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Abstract

The study herein explores the history and memory of the Shoah in Italy through the eyes, primarily, of survivors themselves. Pairing witness testimonies (memoirs and oral interviews) with government records, I show how Italy's Jewish survivors, for many decades after World War II and the Shoah, continued to invoke the national myths of the 'good Italian' and the 'bad German' in their recollections, despite their frequent persecution at Italian hands. This tendency, I argue, stems from their past experiences of acceptance and integration in Italy after national unification and emancipation, experiences which extended to foreign Jews residing in Italy, as well. Only recently, since the turn of the twenty-first century, has a collective counter-memory emerged from within the survivor community to challenge the predominant myths of Fascism, the war, and the Shoah that prevailed in postwar Italy. Receiving fullest expression at the Shoah Memorial of Milan, situated within Milan's central railway station (Milano Centrale) on the site of a former deportation center, this counter-narrative alleges that ordinary Italians did not act with goodness and benevolence as the Jewish population was oppressed and persecuted, but rather, with indifference, resulting in the deportation and death of thousands of their members. The setting of the memorial at the station, I contend, which remains emblazoned with Fascist insignia, establishes Milano Centrale as a site of memory contestation in Italy, a battleground in the war over the politics of memory that has been raging in Italy with particular intensity ever since Silvio Berlusconi's rise to power in the mid-1990s. However, nearly a decade after inauguration, the memorial remains incomplete, hampered by limited funding and low visitorship. The future of Milan's Shoah Memorial, which for now looks, at best, uncertain, will say much about the future of Shoah memorialization in Italy.

THE GOOD ITALIAN, THE BAD GERMAN, AND THE SURVIVOR: NARRATIVES AND
COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF THE SHOAH IN ITALY

by

John R. Barruzza

B.A., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2010

M.A., Villanova University, 2012

M.Phil., Syracuse University, 2016

Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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Introduction

As they descended into “the bottomless funnel of the maelstrom”, the Finzi-Continis of Ferrara recovered their tennis court with a fresh layer of clay...

* * *

During the Risorgimento, Moisè Finzi-Contini, the great landowning patriarch at the source of the family dynasty, enjoyed a meteoric rise. Having briefly tasted freedom and equality in Napoleon’s Cisalpine Republic before the forces of reaction tossed him back into the ghetto, Moisè was sprung from his urban cage for good fifty years later by the liberating armies of the Kingdom of Italy. Eagerly embracing the full legal, political, and civil rights afforded him by the Albertine Statute (*Statuto Albertino*), the enlightened constitution of Piedmont-Sardinia that was spread throughout the peninsula, Moisè parlayed his newfound equality into social mobility and agrarian wealth, playing a key role in local agricultural reform. By the time of his death in 1863, a mere three years after Ferrara became part of the emergent Italy, Moisè had traded his ghetto walls for a walled estate within the city. Sealing his preeminent local status in stone, the family dynast had a monumental tomb built for him and his descendants in Ferrara’s Jewish cemetery. More consonant in size and splendor with the vaults of his Catholic peers, Moisè’s mausoleum towered over the much humbler final resting places of the deceased Jews surrounding him.

When Italy’s Racial Laws took effect in 1938, as the world they knew, loved, and built crumbled around them, the Finzi-Continis continued to live as they had been living ever since Moisè’s spectacular ascent seventy years prior. Micòl, the young, college-educated heiress of the family, spent fraught nights engaged in tortured conversation with her on-again, off-again lover, the two continuing their will-they-won’t-they tango as the tentacles of antisemitic tyranny entangled

them. Her dance partner, meanwhile, worried only about making a bad impression on his coveted Micòl, symbol of his unrequited love and object of his undying affection. Upon learning that a member of their clique had been expelled from the local library, the remarks that emanated from the Finzi-Continis' family dinner table "were not even particularly bitter, but elegantly sarcastic as usual, you might almost say gay." In the world of the Finzi-Continis and their coterie, the Racial Laws are always there, but they exist as an afterthought, background noise, an irritant more than a threat. On the rare occasions when they are invoked or, more commonly, alluded to, they are tiptoed around with coded, evasive language, or they are summarily dismissed with sarcasm and snide derision. And though it was true that one ran the risk of being outed as a "filthy Jew" in public, and even being assaulted for it, such episodes sparked a mild apprehension at most, more akin to a juvenile worry about getting caught doing wrong, not being wrong. Nor would it stop Ferrara's young, Jewish merry-makers from hitting the town again the following night and getting into the same kind of mischief, fisticuffs and all. Yet, by the time Micòl's former courter returned to the Finzi-Continis estate on a spring day in 1957, all of Moisè's descendants were gone, his family line being extinguished in the Lager, the many vacant slots in the family crypt going forever unfilled. In less than a century, the Finzi-Continis had emerged from the depths of the ghetto to forge a powerful local dynasty, wealthy, influential, and accepted by their Gentile equals, only to be eradicated in the gas chambers of Birkenau in the blink of an eye.¹

The story of the Finzi-Continis is, of course, historical fiction, but Giorgio Bassani based his characters on reconstructions of real-life people – the narrator, Micòl's star-crossed, irresolute lover,

¹ Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, trans. Isabel Quigly (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), especially 1-13, 138-143, 197, 212, 232-235.

is presumably Bassani himself – and their tale is one that repeated up and down the Italian peninsula in the years before the Shoah.²

History

Using the voices and perspectives of Jews themselves, this study tells a story of the Jewish experience in Italy, spanning from the Risorgimento to the present day and emphasizing the history and memory of antisemitic discrimination and the Shoah. Until 1938, that story had been one of remarkable acceptance and integration into the national community. In the wake of emancipation, as if ghetto walls had become dams ready to burst, Italy's Jewish population gushed out of its centuries-old holding cells and, on a scale unmatched elsewhere in Europe, blended seamlessly into the political, cultural, and social mainstream. After unification, whose realization they had helped achieve, Italy's Jews soared to the highest government reaches, entered and enhanced the most profitable economic spheres, and settled into a comfortably middle-class standard of living, reflective of the new nation-state's burgeoning bourgeoisie. In less than a half-century, Italy's Jews had gone from inhabiting one of the harshest environments for Jews in Europe, and by far the worst in the west, to being valued and accepted as Italians, and this continued well into the Fascist era. Patriotic to the bone, a reflection of their commitment to the state that had freed them, Jews sprung to Benito Mussolini's radical, ultranationalist movement from the very beginning, and they would fill its ranks by the thousands, at least as long as they were allowed to.

² In fact, there was a Dora Finzi Contini from Ferrara who was deported from Milan's central railway station and, like Bassani's characters, killed at Auschwitz. However, she was not the inspiration for his novel. Rather, that was Ferrara's Magrini family, whose fate was mirrored in that of the Finzi-Continis. (Though the matriarch of the Magrini family was named Albertina Bassani, this may have been coincidental); see "Finzi Contini, Dora," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2597/finzi-contini-dora.html>; "Magrini, Isa," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-5043/magrini-isa.html>; "Magrini, Silvio," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-5044/magrini-silvio.html>; "Bassani, Albertina," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-712/bassani-albertina.html>; and Marco Ansaldo, "La vera storia dei Finzi Contini," *la Repubblica*, 13 giugno 2008, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2008/06/13/r2-la-vera-storia-dei-finzi-contini.html>.

When the Fascist regime announced its Racial Laws in 1938, it thus came as an immense, incomprehensible shock to Italy's Jews, who suddenly found themselves betrayed by the Italian state and often, but not always, abandoned by their non-Jewish friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and co-workers. Still, the high level of acceptance and the genuine feeling of belonging that they had enjoyed up until then were undeniable, making it possible for many Jews to explain away the antisemitic legislation as something foreign, un-Italian. Such a move, a headlong swing into anti-Jewish enmity, could not be representative of the real Italy, the one that they loved and helped create. Given the year, a fateful one in European history, many Jews even absolved their Duce, attributing the novel antisemitic campaign to Adolf Hitler and the budding pact between the fascist regimes. When the alliance ended, they believed, so too would the oppression.

More practically, Italy's Jewish community remained a strong, middle-class demographic under Fascism, and their leading roles in the economy enabled many to withstand the initial financial blow and to restabilize, at least in the short term. (The exception was Rome, where the Racial Laws had a devastating impact on an already impoverished community.) Like all good Italians, and they considered themselves as such, Italy's Jews mastered "the art of getting by" (*l'arte di arrangiarsi*) and adjusted to their new circumstances. Life was certainly different, and no doubt it was worse, but they accommodated themselves to the antisemitic legislation and looked forward to the day the discrimination would pass. When Italy went to war alongside the Nazi regime, sworn enemy of Jews everywhere, Italy's Jews fretted over the alliance while decoupling their own experiences from those of Jews trapped in the ever-greater German Reich. Ever since 1933, German Jews had been escaping to Italy by the thousands, their numbers increasing with each stage of Nazi radicalization, and after March 1938, they were joined by Jews from Austria. Even after Italy sealed its borders, thousands of Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe continued to smuggle themselves into the *bel paese*, all sharing nightmare stories of oppression that seemed unreal to Italy's Jews and inapt to their own situation.

Accordingly, when the war came home to Italy, Jews did like Gentiles. An overwhelmingly urban population, they fled their homes for the countryside to escape Allied bombardment, or they hunkered down *in situ* and hoped for the best. All the while, the Fascist state continued to strip away their rights, conscripting Italian Jews into forced labor, men and women alike, while confining foreign Jews in concentration camps. In summer 1943, when Benito Mussolini was deposed from within, Italy's Jews rejoiced, storming the streets with their non-Jewish neighbors and reveling in the mistaken belief that *il Duce's* downfall marked the end of the war and the coming of their second liberation.

It was not until September 1943, when the Germans occupied central and northern Italy, that Italy's Jews had their "*Kristallnacht*" moment, their collective existential realization that their physical beings were in imminent danger.³ From an analytical perspective, the Shoah essentially began in Italy on September 8, 1943. The signing of the Armistice of Cassibile between the Kingdom of Italy and the Anglo-American powers, with German troops already stationed on Italian soil, cast the dye for Italy's Jews, especially those living in the northern sphere of the peninsula and in Italy's Balkan, Greek, and French possessions. Determined to avoid another World-War betrayal, Hitler quickly moved to occupy those parts of Italy that he still could, ensnaring Jews caught behind enemy lines. Much to their delight, the occupying Germans found an infrastructure of anti-Jewish hate just waiting to be exploited to even more sinister ends, and they quickly set to work grafting their genocidal enterprise atop existing Italian institutions.

Nor was the relationship between the Fascist and Nazi powers so passive. After German commandos sprung Mussolini from prison and installed him as leader of the semi-autonomous Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, RSI), the central authorities of the new puppet state

³ For German Jewish reactions to *Kristallnacht* (or, the "November Pogrom"), see Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially ch. 5, "The November Pogrom and Its Aftermath," 119-144.

fully collaborated with the Germans in the Final Solution, participating in all of the genocide's precursors: arrest, detainment, and deportation. Although the process remained messy, and disputes arose between the two powers over jurisdictional matters and the legal definition of a 'Jew', by November-December 1943, German occupiers and Salò officials had come to a task-sharing agreement whereby Italians carried out most of the arrests and oversaw internment, while Germans organized and conducted deportations.⁴

All things considered, the Fascist experience with the Shoah is probably one of unintended consequences. There is no evidence indicating that the Fascist regime, whether in monarchical or social-republican garb, ever sought to kill Italy's Jews. Though numerous Italians participated in the Final Solution, the Fascists' own answer to the Jewish Question reached its radical limit at forced emigration, an idea that was planned but never realized.⁵ Redemptive antisemitism, eliminationist antisemitism, murderous antisemitism, whatever one wishes to call it, was by and large absent in Italy (at least among Italians).⁶ Willingly or not, many non-Jewish Italians did aid and abet murder, both in official and unofficial ways, but only a select few were themselves willing to kill. The Cuneo massacre of 26 April 1945, in which Italians slaughtered six Jewish prisoners, appears to be an

⁴ For a discussion of the task-sharing process, see Liliana Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 218-219. The division of labor was not always so neat, but that was the general pattern, particularly in the Italian Social Republic, where Italian authorities maintained control over civil affairs. In the two Operation Zones, the *Alpenvorland* and the *Adriatisches Küstenland*, the occupying Germans assumed control over both civilian and military matters.

⁵ Perhaps Italian authorities would have one day arrived at such a solution, since Fascist antisemitism continuously radicalized, but this is an ahistorical consideration.

⁶ For a discussion of 'redemptive antisemitism', see Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007). Friedländer, who coined the term, argues that redemptive antisemitism pits the forces of good, represented by Aryans, against the forces of evil, represented by Jews, in a metahistorical, apocalyptic struggle, with the triumph of one requiring the destruction of the other. Hitler's ideological mentor, Dietrich Eckart, was an advocate of redemptive antisemitism, and his most famous pupil presented himself to the German masses as the messianic figure who would 'redeem' the Aryan race. For a discussion of 'eliminationist antisemitism', see Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage, 1996). Goldhagen, progenitor of this term, argues that the desire to kill Jews had become diffuse throughout German society by the early twentieth century; all that ordinary (that is, non-Jewish) Germans required was a murderous dictator like Hitler to give them the greenlight for genocide. Although 'eliminationist antisemitism' is a perfectly valid conceptual construction, Goldhagen erred by making it a monocausal factor and presenting it as a uniquely German phenomenon.

absolute outlier.⁷ Nevertheless, Italy's own prior antisemitic policies and practices helped the Germans deport and destroy thousands of Jews residing in the country. Without resorting to teleological and linear explanations, the human-rights violations that came before, implemented by the Fascists without German pressure or goading, expedited the human-rights atrocities that came later. And in the Italian Social Republic, many Italians played active roles in the genocide's preparatory stages.

As for the general population, within a few short years, anti-Jewish vitriol had been spouted by enough official and unofficial mouthpieces to reach the Italian masses and significantly impact public opinion. Though it might be too much to say that antisemitism came to reflect the general mindset, and certainly not in its redemptive or eliminationist strains, by late 1943, anti-Jewish sentiment had become sufficiently diffuse throughout Italian society – and certainly more so than scholars long believed and Italians or others cared to admit, Jews among them. At the very least, the majority of Gentiles willingly acquiesced as Italy's Jews were first pushed toward a state of collective ostracism and then deported toward their likely deaths. Meanwhile, they all-too-eagerly despoiled their banished neighbors of their property while jumping into the homes and posts that they left behind.

It's slightly more difficult to pinpoint when the Shoah began for its victims. As noted by the recently departed survivor-scholar, Ruth Kluger, "Though the Shoah involved millions of people, it was a unique experience for each of them."⁸ But from a collective standpoint, the onset of the Shoah emerged belatedly and gradually in the days, weeks, and months after 8 September 1943. Though the German occupation had a seismic impact on Italy's Jewish population, many Jews –

⁷ Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 200.

⁸ Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2001), 66.

again, like their non-Jewish neighbors – met the Armistice the same way that they had greeted Fascism’s mid-summer ruin, with elation and glee. It was only when the ‘Jew-hunt’ (*caccia all’ebreo*) began, at different times in different places, that the gravity of their collective situation started to dawn on them, an awareness that intensified first while they were languishing in dirty, dingy prison cells, where they were sometimes reduced to numbers, and later, when they were violently packed into cattle cars and deported toward their unknown fates.

Memory

In the wake of liberation, a series of seductive, self-exonerating myths surfaced in Italian public and political discourse that came to define national remembrances of Fascism, World War II, and the Shoah. From the belief in national resistance and universal victimhood, to notions of German domination and wickedness, to the conviction that Italians are innately good people, each narrative further distanced the Italian collective from the crimes of the Germans, the brutality of the war, and Fascism itself, including the savage nature of empire-making and partisan repression. Of these many myths, the Resistance “vulgate” (*vulgata*), as one scholar suggestively dubbed it, has seen the greatest swing in its fortunes.⁹ Holding that Italians either met the Nazi and Fascist aggressors head-on or aided those who did, the idea of national resistance became “the cornerstone of postwar Italian democracy” and “the foundation for the reconstruction of Italian society” following the constitution of the Italian Republic in 1946. Accordingly, when commemorating victims of Nazi atrocities, Italians typically framed the issue through the lens of political, not racial, victimhood. While antifascists and partisans were immortalized as heroes and martyrs, Jewish suffering, to the extent that it was acknowledged at all, was either telescoped within the framework of political victimhood

⁹ The concept of the Resistance “vulgate” (*vulgata*) comes from Renzo De Felice; see Renzo De Felice and Pasquale Chessa, *Rosso e nero* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995).

or subsumed within an even broader category of collective, universal suffering.¹⁰ Following the “Clean Hands” (*Mani pulite*) investigations of the early 1990s, however, which exposed rampant and systemic corruption among the ruling classes, the entire political edifice of the so-called “First Italian Republic” crumbled, paving the way for the rise of Silvio Berlusconi and the decidedly more conservative Second Italian Republic. Antifascism, until then the lifeblood of postwar politics, was itself put on trial in the court of public opinion and found guilty of creating the corrupt “Republic of parties”, which had maintained a stranglehold on Italian politics ever since the end of the war. This tectonic shift in the world of politics profoundly impacted national memory, and as the Resistance’s star began to fade, that of the political victim diminished as well.¹¹

Most commonly, postwar states contrasted their own national communities with the Germans in order to accentuate their fundamental differences in character and, in the process, embellish their own experiences of collective victimhood. Austrians infamously claimed the mantle of “Hitler’s first victim”, and who could blame them, since the Allies had gifted them the moniker in 1943’s Moscow Declarations. Such a title conveniently ignored the throngs of Austrians who greeted the *Anschluss* with delirium and gave their favorite son a hero’s homecoming, marking their incorporation into the Third Reich with spontaneous antisemitic demonstrations. Germans themselves got in on the act, distancing themselves from the Nazis and the *Führer* whom they had

¹⁰ Emiliano Perra, “Narratives of Innocence and Victimhood: The Reception of the Miniseries Holocaust in Italy,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22:3 (Winter 2008), 413, 420.

¹¹ As John Foot’s *Italy’s Divided Memory* shows, the Resistance narrative never, in fact, acquired the universal pretensions that it seemed to have during the First Italian Republic. Basing his account on a series of Italian-language microhistories that focus on Nazi massacres in Tuscany, which reveal that village inhabitants held antifascist partisans responsible for provoking the massacres, Foot concludes that the hegemonic narrative of universal resistance was always challenged at the local level. With the sully of political antifascism following the *Tangentopoli* (“Bribesville”) scandal and subsequent Clean Hands investigations, these local counter-memories could, for the first time, resound on a national scale; see John Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8-10, 13. Similar conclusions can be made by looking at the borderland region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, where local sentiment remains hostile to Communism, so often at the heart of partisan activity, and to wartime resistance fighters from Yugoslavia; see Claudio Fogu, “*Italiani brava gente*: The Legend of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 151-167; and Glenda Sluga, “Italian National Memory, National Identity and Fascism,” in *Italian Fascism: History, Memory and Representation*, eds. R.J.B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), 183-186.

heiled countless times before. As Richard Ned Lebow neatly states, “everyone blamed the Germans for the Holocaust, the Germans blamed the Nazis, and the Nazis blamed Hitler,” a pattern that holds true even for Nazi Germany’s chief ally, Italy.¹² The Italian variation on the European theme took the form of *italiani brava gente*, the belief that Italians are naturally good people, and as Filippo Focardi has shown, the ‘good Italian’ (*bravo italiano*) could not exist without his evil other, the ‘bad German’ (*cattivo tedesco*). Against the bloodthirsty, sadistic Germans, a people founded on inhumane principles of Nordic-Aryan racial superiority, the Italians contrasted an image of a people raised on the twin civilizational pillars of *latinità* (Latinness) and Catholicism, both of which guaranteed their goodwill and their aversion to violence, much less war and genocide. As expressed by the famed Resistance fighter and postwar Socialist politician, Vittorio Foa, in a manner more honest than most, “The Germans became a great asset for the tranquility of our conscience.”¹³ As much an identity construction as a narrative or myth, *italiani brava gente* has proved especially resilient, appealing to all Italians by definition and therefore transcending political, cultural, regional, social, and moral differences. The belief in their own natural goodness, Lebow posits, might be the only way that Italians actually identify as “Italian”.¹⁴ Italians, finally made.

When Jewish survivors returned to Italy after the war, a confluence of factors, from the national, political, and diplomatic, to the personal, familial, and communal, conspired to mute their voices. Though Primo Levi enjoys as great a reputation as any among witnesses, he remained the exception to the rule for much of the postwar period, and even he encountered difficulties. An

¹² Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, 21.

¹³ “*I tedeschi sono diventati una grande risorsa per la tranquillità della nostra coscienza*”; Vittorio Foa quoted in Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013), 187. See also xiv, 110, 180-183, and 186. The Italians (like the Austrians) received a key assist from foreign powers. Focardi traces the origins of the distinction between the Italian and German character-types to the beginning of World War II, when the Allies tried to convince ordinary Italians, via airdropped leaflets and Radio London, that they were different from Mussolini, his gang of Fascist thugs, and the Nazis. These character stereotypes then crystallized into myths from 1943 to 1947, beginning shortly after the armistice as the government of Pietro Badoglio sought to legitimize itself and mobilize Italians against the German occupiers.

¹⁴ Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” 29-30.

editor for Einaudi, Natalia Ginzburg, rejected Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* (*If this is a man*) for publication in 1947. If anyone were inclined to sign off on such a work, it would have been Ginzburg. A Jewish author herself, her husband had been executed by the Nazis.¹⁵ But as Tony Judt confirms, "Levi's narrative of persecution and survival, beginning with his deportation as a Jew rather than as a resister, did not conform to uplifting Italian accounts of nationwide anti-Fascist resistance."¹⁶

Jewish communities and organizations, on the other hand, did produce collective memories of World War II and the Shoah, and these memories almost always reinforced the grand master narratives. The Resistance hegemon and the sacralization of the partisan-martyr left little room for their own victims, but Italy's Jews, both Italian and foreign, contributed to the vulgate by calling attention to the many non-Jews who helped them escape near-certain death. As for the myth of universal victimhood, believing themselves to be Italians, Italy's Jews wouldn't have just endorsed this memory; they would have felt that they shared in it, a kinship of suffering that seemed especially salient as all fled to the countryside together to escape Allied bombardment. Jews' greatest contributions of all, however, were to the myth of *brava gente*. As Guri Schwarz has shown, prominent Italian Jews helped create and 'confirm' the *brava gente* myth in the early postwar period.¹⁷ Shira Klein's research demonstrates how these voices found echoes not just within Italy, but also

¹⁵ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14:1 (Spring 2001), 266n.29.

¹⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London and New York: Penguin, 2005), 807. Levi, arrested by militia units as part of a Resistance band, identified himself as a Jew, rather than as a resister, because he "believed (wrongly, as it subsequently proved) that the admission of my political activity would have meant torture and death"; Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Ann Goldstein, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), ch. 1. Because of inconsistent pagination, eBooks are referenced by chapter instead of page in the present study.

¹⁷ Guri Schwarz, "On Myth Making and Nation Building: The Genesis of the 'Myth of the Good Italian,' 1943-1947," *Telos* 164 (2013): 11-43. Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy*, trans. Giovanni Noor Mazhar (Edgware and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, 2012).

among expat communities in Palestine and the United States.¹⁸ The present study reveals that survivors have continued to endorse this myth while bearing witness decades later.

Although this study, like many before it, exposes the misrepresentative nature of Italy's many postwar myths, I do not wish to overturn all of the good deeds performed by Italians during the war and the Shoah. *Brava gente* is a fable, but there were plenty of *bravi italiani* throughout the general population who put themselves in harm's way to help Jews in need. The many members of the Catholic Church who, on individual initiative, sheltered Jews from deportation and death should not be forgotten. Nor should the military officers and occupation officials who refused to turn over Jews when the Nazis came with their quotas (even if their motives had more to do with prestige and autonomy than morality and concern for the Jews' well-being). Actions like these convinced Hitler that the Italians were unreliable allies in the war against the Jews (at least until late 1943), and when contrasted with the wartime records of other Axis powers, like Croatia, Hungary, Romania, France, and of course Germany, Italy's record on the Jewish Question shines brilliantly. But the blinding light of Italian benevolence conceals the many blemishes on a not-so-spotless record, as the present study shows. For far too long, both within academic circles and without, conventional wisdom has been taken for granted and myth has been accepted as truth, shrouding a much more complicated historical reality.

Thesis and Method

This study follows a multi-national selection of Shoah survivors, Italians and foreigners, from their time in Italy before the 1938 Racial Laws, through their experiences of discrimination, persecution, and deportation under the Fascist and Nazi regimes, to their reintegration into Italy in the postwar period, concluding in the present day. Pairing survivor documents, including memoirs and

¹⁸ Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

interviews, with government records, especially state, municipal, and police files, I argue that the remarkable levels of acceptance and integration that Jews enjoyed in unified Italy hindered their ability to perceive the dangers encircling and entrapping them.¹⁹ Playing a central role in fostering this misperception were contrasts with the Third Reich. Even as their circumstances progressively worsened from late 1938 onward, a peek northward into Hitler's Europe assured Italy's Jews of their security. Their own mistreatment seemed benign in comparison, and refugees from central Europe frequently confirmed as much. In fact, many Jews concluded that the Racial Laws were either a German imposition or a concession to the *Führer*, to be rescinded once the alliance had served its purpose. These reasonable but mistaken beliefs found reinforcement when the onset of the Shoah coincided with the arrival of the Nazis, and survivors mark 1943, not 1938, as the radical break in the timeline of Jewish history in modern Italy. Punctuating the point, Bassani, who avoided arrest by using a false name, only treats the Finzi-Continis' demise in an abbreviated epilogue, as if to stress that the German occupation and all it wrought constituted a fundamentally different era of Italian history. But the Finzi-Continis, like the rest of Ferrara's Jews, were arrested by Italians, not Germans.²⁰ Unintended consequences or not, the Shoah is a fundamental part of Italian and Fascist history. It is no mere coda or parenthesis.

In his introduction to the edited volume, *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (2006), Lebow identifies three levels of memory analysis: (i) individual, which focuses on what individual people remember (or think they remember) and considers them independently of social context; (ii) collective, which, following Maurice Halbwachs, holds that memory is an intrinsically social phenomenon that helps bind communities together; and (iii) institutional, which pertains to "efforts by political elites, their supporters, and their opponents to construct meanings of the past and

¹⁹ Translations in this study, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

²⁰ Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 245-246. Michele Sarfatti, "La Shoah e le case della memoria," *L'Unità*, 17 gennaio 2007, https://archivio.pubblica.istruzione.it/shoah/biblio/articoli/sarfatti_unita.pdf.

propagate them more widely or impose them on other members of society.”²¹ By comparing individual survivor testimonies with each other, with the collective memories of Italy’s larger Jewish community, and with the hegemonic institutional memories of Fascism, World War II, and the Shoah, the present study employs all three levels of analysis. In the process, it reveals the interplay and overlap between victim, bystander, and perpetrator memory. While I am primarily interested in uncovering patterns, which concerns collective and institutional memory, survivor testimonies also reveal a patchwork of unique experiences, which hems more closely to individual-memory analysis.

An examination of witness testimonies reveals that the myths of the ‘good Italian’ and the ‘bad German’ have proved central to how survivors remember, process, and portray their experiences. Survivors invoked the diametrical character types before the Shoah, they did so during the Shoah, and they continued to do so long afterward, as testimonies from the late twentieth century demonstrate. Only in recent years, as my study also reveals, has a counter-memory emerged from within the Jewish population to challenge this dyadic myth. Led by Milan’s Jewish community and survivor Liliana Segre, this counter-narrative charges that ordinary, non-Jewish Italians were not ‘good’ during the years of antisemitic persecution, but rather, indifferent to the fates of their Jewish neighbors. This group contends, and I argue in concert with them, that Italians’ insufficient civic engagement with their antisemitic and collaborationist pasts has helped the radical right return to power in Italy today, with antisemitism in tow.

In form and in substance, the present study is a survivors’ story; the words of witnesses, in their retellings of their persecution, survival, loss, reintegration, and struggle to bear witness carry this project from start to finish. Their names are: Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, of Berehove; Isacco Bayona, of Thessaloniki; Samuele Dana, Fausta Finzi, and Liliana Segre, of Milan; Giuseppe Di

²¹ Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” 8-16. Seeing it as most apt to the politics of memory, their volume mostly utilizes institutional-memory analysis.

Porto, of Rome; Luciana Sacerdote, of Genoa; and Lina (Ventura) Jaffè, of Smyrna.²² It is their own memories of their own histories that I present and analyze herein, which has the added benefit of giving the story both structure and narrative coherence from the early twentieth century until the present day. In the process, we learn how and why Italy's Jews rationalized, relativized, and minimized their own victimization, while their ground-level, personalized views of arrest, detainment, and deportation give us a clearer understanding of where the RSI's persecutory mechanisms overlapped with, or deviated from, those of the German occupiers. In the postwar period, we learn the struggles that survivors had to overcome to give voice to their own experiences. While some difficulties were political, others were highly personal. And while this is a story about the living, it necessarily entails the dead, the many family members, friends, and acquaintances who never returned from the Lager.

Memory analysis comes with many inherent difficulties, given that memory is a fallible, mutable, and incomplete quantity, and using survivor testimony poses even more challenges. As the memories of victims who suffered unspeakable trauma, survivor testimonies require delicacy and care, but not at the expense of critical analysis. My approach has not been to compare and contrast survivor memories with the historical record, but to use the two in symbiosis and to treat survivor testimony as a valid, integral part of that record. As Alessandro Portelli has contended, "Subjectivity is as much the business of history as are the more visible 'facts.' What informants believe is indeed a historical *fact* (that is, the fact that they believe it), as much as what really happened."²³ Building on Portelli's guidelines, Daniel James cautions that oral testimony does not necessarily reveal a speaker's

²² Many Jewish women in this study, survivors and deceased, kept their maiden names upon marriage, whether or not they added their spouse's surname. 'Herskovits', for example, is Agata's maiden name, and Bauer is her married name. Her full name is 'Agata Herskovits Bauer'. For clarity's sake, I parenthesize the maiden name in instances when the woman also took her husband's surname.

²³ Emphasis in original; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1991), 50.

subjectivity, writing that life stories “make use of a wide spectrum of possible roles, self-representations, and available narratives. As such,” he advises, “we have to learn to read these stories and the symbols and logic embedded in them if we are to attend to their deeper meaning and do justice to the complexity found in the lives and historical experiences of those who recount them.”²⁴ Herein, it is not my objective to “correct” victims on their memories of trauma, and on the occasions where I do point out historical inaccuracies in survivor testimonies, I typically reserve such comments for footnotes.

Still, such a study is not without its limitations. As a consequence of Italy’s belated Shoah commemoration, which did not begin in earnest until the 1980s, most witnesses were children, adolescents, or young adults during the years of antisemitic persecution, creating a generational gap in collective memory that is impossible to fill. Born in 1902, Lina Jaffè is the oldest survivor profiled here. All other witnesses were born between 1920 and 1932. Another limitation concerns those who did return to speak. Not all survivors have borne witness equally, which leads to content imbalances and other problems. In the realm of Italian Shoah memory, Liliana Segre and Agata Bauer are, in a sense, hegemonic witnesses. Both survivors have narrated their life stories to interviewers and live audiences on countless occasions, and they’ve committed their testimonies to print many times, as well. After so many rehearsals, performances, and encores, presented across various media, their life stories have acquired a curated quality and a crystal clarity that, occasionally, belie the messiness of lived experience, especially during extraordinary times. Moreover, both figures are widely recognized as authorities not just on their own unique experiences, but those of the entire victim community. As a result, the line between personal and collective memory (or narrative point) is not always clear, a dilemma that becomes even more pronounced when other, less prodigious witnesses invoke their

²⁴ Daniel James, *Doña María’s Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 124.

testimonies. While Primo Levi is the principal font of borrowed source material, Luciana Sacerdote refers to Segre on multiple occasions. Although these considerations do not discredit what our hegemonic witnesses say, we cannot discount that certain details have been omitted in service of the narrative and the line between personal memory and plot point is not always apparent.²⁵

In fact, both Segre and Bauer are cognizant of the meta-nature of their witnessing and have tried to account for it in similar fashion. Segre maintains that testimony requires dissociation, despite the risk of losing oneself, and this is a method that Bauer also practices.²⁶ “I don’t like to speak about myself in this context,” she explains, “because I maintain that the tragedy of the deportation is a collective tragedy so immense, so enormous, that any personal story has a very relative value. Because of this,” she continues, “I always like to speak in the plural. I don’t like to speak about what I lived, because so many others experienced worse things than I did, and my story is not emblematic.”²⁷

* * *

This project devotes especial attention to the city of Milan and its central railway station. After unification, the Lombard capital quickly came to boast the wealthiest, most integrated Jewish community in Italy. The Finzi-Continis may have been a quasi-fictive landowning family from Ferrara, but they found their real-life equivalents in the upper crust of Milan. With leading roles in finance and commerce, especially in the banking, brokerage, and textile industries, Milan’s Jewish

²⁵ Generally speaking, oral accounts and interviews are fuller and richer in detail than memoirs, but the latter have the benefit of coherence. Another drawback to interviews, of course, is the role of the interviewer, who can dictate or influence the direction in which the conversation goes.

²⁶ Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre. *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 217.

²⁷ “A me non piace parlare di me in questo contesto. Mi disturba perché ritengo la tragedia della deportazione è una tragedia collettiva così immensa, così enorme, che ogni storia personale ha un valore molto relativo. Per cui mi piace parlare sempre al plurale. Non mi piace parlare di quello che ho vissuto perché hanno vissuto peggio di me tanti altri, e la mia storia non è emblematica”; Agata “Goti” Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC. <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>.

businessmen held commanding influence over some of the most lucrative sectors of the economy. A firmly upper-middle-class demographic, Milan's Jews grew and prospered with their city, the financial and industrial engine of the new nation-state. Dating only to the Napoleonic era, Milan's Jewish population was also among the youngest in Italy, making its rapid collective ascent all the more dazzling. This study explores how Milan's ordinary, non-Jewish population turned its back on this well-integrated, profoundly Milanese community.

Milan is also where the individual stories in this study collide. In his advice to another writer, the famed author and railway enthusiast, Rudyard Kipling, once said, "Make the platform speak. It should have some tales to tell." To those willing to listen, the hidden platforms beneath Milan's central railway station have some tales to tell. From December 1943 until January 1945, the Nazis and their Italian accomplices deported approximately 1,000 Jews from a subterranean area beneath Milano Centrale station, including all of the survivors profiled herein. Eleven of the fifteen convoys that dispatched from the station terminated at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the majority of Italy's Jewish victims were killed. Although Germans conducted the deportations, Italian guards routinely assisted them, and local railroaders and conductors often were the ones making these trains run on time, well aware of the cargo they were moving. After the war, Milano Centrale's subterranean space quickly resumed its former function as a mail center, remaining unknown to most Italians and keeping its secret hidden from the Milanese and other Italian and foreign travelers who frequented the station. It was not until the turn of the twenty-first century, after the hidden underground tracks had been abandoned, that local Jewish and Catholic groups excavated the memory of the deportations from the buried remains, figuratively and literally, and exposed them to the public. Today, the Shoah Memorial of Milan (*Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*), the culmination of that effort, sits on the exact track where the Nazis and their Italian partners forcibly assembled the deportations, *binario 21*. It is there, at the memorial, that the counter-narrative of 'indifference' has received fullest

expression. Just as the Shoah in Milan reached its climax at the central station, it is there, too, that public memory of the tragedy has centered.

Over the life of the project, Milano Centrale, like the city it serves, became less the focal point and more of a reference point. From an ethical angle, I feared that the station, a building, was overshadowing the histories of the individuals who were deported from it, both those who returned to tell their stories and the many more who did not. For decades after the war, the marble megalith, a relic from the Fascist era, stood as an imposing stone metaphor for the suppression of survivors' voices and experiences, trapped beneath the station where they were conveniently and deliberately forgotten. To this day, the station's walls remain adorned with Fascist insignia, so one could argue that it still achieves this effect. I wanted to avoid recreating the same historical injustice in my study.

How I use the station now can be analogized to the vertex of a funnel or the neck of an hourglass. Together with San Vittore prison, the two Milanese sites function as a point of convergence where many unique, disparate biological streams meet. Tracing these individual tributaries backward and forward allows us to fill in the lives of the victims, learning the circumstances that placed them in Milan and the ways they rebuilt their lives when they returned to Italy after the war. While limiting the investigation and giving it a sharper focus, this method also obliges us to fan outward, prompting comparisons between Milan and other locations, including Ferrara, Fiume, Florence, Genoa, Rome, Trieste, the Po Valley, the Tuscan countryside, and the Italian-Swiss borderland. The geographical boundaries of the study, however, are national, for the story I wish to tell is an Italian one.²⁸ In sum, the historical dimension of the project (chapters 1-4) became less a story of the station itself and more a story of the circumstances that brought survivors there, while the study's memory component, especially chapters 6 and 7, analyzes the station as a site

²⁸ The one exception is Thessaloniki, since the historic Greek city is central to Isacco Bayona's story.

of memory contestation in Italy, a battleground over the politics of memory where divergent readings of the past clash.²⁹

Historiography

My study owes a great debt to many that have come before. Obviously, no analysis of the historical relationship between Fascism, Italy's Jews, and the Shoah can be carried out without reference to the trailblazing work of Renzo De Felice, Michele Sarfatti, and Liliana Picciotto. Although De Felice's conclusions and interpretive frameworks have been challenged, and in many cases discredited, his body of work and archival excavations have given later scholars an abundance of material to work with, and his *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* launched the field of study in 1961.³⁰ Sarfatti has compellingly demonstrated, throughout his life's work, how Mussolini's regime became fixated on answering Italy's Jewish Question (the Fascists' final solution being emigration, not extinction), and his argument that the Fascist state's antisemitic measures helped the Nazis destroy Italy's Jews cannot be refuted.³¹ Picciotto's masterful studies of the Shoah in Italy, suffuse with statistical data, have an archival quality to them that befits her position as a researcher at Milan's Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC), Italy's leading archive for Jewish history. Central in this regard is her pioneering study, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, first published in 1991 and then reissued in 2002. A recent study by geographer Alberto Giordano and historian Anna Holian builds off Picciotto's work to provide an enhanced, in-depth look at the 'hunt for Jews' in Italy.³² To these works should be added Klaus Voigt's *Il rifugio precario*.

²⁹ Whereas Milano Centrale was once the focus of the study, the station now does not debut until chapter four, save a cameo in chapter two.

³⁰ De Felice's seminal text was translated into English, forty years later, as *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2001).

³¹ See, for instance, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), translated into English as *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy* (2006).

³² Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 2002). Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews': A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Arrests during the Holocaust in Italy,"

Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945 (1993), which documents the experiences of central European Jewish refugees in Fascist Italy, and Joshua D. Zimmerman's edited volume, *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (2005), which is full of valuable, habitually overlooked chapters.³³

While my project necessarily draws on these works, it is closest in nature to studies by Alexander Stille, Guri Schwarz, and Shira Klein. Stille's *Benevolence and Betrayal* (1991), among the best-received English-language books on the topic, charts the histories of five Italian Jewish families who lived under Fascism, covering the full expanses of the political and socioeconomic spectra and encompassing the cities of Genoa, Ferrara, Rome, and Turin (twice).³⁴ My study differs from Stille's by showcasing Milan and by extending the analysis past 1945 into the postwar era, incorporating a memory component. Schwarz has demonstrated how leading Jewish intellectuals and institutions helped create and propagate the myths of the 'good Italian' and the 'bad German' (the latter implied in his analysis but unspoken) in the early postwar period, an effort that was in fact underway before the war even ended.³⁵ Klein's study, the most recent of the bunch, assesses the exceptional degree to which emancipated Jews integrated into the Italian mainstream – though she stops short of proclaiming their outright assimilation and actually refutes that assumption (discussed in chapter 1 below) – and she shows how Italy's Jews endorsed the *brava gente* myth whether or not they remained in Italy.³⁶ Supporting Schwarz's and Klein's conclusions, my study reveals how survivors from Italy have also played key roles in spreading and strengthening the *brava gente* myth, and this holds true

in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 53-86.

³³ Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1993). *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman. Sarfatti, Picciotto, and Voigt are among the authors who feature in Zimmerman's volume, and their chapters are referenced herein.

³⁴ Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991). His book's warm reception transcends the Anglophonic world, receiving a plug from Sarfatti in the introduction to *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*.

³⁵ See *After Mussolini* and "On Myth Making and Nation Building."

³⁶ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*.

whether witnesses were Italian or foreign, whether their families had lived in Italy *da generazioni* or they were newcomers to the peninsula.

Schwarz and Klein disagree, however, over the meaning of *brava gente*. In Schwarz's evaluation, the myth functions as something of a "quid pro quo" between the postwar Italian state and its Jewish minority. In exchange for government assistance with the thousands of refugees who passed through Italy *en route* to Palestine, Jewish leaders lent their support to the "Italians, good people" interpretation of World War II, which postwar statesmen were parading to get in the Allies' good graces. In Schwarz's argument, Jews' motives for promoting *brava gente* were purely pragmatic. (From the state's perspective, such a wager may not have been necessary though, for as Focardi notes, the Allies had been telling the Italians that they were good people since the beginning of the war.)³⁷ Klein, on the other hand, contends that Jewish support for *brava gente* was authentic and heartfelt, based on a history of acceptance and an already established legacy of cooperation with the state.³⁸ Drawing on different primary sources but a similar resource base, my arguments and conclusions are closer to hers. Moreover, while my study demonstrates that survivor support for the 'good Italian' trope was real, it shows that their belief in the 'bad German' was every bit as genuine, for many continued to harbor an antipathy toward Germany and its people well into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Outline

My project consists of two parts, the first focusing on history, and the second on memory. Part I, spanning chapters one through four, provides a history of Italy's Jewish population from emancipation until the end of World War II and the Shoah, concentrating especially on survivors'

³⁷ Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano*, xii.

³⁸ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 6-8.

experiences of acceptance and integration on one hand, and discrimination, persecution, arrest, detainment, and deportation on the other. Throughout, I contend that the high levels of acceptance and integration enjoyed by Italy's Jews, which translated into a firmly bourgeois standard of living and an unshakable attachment to the national community, mitigated against the effects of antisemitic oppression, impeding their ability to discern the dangers surrounding them. The plight of their Jewish peers in Hitler's Europe, many of whom escaped to Italy, further convinced them of their own security.

Chapter 1 begins by charting the history of Italy's Jewish population from the Risorgimento until the eve of the Racial Laws, examining how the unofficial pact between the Italian state and its faithful religious minority came into being, before taking a closer look at Milan's community – the most affluent and integrated in Italy – over that same period. The second half of the chapter parallels the first to reveal a seedier underbelly in Italian politics and culture that, over the course of 1937 and 1938, the Fascists exploited to prime the general population for their antisemitic campaign. Herein, I also synthesize past literature to explain why Mussolini's regime decided to take that turn. Chapter 2 commences with the introduction of the Racial Laws in late 1938 and concludes with Benito Mussolini's downfall in July 1943, covering the entire range of the (monarchical) Fascist regime's antisemitic measures. Although the collective status of Italy's Jews deteriorated over these years, progressively if not precipitously, their middle-class status lessened the economic depredations, and some Jews, though not all, had the benefit of faithful friends. When war came, Italy's Jews felt that the main threat to their safety was not the Fascist state but the Allied bombs, so they retreated to the countryside, and as rumors began circulating about killing fields and extermination centers in "the east", they often doubled down on their conviction that they would be safe in Italy, believing their homeland to be immune from the barbarism corrupting German culture.

With the announcement of the Armistice of Cassibile between the Kingdom of Italy and the Allied powers on September 8, 1943, the Nazis quickly occupied the northern half of the peninsula, as well as their former ally's Continental possessions, and introduced the Final Solution to Italy. Chapter 3 explores the first stage of this process, the so-called Jew-hunt, from the perspectives of the hunted. Realizing that their lives were in grave, immediate danger, Italy's Jews scrambled to disappear underground, secure false papers, or make last-minute dashes for the border. Although the majority evaded capture, primarily by hiding, over 8,500 did not (a number that jumps to over 10,000 if we include Italy's French, Balkan, and Greek possessions). From botched flight attempts, to denunciation by business patrons, to being apprehended in their own homes, this chapter describes some of the circumstances that led to their arrests. Meanwhile, their captors were split almost evenly between Germans and Italians, the latter acting in accordance with the policies of the Italian Social Republic, not those of their Nazi overlords. Hence, this chapter also provides an overview of the Shoah in Italy, including the extent of Italian knowledge and participation. Chapter 4 concludes the project's history circuit by examining the experiences of imprisonment and deportation. In the gaols of central and northern Italy, as they were exposed to the extremes of the weather, forced to share cells with vermin, fed meagre rations, and sometimes reduced to numbers, Jewish prisoners began to undergo the transformation from demonization to dehumanization. For most, deportation likely sealed their devolution. Herded violently into cars meant for cattle and forced to share a common latrine (a bucket), Jewish victims entered a new level of debasement during deportation, and one which foreshadowed the degradation awaiting them over the border. Although, in the main, the Nazis orchestrated and hastened this devolution, prisons were typically under local administration, staffed with Italian guards, and observing RSI policy, and during deportation, Italian police and railway workers routinely assisted the Germans.

Part II, spanning chapters five through seven, forms the project's memory component and covers the period from 1945 until the present day. More specifically, these chapters assess the suppression and then the production and articulation of survivor memory. Chapter 5 examines how a number of obstacles prevented survivors from publicly, and sometimes privately, speaking their truths when they returned home after the war. When the public sphere opened itself up to their voices in the 1980s, witnesses, finally given the opportunity to speak, routinely invoked the tropes of the 'good Italian' and the 'bad German' in their testimonies. Though survivors do not whitewash their Italian persecutors completely, they do differentiate between them, a courtesy not afforded to their German tormentors. Notably, they typically refer to their Italian persecutors as 'fascists' and '*repubblichini*', while their German persecutors remain 'Germans'.

The project ends with two chapters on the Shoah Memorial of Milan, situated within the former deportation center at Milano Centrale station. By articulating a remembrance narrative of indifference, the memorial foregrounds Italian responsibility for the Shoah, refuting the sanitizing myths that have long dominated the politics of Shoah memory in Italy. Such an interpretation establishes the station as a site of memory contestation, which is the topic of chapter 6. The study's seventh and final chapter situates the Shoah Memorial in the conservative, often reactionary political climate of the Second Italian Republic. Since its inauguration in 2013, the memorial has suffered chronically low turnout and funding. As chauvinism has become the order of the day in Italy, with national hubris high and self-criticism anathematic, such an environment is hostile territory for a marginalized, oft-persecuted minority group calling attention to a major blemish on the nation's historical record. Though not a full explanation for the memorial's underperformance, I argue that the regnant political climate cannot be overlooked as a contributing factor, and this bodes poorly for the future of Shoah memorialization in Italy.

A Note on Terms

I use the word *Shoah* instead of *Holocaust* in this study for two main reasons. First, *Shoah* – or, more accurately, *The Shoah* – has retained a sense of specificity over time to refer to the Jewish genocide, while *Holocaust* has always doubled as a general term, both within the Nazi context (e.g., incorporating Roma and Sinti and the mentally disabled) and in reference to unrelated catastrophes. Second, although neither word is definitionally perfect, *Shoah* is less bad. *Holocaust*, derived from Greek, connotes a sacrificial offering, often implying voluntarism, but the Jews were not sacrificing themselves during the genocide, nor were the Nazis offering them up as such. (This same logic, of course, also applies to other victims.) *Shoah*, a Hebrew term, is preferable because it translates to ‘destruction’ or ‘calamity’. Nevertheless, it remains imperfect, because it may have first been used to connote natural catastrophes. Although I accept that the meanings of words change over time, and I have no expectation of upending *Holocaust* as the hegemonic term in English-speaking contexts (as my own course syllabi imply), a word that once meant ‘voluntaristic sacrifice’ seems unsuitable for murder. I do, however, use *Holocaust* in quotations and for proper nouns (e.g., Holocaust Remembrance Day, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The most fitting term might actually be *Khurbn*. With origins in the ruin of the First and Second Temples, the term captures the essential element of manmade destruction and has indeed been adapted to the Nazi context. A Yiddish word (from the Hebrew *Churban*), the term has the added benefit of employing the language of the Ashkenazim, the Jewish ethnic group most greatly affected by the tragedy. I do not employ this term, however, because outside of Yiddish-speaking communities, it is neither widely known nor used.³⁹

³⁹ Zvi Jankelowitz, Interview by Christa Whitney, “The Language of Khurbn (Destruction),” *Wexler Oral History Project*, 2014, Yiddish Book Center, <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/oral-histories/excerpts/woh-ex-0003601/language-khurbn-destruction>. For an early, German-language postwar book that uses the term ‘*Khurbn*’, see Max Kaufmann’s *Churban Lettland* (1947), translated into English as *The Destruction of Latvia’s Jews* (2008), <https://web.archive.org/web/20120324070908/http://www.jewsoflatvia.com/thebook.html>.

I also stylize racial anti-Jewish prejudice and hatred as *antisemitism*, not *anti-Semitism*. Despite Houston Stewart Chamberlain's best efforts, 'Semitism' has only ever existed in the minds of antisemites. (It is somewhat ironic that German, the original language of the term – *Antisemitismus* – gets it right.)⁴⁰ Instead of inadvertently reifying the concept into existence, even in a critical analysis and condemnation of it, I avoid it altogether. From a problematic construction to a problematic term, I also tend to eschew *assimilation*, for reasons discussed in chapter 1. In less weighty matters, I use the phrase "Italy's Jews" to refer to all Jews living in Italy, be they Italian, foreign, or stateless, because similarities obtained across legal statuses.⁴¹ Lastly, *Community* with a capital 'C' refers to the official Jewish organization. Each municipality in Italy with a sizable Jewish population formed a Community, all of which were federated into the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (*Unione della comunità israelitiche italiane*) in 1930. Elsewhere, I use lower-case *community* interchangeably with *population*.

⁴⁰ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Lees (London and New York: John Lane, 1912). For a discussion of why 'anti-Semitism' is an inadequate construction, see Peter Hayes, *Why? Explaining the Holocaust* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017), ch. 1. Chamberlain's contemporary, Wilhelm Marr, is credited with popularizing the term '*Antisemitismus*'; see *The Victory of Judaism over Germandom* (1879), http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1797.

⁴¹ I acknowledge and regret that I end up calling some people "Jews" who never identified as such, but other more accurate phrasings, such as "persons of Jewish ancestry" or "racially defined Jews", read too clumsily.

Chapter I

A Jewish *Belle Époque*? Acceptance and Antisemitism from the Risorgimento to the Racial Laws

In Italy ... until the Racial Laws ... there was no antisemitism.

Agata (“Goti”) Herskovits Bauer, 1993

Introduction

In 1929, at age five, Goti Herskovits moved with her family from Czechoslovakia to Fiume.⁴²

Perhaps because of the Depression, her father, Luigi, a trader (*commerciante*) by profession, had been put out of work in their Berehove hometown (in today’s Ukraine), but a job prospect brought him and his family to the historic, hotly disputed city by the Adriatic Sea. Barely a decade had passed since the soldier-poet Gabriele D’Annunzio occupied the famous Habsburg port with his Legionaries – forecasting Fascism in the process – before the Italian military booted them out in late 1920. Following a brief moment of independence, the Kingdoms of Italy and Yugoslavia agreed to divide the Free State of Fiume between themselves in 1924, with Italy annexing the Province of Fiume and Yugoslavia taking the town of Sušak. The Herskovits family settled on the Italian side, and in Italy, Goti insists, there was no antisemitism.⁴³

Luigi’s gamble paid off in more ways than one. Despite the economic woes of the time, Goti says that her family was “well-off” (*benestante*) in their new home on the shores of the Carnaro Gulf.⁴⁴ Culturally, their new homeland was more welcoming than the one they had left behind. Czechoslovakia itself might have lacked the anti-Jewish traditions of its neighbors, but Goti says that

⁴² “[I]n Italia ... [f]ino ad allora [le legge razziali] ... [n]on c’era antisemitismo”; Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, p. 3, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

⁴³ Agata “Goti” Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>. Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 25 febbraio 1987, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000211/goti-herskovits-bauer.html>. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

central Europe's Jews felt themselves surrounded by enmity, hemmed in on all sides by hostile populations. In Italy, by contrast, the Herskovitses were happy to discover that they could practice their religion freely and openly, and Goti's family was devout – “not 100% orthodox, but religious” – celebrating all of Judaism's Holy Days and observing the Judaic laws of daily conduct.⁴⁵ In so doing, they matched the local Jewish demographic. While Italian Jews, as a whole, had been trending toward assimilation since the nineteenth century, Goti recalls Fiume, with its large community of foreigners, boasting a sizable population of observant Jews. Fitting right in, the Herskovitses actively participated in the local Jewish Community.⁴⁶ This spirit of acceptance carried over into state-run institutions. Although the public-school system would one day be the state's first battleground against the Jews, before the Racial Laws came into effect, Goti maintains that her school was an antisemitism-free zone. She was “absolutely accepted” at school, “well-liked by classmates and by teachers,” even by her rigidly Fascist literature instructor.⁴⁷ Over her many witness documents, consisting of oral interviews, written testimonies, and even a chapter in an edited volume, Goti never deviates from her premise; antisemitism may have been a European-wide plague, stretching from Portugal to the Urals and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, but Italy and its people were immune.

A closer examination of her testimony, however, reveals the fissures within her seemingly unimpeachable account. Goti admits that her new borderland hometown was the antisemitic

⁴⁵ “*non proprio ortodossa al 100% ma religiosa*”; Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 4 marzo 1992, Lato B, pp. 8-9, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. See also: Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁴⁶ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 3-4, and Lato B, p. 23, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. The Jewish census of August 1938 recorded 1,782 Jews living in Fiume, Italy's ninth-highest total. Certainly, many foreign Jews had arrived from Germany and Austria by then, fleeing Nazi oppression, though the number was in constant flux due to Fiume's role as a departure port for Jews migrating to Palestine. During the Nazi occupation of Fiume, 225 of these Jews would be deported. For comparison, nearby Trieste counted 6,085 Jews in 1938, third-highest in Italy, 554 of whom were deported; Cinzia Villani, “The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945: Operationszone Alpenvorland and Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 247-248.

⁴⁷ “*assolutamente accettata, ben voluta dai compagni e dagli insegnanti*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 3-4.

exception to the rule of tolerance in Italy, although she characterizes it as a foreign and a fringe phenomenon. An Austro-Hungarian cultural heritage, she says, blended with a particularly zealous local Fascist movement to produce an environment rife with anti-Jewish sentiment in Fiume.⁴⁸ It didn't help matters that nationalist passions ran strong in the divided City that Flows, putting the Jewish minority, a group always vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty, in the middle of a struggle playing out between ethnic Italians and Yugoslavians. Time and war would only deepen this row. (Not that Fiume's Jews were mere onlookers. Revealing a bit of her own atavistic irredentism, in a 1995 interview, Goti expresses her disappointment that Fiume had been lost to Yugoslavia and then Croatia, its name changing to 'Rijeka' in the process.)⁴⁹ And Goti's school failed to provide sanctuary, after all. In one sitting, upon further probing by the interviewer, she reveals that she and other Jewish students did occasionally have to deal with verbal microaggressions, things that "we got used to and that didn't offend us that much."⁵⁰ What this suggests is not that antisemitism was absent in her school, but that she and other Jewish pupils had grown accustomed to it and even normalized it.

* * *

Though a newcomer to the peninsula, Goti's situation is indicative of Italy's Jews as a whole in the seventy years that passed between Italian unification and the Racial Laws. In late 1938, despite ominous events taking place elsewhere in Europe, the Jews of Italy had little reason to believe that their own lives were about to be upended. Ever since the Risorgimento, Italy's Jews had embraced acceptance and integration into a state that freed them from the ghetto and then welcomed them with open arms. Enjoying the full fruits of citizenship, including equal rights with their Gentile peers

⁴⁸ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁹ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. Both words, 'fiume' (Italian) and 'rijeka' (Croatian), translate to 'river' in English.

⁵⁰ "*ci eravamo abituati e più di tanto non ci offendeva*"; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, p. 4.

and the same opportunities for social mobility and economic advancement, Jews entered seamlessly into Italy's burgeoning middle class, playing key roles in the state's economic modernization in the later nineteenth century. Led by the Milanese community, Italy's wealthiest and most integrated, Jews especially thrived in the fields of finance and commerce, prospering alongside and along with the fledgling nation-state.⁵¹ As religious observance became an increasingly private affair, often confined to the walls of the home, Jews' outward mores took on the hegemonic Catholicism and *italianità* (Italianness) of the cultural mainstream. Long fluent in Italian and dialect, their architectural preferences, low religious attendance, and sky-high intermarriage rates – the highest in Europe – further solidified their integration.⁵² With the political field opened to them, Jews ascended to the peaks of local, regional, and national government. From 1905 until 1911, three politicians who either identified as Jewish or were of Jewish ancestry served as Prime Minister. (They would have all served consecutively had one of Giovanni Giolitti's five terms as premier not interrupted their streak.) And when the king called them to arms, as he did during the Great War, Jews answered willingly and proudly, as they had done before alongside the armies of unification. If 'assimilation' is too strong a word to describe Italy's Jews, as Shira Klein has persuasively argued, then Italy's Jews at the very least displayed a pronounced acculturation.⁵³

That the Herkovitses were a family of immigrants, living in a turbulent part of the country, in the midst of a disastrous global depression, only strengthens the argument. Goti herself, well-versed on the events of her life, has summarized the status of Italy's Jews quite nicely. Before the

⁵¹ Certainly, there were different levels of acculturation among Italy's many and varied Jewish communities. For as integrated as Milan's Jews were, Rome's Jewish community, by contrast, maintained high levels of religious observance and continued to live in the same general impoverishment after unification as they had under the pope. While these two communities represent the polar extremes between assimilation and its rejection, the general trend among Italy's Jews after unification had been toward integration.

⁵² Franklin Hugh Adler, "Why Mussolini turned on the Jews," *Patterns of Prejudice* 39:3 (2005), 290-291.

⁵³ Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Shira Klein, "Challenging the Myth of Italian Jews Assimilation," *Modern Judaism* 37:1 (February 2017): 76-107. Klein's arguments are assessed below.

Racial Laws, she writes, “Italian Jews had lived perfectly integrated into society, participating in all aspects of national life”:

Among them there were decorated patriots from various wars, Garibaldian volunteers in the Expedition of the Thousand, illustrious personalities who, in various fields of activity, from politics to science and the arts, had distinguished themselves by their commitment and loyalty. There was no antisemitism; after all, the Jews comprised forty thousand people in a country of forty million: 1 in 1,000, a tiny minority that differed from other Italians only in religious belief.⁵⁴

In the wake of unification, the Risorgimento champion and Piedmontese statesman, Massimo d’Azeglio, famously quipped, “We have made Italy; now we need to make Italians.” Some of the most willing participants in this Herculean task (Sisyphean struggle?) could be found in a tiny minority group that had been inhabiting the peninsula since before the time of Christ.

Nor did the rise of Fascism disrupt this process. Believing their nation to be in mortal distress, unraveling amidst pyrrhic victory, economic crisis, and social conflict – with the specter of Bolshevism ever-looming – many Jewish nationalists donned black shirts from the very beginning, seeing their own values reflected in those of Benito Mussolini’s radical upstart movement. In 1938, roughly 10,000 Jews, in a population of 47,000, were members of the National Fascist Party.

With antisemitism pushed to the farthest fringes of Italian politics, culture, and society, it would have been easy enough for Jews and other Italians to disregard any signs of future trouble, if they even registered at all. Some antisemitic agitation had been brewing on the margins of Italian nationalism since, perhaps, the early twentieth century, but while we can’t read into people’s hearts, the number of Jewish nationalists probably remained much greater, well into the Fascist era. And while the Catholic Church, that most vociferous of Italian antisemites, had launched an anti-Jewish

⁵⁴ “Fino ad allora [le legge razziali] gli ebrei italiani avevano vissuto perfettamente integrati nella società partecipando ad ogni evento della vita nazionale. C’erano stati tra loro patrioti decorati nelle varie guerre, garibaldini nella spedizione dei mille, illustri personaggi che nei più vari campi di attività, dalla politica alle scienze ed alle arti, si erano distinti per impegno e fedeltà. Non c’era antisemitismo: del resto gli ebrei erano appena appena 40.000 su 40.000.000 di abitanti: 1 su 1.000, un’esigua minoranza che di diverso aveva solo il suo credo religioso”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Gofy Bauer*, p. 3.

crusade in the wake of emancipation, the papacy was confined to its Vatican prison, and its efforts died down after the turn of the century anyway. Not even the biological racism that marched beside the Italian army into Africa gave the Jews pause. Much to the contrary, as a body, they threw their weight and their resources behind Fascism's imperial enterprise in Ethiopia, no matter how grisly the methods taken to achieve that goal.

Nevertheless, under Fascism, enough cultural kindling was present to spark a mass antisemitic movement. Already vehemently nationalist and resolutely intolerant of "outsiders", by the later 1930s, Italian Fascism had become more race-conscious and, thus, racist. On the heels of an imperial conquest that, at long last, had achieved Mussolini's elusive consensus (*consenso*), the totalitarian dictator, hoping to catch lightning in a bottle twice, turned to antisemitism and against the Jews. Though Mussolini's antisemitism is often downplayed, overlooked, or denied – the product of real but obfuscating contrasts with Adolf Hitler – the Duce played a commanding role in orchestrating Fascism's own antisemitic campaign.

This chapter, a chapter in two parts, explores both sides of this story. Part one, a story of acceptance, provides a historical overview of the Jews in Italy from the pre-Risorgimento period until the Racial Laws, analyzing the question of 'assimilation' therein, before taking a detailed look at the Jews of Milan, demonstrating the exceptional degree to which they integrated into their environs. Part two, an account of religious and racial hatred, outlines the Italian histories of Catholic anti-Judaism, biological racism, and Fascist race consciousness, posing that the antisemitic Racial Laws emerged at the nexus of all three. In 1937, with state backing, this poisonous potpourri bubbled over into a pandemic of antisemitic propaganda. Serving to prime the general population for the legislation to follow, the ground was thus prepared for the Jewish census of August 1938, the Fascist state's opening salvo against its Jewish population.

The Jews of Italy

During the Risorgimento, the Italian struggle to create a modern, unified state overlapped and intersected with the fight for Jewish emancipation. The two were, as Alexander Stille writes, “exactly contemporaneous”, with Mario Toscano adding that the movement for national emancipation “could hardly neglect the issue of Jewish equality if it truly claimed to support liberty.”⁵⁵ So closely were the two goals linked, in fact, that Jewish emancipation became a metaphor for Italian emancipation and the unification project.⁵⁶ By the 1830s, proponents of liberalism and democracy had begun pressing for full Jewish emancipation, a campaign marked by the publication in 1837 of Carlo Cattaneo’s *Jewish’ Prohibitions (Interdizioni ‘israelitiche)*. A scathing condemnation of traditional Catholic and Italian anti-Judaism, the Milanese philosopher’s treatise gave the drive for Jewish liberation an added jolt. From that point forward, conservative Catholics and other anti-Jewish reactionaries proved unable to stem the emancipatory tide, try as they might.⁵⁷

In 1848, a “springtime for Italian Jews”, the first levee broke, as Jews living in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia enjoyed a cascade of emancipatory legislation.⁵⁸ On March 4 of that year, the Albertine Statute (*Statuto Albertino*), named for King Carlo Alberto of Savoy, established equality of citizens irrespective of faith, and on the 29th, a royal decree extended civil rights explicitly to Jews. Less than three months later, on June 19, the Jews of Piedmont-Sardinia were granted full political rights, and when the Savoy dynasty led the unificatory march (with Giuseppe Garibaldi’s “help”)

⁵⁵ Alexander Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews: Acceptance and Assimilation,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 25. Mario Toscano, “Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 39.

⁵⁶ Giuseppe Verdi, for instance, made this comparison in 1842; Gad Lerner, preface to *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni*, by Rony Hamaui (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 10. Sometimes, the link between Jewish emancipation and national unification was even more direct, as in the case of Enrico Guastalla, who was a Mazzinian republican, a redshirt in Garibaldi’s army, a fervent patriot, a banker, a politician, and a devout Jew; Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 22-23.

⁵⁷ The full title of Cattaneo’s work is *Ricerche economiche sulle interdizioni imposte dalla legge civile agli israeliti* (Economic investigations on the prohibitions imposed by civil laws on the Jews); Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), ch. 1. See also: Toscano, “Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938,” 39.

⁵⁸ Toscano, *ibid.*, 40.

from the late 1850s until 1870, they extended these rights to Jews living throughout the peninsula and on the islands.⁵⁹ “[T]he processes of national unity and freedom,” Stille writes, “were synonymous: wherever the Piedmontese armies conquered, they extended full equality to the Jews.”⁶⁰ Longing to return the favor and demonstrate their loyalty to the emergent nation-state, many Jews enlisted in Piedmont’s armies and Garibaldi’s Thousand, playing active roles in the creation of Italy.

Building off the Risorgimento experience, in which the Italian Jew had factored as symbol and soldier, the nascent Italian state and its patriotic Jewish minority continued to profit from their partnership after unification had been achieved. Benefiting from the Kingdom of Italy’s liberal political culture, Jews swiftly integrated into Italian society, culture, and politics. As Stille observes, after unification, “Italy moved rapidly into an era of liberal tolerance that has almost no equal in that age,” with Fabio Levi concluding that “Without a doubt, we could go so far as to say that Italy was one of the countries in nineteenth-century Europe with the fewest difficulties in minority-majority relations.”⁶¹ So extraordinary was the emancipation and integration of Italian Jews that one expert, Toscano, has dubbed it the “Italian model” (*modello italiano*).⁶²

One factor aiding the integration of Jews into Italian society was demographics: they were numerically insignificant, never amounting to more than 0.1 percent of the total population. Probably even more important, they hardly stood out in a country that was already so culturally variegated, while in addition to the Italian language, they spoke dialect, not a foreign language like Yiddish, Ladino, or Hebrew.⁶³ An almost total absence of eastern European Jews in Italy, a group

⁵⁹ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

⁶⁰ Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 24.

⁶¹ Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews,” 25. Fabio Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 199.

⁶² Toscano quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1. See also: Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 68-69.

⁶³ Of the 18 million people residing in the Italian territories in 1800, only 34,000 were Jews: that is, 0.1 percent, an amount they’ve never eclipsed; Toscano, “Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938,” 35. See also: Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 67; and Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews,” 25.

who often drew the ire even of their western counterparts, also kept antisemitism at bay.⁶⁴ For their part, Italy's Jews embraced what their new state had to offer. Weighted in a tradition of cultural openness that not even ghetto walls could obstruct, a trait quite unusual for a European Jewish community, Italy's Jews carried out an integrationist programme during the Risorgimento that persisted into the post-emancipation era.⁶⁵ As Toscano explains, this project involved replacing "their aspiration to a mythical homeland set sometime in the future with the concrete reality of a European homeland". The way most Italian Jews saw things, then, was that they were already living in a state that had guaranteed their freedom; there was no need to found another. Why continue looking forward to "next year in Jerusalem" when Jews could live safely and securely, in the here and now, in Italy? The implications of this decision were significant. Judaism, now limited to its "strictly religious dimension," became a private matter mostly "confined to the home."⁶⁶ Outwardly, in the tradition of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, Italy's Jews would be more Italian than Jewish. And political Zionism had to wait until after World War II and the Shoah to find fertile soil on the Italian peninsula.

As Jews poured out of the ghettos and into the cities of the north, they found their home among Italy's blossoming bourgeoisie. Pairing constitutional guarantees of equal opportunity with a ninety-five percent literacy rate (at a time when most Italians were illiterate), Italy's Jewish population thrived in the economic sectors that drove Italian modernization, especially the financial and commercial industries.⁶⁷ In politics, too, the integration of Italy's Jews was swift and pronounced, including at the highest levels of government. Less than forty years after unification

⁶⁴ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 16.

⁶⁵ We might think, for instance, of a passage in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, when our narrator recalls with pride the early-seventeenth-century poet, Sarah Enriquez Avigdör, who hosted many great men of letters, Italian and otherwise, in her salon in Venice's Old Ghetto (*Ghetto Vecchio*); see Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, trans. Isabel Quigly (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 149-150.

⁶⁶ Toscano, "Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938," 38, 41, 44. See also: Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 68-69; and Stille, "The Double Bind of Italian Jews," 25.

⁶⁷ Stille, *ibid.*

was complete, Alessandro Fortis, a lawyer of Jewish origins and veteran of Garibaldi's Thousand, was appointed Prime Minister, serving in that capacity from 1905 to 1906. His immediate successor, Sidney Sonnino (r. 1906, 1909-1910), though Anglican by faith, had been born to a Jewish father. Following Sonnino's second term, Luigi Luzzatti, the noted Italian banker, headed the national government from 1910 to 1911. At the municipal level, Ernesto Nathan, born in London to Italian and German parents, was elected mayor of Rome in 1907, holding the position until 1913. And while France was mixed up in the Dreyfus affair, a Jewish military general, Giuseppe Ottolenghi, was directing Italy's war ministry – and moonlighting as a tutor for the royal family.⁶⁸ A notable consequence of the pact between new state and new citizens was that unlike in other parts of emancipated Europe, political antisemitism had no base in liberal Italy, being neither present nor viable among the ruling classes.⁶⁹ The antisemitic ravings of a Karl Lueger or the public strip-down and humiliation of a General Dreyfus, to say nothing of the murderous pogroms in tsarist Russia, would have been unthinkable in the *bel paese*.

The history of Zionism in Italy, at least before 1945, further reinforces the Jewish population's commitment to the state that had liberated them. Although a Zionist movement did arise in Italy, it struggled to find adherents, given that most Jews fully devoted themselves to the Italian nation-state and the House of Savoy. When *The Jewish State* was published in 1896, it made few waves south of the Alps, with Italy's leading Jewish newspaper, *Vessillo israelitico* (Jewish Standard), dismissing Theodor Herzl as a "fanatic".⁷⁰ Zionism's already thin ranks diminished even further when loyalty to nation and state was put to the test, such as during the Libyan and Great

⁶⁸ Stille, *ibid.* Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

⁶⁹ Collotti, *ibid.* Toscano, "Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938," 41. The exception, of course, could be found among the traditional, conservative Catholic milieu, whose long tradition of anti-Judaism and more recent political hostilities pitted the Vatican against liberal Italy and everything it represented, including Jewish emancipation (discussed below).

⁷⁰ "fanatico"; *Vessillo israelitico* quoted in Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 123. See also pp. 118-119; and Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

Wars and the Fascist era.⁷¹ That said, it would be wrong to conclude that Zionism had no impact on Italian Judaism and Jewry, for although its political aspirations were muted, its philanthropical impact was considerable. Along with bringing the heady ideas circulating among eastern European Jews into the orbit of Italian Judaism, Italian Zionists saw it as their duty to remain committed to the international community, especially those who were being persecuted in tsarist Russia and, later, the Third Reich. Indicative of Zionism's subaltern popularity among Italian Jews, *Israel*, a weekly newspaper launched by Dante Lattes and Adolfo Pacifici in 1916, remained one of Italy's most authoritative publications not just on Zionism, but on Italian Judaism, until it was suppressed in 1938.⁷²

Historian Shira Klein has recently put forth a serious reconsideration of Italian Jewish assimilation. Though this prominent interpretation is shared by the likes of Stille, Toscano, and Liliana Picciotto, Klein proclaims that assimilation is a “myth”. With compelling arguments and evidence aplenty, she contends that by allowing Jews to live as Jews, the Italian government ingratiated itself with its Jewish minority, thereby fostering in them a fervent devotion to Italy that overcame even the state's gravest transgressions.⁷³ Italian Jewish memoirists, says Klein, may have a tendency to belittle Jewish culture and deny their own Jewish upbringing or inheritance, but as her study and, to a lesser degree, my own show, “statements about leading non-Jewish lives more often than not give way to descriptions of a lively Jewish culture.”⁷⁴ Rather than forsaking Judaism, Italy's Jews continued to officially subscribe to Orthodoxy while practicing an eclectic form of their religion that borrowed liberally from Italian and Roman-Catholic influences. Instead of simply

⁷¹ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 124-126.

⁷² Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1. For a related discussion, see Toscano, “Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938,” 44-46.

⁷³ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 8, 11, 63. See, especially, ch. 2, “A Thriving Jewish Life: Jewish Culture in the Kingdom of Italy” (pp. 57-84), which is an expanded version of the article, “Challenging the Myth of Italian Jewish Assimilation.”

⁷⁴ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 82, 84.

imitating Catholicism, Klein argues, Italian rabbis adopted from the majority religion to reenergize their own faith and practice. Synagogue interiors began to feature choirs singing along with organs, and rabbis, dressed in priestly garb, delivered their sermons from elevated pulpits. Deceased Jews continued to be buried apart from the dearly departed of other religions, and while their tombstones took on the splendor, size, and magnificence of non-Jewish Italians, with mausoleums coming into vogue, their ornamentation blended winged cherubs and bronze wreaths with Stars of David, the Menorah, and the Tables of the Covenant, while inscribed Hebrew Bible verses remained customary.⁷⁵

Inside the home, religious observance mimicked the eclecticism of communal, congregational practice. Displaying a devotion to both Judaism and *italianità*, dietary habits took on a syncretism that blended Jewish law with Italian custom, such as by avoiding most pork products but making an exception for prosciutto. Although interfaith marriages were exceptionally high, approaching fifty percent in the 1930s before the state outlawed them, most ceremonies took place in a courthouse, not a church, and conversion rates were exceedingly low. Rome, for instance, Italy's largest Jewish community, counted fewer than two conversions per year from 1867 to 1934.⁷⁶ (One notes, however, that the Roman community was more devout than most.) As Klein observes, Italian Jews "picked and chose the customs that they wanted to maintain":

They were convinced that through these traditions, however partial, they were carrying on the essence of their ancestors' faith ... In these countless little rules, self-imposed and often self-invented, Italian Jews showed their respect for the Sabbath, in ways often unseen by anyone outside the family.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, some Judaic practices changed little, if at all. Circumcision continued to be the norm for Jewish males, with Mantua's community in 1908, for instance, counting only eighteen

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 73-75, 78-79.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 66-67, 77-78.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

uncircumcised members in a population numbering 1,100. In the rare cases when the rite was not performed, the reason was typically medical, not religious. Also, while given names Italianized, surnames remained Jewish, regardless of a family's level of observance. By 1925, one in every six Italian Jewish families shared a last name, a name which often either revealed their ancestral origins, like 'Romano' or 'Polacco', or connoted something meaningful to Judaism or Jewish culture. The surname 'Sacerdote', for instance, is Italian for 'C/Kohen' and translates to 'priest' (think Temple, not church).⁷⁸ Though unmentioned in her book, probably the most common last name among Italian Jews is none other than Levi, which indicates patrilineage from the eponymous Tribe.

In addition to Klein's contention, which is that 'assimilation' does not properly characterize Italian Jews, there is another reason to eschew the term. Taking a panoramic view of Jewish history on the European continent, 'assimilation' reveals itself as a loaded word conjuring negative connotations. In the modern era, emerging from the Enlightenment, the Jewish Question first took the form of, "Can the Jews assimilate, or be assimilated – and thus be made useful to the state," and this was a question asked from emancipatory France in the west to ultra-conservative Russia in the east. In France, which led the way in liberating Europe's Jews, the state compelled Jews to dissolve their traditional, semi-autonomous corporate-communal lifestyle – the source of their 'clannish' behavior, in the words of antisemites and abolitionists alike – in exchange for equal rights.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 75-76, 79-80.

⁷⁹ Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). "Admission of Jews to Rights of Citizenship," *French National Assembly*, September 27, 1791, <https://revolution.chnm.org/items/show/563>. Voltaire, for instance, was a passionate supporter of Jewish emancipation during the Enlightenment, correctly seeing the Jews' downtrodden status as the consequence of centuries of Christian oppression. Putting it in a way no other writer could, he said, "When I see Christians cursing Jews, methinks I see children beating their fathers." Yet it was the same Voltaire who saw Judaism as superstitious and obscure, and Jews as ignorant, clannish, fanatical, and barbaric, depicting them as "the most abominable people on earth". In response to his own question, "Why are the Jews hated?", he looked this time not to Christians but to Jews themselves for the answer, contending that "It is the inevitable result of their laws; they either have to conquer everybody or be hated by the whole human race". Adopting the Augustine mantra, however, he concluded by saying, "Still, it is not necessary to burn them." According to the Enlightenment's most influential figure, in order for Jews to be accepted into European society, they would need to unloose themselves from the chains of Judaism and tradition; see Richard Levy, ed., *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*. Vol.2 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2005), 746-748; Lloyd P Gartner, *History of the Jews in Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2001, 85-87; and Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, 18.

Russia, where Tsar Nicholas I forced the issue by abolishing communal autonomy in 1844 (although communal life went on in an unofficial way), Jews were either forced or encouraged to Russify, depending on the policies and disposition of the tsar in power. While Russification brought with it certain privileges, such as economic and educational opportunities, emancipation only came to Russia's Jews with the abolition of the tsarist autocracy in 1917.⁸⁰ Indeed, Italy might stand alone in not demanding assimilation of its Jews in exchange for citizenship and full, equal rights.

If, in the present study, I occasionally employ the term – accepting its problematic connotations – it is for three main reasons. First, the survivors at the center of the study remember and portray themselves as such, even in the face of their own conflicting evidence. Many survivors herein do not recall *feeling* very Jewish, even when their families were observant. Second, Italy's Jewish population integrated into mainstream culture and society more fully and seamlessly than their coreligionists elsewhere in Europe. They might have shunned conversion, but they still took non-Jewish spouses at an unusually high rate, and attendance at religious services was so low that concerned rabbis felt compelled to reprimand their truant congregations. Reformed practices and Catholicized synagogues, it turned out, proved unable to get the average Italian Jew into a temple more than two or three times a year.⁸¹ Third, if assimilation is a two-way street, requiring the hegemonic majority to be receptive to the aspirations of the minority group in question, then this relationship obtained in unified Italy, even if certain Jewish practices, such as sepulchral rites and circumcision, fell shy of true assimilation. If Italy's Jews had not assimilated, *per se*, they were still the most integrated Jewish population in Europe.⁸²

⁸⁰ Gartner, *Ibid.*, 167-185. Levy, ed., *ibid.*, 629-632. Nicholas I's son and successor, Alexander II, promoted voluntary assimilation ("Russification"), shying away from his father's heavy hand; see Gartner, *ibid.*, 185-190; and Levy, *ibid.*, 629-632.

⁸¹ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 71-72.

⁸² Alternatively, if we understand 'assimilation' as a spectrum and not a fixed entity, then we can say that Italy's Jews were, probably, the *most* assimilated in Europe.

When Italy entered the First World War in 1915, the country's tiny Jewish minority, brimming with outsized patriotism, rushed to the battlefield. According to Toscano, Italy's Jews welcomed the conflict because it offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cement their commitment to the Italian nation-state and to complete their integration into Italian society. "Participation in World War I," he writes, "was thus experienced as a moment in the process of Italianization, sealed by the blood shed on the field of battle."⁸³ Over fifty Jewish generals served in the Italian army over the course of the war, and by the time the guns fell silent, 261 Jews had made the ultimate sacrifice. According to one count, two Jewish soldiers received Italy's highest military honor, the Gold Medal, 207 Jewish soldiers were awarded Silver Medals, 238 earned Bronze, and twenty-eight were honored with "solemn commendations" (*encomi solenni*). One of the Gold-Medal recipients, Roberto Sarfatti, was the son of Margherita, patron of the *Novecento* art movement and companion of *il Duce*. All told, Stille notes that over one thousand Jews received medals of valor for their contributions to Italy's war effort.⁸⁴

The same author, however, cautions against interpreting the Jews' embrace of the Great War as a sign of confidence in their national and social inclusion (an argument suggested by Toscano's wording). He argues instead that their enthusiasm betrays an undertone of anxiety present throughout Italy's Jewish population, indicating that this demographic could not take assimilation for granted. "By signing up in record numbers for the war," he writes, "the Jews acted like citizens on probation":

Rather than see themselves as having the same rights and duties as everyone else, they felt a special obligation to show their gratitude, to prove their patriotism, to be more Italian than other Italians. Their overemphatic expressions of *italianità*, Italianness, reveal a trace of insecurity, an unspoken fear that if they fell short in their national duties, the gates of the ghetto might again swing shut on them.⁸⁵

⁸³ Toscano, "Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938," 46. See also: Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 117.

⁸⁴ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 118. Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 30.

⁸⁵ Stille, *ibid.*

Stille may be right; overeager displays of patriotism, and even jingoism, are not uncommon among minority groups who feel they have something to prove to the hegemonic national community. But the key word in his passage is ‘unspoken’. Although these fears very well could have been present, the historical record does not cough up examples. In word and in deed, Italy’s Jews presented themselves as Italian.

When Fascism emerged from the ashes of war, Italy’s Jews joined its ranks from the start. After all, Italy’s Jews were ardent nationalists, and what was fascism if not (palingenetic) ultra-nationalism?⁸⁶ Moreover, the Fascists’ actions, if not always their words, displayed a sympathy toward the middle class, which suggested to Italy’s Jews that their interests and livelihoods would continue to be protected. As Klein notes, given their overwhelmingly middle-class composition, Italy’s Jews joined their Gentile peers in the belief that Fascism would protect their rights, their status, and their wealth and property from the threat of socialism, a threat that became palpable during the Red Biennium (*biennio rosso*) of 1919-1920.⁸⁷ If Klein is right that Italian Jews did not abandon Judaism *en masse*, then it might also stand to reason that Jews gravitated toward Fascism because Mussolini’s movement defended against Bolshevism and its militant atheism. For reasons such as these, most Italian Jews supported Fascism during the interwar years, and until 1938, it looked like a good collective decision.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ In *The Nature of Fascism*, first published in 1991, Roger Griffin introduced one of the most familiar and simplified definitions of ‘fascism’, presenting it as a political ideology whose mythic core consists of “palingenetic ultra-nationalism”. Granted, fascism was built upon the “raw materials” of “militarism, racism, charismatic leadership, populist nationalism, fears that the nation or civilization was being undermined by the forces of decadence, deep anxiety about the modern age and longings for a new era to begin,” ingredients that were brought to the surface by the pressures induced by World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, but Griffin’s definition pinpointed ‘palingenetic ultra-nationalism’ as the primary element required, the “fascist minimum” or fascist’s “lowest common denominator”; see Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), viii, 12, 26, 38.

⁸⁷ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 2, 14.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

When the Fascists marched on Rome in October 1922, over 230 Jews joined the ranks of the Blackshirts, and when Mussolini created his first cabinet as Prime Minister, Aldo Finzi, who had been elected to Parliament as a Fascist in 1921, served as his Undersecretary of the Interior. He would later be appointed to the Fascist Grand Council.⁸⁹ In *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, the narrator states that by 1933, “ninety percent” of Italians had enrolled in the National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF), a number reflected in Ferrara’s Jewish Community. Probably an exaggeration, Sarfatti nevertheless has noted an appreciable surge in Jewish Party membership dating from that year, which, he surmised, resulted from three distinct factors: (i) testaments of loyalty to the regime were required for public employment and administrative positions from that year onward; (ii) publicly, Mussolini was distancing himself from Hitler’s open antisemitism; and (iii) many Jews had come to enjoy the stability provided by the Fascists’ juridico-legal framework, and some, especially those involved in Community administrations (which had been linked to the state two years prior), developed a sense of pride for their active participation in the regime’s totalitarian project.⁹⁰ By 1938, when the Racial Laws expelled them from the Party, Stille notes that over 10,000 Jews – that is, one-third of the adult Jewish population – were card-carrying members of the PNF.⁹¹

For Italy’s Jews, the transition from liberalism to Fascism had been seamless. Any changes or disruptions in their lives, such as the loss of civil and political liberties, were shared by the general population, and on the eve of the Racial Laws in 1938, their status and circumstances were strikingly similar to what they had been twenty years prior. Occupational indices show that their socioeconomic status stayed solidly middle class, with their preferred occupations holding steady.

⁸⁹ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 133. Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews,” 26. Benito Mussolini, *My Rise and Fall* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998), 194. Adler, “Why Mussolini turned on the Jews,” 292. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce. II, Lo Stato totalitario (1936-1940)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 247. During the Fosse Ardeatine massacre, carried out by the Nazis on March 24, 1944, Aldo Finzi was among the 335 victims killed.

⁹⁰ Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 66-67.

⁹¹ Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 16. Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 22.

Over forty-three percent of Jews were engaged in trade (against just over eight percent of the general population), almost six percent were involved in credit and insurance (against 0.6 percent), and twenty-two percent were industrialists (against twenty-nine percent). Nearly twelve percent held posts in public administration, a sector they would soon be barred from, while just under nine percent had liberal professions (against 0.6 percent). And conversely, while roughly half of the Italian population was engaged in agriculture, only 1.5 percent of Jews worked the land for a living.⁹² Geographically, they lived primarily in the urban areas of northern and central Italy, as they had before, with only a small number scattered throughout southern Italy and the countryside.⁹³ And culturally, they continued to take non-Jewish spouses with regularity. By the mid-1930s, nearly forty-four percent of Italy's Jews were marrying outside the faith, a number that routinely spiked over fifty percent in the big cities.⁹⁴

Their circumstances not deteriorating in any appreciable way, Jews remained loyal to the Italian state, Fascist form notwithstanding. Their organizations, especially Ettore Ovazza's *Bandiera* movement (named after his newspaper, *La Nostra Bandiera*) but also the official Jewish Communities, did their best to curb the Zionist strands within Italian Jewry, and Jews as a whole supported the Fascist regime even in its most objectionable pursuits, such as the conquest and colonization of Ethiopia.⁹⁵ In fact, Mussolini even came to a *modus vivendi* with the Zionists, albeit a tenuous one always on the verge of crumbling. Although Mussolini's opinion of Zionism, in accordance with his nationalist worldview, ranged from skepticism to hostility, all seem to agree that the Italian dictator

⁹² Joshua D. Zimmerman, introduction to *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 4. Zimmerman does not provide statistics for the general population's representation in public posts.

⁹³ *Ibid.* Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews': A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Arrests during the Holocaust in Italy," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 55.

⁹⁴ Zimmerman, introduction, 4. Trieste, where fifty-nine percent of Jews had interfaith marriages, represented the high end of this pattern.

⁹⁵ For an account of Ettore Ovazza, see Stille, "Fatherland, Faith and Family: the Ovazzas of Turin," in *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 17-89. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 96.

learned to live with the movement, at least for a time, and even tried turning it to his advantage. Giorgio Fabre, for instance, concludes that Mussolini was “hostile to Zionism in general, but was ready to come to terms with it.”⁹⁶ This was principally so because, as Enzo Collotti explains, Mussolini saw the Italian Jewish colonies in North Africa and the Middle East as valuable tools for furthering his expansionist designs on the Mediterranean, an interest that overlapped with Zionism and the Palestine question. If Mussolini could wrest the Zionists from their supposed affinity for Britain and bring them into the Italian fold, then he could frustrate Britain’s control over the Mediterranean world, eventually undoing it entirely. Uninterested in Zionism on its own account, the Fascists could at least use it to achieve their own ends.⁹⁷ As Klein shows, Italian Jews as a whole shared the Fascist regime’s visions of empire, and their imperial investment dated back even further, tracing to Italy’s invasion and annexation of Libya in 1911-1912. Many Italian Jews saw North Africa as a place to practice their own civilizing mission alongside that of the (then-liberal) state, seeking to rescue their African coreligionists from their presumed benightedness. Meeting them on this point, the Fascist regime appointed Aldo Lattes, of Livorno, as Libya’s Chief Rabbi in 1937.⁹⁸ They may have had other reasons, however, less civil in nature, for supporting Fascism’s African empire, for Klein writes that “Jews, no less than other Italians, condoned their country’s racism and brutality toward Africa.”⁹⁹

Meanwhile, as the Nazis upped their cruelty toward Germany’s Jewish population and, from March 1938 onward, subjected Austria’s Jews to like treatment, some 18,000 Jewish refugees found

⁹⁶ Giorgio Fabre, “Mussolini and the Jews on the Eve of the March on Rome,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 64-65. See also: Toscano, “Italian Jewish Identity from the Risorgimento to Fascism, 1848-1938,” 46-48.

⁹⁷ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1. See also: Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 55-56.

⁹⁸ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 68-69.

⁹⁹ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*. Jews could be fluent in intra-Italian racism as well, such as when one survivor, in an oral interview, refers to the man who may have denounced her as a “*terrone*”, a racial slur directed by northern Italians against their southern counterparts. Labeling someone a ‘*terrone*’ has since been deemed a punishable offense by the Italian state; see “Lo chiamavano ‘terrone’, sarà risarcito,” *Corriere della Sera*, 20 aprile 2005, https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2005/04_Aprile/19/terrone.shtml.

sanctuary south of the Alps, all telling tales of untold horror from life in Hitlerian Europe. While the majority of these refugees would continue onward to other destinations, such as Palestine (from Trieste) or the Americas (from Genoa), roughly twenty percent (3,600) chose to stay and make a living in Italy, a country that offered them work and spared them discrimination.¹⁰⁰

The Jews of Milan

If Italy's Jews form a community unto themselves, conducting their services in an Italian-inflected Hebrew (while speaking Italian and dialect in everyday conversation) and observing a variety of rites that betray Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and homegrown origins, then the Jews of Milan constitute their own community within Italy.¹⁰¹ Often referred to as a "*unicum*", Milan's Jewish community is, indeed, unique in some significant ways. While the history of most Italian Jewish communities rests on a continuous timeline, in some cases stretching back, unbroken, for millennia, the history of Milan's current community begins only in the modern era, dating to the Napoleonic period. Ascending and prospering alongside the Italian state, Milan's Jews integrated into Italian politics, society, and culture to an unusually high degree, even by Italian standards.¹⁰² In one key respect, however, Milan's Jewish community does reflect the national picture. Milan's Jews, like their coreligionists throughout the peninsula, eagerly shared in the gifts that emancipation and equality afforded them.

¹⁰⁰ Using statistics compiled by Klaus Voigt, Hamaui records that from 1933 to 1940, 18,000 Jewish refugees from central Europe passed through Italy; 8,000 were German, 5,000 were Austrian, and another 5,000 hailed from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other countries absorbed into the Third Reich; Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 158-159. For the original, and for a full account of Jewish refugees in Fascist Italy, see Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* (Florence: La Nuova Italia), 1993.

¹⁰¹ The argument is often made that Italian Jews are part of the Sephardic community, given the flowering of the Sephardic rite throughout the Italian peninsula following the expulsion of Jews from Spain and its territories (most having first settled in the Ottoman Empire). However, in addition to the fact that Italian Jews speak Italian, not Ladino, this argument disregards the many smaller groups on the peninsula that observe different rites, such as the northern Italian communities that arrived from France and the Holy Roman Empire, and Italy's oldest and largest community in Rome; see Alexander Beider, "Neither Ashkenazi Nor Sephardi, Italian Jews Are A Mystery," *Forward*, August 6, 2018, <https://forward.com/opinion/407472/neither-ashkenazi-nor-sephardi-italian-jews-are-a-mystery/>; and Leo Levi z'l, "Traditional Jewish Music and Italian-Jewish Liturgical Tradition," *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* XXIII:10 (October 1957), trans. Inga Pierson, <https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/the-italian-jewish-liturgical-traditions/>.

¹⁰² Lerner, preface, 9. Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 21.

Much of the Milanese community's distinct status stems from its unique history. Although Italy's Jewish population is among the oldest in Europe, Milan might very well have one of the youngest.¹⁰³ Whereas many Jewish communities in Italy can trace their roots, without interruption, to antiquity, the ancestry of Milan's current Jewish population dates back only a couple of centuries, to the early 1800s.¹⁰⁴ A notable side effect of this peculiar historical trajectory is that Milan, unlike other of Italy's major Jewish population centers (such as Rome, Venice, Turin, Florence, Bologna, and Ferrara), never featured a ghetto.¹⁰⁵ While it is true that Jewish settlements could be found in ancient Milan (*Mediolanum*), their numbers were never great, and in 1597, sixty years after the Duchy of Milan passed into Spanish hands, the Spanish Crown banished Jews from their new Italian possession.¹⁰⁶ It would be another two-hundred years before they returned, when, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, Napoleon Bonaparte extended (some of) the ideals of the French Revolution to the Italian peninsula. Sources are unclear, but it appears that Jews first began trickling back into Milan between 1801 and 1806, five to ten years after the Corsican captured the city and appointed it capital of his Cisalpine Republic.¹⁰⁷

In the wake of Waterloo and Napoleon's banishment from Europe, the Habsburg Empire reabsorbed Lombardy, and Austrian officials applied their Civil Code of 1811 to Milan. This law code guaranteed freedom of religion, but promises of civil equality were belied by the numerous constraints placed on non-Catholic populations: interfaith marriages were restricted, Jews were barred from public service, and the number of non-Catholic resident families was capped.¹⁰⁸ Yet it was during this period of Restoration, with private enterprise open to them, that a handful of Jews

¹⁰³ Stille, in fact, contends that Italy has *the* oldest Jewish population in Europe, living uninterrupted on the peninsula for two-thousand years; see Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Lerner, preface, 9-11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* The only other Italian city with a sizable Jewish population to never feature a ghetto is Livorno; see Beider, "Neither Ashkenazi Nor Sephardi, Italian Jews Are A Mystery."

¹⁰⁶ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 21, 38-39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 50. *Viaggio nella memoria. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2013), 18.

¹⁰⁸ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 46.

started to establish themselves in Milan's financial industry, foreshadowing the day when Milan would become Italy's undisputed economic capital.¹⁰⁹ True emancipation for the city's Jews, however, would have to wait until the Risorgimento and unification.

With the return to power of conservative regimes across Europe, Italy included, Jews quite literally returned to the ghettos. Although talk of re-emancipation remained a lively topic of public discourse on the peninsula – with the predictable exception of the Papal States, whose anti-Jewish position hardened over the nineteenth century – the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia was the only Italian state to actually do so. Savoyard monarch Carlo Alberto, more enlightened than his royal Italian peers, had surrounded himself with a forward-looking circle of advisors, and in 1848, Piedmont-Sardinia legislated re-emancipation into existence.¹¹⁰ Other rulers failed to follow their lead, so Jews living elsewhere had to wait on the Piedmontese army. Milan's Jews were emancipated eleven years later when Piedmont-Sardinia, with Napoleon III's help, annexed Lombardy in 1859.

For much of the early nineteenth century, Milan's Jewish community had remained small. Into the century's second decade, only about fifteen Jews were living in the city.¹¹¹ But by mid-century, the local community had risen to 500 active members, with a total number that was assuredly higher. At the time, most of Milan's Jews came from nearby Mantua, which remained the principal font of Milan's Jewish population until 1866, when an official Jewish Community was established in the city. Thereafter, Jews from Mantua were joined by others from across northern Italy (including Piedmont, Friuli, and the Veneto), from central Italy and the Po Valley, and from small cities in Austria and Germany.¹¹² With unification, the influx of Jews to Milan rose even more

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 53-57. For a historical account of the role of Jews in Milan's nineteenth-century economy, oft-cited by Hamaui, see Germano Maifreda, *Gli ebrei e l'economia milanese. L'Ottocento* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Camillo Benso di Cavour, for instance, was a noted advocate of Jewish emancipation, and Massimo d'Azeglio had written a lengthy treatise on the topic in 1847; see Massimo d'Azeglio, "Sull'emancipazione civile degli Israeliti" (Florence: Prezzo: una Lira italiana, 1848), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42669/42669-h/42669-h.htm>.

¹¹¹ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 50.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 52-53, 69-70.

considerably. By 1880, Milan's Jewish population counted 1,000 members, a number that grew to 4,500 by 1920. True, these totals paled in comparison with those of other major European cities, but within Italy, there was no Jewish population explosion quite like it. Of all Italian cities that had lacked a strong Jewish presence before unification, none received a higher influx of Jews than Milan, and at the turn of the century, only Rome's Jewish Community was larger. If we consider the period from 1840 to 1931, we see Milan's Jewish population jump from 222 members to 6,490, a thirty-fold increase. By then, the Lombard capital boasted Italy's second-largest Jewish population, behind only the Eternal City (whose population had tripled over that same period, from 3,811 to 12,326).¹¹³

Economic opportunity – and the comfortable lifestyle it afforded – was the propulsive factor that drove so many Jews to Milan. Following Lombardy's annexation to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, Milan's Jews grew and prospered with their city, thriving in some of its most lucrative fields.¹¹⁴ In the financial sector, Jews dominated the banking and brokerage industries. Luigi Luzzatti, the future prime minister, founded the *Banca Popolare di Milano* in 1865, and in the wake of the 1892-1893 economic crisis, a German Jew named Otto Joel established the *Banca Commerciale Italiana* in Milan in 1894. Underwritten by German, Swiss, and Austrian backers, the *Banca Commerciale* quickly became the largest and most influential bank in the country. Among its sponsors were the Bleichröders, a German Jewish family that had been central to the unification and consolidation of the Kaiserreich. Along with finance, Jews held leading roles in local commerce, trading in textiles, Milan's traditional economic base, as well as foodstuffs, jewelry, and precious metals. In Rony Hamaui's estimation, thanks to their “very high” (*molto alto*) levels of wealth and education, Jews in Milan's financial and commercial sectors were able to “outclass” (*surclassare*) not only their colleagues elsewhere in Italy, but also the country's older aristocrats and more recent industrialists. Outside the

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 69-71, 87. Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 70, 72.

fields of finance and commerce, Milan's Jews were actively engaged in local real estate, and many were employed in higher education and the liberal professions, law and medicine.¹¹⁵ Such occupations allowed Milanese Jews, as a whole, to settle comfortably into a *haute-bourgeois* standard of living, typical of the city's ruling elite.

Politically, despite being an upper-middle-class demographic, many of Milan's Jews played a key role in the development of Italian socialism, none more so than the Russian-born revolutionary, Anna Kuliscioff. Operating from Milan, the capital of Italy's feminist movement, it was Kuliscioff who introduced feminism to Italian socialism, contending that equal work should mean equal pay, championing the women's franchise, and campaigning for the rights of wives to seek divorce and of mothers to seek their children's fathers. While her politics and activism brought her into the company of other socialist luminaries, such as Filippo Turati and Andrea Costa, her feminist platform often drove a wedge between her and her male colleagues. Still, during her burial in Milan's Monumental Cemetery (*Cimitero Monumentale*) in 1925, it was Fascists, not socialists, who disrupted the ceremony, provoking a scuffle that left many on both sides bloody, bruised, and battered.¹¹⁶ In another violent (and bizarre) event, this one from 1915, following a series of scathing back-and-forth articles over the topic of Italian interventionism, Claudio Treves, a journalist and Socialist politician of Jewish background, challenged his former colleague, Benito Mussolini, to a duel. Although the practice was outlawed, Mussolini obliged, and the two erstwhile directors of *Avanti!* met in Milan's Bicocca district, an academic neighborhood, where they engaged in a vicious swordfight. The duel only ended when medics on hand insisted that they stop.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 70, 72-74, 78-87. After the 1892-1893 economic crash, it was German backing that resuscitated Italy's banking and financial sector. See also: Lerner, preface, 10, 13. For an account of Gerson Bleichröder's role in the creation of the German Empire, see Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹¹⁶ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 113-117. Klein, "Challenging the Myth of Italian Jewish Assimilation," 84.

¹¹⁷ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 119-122. Treves would flee Italy as a political refugee in 1926, traveling first to Switzerland before settling in France, where he died in 1933; see Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 12.

Although many Jewish activists in Milan espoused leftist, if not always enlightened, politics, they remained committed to the state that had granted their freedom and facilitated their prosperity. As a result, much like elsewhere in Italy, Zionism failed to find stable footing in Milan, at least before the events of Shoah came to light. Where Zionism did exist in the Lombard capital, it was moderate and philanthropical in nature, not radical and political, directing its energies toward aiding the oppressed Jews of eastern Europe and stanching the spread of Herzl's politico-religious ideology. In 1927, a group of bourgeois women formed the Jewish Women of Italy Association (*Associazione Donne Ebreo D'Italia*, ADEI) in Milan, which focused on strengthening Jewish culture in Italy and assisting Jewish communities at home, in Libya, and in Palestine. ADEI provided Jewish women in Milan with a societal function outside of the home and their traditional roles of procreation, motherhood, and childrearing, while at the same time keeping them firmly grounded in bourgeois gender conventions by limiting them to charity work.¹¹⁸

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, Milan's Jews also gravitated toward Fascism. Resolute patriots of middle-class stock, many Jews in Milan believed, correctly, that their values were compatible with those of Fascism, and some were even Fascists of the First Hour. When Mussolini launched the Fascist movement from Milan's Piazza San Sepolcro on March 23, 1919, five of the 119 Sansepolcristes in attendance were Jews, one of whom had procured the hall where the meeting took place.¹¹⁹

One family that reflected the realities of life under Fascism for Milanese Jews was Liliana Segre's. It was in the Lombard capital that the Segres had established their textile business, owned and operated by Liliana's grandfather, Giuseppe, and all evidence indicates that it was a successful

¹¹⁸ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 123, 126-128. Iael Nidam-Orvieto, "Associazione Donne Ebreo D'Italia (ADEI)," *Jewish Women's Archive*, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/associazione-donne-ebreo-ditalia-adei>. In 1951, ADEI officially became the Italian Federation of WIZO, ADEI-WIZO, with headquarters in Milan; see Hamaui, *ibid.*, 131.

¹¹⁹ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 24, 133.

enterprise.¹²⁰ By the late 1920s, Giuseppe, hampered by both a hernia and a chronic shaking paralysis (perhaps Parkinson's disease), handed over the day-to-day management of the business to his son, Alberto. It was around that time, in 1929, that Alberto married Lucia Foligno, and on September 10 of the following year, she gave birth to their only child, Liliana. The joy of Liliana's birth soon gave way to the shock and sorrow of Lucia's passing, for within a matter of months, she died of an intestinal tumor at age 26. Alberto, together with his newborn daughter, moved back into his parents' home on Corso Magenta, located near Sforza Castle (*Castello Sforzesco*) in one of the city's wealthier neighborhoods. Describing her family's financial status as "well-off" (*benestante*), Liliana reflects fondly on her "lavish" (*fastosa*) childhood, highlighted by trips to the family horse stable. Liliana especially liked naming the horses.¹²¹

The Segres were a Fascist family, though some had more conviction than others. First to join the National Fascist Party was Amedeo, Alberto's older brother. A diehard nationalist and a decorated artillery lieutenant during the Great War, Amedeo detested the Red presence in Milan and took to the streets to fight it. After the Party was founded, he enrolled on New Year's Day, 1922, before becoming a district Party leader and administrative consultant later that decade.¹²² Giuseppe, the *paterfamilias*, joined the PNF in November 1925, the same year that the Italian Crown awarded

¹²⁰ The exact nature of the family enterprise isn't entirely clear. A *carabinieri* document from 1939 identifies Giuseppe as an 'industrialist' (*industriale*), while a questor document from the following year lists him as the "proprietor of a textile store" (*proprietario di un negozio di tessuti*); see Raffaele Galleani, Il T. Colonnello Commandante della Legione territoriale dei carabinieri reali di Milano, Gruppo Interno Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 18 aprile 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano; and Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione al Prefetto di Milano, 15 febbraio 1940, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano.

¹²¹ Liliana Segre, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000348/liliana-segre-2.html>. Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996. Milan, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000092/liliana-segre.html>.

¹²² See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano: G. Marzano, Il Prefetto di Milano, Comunicazione al Ministero dell'Interno, Demorazza, Roma, 13 marzo 1939; and Di Marco, Comunicazione dal Partito Nazionale Fascista, Milano, alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 16 febbraio 1939. Liliana discusses her uncle's Fascist politics in Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 30-31.

him a commendation for his philanthropy and his assistance during the First World War. Giuseppe would spend his golden years donating to various Fascist organizations, at least until 1938.¹²³

Alberto, a World War veteran himself, joined the Party late, enrolling only in January 1933.¹²⁴ After the Racial Laws were implemented, the state deemed the entire Segre family – Giuseppe, Olga Loewy (Giuseppe's wife), Amedeo, Alberto, and Liliana – to be “of good moral, civil, and political conduct”.¹²⁵ Despite this judgment, Liliana remembers her father being a staunch antifascist, often chiding his older brother for his Fascist affliction. Perhaps for Alberto, politics was a family affair. Or maybe he reasoned that it was safer to keep his dissenting political opinions confined to the home.¹²⁶ Whatever the case, we need not doubt Liliana's memory, especially given her father's long avoidance of the Party. As the case of Giuseppe Foa – older brother of Vittorio, the noted anti-Fascist Resistance fighter – reminds us, “it was far from unusual for an Italian Jew of antifascist sympathies to be a member of the Fascist Party.”¹²⁷

Another Jewish family that “made it” in Milan was that of Lina (Ventura) Jaffè, whose origins were impossibly different from Segre's. Born in Smyrna, Turkey, in September 1902, Lina was raised in Johannesburg, South Africa, spending thirteen years there in her youth. During the Great War, she and her mother, Regina (Hassael), returned to Smyrna, where Lina attended the Collegio Americano, while her father, Isaac Ventura, stayed behind in Africa.¹²⁸ It wasn't long,

¹²³ G. Marzano, febbraio 1939, Il Prefetto di Milano, Comunicazione al Ministero dell'Interno, Demorazza, Roma, 19 febbraio 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano. Galleani, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 18 aprile 1939.

¹²⁴ G. Marzano, Il T. Colonnello Commandante della Legione territoriale dei carabinieri reali di Milano, Gruppo Interno Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 20 aprile 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano.

¹²⁵ “*di buon condotta morale, civile e politica*”; Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Eccellenza di Prefetto di Milano, 15 febbraio 1940, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano.

¹²⁶ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 31.

¹²⁷ Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 13. For an account of the Foas, see “Commitment and Betrayal,” in *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 91-165.

¹²⁸ Lina Jaffè, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996, Milan, 20 novembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000053/lina-jaffe.html>. In the interview, it is unclear (i) why the family temporarily split up and (ii) if Isaac remained specifically in Johannesburg or if he moved somewhere else in Africa.

however, before they quit their hometown for Africa once again, this time moving to Egypt. After a brief stay there, the entire family – Isaac included – sojourned in France before relocating to Milan *for the first time* in 1924. Lina's sister, Clara, had opened a rug business with her husband on the exquisite Via Montenapoleone, prime real estate in center-city Milan, and so the family moved to the Lombard capital to join them. Four years later, Lina briefly returned to France (Paris, specifically) before reversing course, moving back to Italy, and putting down roots in Milan for good.¹²⁹

Why, of all the places she lived, did Lina return to Italy and settle in Milan? For starters, she liked Italy “most of all” (*più di tutto*). She also had the comfort of familiarity in Milan. Along with her sister, she knew and met many other Jews who had relocated there from Smyrna, Istanbul, and other Turkish cities. One such individual was Isaac Elia Jaffè, a Turkish Jew from Çanakkale. Like Clara and her husband, Isaac was involved in Milan's carpet trade. It's possible that he and Lina met through these channels, for shortly after Lina's return, the two married, and they moved into the same Milanese house where Lina conducted her interview with Liliana Picciotto in 1995.¹³⁰

Lastly, Milan's Jews integrated effortlessly into mainstream Italian culture, evinced especially by architectural preferences, a lapse in religious practice, and soaring intermarriage rates. By the mid-1930s, interfaith marriages had become the rule rather than the exception, with fifty-six percent of Milanese Jews marrying outside the faith.¹³¹ One such family was that of Fausta Finzi. In 1914, Edgardo Finzi, a Jewish bank official, married a Catholic woman named Giulia Rubiati. The following year, Giulia gave birth to their son, Carlo, and Fausta would follow in 1920, rounding out the family of four.¹³² Supported by Edgardo's banking career, the Finzis were, like the Segres, “of the

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* “Jaffè, Isaac Elia,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4252/jaffe-isaac-elia.html>.

¹³¹ Zimmerman, introduction, 4.

¹³² Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996, 2 maggio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000042/fausta-finzi.html>. Il Ministro dell'Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 5 novembre 1940, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 14, ASMilano.

bourgeoisie” (*della borghesia*), and they were an equally unobservant family. While Fausta remembers her father as a non-practicing Jew, though not a convert, both she and her brother were baptized into Catholicism at birth, leaving them outside of Milan’s Jewish Community.¹³³ Neither sibling embraced their mother’s religion, however. Fausta recalls that throughout her brother’s life, Carlo remained religiously indifferent, embracing neither his Jewish nor his Catholic side. For her part, going against the family grain, Fausta states that she identified as a Jew from early in life. “I have always felt it,” she says. “It was something that I had inside of me.”¹³⁴ She explains how she first came to this understanding while reading a book one evening, when she was no more than seven years old, and she came across the word ‘*israelita*’. When she asked her father what this unfamiliar word meant, he explained to her that she was *israelita*. She was a Jew. “For me,” she says, “that day was one of the most unforgettable days of my life.”¹³⁵ Though her family wasn’t an option, Fausta explored and cultivated this new identity with Jewish friends.¹³⁶

Edgardo and Carlo Finzi were more representative of the local Jewish community’s religious disposition than Fausta. If most of Italy’s Jews turned their religiosity inward and homeward after unification, Milan’s Jews seem to have turned away from religion altogether at a higher clip than Jews elsewhere. At the turn of the twentieth century, a mere ten percent of Milan’s Jews were participating in the local Community, and the only rite that they practiced with any regularity was circumcision. Exhibiting a religious orientation that was decidedly lay, Milan’s Jews elevated their Italian national identity over their traditional Jewish culture. This trait was especially common, Hamaui argues, among the city’s upper class and intellectuals, where “secular ostentation”

¹³³ Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996. See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 14, ASMilano: Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Regia Prefetto di Milano, 16 maggio 1941; and Il Ministro dell’Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 12 luglio 1941.

¹³⁴ “*P’ho sempre sentita. Era qualche cosa che avevo dentro di me*”; Finzi, *ibid*.

¹³⁵ “*Per me quel giorno è stato uno dei giorni indimenticabile della mia vita*”; *ibid*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*. As Klein relates, it was not unheard of for Italian Jewish children to independently observe Judaic practices. Take, for instance, Ora Kahn and her siblings, who chose to rest on the Sabbath, even though their parents permitted them to take the streetcar and attend school; Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 74-75.

(*ostentazione laica*) and “areligious snobbism” (*snobismo areligioso*) were typical. As a result, in contrast with their conspicuous roles in the development of their city and state, Milan’s Jews offered precious little to Judaism or to philosophical-religious thought. They developed no distinct rabbinical school, they produced no Jewish journal of note until the 1910s, and although Jews were active in the press industry – with Milan being Italy’s newspaper capital – a local Jewish press didn’t emerge until *Il giovane Israele*, a moderate Zionist newspaper, appeared in 1913. Geography also betrayed the worldly interests of the Milanese community, for Milan’s Jews lived in neighborhoods according to social class, not religious affiliation. The wealthiest members of the community resided near the city center, like the Segres, while those at the poorer end of the socioeconomic spectrum concentrated in newer parts of the city, especially in the zone surrounding Milan’s central railway station.¹³⁷

Milan’s two most prominent sites of Jewish culture further reveal the local community’s integrationist tendencies. The Central Synagogue on Via Guastalla, the sometimes-beating heart of Milan’s Jewry, was designed by the renowned Milanese architect, Luca Beltrami, then-director of monument preservation in Lombardy. A distinguished professor of architecture at both the Brera Academy and Milan’s Polytechnic University, Beltrami’s most notable works in the city include the headquarters of *Corriere della Sera*, the Piazza della Scala, and the façade of Palazzo Marino (Milan’s city hall). In addition to these Beltrami originals, he restored such local staples as Sforza Castle, the Duomo, the Basilica of Sant’Ambrogio, and the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, home to Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*. For Judaism’s premiere landmark in the city, Beltrami employed the monumental style, which had become common for synagogues in Italy and elsewhere by the later nineteenth century. Inaugurated in 1892, the Central Synagogue’s basilican design reflected the community’s assimilation into Italian culture, its three knaves calling to mind Christian churches and

¹³⁷ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 23-24, 87-91. All that said, Milan did host the first congress of the Jewish Communities of Italy (*Comunità Israelitiche d’Italia*) in November 1909; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1. A notable exception to the rule of urban geography was Carlo Morais, a wealthy Jew whom we will encounter in later chapters.

ancient Roman courthouses.¹³⁸ In 1900, following King Umberto I's assassination, function followed form; Milan's Jewish Community held a commemoration ceremony at the Via Guastalla Synagogue, and in a show of collective devotion to the Savoy dynasty, a thousand people attended.¹³⁹

Like the principal site of Jewish life in Milan, the Jewish wing of the Monumental Cemetery (Anna Kuliscioff's final resting place) also testifies to the local community's integration into mainstream culture. As Hamaui writes, with its colossal, magnificently crafted tombstones and mausolea, the Jewish section of the cemetery marks a "significant departure from Orthodoxy of many of [the Jewish Community's] influential members, given the presence of funerary temples, as well as monumental and columbarium tombs that blend the symbols of Jewish culture with those of the Catholic and civil culture of the era."¹⁴⁰ The Monumental Cemetery remained open to all of Milan's Jews until 1895, but from that year on, only the city's most illustrious Jewry merited internment there, alongside, but always apart from, their Gentile peers. The earthly remains of less well-to-do Jews were sent to the new Greater Cemetery (*Cimitero Maggiore*, the "Musocco").¹⁴¹

Milan's Jews reflected the culture and values of the society in which they lived to a striking degree. They participated in local and national government while promoting national interests, sidelining Zionism and spilling their blood in defense of *Italia*. They helped propel Milan into an economic powerhouse on both Italian and continental levels. They took Catholic spouses more often than not. And they worshiped in a temple that owed more to Rome than to Jerusalem – that is, when they worshiped at all. They embraced a state and country that embraced them back. Conversely, many Jews in Milan had heard firsthand the nightmare stories emanating from the

¹³⁸ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 92-93, 95. Francesca Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 83.

¹³⁹ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 96. This episode is reminiscent of when, after King Carlo Alberto's passing in 1849, Turin's Jews painted the doors of the sacred ark at their synagogue black in a show of mourning; see Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 24; and Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 228-229 and figure C.1.

¹⁴⁰ "significativo allontanamento dall'ortodossia di molti suoi membri influenti, data la presenza di edicole, tombe monumentali e colombari in cui i simboli della cultura ebraica si uniscono a quelli della cultura cattolica e civile dell'epoca"; Hamaui, *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

increasingly baleful Third Reich. As Hamaui writes, from Hitler's rise in 1933 to the passing of the Italian Racial Laws in 1938, Milan served as Italy's "main reception center for Jews fleeing northern Europe," offering aid to over one-third of all Jewish refugees who passed through the country. While eighty percent of these refugees continued onward to Palestine, the Americas, or some other non-European destination, twenty percent (roughly 2,500) chose to stay in Italy.¹⁴²

Warning Signs

The striking degree of Jewish integration into Italian politics, society, and culture was no mirage, and any signs of antisemitism would have been easy enough to ignore before 1938, but the Racial Laws did not manifest out of thin air. Could we really expect the land that birthed the ghetto to be devoid of anti-Jewish sentiment?¹⁴³ Nor did they come from Germany, as conventional wisdom has maintained for far too long. By the later 1930s, a constellation of warning signs, some parts antisemitic, some parts anti-Judaic, and some parts racist, had reached a critical mass. In 1937, longstanding Catholic anti-Judaism, short-standing biological racism, and Fascist race consciousness came together to mark 'the Jew' as the enemy of Fascism and Italy.

For the most part, antisemitism had been restricted to the fringes of Italian culture and politics until the later 1930s, although there were some troubling undercurrents. While certain extremists within Italian nationalism dabbled in antisemitism in the post-unification years, they were few in number, unorganized in approach, and incapable of gathering enough momentum to sustain a political movement. Things began to change, however, with Italy's invasion of Libya in 1911, accompanied as it was by a swell in nationalist fervor, and this trend became even more pronounced during World War I. Though it is true that antisemitism remained on the sidelines of the nationalist

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁴³ Technically, ghetto-like structures first appeared in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire in the fifteenth century, but the first ghetto to be called as such was established in Venice in 1516.

movement, even into the Fascist years, its prominence flowed more often than it ebbed from that point forward. Ominously, one of its most conspicuous voices during this early period was Paolo Orano, whose *Gli ebrei in Italia*, published in 1937, breathed life into that year's antisemitic propaganda campaign.¹⁴⁴

The deepest precursor to the Italian Racial Laws, however, could be found in the ideology of the Catholic Church, an institution that continued to hold a commanding influence over Italian culture long after the pope was confined to his Roman enclave. Both liberal Italy and, until 1938, Mussolini's dictatorship had guaranteed freedom of religion, while limiting the Church's role.¹⁴⁵ But there remained a considerable imbalance in the deference afforded to Catholicism, in both liberal and Fascist Italy, which came at the expense of other religions. Almost universally, Italians looked to Catholicism as their strongest civilizational pillar. Even the atheists and anticlerics among them could not deny the import of Catholic tradition, while members of minority faiths were forced to live with this reality. In the late 1920s, the Church's cultural respectability started to translate into tangible institutional power, culminating in the signing of the Lateran Pacts on February 11, 1929. Along with establishing Vatican City as an independent state within Rome, the Lateran Pacts also brought to an end the separation of Church and state in Italy. With Catholicism once again crowned the official state religion, Pope Pius XI, freed from his Vatican prison, proclaimed Mussolini to be "a man sent by Providence".¹⁴⁶

The mending of fences between Church and state, predictably, had adverse effects on other religions, which found themselves subordinated to the rank of "admitted cults" (*culti ammessi*), their

¹⁴⁴ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Jews under Fascism were never denied the right to practice their religion, even after 1938, but their status as racially defined Jews would cause them to suffer on account of their, or their ancestors', affiliation with Judaism. Like in Nazi Germany, in order to determine racial-biological designations, Italian officials relied on, ironically, religious records.

¹⁴⁶ Technically, Catholicism had remained the official state religion after unification, as identified in article 1 of the Albertine Statute, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia's constitution that was inherited by the Kingdom of Italy. However, observance of the religion's premier status had fallen into desuetude; see Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

statuses reduced in the eyes of the regime. Perhaps this is what Ovazza, a militantly Fascist Jew, had in mind when he sensed that Fascism disregarded its religious minorities.¹⁴⁷ Over the next two years, the Fascist state reconfigured its relationship with its admitted cults, modifying their organizational structures and regulations in ways that best fit the regime's dictatorial agenda. For Jews and Judaism, the key piece of legislation to emerge during these years was the royal decree of 30 October 1930. Called the Falco Law (*Legge Falco*), this decree centralized Italy's various Jewish Communities within the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (*Unione della comunità israelitiche italiane*), a novel body in organized Italian Judaism that subordinated the Communities to the state. The consequences of the Falco Law were momentous. While many, though not all, of Italy's Communities had already come together to form the Consortium of the Italian Jewish Communities in 1911, this organization had existed outside the state. The Union, by law encompassing all of Italy's Jewish Communities, brought them within the state's ambit, and only the state had the power to create or dissolve Communities, while the Minister of the Interior – that is, Mussolini himself – had final say over the election of Community presidents and chief rabbis. The law also made Community membership mandatory, basing it on birth location, thus ending a long tradition of voluntary, associative enrollment. And with membership came obligatory financial contributions, taxes, to the Communities, which, in turn, all owed an annual fee to the Union. While Jews could opt out, the process was long and complicated (probably by design), and once they left, they were barred from religious services and denied burial in Jewish cemeteries. As Klein notes, most Italian Jews stayed enrolled.¹⁴⁸ Levi has written that the tightening of relations between Church and state “delegitimized even further any public presence of the Jews as such.”¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, one could argue that

¹⁴⁷ Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 20, 45.

¹⁴⁸ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 60-61. See also: Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1; Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” 199-200; and Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 24-25, 137-139.

¹⁴⁹ Levi, *ibid.*, 200.

because the Falco Law compelled persons of Jewish ancestry to publicly identify as Jews, regardless of their beliefs or attachment to their local Communities, it began the process of returning visibility to a minority group that had done so much to disappear into the general population.

At the time, however, Italy's Jewish organizations embraced the Falco Law with great enthusiasm. In fact, along with Mario Falco, the jurist who authored the eponymous decree, the law had been willed by Rome's Community president, Angelo Sereni, and its chief rabbi, Angelo Sacerdoti. What made the law so appealing was that in exchange for their autonomy, Jewish Communities received a better organizational structure, a price they were willing to pay, and they could now rely on a steady revenue stream from their member conscripts.¹⁵⁰ First elected to lead Milan's revamped Community was Federico Jarach. Born into a successful banking family in 1874, Federico had lived beside the Piazza della Scala before moving to Via Montenapoleone. Jarach's election as President of Milan's Jewish Community was a foregone conclusion; by that time, he was already its undisputed leader. Considered to be Italy's "first true Jewish captain of industry," Jarach's company manufactured sanitation, lighting, and heating fixtures, while adding war materiel to its résumé during World War I.¹⁵¹ The Racial Laws would one day force him to relinquish his lucrative business, but he remained an ardent Fascist until then, and in 1926, the year he joined the Fascist Party, he cofounded the National Fascist Confederation of Italian Industry. Following a successful tenure as Community President, Jarach became President of the Union in 1937. In that capacity, while advancing the causes of Italy's Jews, he worked to maintain close ties between the Union and the state. He used the resources at his disposal to curb Zionism, and after the *Manifesto of Race* was

¹⁵⁰ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 24-25, 137-139. Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

¹⁵¹ "primo vero capitano d'industria ebreo"; Hamaui, *ibid.*, 140. See also pp. 25, 137, 140-146.

published in July 1938, the Union published a communiqué that reaffirmed “with strong spirit the complete dedication of Italians of the Jewish religion to the Fascist *Patria*”.¹⁵²

Where Jarach and the state parted ways, however, was on the topic of Jewish aid. As early as April 1933, in response to the Nazis’ anti-Jewish boycott, Jarach had requested and received permission from the state to allocate Community resources to assist German Jewish refugees. The fruit of his efforts, the Aid Committee for Jewish Refugees from Germany (*Comitato di assistenza agli ebrei profughi dalla Germania*), provided refugees with work placement, Italian language instruction, and travel funds. Frustrated by the Racial Laws in 1938, the organization redefined itself as the Aid Committee for Jews in Italy (*Comitato di assistenza per gli ebrei in Italia*, Comasebit), a name which revealed its new role, but also the reduced status of Italian Jews within their own country.¹⁵³ Though Comasebit lives on in local lore for its services rendered to both Italian and foreign Jews, fraught relations with the Union over Comasebit’s desire for independence, coupled with Mussolini’s growing displeasure with the constant influx of refugees, brought the committee’s operations to a close only nine months after its rebranding. In August 1939, Mussolini himself, in his role as Interior Minister, dissolved the committee (though the act itself was carried out by Milan’s questor).¹⁵⁴

The privileging of the Catholic Church and the ensuing devaluation of Judaism might have been less foreboding if the papacy had not been mounting a vicious antisemitic campaign since the prior century. Arnaldo Momigliano, the great scholar of ancient history, contended that the Shoah

¹⁵² “*con animo forte la completa dedizione degli Italiani di Religione ebraica alla Patria Fascista*”; *ibid.*, 145. See also pp. 25, 137, 140-146.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 143-146. The obvious analog to the German case is the nominal transformation of the Reich Representation of German Jews (*Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden*), founded in 1933, into the Reich Representation of Jews in Germany (*Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*) following the Nuremberg Laws. An important distinction, however, is that Fascism’s Racial Laws did not deprive Italian Jews of their citizenship, though they ceased to enjoy any of its benefits.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 163. A twist to the story is that from 1937 to 1939, the president of the Union was Jarach himself. Though Jarach had grown wary of Comasebit’s intentions, he didn’t follow Dr. Victor Frankenstein’s lead and try to destroy his creation. Believing that he had failed Italy’s Jews, and perhaps in protest of the state’s decision, he resigned the presidency not long after Comasebit was dissolved. For a biographical account of Jarach, see: Ilaria Pavan, *Il Comandante. La vita di Federico Jarach e la memoria di un’epoca (1874-1951)* (Milan: Proedi, 2001).

would never have occurred in Christian Europe if not for the Church's protracted history of hostility toward the Jews. Though not all ordinary Europeans aped the Church's open hatred, Momigliano, who lost his parents to the Lager, argued that the Church's stance had nurtured an indifference among European Gentiles to the fates of their Jewish neighbors.¹⁵⁵ The role of the Catholic Church in the Shoah has been hotly contested, most authoritatively by the historian Susan Zuccotti, and while it is difficult to accept Momigliano's argument without reservations, the Church's history of anti-Judaism and antisemitism is not up for debate. Dating from the times of Saint Augustine (354 – 430 CE) and Pope Gregory I (r. 590 – 604 CE), the Catholic Church had observed an anti-Jewish policy that amounted to “survive but not thrive”. Because “the Jews” had killed Christ and then refused to accept his divinity, they were to be subjugated and humiliated, forced to live lives of poverty and social ostracism for all time. In this way, Jews and Christians alike would be witness to the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and the status of the Jews would stand as a warning to any Christians considering apostasy. Augustine and the Church did stop short of promoting corporal violence and the destruction of Jewish property – primarily because Jewish Scriptures prophesied Christ's coming – and this policy occasionally mitigated against physical anti-Jewish violence, but Augustine's instructions also subjected Jews in Christian Europe to fifteen-hundred years of legal discrimination, social and geographic marginalization, and abject oppression.¹⁵⁶

“Survive but not thrive” received fullest expression in the papal bull of 1555, *Cum nimis absurdum*. Since, according to Pope Paul IV, it was “absurd” that Jews, slaves by their own hand, had deigned to live among Christians and even take some as servants, *Cum nimis absurdum* most (in)famously created the Roman ghetto. But this was only the most conspicuous consequence of the bull, which, in reality, was nothing more than a laundry list of anti-Judaic regulations. Along with

¹⁵⁵ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

¹⁵⁶ Levy, ed., *Antisemitism*, Volume 1, 43-45, 284-285. Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 65-66.

confining Jews to their new, walled-in home on the banks of the Tiber River (and under the gaze of the Holy See), the bull compelled them to wear blue clothing markers; restricted them to dealing only in secondhand clothing; forbade them from socializing with Christians, much less employing them; limited them to a single synagogue per community; banned them from owning buildings or land, while forcing them to sell their possessions to Christians; and prohibited them from working on Sundays and Christian Holy Days.¹⁵⁷ It was a total attack on Jewish life and livelihoods, and Jews who lived in the Papal States would suffer its effects for centuries to come.

With the capture of Rome by the non-clerical Kingdom of Italy in 1870 – over three hundred years later – this legislation was finally done away with, the ghetto walls were torn down, and the pope was stripped of his temporal and political power. Nevertheless, from behind its papal walls, the Holy See launched a verbal crusade against liberal Italy and everything it stood for, and in the pope’s eyes, there was no more obvious symbol of the new state’s moral bankruptcy than the ‘emancipated Jew’, who lived, worked, and prospered alongside his Catholic better – and in the seat of the Catholic Church, no less. The epitome of everything wrong with the new liberal state, the ‘emancipated Jew’ was the thing that should not be.¹⁵⁸

Training its sights on this old foe in new guise, the papacy unloaded a bombast of hate against the ‘emancipated Jew’ that, while fully showcasing the Church’s time-honored anti-Judaism, also revealed its fluency in more modern, political and socioeconomic antisemitism. Its anti-Jewish tone became especially strident toward the end of the nineteenth century, with the Jesuit periodical, *Civiltà cattolica*, leading the charge. *Civiltà cattolica* had been founded in 1850 at the behest of Pope Pius IX, the same pope who would orchestrate the infamous Mortara Affair eight years later, and it remained the papacy’s unofficial mouthpiece into the unification era. No article could be published

¹⁵⁷ “Papal bull about Jews, ‘Cum nimis absurdum’ by Pope Paul IV, 14 July 1555,” in *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Steve Hochstadt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 16-18. See also: Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews,” 22-25.

¹⁵⁸ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

without papal review and consent.¹⁵⁹ The contents of *Civiltà cattolica* paired stories of ritual murder with accusations of disloyalty, all while blaming Jews for both capitalism and communism. One would be forgiven for mistaking some of *Civiltà cattolica*'s publications for other antisemitic screeds of the time, such as Édouard Drumont's *La France juive* (Jewish France, 1886) or *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903/1905). As one passage from 1880 warned, "If this foreign Jewish race is left too free, it immediately becomes the persecutor, oppressor, tyrant, thief, and devastator of the countries where it lives."¹⁶⁰ A particularly pernicious article from 1893, titled "Jewish Morality", hit on many nineteenth-century antisemitic tropes when, despairingly, it reminded readers that "once freedom of religion had been granted and citizenship given to the Jews, they knew well how to take advantage of the new situation, and from our equals they became our masters. Indeed," the article went on, "politics is today controlled by the Stock Exchange, and this is in the hands of the Jews; Freemasonry runs the government, and this too is controlled by the Jews; public opinion is shaped by the press, and this too is in large part inspired and subsidized by the Jews".

In the passage that followed, the author began by insisting, "We do not write with any intention of sparking or fomenting any antisemitism in our country," before immediately pivoting to say, "Rather, we seek to sound an alarm for Italians so that they defend themselves against those who, in order to impoverish them, dominate them, and make them their slaves, interfere with their faith, corrupt their morals and suck their blood".¹⁶¹ The Church, admittedly, tempered its naked antisemitism after the turn of the twentieth century, but it did not officially abandon its anti-Jewish position until the Second Vatican Council during the 1960s. For many Italians during the Fascist era

¹⁵⁹ David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Vintage, 1998). For a summary of the Mortara case, penned by Kertzer himself, see Levy, ed., *Antisemitism*, Vol. 2, 470-471.

¹⁶⁰ Levy, *ibid.*, 129.

¹⁶¹ "Excerpts from article 'Jewish Morality' in Vatican newspaper, 10 January 1893," in *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Hochstadt, 19-21.

– Jewish and non-Jewish alike – the Church’s unabashed, unholy press war against the Jews remained part of living memory when the state passed the Racial Laws in 1938.¹⁶²

If Italian anti-Judaism stretched back into antiquity, Italian racism was a much more recent phenomenon, developing within the context of colonialism. From Italy’s first colonial exploits in the later nineteenth century, Collotti observes, there had been an emphasis on racial differentiation and hierarchy between colonizer and colonized. As political theorists and social scientists back home debated population policy, faced with ongoing mass emigration and an uncooperative national birthrate, anthropologists and ethnographers in Africa “worked hard to demonstrate not only the difference between white and black people, but the superior characteristics of the white race.”¹⁶³ It would be Fascism’s masterstroke to bring the two together, especially when, after the conquest of Ethiopia, Mussolinian populationist politics began to brazenly stress quality alongside quantity. As Sarfatti contends, the proclamation of the Italian Empire on May 9, 1936, brought to fulfillment by the annexation of Ethiopia and the consummation of Italian East Africa (*Africa orientale italiana*, AOI), “completed the transition from a ‘colonialist’ racist policy to a ‘pure’ racist policy.”¹⁶⁴ This much was reflected in the constitutive law for Italian East Africa, which was announced on 1 June 1936. Serving to protect Italians from racial contamination by separating them from the indigenous African populations, the AOI’s constitutive law forecasted the antisemitic legislation to come. A subsequent royal decree of April 1937, which made conjugal relations between Italian citizens and African subjects (whether in the colonies or the metropole) punishable by law, would be replicated in the Racial Laws of the following year.¹⁶⁵ By regulating everything from interpersonal relations

¹⁶² In a 2002 article, when *Civiltà cattolica* reflected on its own history, the paper denied and deflected accusations of antisemitism by insisting that the Jesuits – and by extension, the papacy – had opposed Judaism because of its association with Bolshevism, thus invoking the old Judeo-Bolshevism myth; see Levy, *Antisemitism*, Vol. 1, 129.

¹⁶³ “*si erano industriati di dimostrare non solo le differenze di razza tra bianchi e neri, ma i caratteri di superiorità della razza bianca*”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 98-99.

¹⁶⁵ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 2.

(especially sexual ones), to work and education, to transportation, housing, and city planning, the constitutive law and subsequent decrees modeled AOI on the apartheid principles of racial hierarchy, segregation, and discrimination.¹⁶⁶

The Fascists' antisemitic campaign owed much to traditional Catholic anti-Judaism and biological anti-African racism, but we are still left with two pressing questions: (i) why did the Fascist regime decide to identify Jews, who as a body remained steadfast in their loyalty, as the archenemy of the Italian state, nation, and race; and (ii) why did antisemitic legislation come into effect in 1938? Addressing question one, we should begin by finally putting to rest the De Felice – Michaelis consensus. First articulated by Renzo De Felice (1961) and then popularized by Meir Michaelis (1978), this thesis correctly charged Mussolini with implementing the antisemitic Racial Laws on his own account, and not at Hitler's goading. But De Felice and Michaelis erred by claiming that the Italian dictator did so, primarily, to bolster the Nazi alliance. Although, as De Felice noted, Mussolini did introduce radical antisemitism to Italy for reasons that were partly opportunistic, he missed the target by emphasizing the Axis alliance as the decisive factor. He came closer to the mark by arguing that Mussolini turned to racism as a way to reenergize Fascism. Further, because De Felice deemed racial antisemitism to be "alien to the Italian mentality and sensibility," he argued that the Racial Laws provoked a cleavage between the Fascist government and the Italian people. He even quipped that the Fascist regime's antisemitic measures were met with a "totalitarian" rejection from the general populace.¹⁶⁷ Adopting and restricting the De Felice thesis, Michaelis argued that Mussolini introduced antisemitism solely on account of the Axis alliance, hoping to "emulate" Hitler

¹⁶⁶ Had it not been for the colony's short life, the occupiers' inability to fully 'pacify' the Ethiopians, and an admittedly high number of transgressions of the law, Italian East Africa might very well have resembled what the Afrikaner National Party achieved in South Africa, as scholars such as Collotti and Angelo Del Boca have argued; *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Renzo De Felice quoted in Zimmerman, introduction, 5-6. De Felice set the pattern for later research when he first articulated these views in 1961's *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (translated into English as *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History* in 2001), and he himself repeated them in his monumental biography of Mussolini; see De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce. II*, 247-248.

and to prove the “ideological solidarity” of the two fascist regimes. As Michaelis reasoned, Mussolini may have held plenty of grievances against the Jews, such as their purported affiliation with anti-Fascism and support for Republican Spain, but only the alliance with Hitler triggered il Duce’s turn to official, state-sponsored antisemitism.¹⁶⁸ Although this argument is seductive, no evidence exists to support it.

At most, the German example *influenced* Italy’s own antisemitic campaign, with Mussolini and his racial architects modeling Fascist antisemitism on Nazi examples in an attempt to replicate the dynamism of Hitler’s movement. The drawing closer of the two fascist-totalitarian regimes had more to do with shared dreams of empire – and the mutual military support that both states would require of one another. The world of the future, spinning on its Rome-Berlin axis, would feature a Nazi-dominated Europe, while the Fascists would control the Mediterranean as their Roman muses had done once before. Their Japanese ally, meanwhile, would hold sway over East Asia and the Pacific, at least as long as Hitler let them.¹⁶⁹ There was no German coercion on the issue of antisemitism, nor was there any coordination of antisemitic ideology or policy between the two regimes, at least until late 1943. As Collotti argues, “The inauguration of anti-Jewish politics in Italy did not derive from any German pressure; it was an autonomous decision made by the Fascist regime in its attempt to revitalize the regime on the domestic front.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Meir Michaelis quoted in Zimmerman, introduction, 7. Michaelis expressed these views in *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922-1945* (1978).

¹⁶⁹ According to Gerhard Weinberg, Hitler wanted nothing less than world domination, which portended future problems with Mussolini over his Fascist ally’s more humble empire in the Mediterranean and northern Africa. Though it appears that Mussolini’s regime, by virtue of its fascist composition, would have been permitted to keep its empire, the Italians presumably would have been reduced to (official) junior-partner status in the Nazis’ new world order. No such charity, however, would have been afforded to the Japanese. Because Hitler had his sights set on the entirety of Asia, Weinberg notes that the *Führer* would have eventually dispensed with his Japanese ally, who was racially inferior anyway. In this respect, the otherwise fantastical *Man in the High Castle* was true to life; see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and *The Man in the High Castle*, created by Frank Spotnitz, Amazon Studios, January 15, 2015.

¹⁷⁰ “*L’inaugurazione della politica antiebraica in Italia non derivò da alcuna pressione tedesca, essa fu una decisione autonoma del regime fascista nel tentativo di rivitalizzare il regime all’interno*”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4.

The Fascist regime's answer to the Jewish Question does begin, however, with Mussolini. Although the Italian dictator's antisemitism manifested in inconsistent, unsystematic, and contradictory ways, Sarfatti has demonstrated that Mussolini's anti-Jewish leanings had always been there, dating from his time as a Socialist.¹⁷¹ In a similar vein, Fabre traces Mussolini's antisemitism to the first decade of the twentieth century, while noting that his stance hardened after he abandoned Socialism for his own political creation, Fascism.¹⁷² At least from the 1920s, Mussolini had begun to speak of 'Italians' and 'Jews' as distinct peoples, and in a move that casts serious doubt on the De Felice – Michaelis consensus, when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Mussolini privately encouraged the future *Führer* to remove Jews from "positions of responsibility" within the Reich, a purge that was already silently underway in Italy.¹⁷³

Why Mussolini targeted the Jews for persecution had to do, in large part, with their supposed political incorrectness, an accusation grounded more in prejudice than reality. Jews living in Fascist Italy, according to Stille, had a "higher threshold for citizenship than other Italians." Unlike their Catholic counterparts, he argues, in order for Jews to survive and prosper under Mussolini, they had to suppress their Judaic identity and demonstrate their total ideological commitment to state and nation. The presence in Italy of Zionists and Jewish anti-Fascists threatened this collective persona.¹⁷⁴ Since the days of the premodern Jewish corporation, Europe's Jews had been dogged by accusations of "double loyalty" – of constituting a "nation within a nation" – and the rise of Zionism left them particularly vulnerable to this slander. In Fascist Italy, Zionism was incompatible with the regime's avowed ultra-nationalism, and although Mussolini came

¹⁷¹ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 42.

¹⁷² Fabre, "Mussolini and the Jews on the Eve of the March on Rome," 65-66.

¹⁷³ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 67. Zimmerman, introduction, 14n.38. Mussolini apologists often cite his relationship with Margherita Sarfatti to downplay or negate his antisemitism. However, Margherita tried, unsuccessfully, to pry Mussolini away from Hitler, and as Italy came closer to passing its own antisemitic laws, Mussolini grew colder and ever more hostile in his interpersonal relations with her. In 1938, Margherita followed her son, Amedeo, to Uruguay, though she returned to Italy after the war; Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 136.

¹⁷⁴ Stille, "The Double Bind of Italian Jews," 27-28.

to a brief truce with the politico-religious movement in the mid-1930s, he had warned Italian Jews in the past about embracing Zionism, lest they “provoke anti-Semitism in the only country where it has never existed.”¹⁷⁵ Sharing this sentiment, Ovazza called on his fellow Italian Jews to ignore the call of Palestine and to profess their “full and absolute adhesion to the Fatherland.” Any Jew who did not feel “the sacred and obligatory love for the Fatherland where he is born,” Ovazza advised, should leave. As Stille notes, to that point, not even the regime had issued so strong a statement on the Jewish Question, but Ovazza’s admonition demonstrates how even the most fanatically Fascist of Italian Jews detected their delicate status.¹⁷⁶ Any suspicions that Jews might have harbored were confirmed when the Fascist Grand Council announced its *Declaration on Race* in October 1938, which stated that Italian Jews could never accept Fascism because it was “antithetical to that which is the psychology, politics, and internationalism of Israel.”¹⁷⁷

In March 1934, during a raid on a Justice and Liberty (*Giustizia e Libertà*) cell in Turin, the police arrested a number of Jews involved with the anti-Fascist organization. While it is true that most Justice and Liberty members were Jewish, the movement was few in number and elite in character, neither representing majority Jewish opinion nor posing a threat to the regime.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, from that point forward, Fascist antisemites started to collapse ‘the Jew’ and ‘the anti-Fascist’ into a single figure.¹⁷⁹ During the Spanish Civil War, this pairing became especially pronounced. In the same *Declaration of Race* that had linked Jews with Zionism, condemning both equally, it was written that “All anti-Fascist efforts can be traced back to a Jew; worldwide Judaism is, in Spain, on the side of the Bolsheviks of Barcelona.” The first draft of the *Declaration*, it should

¹⁷⁵ Mussolini quoted in Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews,” 27-28.

¹⁷⁷ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 128-129. Undeterred, Ovazza responded to the Racial Laws not by condemning Mussolini, the Fascist regime, or the antisemitic trumpeters, but by burning down the offices of a Zionist newspaper in Florence with some likeminded accomplices; see Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 21.

¹⁷⁸ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 1.

be noted, was written by Mussolini himself.¹⁸⁰ The Duce's decision to turn his regime against the Jews stemmed, in large measure, from his own antisemitic prejudices, prejudices which convinced him that "the Jews" were seditious by nature and acting against the interests of the Fascist state and the Italian nation.

Why the regime commenced its antisemitic campaign in 1938 has to do foremost, it would seem, with the political climate that prevailed in Italy following the conquest of Ethiopia. The promotion of active race consciousness had accompanied Fascist empire-making, and the regime set out on its mission to create the Fascist New Man (*Uomo nuovo*), with il Duce and his body leading the effort.¹⁸¹ As racial theorists debated whether the Italians were a Mediterranean or a Nordic people, all agreed that they were superior to non-European, non-Aryan, non-white races. In this context, as the Fascist regime differentiated between Italians and Africans on an essentialist level, the designation of Jews as their own biological race was not far behind, with Italy's anti-African policies and propaganda providing a sort of racial training ground for non-Jewish Italians.¹⁸² As Roberto Maiocchi neatly puts it, "The image of the negro, universally diffuse among the Italians, acted as the Trojan Horse by which antisemitic racism penetrated Italy."¹⁸³ It would have been difficult, however, to arouse anti-Black and anti-African passions at home when most Italians had never seen a Black person or an African outside of a photograph, as Sandro Servi has noted.¹⁸⁴ Italians could hate

¹⁸⁰ Zimmerman, introduction, 13n.30. Various drafts of the *Declaration on Race* appear reprinted in Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2001), 690-700.

¹⁸¹ Here the reader is referred to Adler's 2005 article, "Why Mussolini turned on the Jews." Adler is right to situate the Fascists' anti-Jewish campaign amidst their novel fixation on creating an "imperial-totalitarian state" peopled with New, Fascist Men, though he underplays antisemitism in Italy both before and after 1938, an evaluation that could have been modified by examining the lives of Jews of the era.

¹⁸² Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 110.

¹⁸³ "L'immagine del negro universalmente diffusa tra gli italiani sarà il cavallo di Troia con cui il razzismo antisemite verrà fatto penetrare in Italia"; Roberto Maiocchi quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 2.

¹⁸⁴ Sandro Servi, "Building a Racial State: Images of the Jew in the Illustrated Fascist Magazine, *La Difesa della Raza*, 1938-1943," *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 129, 132.

Africans and Black people from afar, but those distant objects of their ire could never constitute a true internal enemy.

The Jews, fractional but at least visible, suggested themselves as a minority group that could fill this role, and in the late 1930s, the Fascist regime wagered that the Italian majority could quickly become well-versed in antisemitic enmity. For nearly two-thousand years, Italians had been steeped in Catholic anti-Judaism, which marked Jews as different, inferior, and alien. (Never mind that Jews had been living in Italy since before Christianity came into existence.) More recently, since the end of the First World War, antisemitism had shown itself to be a powerful mover of racist passions, most obviously in Germany but also in places like Austria, Hungary, and Romania. Mussolini, an ideological antisemite, a race-conscious dictator, and an opportunist, launched the campaign against ‘the Jew’ as a new consensus-builder.¹⁸⁵ Unlike Hitler, whose antisemitism manifested as part of the Nazi Party programme from the very beginning, Mussolini only weaponized antisemitism and made it state policy when other options (like corporativism) failed to produce the totalitarian consensus that he desired. R.J.B. Bosworth is no doubt right when he says, “Certainly neither race in general nor anti-Semitism in particular ever moved the *Duce* in the fanatical way in which they drove Hitler.”¹⁸⁶ But given Mussolini’s own antisemitic inclinations, this likely wasn’t a difficult turn for him to take.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 3. Other important temporal factors were at play, too. Although Rabbi Sacerdoti had promised Mussolini that Italy’s Jews would make themselves “useful” to his expansionist efforts, they proved unable to prevent the sanctions that the League of Nations imposed on Italy following the invasion of Ethiopia. While Mussolini would turn the sanctions to his advantage, exaggerating their negligible effects to drum up populist fervor at home, he had nevertheless become convinced that Jews were an unreliable people who couldn’t keep their word. It was also during this time that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany began aligning their interests, with German support for the Ethiopian invasion being a seminal moment in that process. While the wholesale rejection of Nazi Germany by Italy’s Jews is understandable, their open opposition to the emergent Rome-Berlin Axis, the forerunner to 1939’s Pact of Steel, did them no favors in the Fascist regime’s eyes; see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 98-99.

¹⁸⁶ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 419-420.

¹⁸⁷ I admit that this analysis reflects the pitfalls of Great Man seduction. However, available evidence points to Mussolini playing the lead role in launching Fascism’s antisemitic campaign. This is not to exonerate other antisemites of note (i) in the Fascist government, like Roberto Farinacci, (ii) in the press, like Julius Evola and Telesio Interlandi, and (iii) who bridged the gap between both, like Giovanni Preziosi. Evola and Interlandi feature in this chapter, below, while Preziosi

And so, in 1937, with the state's blessing, a full-fledged antisemitic propaganda campaign gripped Italy. This was the moment, Collotti contends, that the Fascist regime committed itself to state-sponsored antisemitism, with the propaganda effort serving to prime the general population for the legislation to follow.¹⁸⁸ If nothing else, Italy's Jews took note, for our narrator in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* mentions how his father had been suffering from insomnia ever since "the racial campaign ... started in all the newspapers in the summer of '37."¹⁸⁹ Naturally, Giovanni Preziosi factored prominently in this campaign. In his journal, *Vita italiana* (Italian Life), he composed an article titled "Dieci punti fondamentali del problema ebraico" – Ten Fundamental Points of the Jewish Problem – which, employing a biological interpretation of race, warned that Jews were bent on world domination. And Fascism's first antisemite did not stop there. Having already translated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* into Italian back in 1921 – he was the first to do so, unsurprisingly – he used his journal's publishing house to reissue the timeless antisemitic canard, recruiting fellow ideologue Julius Evola to contribute the preface.¹⁹⁰

The year 1937 also saw the release of *Sotto la maschere d'Israele* (Under the Mask of Israel), written by a Catholic publicist fittingly named Gino Sottochiesa. Despite "Underchurch's" religious affiliation, *Sotto la maschera d'Israele* was more antisemitic than anti-Judaic, a sign of the times, though the author drank liberally from both wellsprings of anti-Jewish hate. Depicting "Hebraism" (*Ebraismo*) as a biologically immutable concept, Sottochiesa stressed that Jews couldn't baptize their way out of it. Not that they would want to anyway though, for Hebraism, international and anti-national in nature, teaches its followers that they are destined to conquer the world and all other

is discussed in this chapter as well as chapters two and three. For what it's worth, Farinacci refused to fire his private Jewish secretary, Joël Foa, in this environment of precipitating antisemitism; see Jonathan Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 218.

¹⁸⁸ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 3.

¹⁸⁹ Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, 228.

¹⁹⁰ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 3.

religions. Denouncing Jews as foreigners and enemies wherever they lived, Sottochiesa, like Mussolini and antisemites in general, believed that all Jews were inherently Zionists, and in a manner typical of Catholic antisemites, he identified communism as the political vessel that Jews were using to achieve their goal of world domination.¹⁹¹

Not long after, Sottochiesa became a frequent contributor to Telesio Interlandi's new periodical, *La difesa della razza* (The Defense of the Race), which pressed its first issue on August 5, 1938, just weeks before the Jewish census. Though first and foremost a "popular-scientific" publication, Interlandi's bi-weekly magazine blended biological antisemitism with centuries-old anti-Judaism while covering all of the tropes in between. An article on Judeo-Bolshevism, for instance, might be followed by one on Simon of Trent, history's most famous victim of the fabled ritual murder.¹⁹² Incidentally, *La difesa della razza*'s editorial secretary, Giorgio Almirante, would found the neofascist Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI) after the Second World War.¹⁹³ Linked to the Ministries of Education and Popular Culture, *La difesa della razza* not only enjoyed widespread distribution, but also acquired an air of officiality that contributed to its commanding role as a weapon of antisemitic propaganda. From August 1938 until November 1940, Interlandi operated *La difesa della razza* directly from the Ministry of Popular Culture. Meanwhile, the day after launch, in an effort to introduce antisemitism to the Italian curriculum ahead of the Racial Laws, the Minister of Education, Giuseppe Bottai, recommended that *La difesa della razza* be distributed in all of Italy's schools, from the elementary level through college, as well as in libraries.¹⁹⁴ Bottai's

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* No word on Sottochiesa's thoughts (if he were still alive) when the Soviet Union, under Joseph Stalin, openly embraced an anti-Zionist platform from the later 1940s until the dictator's death in 1953; see Levy, *Antisemitism*, Vol. 1, 26-28.

¹⁹² Nor did *La difesa della razza* limit itself to anti-Jewish themes. As Servi notes, the periodical also covered "eugenics, folklore, national traditions, and the celebration of the Italian race and the races of allied nations (Germany, Hungary, and Japan)," along with "the denigration of the populations of enemy nations and nations peopled with 'inferior' races"; Servi, "Building a Racial State," 117.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, entire. Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Servi, *ibid.*, 115-117, 149-150.

endeavor, according to Collotti, proved especially effective on college campuses, where members of Fascist student organizations championed antisemitic and racist ideas with gusto. Their motivations may have been tinged by a bit of opportunism, however, for Collotti says that undergraduates saw their college activities as launchpads into future political careers.¹⁹⁵

Arguably the most impactful production to come out of the propaganda campaign, however, was Paolo Orano's *Gli ebrei in Italia* (The Jews in Italy, 1937), a publication that backed off biologically essentialist arguments while still expressing strong, undeniably antisemitic viewpoints. In his book, Orani issued a warning to Jews that they should either fully, to a person, integrate into Italian society, or they would suffer the not-yet-specified consequences. One momentous step they could take to show their devotion to Italy, he volunteered, would be to distinguish themselves from their European coreligionists by denouncing European (and international) Judaism as anti-Fascist and subversive. This would encompass, of course, a severing of aid to their persecuted cousins in the Third Reich, which by the late 1930s had become a hallmark of Italian Zionism.¹⁹⁶

The groundwork thus laid, the year 1938 witnessed a deluge of official anti-Jewish developments in anticipation of the Racial Laws, starting with the publication of the *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* (Manifesto of the Racist Scientists) on July 13, 1938. Under the aegis of the Ministry of Popular Culture, and following instructions dictated by Mussolini himself, the Manifesto “codified for the first time the strong nucleus of a theory of the Italian race.”¹⁹⁷ Race, the Manifesto upheld, was something “purely biological”, and the Italians constituted a pure race that descended from the Mediterranean branch of the Aryan family tree.¹⁹⁸ Explicitly rejecting older racial concepts

¹⁹⁵ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

¹⁹⁷ “codificò per la prima volta il nucleo forte di una teoria della razza italiana”; *ibid.*, ch. 4. For an English translation of the *Manifesto of the Racist Scientists* in its entirety, see De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 679-680. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 128-129.

¹⁹⁸ “puramente biologico”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4.

that had once prevailed in Italy, concepts which confused the “biological concept of race with the historical-linguistic concept of people and of nation,” the authors based their definition of race on “the purest blood relationship that unites the Italians of today to the generations that have populated Italy for one thousand years. This ancient purity of blood is the grandest title of nobility of the Italian Nation.”¹⁹⁹ The time had long since come, the Racist Scientists announced, “for Italians to openly proclaim themselves racists. All the work the Regime has carried out in Italy until now is, after all, racism.”²⁰⁰ In the Manifesto’s tenth and final point, the authors warned Italians not to breed with members of non-European races, lest they contaminate their pure gene pool.²⁰¹ Because of their non-European and “absolutely” non-Italian racial makeup, the Manifesto averred, Jews “do not belong to the Italian race,” as evinced by their inability to assimilate into a majority population that, allegedly, made assimilation very easy.²⁰²

In July and August, a couple of government ministries underwent ominous administrative restructurings. On July 17, a few days after the Manifesto was published, the Interior Ministry’s Central Demographic Office was renamed the Department of Demography and Race (*Direzione Generale per la demografia e la razza*). Known by its acronym, “Demorazza” was overseen by Undersecretary of the Interior, Guido Buffarini-Guidi, who would play a key role in the Italian Social Republic, while racial anthropologist Guido Landra, he of the Nordic school of Italian racial theory, served as its director. Put simply, Demorazza’s organizational purpose was to formulate and regulate racial legislation. The following month, the Ministry of Popular Culture added to its

¹⁹⁹ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 680. While hegemonic concepts of race in Italy had once referred to the Italian ‘nation’ or ‘people’, race had come to be understood and framed primarily as a “fixed biological entity” by 1938, including at the state level. Demonstrative of this shift in prevailing racial thought was the endocrinologist Nicola Pende. In direct opposition to racial theories in northern Europe, Pende had once proposed that Italians derived from a Mediterranean polyvalence of peoples, and so their racial origins could not be fixed. Yet Pende added his signature to the *Manifesto of the Racist Scientists*, which touted the existence of the Italian race in the same crude, biological sense as the Nazis; see Zimmerman, introduction, 14n.38, and Collotti, *ibid.*, ch. 2.

²⁰⁰ De Felice, *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

repertoire an Office for the Study of the Problem of Race (*Ufficio studi del problema della razza*), whose charge was to study racial problems and disseminate propaganda.²⁰³

These efforts came to a head on August 22, 1938, when Demorazza conducted a census of the Jewish population, the first shot fired by the Fascist regime against Italy's Jewish population. Though not part of the Racial Laws, *per se*, the census was a discriminatory act in and of itself, serving only to facilitate the implementation of the antisemitic legislation soon to come. As Levi puts it, the census was conducted purely and precisely to give the regime an idea of which people it would be discriminating against, and how many of them there were.²⁰⁴ Because the census was carried out publicly, moreover, involving input from many Italians, it also functioned to psychologically prepare the population “for the segregation and isolation of the Jews from the rest of society.”²⁰⁵

Conclusion

From her Fiuman port, Goti Bauer recalls, clandestine ships carried Jewish refugees from Germany and Vienna away to Palestine, where the travelers, weary from oppression and persecution, looked to the day they could create a new state, free from the tyranny they were escaping. Hosting its own Zionist organization (*circolo*), Fiume had been a Zionist hotspot in her youth – yet another way her border town broke from the Italian mold. Indeed, not even the Racial Laws put a dampener on Zionist activities, for after 1938, secret ships transporting their illegal cargo continued to dock in Fiume's ports, where refugees awaited departure to the Holy Land (or the United States). Looking

²⁰³ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 125-126. Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, ch. 4.

²⁰⁴ Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” 200. See also: Collotti, *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ “*alla segregazione e all'isolamento degli ebrei dal resto della società*”; Collotti, *ibid.*

upon the refugees with “extreme worry”, Goti and her community of Fiuman Jews nevertheless took comfort in knowing that the same horrors they were escaping “could never happen in Italy.”²⁰⁶

From the Risorgimento until the Racial Laws, the history of the Jews in Italy had been a success story. Joining the ranks of the Piedmontese and Garibaldian armies, Jews fought side-by-side, as equals, with their non-Jewish peers, forging the nation-state and spreading emancipation in the process. Integrating into unified Italy with passion and purpose, Jews played leading roles in the new state’s economic modernization, rose to the heights of local, regional, and national government, featured prominently in politics from the far left to the radical right, and harmonized the mores of the Catholic majority with their own religious practices. When the nation went to war, Italy’s Jews enlisted in record number (like their German counterparts – or rather, enemies), and for their service and sacrifice, they were honored accordingly. When the nation was in distress, many Jews responded in the only way they thought how, by donning black shirts (or financing those who did). And when a Judaic offshoot like Zionism threatened the integrity of Jewish commitment to the patria, Jewish organizations militated against it, like Ettore Ovazza and his *Bandieristi*, or used their resources to curb its more radical inclinations, like the Union – Italian Jewry’s answer to the Mussolinian credo: everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state. The sum of the parts was a well-integrated, comfortably middle-class, city-based religious minority group that didn’t just survive, but thrived in its welcoming new home.²⁰⁷

In Milan, a *unicum-within-a-unicum*, all of the above held true, and then some. Jewish bankers dominated the financial sector, helping spearhead Italy’s modernization drive, and though Luigi

²⁰⁶ “*Con estrema ansia per tutti quelli, convinti però che in Italia non avrebbe mai potuto succedere*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 23. See also: Lato A, p. 1; and Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. They might have heeded Theodor Herzl’s warning that antisemitism was a European-wide phenomenon, leaving no state unaffected; Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25282/25282-h/25282-h.htm#I_Introduction.

²⁰⁷ The fact that the Herskovitses in Fiume and the Ventura-Jaffè family in Milan, both immigrants, found comfort and prosperity in Italy amidst the Great Depression further emphasizes the point.

Luzzatti was Venetian by birth (then part of Austria), he founded his *Banca Popolare di Milano* in the Lombard capital before embarking on an impressive political career; not only did he rise to the premiership, but he also did four tours as the Minister of Treasury and one as Minister of Trade, Agriculture, and Industry. In commerce, too, Jewish businessmen had a commanding presence, especially in textiles – the “rag trade”, as Jews often call it – while Jewish professionals settled easily into white-collar jobs like teaching, academia, law, and medicine.²⁰⁸ Beside their Gentile colleagues, Milan’s Jews enjoyed an upper-middle-class standard of living that bespoke their local prestige. Politically, Milan’s Jews ran the gamut from far-left agitation, like the activist Anna Kuliscioff, to rightwing militancy, like the five Jews present at the founding of Fascism. Despite coming from a demographic that made up 0.1 percent of Italy’s population, Jews represented over four percent of those gathered in the Piazza San Sepolcro. Lastly, their synagogue, sepulchers, and spouses demonstrated just how much of Italy’s Catholic-infused majority culture they had absorbed and made their own. As a steady but increasing stream of Jewish refugees came to, or passed through, their city from the Third Reich, Milan’s Jews felt even safer and more secure in the precarious refuge they called home, even receiving permission from the state to aid Jews persecuted elsewhere in Europe.

But though this era was more golden than gilded for Italy’s Jews, all did not glitter, and there were some troubling undercurrents spread diffusely throughout Italian society. Italy’s nascent antisemitic movement may have lacked the potency of its European cousins, but it nevertheless existed, and as Italian nationalism continued to radicalize under Fascism, its voices grew ever louder. The papacy had toned down its strident antisemitism and anti-Judaism by the early twentieth century, but the Fascist regime’s blatant favoritism toward Catholicism and its Church spelled

²⁰⁸ For a historical analysis of the Jewish rag trade, see Adam D. Mendelsohn’s *The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015).

misfortune for Italy's religious minorities. Nor could centuries of anti-Jewish preaching and practice evaporate overnight. As biological racism, the bedrock of antisemitism, became a fixture of Fascist ideology and policymaking, marching into Africa with the Italian military, few of Italy's Jews suspected that they would soon be essentialized in the same way, and oppressed in like manner. Italian Fascism's antisemitic campaign, then, did not appear out of nowhere. As Benito Mussolini and his lately race-conscious regime sought to reenergize Fascism at home, hoping to recapture the magic of the Ethiopian expedition, they turned against a new internal enemy, the Jews, allegedly unassimilable since time immemorial and now racially disqualified from becoming New Men. With the propagandistic press in the vanguard, an antisemitic social-engineering campaign took hold of Italy in 1937, and as government ministries restructured themselves to reflect the regime's reorientation, their collective efforts culminated in the Jewish census of 22 August 1938, taken only two weeks before the first Racial Law was introduced.

Yet, for plainly understandable reasons, not all Jews in Italy detected the discrimination infusing the census. A missed perception that seems to have lingered deep into the postwar era, survivors typically don't reflect on the census or discuss it at length in their interviews and memoirs. Meanwhile, Fausta Finzi, who does, is the exception that proves the rule. She recalls her father registering himself as a Jew without realizing that he was condemning himself in the process. "Naturally," she says, "he was never ashamed of being Jewish."²⁰⁹ Almost a hundred years of acceptance and integration had made the writing on the wall difficult for Italy's Jews to decipher.

²⁰⁹ "Non si è mai vergognato di essere ebreo, naturalmente"; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

Chapter II

Making Jews, Unmaking Italians: From the Racial Laws to Il Duce's Fall, 1938 – 1943

In 1938, I was required by law to become Jewish.

Aldo Zargani, 1995

Introduction

One summer day in 1939 or 1940, Giuseppe Di Porto took a trip with some family members to Ostia, a seaside town near the eponymous port that had once served ancient Rome.²¹⁰ For the teenaged Giuseppe, who had been working alongside his father, a street vendor, since age seven – and who, following his expulsion from school, was still reeling from the loss of his Catholic friends – a daytrip to the beach was a welcome reprieve from life in the rugged former ghetto. Alas, his escape from the doldrums would be short-lived, for after some “Fascists” (*fascisti*) discovered that Giuseppe and his relatives were Jews, they escorted them to a police station (*commissariato*) nearby. Barred from the beach, they had no other choice but to pack up their things and trudge back to the old Roman ghetto.²¹¹

Most likely, this event occurred in 1940, because after Italy entered the Second World War on 10 June – exactly one week after Giuseppe's seventeenth birthday – the state forbade Italian Jews from visiting the seaside, just one of the many new restrictions placed on Italy's Jewish population throughout the war.²¹² Rome's Jews, who had been living in the City of God since Before Christ, had suffered the worst and the longest under the pope, never leaving sight of the See after 1555. Unlike

²¹⁰ “Nel 1938 sono stato obbligato per legge a diventare ebreo”; Aldo Zargano, *Per violino solo. La mia infanzia nell'Aldiqua (1938-1945)* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995), 89.

²¹¹ Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Rome, 28 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000031/di-porto-giuseppe.html>.

²¹² Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 82-83. See also: “Di Porto, Giuseppe,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/person/detail/person-2370/di-porto-giuseppe.html?persone=%22Di+Porto%2C+Giuseppe%22>.

other Jewish communities in Italy, whose circumstances improved greatly after unification, Rome's Jews struggled to recover, continuing to live in a general state of paucity and privation well into the twentieth century. The Racial Laws thus hit Rome's community especially hard, worse than most, and mounting antisemitic legislation over the course of the war would only add to their collective misery, as the Di Portos learned over and over again.

* * *

When 1937 turned to 1938, Italy was in the midst of a vicious antisemitic propaganda campaign, reaching a fever pitch with the August debut of Telesio Interlandi's *La difesa della razza* (The Defense of the Race), followed in short order by the Jewish census. But through August, there were no actual anti-Jewish laws on the books. By the time the calendar flipped to 1939, Fascist Italy had an infrastructure of antisemitic legislation in place that rivaled Nazi Germany's in its discriminatory purview, and though their northern ally would soon surpass them in every respect, Italy's assault continued into the new year. By mid-summer 1939, the state had barred Italian Jews from many areas of public life, virtually eliminating them from public employment, while severely curtailing their private opportunities. Foreign Jews, meanwhile, were banished from Italy entirely, though the regime rescinded its expulsion decree shortly thereafter. When the course of the Second World War scuttled Fascism's goal to rid the country of its Jews, the regime turned instead to the mass internment of its foreign Jewish population, while pressing thousands of its own Jews into forced labor, thus bringing Italian Fascism's antisemitic measures to their extremes – at least before September 1943. While the Racial Laws, as intended, returned visibility to a miniscule minority group eager to blend with the whole, they also forced many Italian Jews, secular in worldview and agnostic or lacking in belief, to face their Jewish identity for the first time. The year 1938, then, which set these measures and processes in motion, had “caused a rupture in Italian Jewish history,”

as Michele Sarfatti explains, “whether at the time its victims or the other Italians were aware of it or not.”²¹³

After the initial shock passed, Jews recovered and adjusted to their new circumstances. Though thousands left Judaism, others became more committed in their faith, and while thousands more unenrolled in their Jewish Communities, others looked to them for advocacy and support. Some could rely on trusty Christian friends, who stayed by them even in their hour of need, while others, feeling social ostracism’s acute sting, fell back on their family networks. A comfortably middle-class demographic, Italy’s Jews could typically withstand the financial hit, and to replenish their lost income, some seized on the few corners of the market still open to them, while others, especially children, adolescents, and young adults, searched high and low for odd jobs to keep their families afloat. In the long term, such a way of living would have been unsustainable, especially when the Italian Social Republic started robbing Jews outright in 1943 and ’44. But in the short term, Jewish families could reestablish their bottom lines – even if they were a bit lower than before – and, in characteristic Italian fashion, ‘get by’. The check to this argument, of course, is Rome, which in this way, like so many others, qualifies the thesis. Already scraping bottom in their ghetto or ghetto-adjacent environs, Rome’s Jews were plunged into abject poverty by the Racial Laws, and they suffered the state’s legislative onslaught to the fullest degree.

Meanwhile, though thousands of Jews left the country, most stayed. Feelings of betrayal were palpable, approaching universal proportions, but most of Italy’s Jews remained committed to their homeland, persistent in the belief that Italy would not turn its back on them, even as it was in the process of doing so. As Alexander Stille has observed, “individual interviews with Jews suggest that the great majority did not feel themselves to be living in a hostile environment, even as their

²¹³ Michele Sarfatti, “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

rights were cruelly stripped away.”²¹⁴ Ettore Ovazza might have been unusual in his militant fascism, but he was from alone in thinking that ‘this too shall pass,’ even as Fascist Italy’s fortunes became tethered ever more tightly to those of Nazi Germany during the war. Indeed, from *Kristallnacht* on, the German counter became more and more pronounced, as Italy’s Jews favorably contrasted their own situation with that of their religious peers in the swelling Third Reich. Sure, they might have found themselves booted from their job, kicked out of the Party, and scrambling to find a new school for their children, but they weren’t being rounded up by the thousands and deported to camps or murdered outright on the streets.

With the war, Italy’s Jews, like their Gentile neighbors, spilled into the countryside to escape the bombardment of their cities, sharing in the collective victimhood of the general populace rather than differentiating themselves from it. All the while, as the noose tightened around their necks to the point of collective asphyxiation, they clung to the hope that Italy would show itself to be different from Germany. At most, they reasoned, the antisemitic discrimination was a stopgap measure meant to please an irascible partner, married to Italy only by convenience. Others insisted that the Racial Laws had been imposed outright, thrust upon the Italian government by its more powerful ally. Only with the arrival of the Germans on Italian soil did these beliefs start to crack, prompting many of the remaining Jews to consider flight. But by then, most of their escape routes had been sealed.

The Implementation of the Racial Laws

The August 1938 census may have made few waves among ordinary Jews, but the following month, the state’s antisemitic campaign became harder to ignore. In September 1938, with its anti-Judaic,

²¹⁴ Alexander Stille, “The Double Bind of Italian Jews: Acceptance and Assimilation,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 21-22.

racial, and antisemitic foundations in place, the newly race-conscious Fascist regime embarked on its mission to create “an Italy without Jews”. As Sarfatti explains, from 1938 until 1943, Italian Fascists attempted to “eliminate Jews from the country” (though never to “eliminate the country’s Jews”, an important distinction). The Racial Laws made clear that the Fascist regime’s goal was “to ‘aryanize’ Italian society,” and the first and most important step in this process was to excise the Jewish tumor from the body politic. “These policies of expelling Jews from the various sectors of employment, education, and social life and of separating them from non-Jews,” he writes, “served also the purpose of de-Judaizing and of racializing the country, which increasingly took on the character of an Aryan and racial state.”²¹⁵ Sharing this interpretation, Davide Rodogno argues that the end-goal of Fascist antisemitism was the emigration of Jews from Italy and its territories. To this end, the regime sought to completely eradicate Jews’ civil and political rights, an effort that involved barring them from vast sectors of the job market, eliminating them from national life, and transforming them into social pariahs. Once these goals had been achieved, Jews would have no choice but to leave.²¹⁶

The initial thrust of the legislation came on 5 September, when the state expelled all Jewish students, teachers, professors, and staff from Italy’s public schools and universities.²¹⁷ Italian Fascism, like its German counterpart, bestowed pride of place on its youth, and so the regime sought to purify the field of education first. As Iael Nidam-Orvieto and Enzo Collotti have both

²¹⁵ Sarfatti, “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943,” 76-77.

²¹⁶ Davide Rodogno, “*Italiani brava gente?* Fascist Italy’s Policy Toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943,” *European History Quarterly* 35:2 (2005), 215, 218.

²¹⁷ Vittorio Emanuele, Benito Mussolini, and Giuseppe Bottai, “Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza nella scuola fascista” (Measures for the Defense of the Race in Fascist Schools), *Regio Decreto Legge* n.1390, 5 settembre 1938, <http://www.e-brei.net/articoli/storia/razza4.htm>. See also: Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 124-125, 328n.129; Liliana Picciotto, introduction to *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, by Francesca Costantini (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 13-14; and Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 19. On 15 November, two amendments to the law were added that cut both ways for the Jews. While Italian Jews already enrolled in universities were permitted to complete their studies, the state removed all Jewish-authored textbooks from Italian schools; see Zimmerman, introduction to *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 3; and Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), ch. 4.

written, Mussolini's regime identified Italy's public-school system as the starting point for the creation of the new Fascist generation, the generation of the New Man (*Uomo nuovo*). By segregating schools, the regime sought to mobilize its youth and put them in the vanguard of the war against Fascism's new internal enemy. For the New Little Man, then, his enemy was his former Jewish schoolmate.²¹⁸ Sarfatti conservatively estimates that 8,500 Jewish students were banished from Italy's public schools: 2,500 elementary school students, 4,000 intermediate and secondary-level students, and 2,000 college students.²¹⁹ Meanwhile, he records a minimum of 270 secondary school principals and teachers being terminated from their positions, in addition to over 100 principals and teachers at the elementary level, and he counts 229 university professors and "many dozens more" supplementary faculty members losing their jobs as well.²²⁰

Two days later, the regime passed another law banishing foreign Jews from Italian soil.²²¹ If the state had begun viewing its own Jews with suspicion, this went double for Jewish 'aliens'. From September 1938 until the following March, non-Italian Jews were forbidden from immigrating to Italy or its Libyan and Aegean possessions, while Jews already residing in those territories were compelled to leave within six months, after which they faced deportation.²²² The 7 September legislation also revoked citizenship to foreign-born Jews who had naturalized after 1 January 1919,

²¹⁸ Iael Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 162. Collotti, *ibid*.

²¹⁹ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 353n.321.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

²²¹ Vittorio Emanuele and Benito Mussolini, "Provvedimenti nei confronti degli ebrei stranieri" (Measures regarding Foreign Jews), *Regio Decreto Legge* n.1381, 5 settembre 1938, <http://www.e-brei.net/articoli/storia/razz4.htm>.

²²² The law did not encompass Italian East Africa (*Africa Orientale Italiana*, AOI), though scholars disagree as to why. According to Renzo De Felice, at the time, Mussolini was planning to relocate Jews to southern Ethiopia: first foreigners (Germans, Austrians, and Poles), and later Italians. This idea, however, was short-lived; De Felice notes that the AOI settlement plan first appears in the historical record on 30 August 1938, in the pages of Galeazzo Ciano's diary, only to have been abandoned by January 1939. The documentary appendix that De Felice provides also shows that the Ethiopia settlement plan is mentioned as a "possibility" in various versions of the *Declaration on Race*, including Mussolini's draft (date not provided) and the final version published on 6 October 1938. Later drafts (not Mussolini's) reveal that the Ethiopia plan was meant to discourage emigration to Mandatory Palestine; Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2001), 270–276, 690–700. Sarfatti, on the other hand, contends that the Ethiopia settlement plan was unrelated to the expulsion decree (though he agrees that it was a "passing interest" for Mussolini); Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 342n.223.

presumably to punish Jews who had not fought for Italy during the Great War. “Overnight,” Shira Klein writes, “some 1,200 Jews with Italian citizenship suddenly became stateless,” and they, too, would have to leave.²²³ For a brief moment in time, the severity of Fascist Italy’s antisemitic legislation surpassed even that of Nazi Germany, at least with respect to education and foreign Jewry.²²⁴ (By mid-November, in the wake of *Kristallnacht* – or the *Reichspogromnacht* – the Nazis had retaken the antisemitic initiative on all fronts.)

On October 6, 1938, a month after the state passed the September laws, the Fascist Grand Council pronounced its *Declaration on Race* (*Dichiarazione sulla razza*). Like July’s *Manifesto of the Racist Scientists*, this key antisemitic tract had the Duce’s fingerprints all over it, the final product bearing a striking resemblance to an early version that he had drafted.²²⁵ Aiming to deny political rights to Italian Jews while severely curtailing their civil rights, the *Declaration*’s discriminatory range was wide-reaching, calling for, among other things, racial categorizations based on heredity and baptismal records (à la the Nuremberg Laws); the prohibition of marriage between Italians and members of non-Aryan races (in fact, even marriages between Italians and other Aryans would need approval from the Interior Ministry); the expulsion of Jews from public service, the military, and the National Fascist Party; special regulations for Jews entering professional occupations; the proscription of Jewish-owned or Jewish-managed businesses staffing 100 or more employees; and the outlawing of Jewish ownership of more than fifty hectares of land.²²⁶

²²³ Shira Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 90. See also: Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4; and Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 166.

²²⁴ The Nazi Party organ, *Völkischer Beobachter*, noted as much in its 25 October 1938 edition; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 328n.129. See also 124–125.

²²⁵ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 690–700.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4. The *Declaration* did contain a proviso stating that, depending on the attitude that Jews adopted toward Fascism from that point forward, these and other anti-Jewish measures could either be voided or intensified. However, by that point, the regime’s mind was made up.

At the same time, the *Declaration* did include exemptions for Jews in the following categories: families of Jews who died fighting in the Libyan, Great, Ethiopian, or Spanish Wars, and for Jews (and their families) who either volunteered in those conflicts or earned the War Merit Cross (*Croce al Merito di Guerra*); Jews who were disabled or wounded in the Fascist movement, and their families (including if they were killed); Jews (and their families) who had joined the *fasci di combattimento* or enrolled in the Fascist Party at an early date, or who had accompanied Gabrielle d'Annunzio to Fiume; and families deemed to be of “exceptional” merit. The *Declaration* also exempted foreign Jews from expulsion if they were sixty-five years of age or older or if they had married a racial Italian before 1 October.²²⁷

The main wave of the Fascist state's Racial Laws came with royal decree n.1728 on November 17, 1938. Bearing the signature of King Vittorio Emanuele III, the “Measures for the Defense of the Italian Race” (*Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza italiana*) amounted to a codification and elaboration of the Grand Council's *Declaration on Race*.²²⁸ Along with enacting all of the sweeping proscriptions outlined in the October *Declaration*, the November laws barred Jews from businesses deemed to be in “the defense of the Nation”, “banks of national interest”, and private insurance firms; prevented Jews from employing Italian-Aryan domestic servants; denied Jews the right to own land valued at greater than 5,000 lire or buildings with an assessable tax of more than 20,000 lire; and reaffirmed the revocation of citizenship to Jews who had naturalized after 1 January 1919. Elaborating on racial categorizations first delineated in the *Declaration*, royal decree n. 1728 also provided a legal definition of a ‘Jew’. According to the November Measures, a ‘racial Jew’ was anyone (i) whose parents were both racially Jewish, (ii) who was born to one Jewish and one foreign parent, (iii) who was born to a Jewish mother and whose father was unknown, or (iv) who had one

²²⁷ De Felice, *ibid.* Collotti, *ibid.* Sarfatti, “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943,” 72.

²²⁸ Collotti, *ibid.* The “Measures for the Defense of the Italian Race” are reprinted in De Felice, *ibid.*, 700-705.

parent who was racially Jewish, practiced Judaism, belonged to a Jewish Community, or gave “indications of Judaism”. Someone who was born into a mixed marriage and who, dating from before 1 October 1938, belonged to a religion other than Judaism was *not* considered racially Jewish. Lastly, the November Measures reproduced the *Declaration’s* exemptions.²²⁹

A look at the date reveals that not even an event like *Kristallnacht*, which happened only a week prior, would deter Fascist Italy from pressing on, full steam ahead, with its own antisemitic programme. In fact, Italy’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Galeazzo Ciano – also the Duce’s son-in-law – noted in his diary that Mussolini “approves unconditionally the measures of reaction adopted by the Nazis. He says that if he were in a similar position, he would do even more.”²³⁰ Certainly word and deed are categorically different things, but this is a shocking statement, especially coming from the mouth of someone whose antisemitism is often downplayed or denied outright. Although it does not appear that Benito Mussolini ever seriously considered mass-murdering Italy’s Jews, his willingness to condone such acts and engage in such language should be enough for us to not casually disregard his own venomous antisemitism.

The following June, the state passed its final antisemitic act before the war. The private-sector companion to the public-sector laws of 1938 (although the November Measures, too, had infiltrated the private realm to a considerable degree), the royal decree of 29 June 1939 affected a wide range of occupations, including law, medicine, architecture, engineering, and journalism. While most professionals in these fields could keep their positions, provided they served a Jewish-only clientele, Jews were forbidden from working as journalists and notaries. Although an addendum

²²⁹ De Felice, *ibid.*, 690-705. Given the legal emphasis on bloodlines, however spurious, I follow Sarfatti’s argument that the state adopted and implemented a biological definition of race. Any claims to the Italians’ spiritual nature had become little more than window dressing; Sarfatti, “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943,” 72-73. With that said, the regime’s commitment to its biological interpretation of race showed a lack of consistency, given that Demorazza and other state agencies accepted baptism as valid proof of one’s Italian-Aryan makeup, provided the rite had taken place before 1 October 1938.

²³⁰ “*Approva incondizionatamente le misure di reazione adottate dai nazisti. Dice che in posizione analoga farebbe ancora di più*”; Galeazzo Ciano quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4.

passed on 13 July allowed Jews to petition the Minister of the Interior for exemptions beyond those codified in law, the evaluation of their Aryan credentials was subject to the Interior Minister's extraordinary discretion, so the outcome of these requests often depended on the applicant's financial wherewithal.²³¹

The Effects of the Racial Laws

In fact and in law, Italy's 1938 antisemitic legislation turned Jews into second-class citizens. As Liliana Segre puts it, Italy's Jews had become "citizens 'of Series B'" (*cittadini 'di serie B'*).²³² While citizenship itself had not become race-based in Italy – as was the case in Germany – many of its rights and privileges had. For all intents and purposes, citizenship became a concept devoid of meaning in Italy, because being of the Italian-Aryan race trumped being of Italian nationality in every appreciable way.

For a population believing itself perfectly integrated, even assimilated, into the Italian national community, the Fascist regime's Racial Laws came as an enormous shock (*shoc*).

In the words of Luciana Nissim Momigliano, a survivor from Turin who, like Primo Levi, was deported to Auschwitz on February 22, 1944, the antisemitic legislation came "like a lightning bolt, like a catastrophic earthquake". Refugees pouring into Italian cities from across the Alps had spread word about their persecution in Hitler's expanding Reich, but Italy's Jewish communities doubted

²³¹ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 97. Other anti-Jewish measures passed between 1938 and 1943 banned Jews from popular vacation spots and certain public buildings; prevented Jews from publishing books or giving public lectures; blocked Jews' names from appearing in phone books; and forbade Jews from posting advertisements or obituaries in the press. For lists of the many economic and social restrictions placed on Jews, see: Collotti, *ibid.*; and Zimmerman, introduction, 4.

²³² Emanuela Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre: Una delle ultime testimoni della Shoah* (Milan: San Paolo, 2013), 18.

that such tyranny could ever appear in their homeland. “It seemed to be a fate affecting others,” she explains, “and from which we would be spared.”²³³

On the heels of shock came feelings of betrayal. “For years,” Nidam-Orvieto writes, “Italian Jews had followed Mussolini and his ideology and several thousands joined the Fascist party. All of a sudden, as if overnight, this same regime abandoned them, leaving them with a deep sense of betrayal.”²³⁴ One family taken completely by surprise was Segre’s. After all, the three family patriarchs had enrolled in the Fascist Party (with her uncle, Amedeo, being actively engaged in the PNF, and her grandfather, Giuseppe, financing Party activities), the Segres didn’t practice their “foreign” religion, Giuseppe spoke the Milanese dialect, Amedeo and Alberto had fought in the Great War, and none had displayed antifascist behaviors (at least outwardly).²³⁵ For all these reasons and more, Liliana says, “it was impossible for me to understand the racial campaign.” It was “a profound violation”, she averred, for the state to treat a community whose patriotism had never been in question as if they were “enemies of the nation”.²³⁶ The Italian state and the Fascist Party had turned their backs on a family that, like so many others, had proved their sincere commitment to their homeland and believed themselves to be fully, demonstrably Italian.

Because the state initiated its anti-Jewish assault in the public-school system, and many survivors were children or adolescents at the time, expulsion from school is one of the memories burned most deeply in their minds. As Nidam-Orvieto explains, “Most of the Jewish university, secondary, and primary school students clearly remember, even today, the moment they realized that

²³³ “*come un fulmine, come un terremoto catastrofico*”; “*Sembrava un destino toccato ad altri, ma da cui noi saremmo stati preservati*”; Luciana Nissim Momigliano quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 5.

²³⁴ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 164.

²³⁵ Ottavia Borella, “Liliana, una sopravvissuta. Nel ’43, a tredici anni da Milano a Birkenau,” *la Repubblica*, 4 maggio 1994, p. 7, VdS, Serie I, Busta 24, CDEC.

²³⁶ “*impossibile per me da capire la campagna razziale*”; Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000092/liliana-segre.html>. “*una violazione profonda*”; “*nemica della patria*”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre*, 19, 20.

they had been banned from school and the deep emotional pain they felt as a result of this shocking discriminatory action.”²³⁷ Similarly, Collotti writes that “In the memories of Italian Jews, the impact of the laws on Italian schools remains one of the most traumatic events,” and the testimonial record bears this out.²³⁸

Segre’s banishment from school marked her passage into, what she calls, the “grey zone of indifference” (*zona grigia dell’indifferenza*). At eight years of age, just before starting third grade, she was barred from resuming her primary schooling at Milan’s Via Ruffini school.²³⁹ As she remembers, her father, Alberto, “with great gentleness and great sadness, explained to me that I was a Jewish girl and would no longer be able to go to school.”²⁴⁰ While Alberto, fortunately, was able to enroll her in the Marcelline Institute, a private school run by nuns not far from their home, this did not solve all of her problems. Although she had an overall positive experience at the Marcelline Institute, especially because the sisters treated her well, her route to her new school took her past Via Ruffini, making her walks decidedly less pleasant. Passing by her old school, she recalls how her former classmates would point at her and giggle, telling each other that Liliana had to attend school elsewhere because she was Jewish. Chalking up these hurtful words and gestures to childish ignorance, kids not knowing what they were doing, she chose to ignore them. But her increasing social isolation was manifesting outside of school settings, too. Her friends, for instance, stopped inviting her to birthday parties, something she attributes to the fact they simply no longer saw her.²⁴¹ But hurtful words and gestures from her former schoolmates could indicate the dissemination of

²³⁷ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 162.

²³⁸ “Nelle memorie di ebrei italiani l’impatto delle leggi sulla scuola rimane uno degli eventi più traumatici”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4. Costantini recounts this as well in *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 19–20.

²³⁹ Liliana Segre, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000348/liliana-segre-2.html>. Borella, “Liliana, una sopravvissuta,” 4 maggio 1994.

²⁴⁰ “mi fu spiegato con grande dolcezza e con grande tristezza che io era una bambina ebrea e non avrei più potuto andare a scuola”; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 19, 21.

anti-Jewish sentiment throughout Italian society (and across generations), or at least to the willingness of ordinary Italians to enforce the state's programmatic antisemitism in their everyday lives. And what she interpreted as falling out of touch with friends could have been their parents forbidding their children from associating with 'a Jew', perhaps for fear of repercussions and stigmatization, perhaps for reasons of racial-ideological conviction.

For Luciana Sacerdote in Genoa, being barred from school was a troubling experience that, like Segre, made little sense to her. Born May 8, 1924, in the Piedmont town of Alba, Luciana had moved with her family to Genoa at the age of two. Luciana's father, Claudio, was involved in the textile trade (also like Segre), and his activity provided the family with a "beautiful home" (*bella casa*) in the Ligurian capital, where they never suffered from want.²⁴² Along with her father, Luciana lived with her mother, Ernestina (Borgetti), a model bourgeois housewife, and her older sister, Laura, four years her senior.²⁴³ Reflecting a common pattern in Italy, Claudio was the only observant member of the household. Though the Sacerdotes celebrated Judaism's Holy Days – which involved taking trips to Turin to celebrate with Luciana's grandparents – Ernestina was not very religious, Laura had converted to Catholicism, her fiancé's religion, and Luciana knew little about Judaism.²⁴⁴ Such was the norm for Italy's Jews, which made the antisemitic legislation all the more incomprehensible. In an instant, at age fourteen, Luciana found herself ousted from her public school, and her expulsion alarmed her. "Truly, a bit of fear began," she relates. Unlike Segre, however, Luciana and her sister

²⁴² Luciana Sacerdote, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, "*Interviste alla Storia*" – 1995-1996, Quinto, 2 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000078/luciana-sacerdote.html>.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* "Sacerdote, Laura," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-6814/sacerdote-laura.html>.

²⁴⁴ Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

were able to maintain their same circle of Jewish and Catholic friends, their Christian companions providing them solace and solidarity when they needed it most.²⁴⁵

Having been baptized at birth in 1920, well before the October 1938 cutoff date, Fausta Finzi avoided expulsion, but even in her racially Jew-less public school, she detected a seismic shift after September 5, 1938.²⁴⁶ The fish rots from the head, so the saying goes, and much of this change in climate stemmed from the Sacchi School principal, a “fascist, San Sepolcriste, et cetera”, who had already made a habit of donning his Fascist uniform to school every day. After the Racial Laws took effect, he added antisemitic clichés to his bag of tricks and enforced the new legislation with vigor.²⁴⁷ Finzi’s circumstances might also demonstrate the fuzzy limits of exemption. By law, Fausta was not a Jew, rendering her immune to the antisemitic measures, but after she completed her magisterial studies, she recalls the school administration only reluctantly granting her a diploma. Later, her application to enroll in a teaching institute was rejected, presumably because of her part-Jewish background. Forced to quit her studies, she went to work as a manager in her father’s new chemical business, the latter having lost his banking job.²⁴⁸

The case of Agata Herskovits shows how both of the September laws could affect a single Jewish family living in Italy. At the time, ‘Goti’ was residing in Fiume with her ethnically Polish father, Luigi, her Czechoslovak mother, Rebecca Amster, and her brother, Tiberio (“Tibor”), two years her minor. She also had three older half-siblings from Luigi’s previous marriage, though they lived elsewhere: a sister, Lili, in Romania, a brother in Albania, and another brother (perhaps in

²⁴⁵ “*Si cominciava vero un po’ paura*”; *ibid.* Looking at the German case, however, Marion Kaplan notes that the kindness of friendship often “gave Jews mixed messages, letting some deceive themselves into staying on”; Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43-44.

²⁴⁶ Demorazza confirmed Fausta’s and her brother’s exemptions in July 1941; Il Ministro dell’Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 12 luglio 1941, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 14, ASMilano.

²⁴⁷ “*fascista, sansepolcrista, eccetera*”; Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996, 2 maggio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000042/fausta-finzi.html>.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Trieste, but the audio is unclear).²⁴⁹ Even before the Racial Laws, Goti explains, Fiume's Jews had it hard. Almost the entire population consisted of central European immigrants, so their grasp of the Italian language was limited. In the Herskovits home, for instance, Goti's family usually spoke German or Hungarian, their native tongues having migrated with them from Czechoslovakia. When Fiume's Jews did speak Italian or, more often, dialect, their pattern of speech was "stunted" (*stentato*), their central European pronunciations giving away their origins. After the Racial Laws came into effect, this self-inflicted verbal betrayal often had the effect of nullifying false documentation, a problem that acquired lethal consequences only a few years later.²⁵⁰

Goti was fourteen years old, in the third level of *ginnasio*, when she was evicted from her public school.²⁵¹ Thanks to arrangements made by local Community members, she and other Jewish children in Fiume were schooled privately thereafter, and in this way, Goti was able to complete her education, even taking her maturation exams in 1942.²⁵² Though the law expelling Jews from Italy's public schools had been disorienting, the law expelling foreign Jews from Italy itself was disastrous for Fiume's Jewish population, putting them in an "absolutely impossible" (*assolutamente impossibile*) legal and diplomatic bind.²⁵³ The not inconsequential sidebar to that piece of legislation had revoked citizenship to Jews who naturalized after January 1919, and most of the 1,200 Jews affected were living in Fiume and Trieste, which had only become part of Italy after the war.²⁵⁴ Fiume's Jews, thus,

²⁴⁹ Agata "Goti" Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *"Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996*, Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>. Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 25 febbraio 1987, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000211/goti-herskovits-bauer.html>.

²⁵⁰ Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 6-7, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

²⁵¹ Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, Dicembre 1982, p. 1, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, p. 1.

²⁵² Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 90. Klein notes that Jews who accepted Italian citizenship at the time of annexation were spared, while those who either rejected Italian citizenship or requested it at a later date were not.

could no longer stay in Italy, but for the same reason, they couldn't return to their countries of origin either.

Fortune, if it can be called that, favored the Herskovits family twice, if only in these early years. Because Luigi was ill and advanced in age, seventy-three years old at the time, an article in the Racial Laws (art. 25) permitted him and his family to remain in Italy.²⁵⁵ In any case, in March 1939 – the designated date for all foreign Jews to leave the country – the government suspended its edict of expulsion. While the reasons for doing so are not entirely clear, the decision seems to have resulted from logistical problems, economic considerations, and diplomatic pressure. Italian shipping companies, unable to handle the outflow of so many refugees, were losing out to foreign competition, and the French, Swiss, and Yugoslav governments protested the sudden surge of refugees pouring over their borders.²⁵⁶

One group of foreign Jews who, even before the state's March retreat, avoided the threat of expulsion were the Turks. Of all states with expatriate or refugee Jewish populations living in Italy, only Turkey vigorously protested the Fascist regime's expulsion decree, warning that if Italy enforced this measure against its citizens, the Turkish government would treat its Italian Jews in like manner. Faced with this possibility, in February 1939, the Fascist state relented.²⁵⁷ Turkey's hardline response enabled the families of Samuele Dana and Lina (Ventura) Jaffè to remain in Milan. Samuele and his siblings, Mosè and Stella, had all been born in Milan, but their parents, Salomone and Malcunna (Boton), had moved to Italy from Istanbul in 1929, following some relatives who had already relocated. (Possibly alluding to Atatürk's reforms, Samuele obliquely mentions that problems

²⁵⁵ Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. "Herskovits, Luigi," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-3518/herskovits-luigi.html?persone=%22Herskovits%2C+Luigi%22>. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 704-705.

²⁵⁶ Rony Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 161-162. Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 90. Klein cites Voigt's *Il rifugio precario* (pp. 306-310) for her information.

²⁵⁷ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 330. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 342n.223. Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), 171n.208.

in Turkey spurred the move in the first place.)²⁵⁸ Upon settling into their new home, Salomone established himself as a street-side sock vendor – an occupation that Samuele would one day inherit – and two years later, on February 5, 1931, Malcunna gave birth to Mosè. Samuele followed on December 5, 1932, and five years after that, on November 28, 1937, Stella was born.²⁵⁹ Uprooting a family of five – and one with an infant and two young children, at that – would have been no small feat under any circumstance, but doing so on a vendor's income would have been virtually impossible. For Lina Jaffè, meanwhile, whose odyssey was recounted in chapter one, Turkey's diplomatic tit-for-tat prevented her own personal diaspora from acquiring another unexpected, unwanted leg. Her sister and brother-in-law, however, did lose their carpet business on Via Montenapoleone, and continuing the family tradition of crisscrossing the Mediterranean, they left Italy for Morocco thereafter.²⁶⁰

With the passing of the Racial Laws in November 1938 and June 1939, one of the most commonly revoked rights was the right to a job. Thousands of Jews suddenly found themselves out of work and with few other prospects still available to them. In Fiume, the already ailing Luigi Herskovits lost his merchant job, and because his illness had left him incapacitated by then, Goti and her brother looked for odd jobs to offset the family's financial losses. The Racial Laws may not have left the Herskovitses destitute, but they did make economic uncertainty their new reality.²⁶¹ In

²⁵⁸ "Salomone and Mosè Dana," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino. Testimonianze, 1967*, 22 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC. Samuele Dana, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Milan, 27 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000026/samuele-dana.html>.

²⁵⁹ The interview that Samuele gave to Liliana Picciotto in 1996 took place at his vending stand; Dana, *ibid.* See also: "Salomone and Mosè Dana," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*; "Dana, Mosè," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2340/dana-mose.html>; "Dana, Samuele," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2342/dana-samuele.html?persone=%22Dana%2C+Samuele%22>; and "Dana, Stella," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1849/dana-stella.html>.

²⁶⁰ Lina Jaffè, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia," 1995-1996, Milan, 20 novembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000053/lina-jaffe.html>.

²⁶¹ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. It is difficult to get an accurate perception of how, exactly, the 1938-1939 Racial Laws affected the Herskovitses' financial situation. Goti says that after the laws barred her father from work, their

Milan, the case of the Finzi family once again shows how anti-Jewish prejudice could win out over legal exemption. Fausta explains that with great difficulty, her father, Edgardo, secured an exemption from the Racial Laws. Working in his favor were his mixed marriage and his military service during World War I.²⁶² Nevertheless, her testimony makes it sound as if he were edged out of his banking post anyway, and to avoid termination, he quit.²⁶³ Given the circumstances, he rebounded nicely, purchasing a small, abandoned chemical business that generated enough profit to keep the family afloat. It was there the Fausta worked after unofficial roadblocks barred her from continuing her studies. The snag to this story, however, is that the business' former owner was a German Jewish refugee who, better than Edgardo, sensed the direction the winds were blowing and fled Italy.²⁶⁴

The Finzis' ability to quickly restabilize reflects the economic realities of Italy's Jewish population at the time of the Racial Laws. By the late 1930s, Italy's Jews had grown into a consummately middle-class demographic, and in Milan, Italy's financial and industrial capital, they were even better off. As a result, the financial hit did not always spell ruin. Within the bounds of legality, new businesses were founded, weekend excursions continued, and life went on. It was different, and no doubt worse, but the new trials and tribulations did not seem insurmountable. On a material level, at least, many Jews living in Italy felt that they could weather the storm.

But the negative impact of unemployment transcended mere loss of income, and in other ways, Italy's Jews were not spared. In conventional Italian Jewish families, male heads of household

"family and economic situation became very critical" (*la nostra situazione economica e familiare era molto critica*), but from there, she quickly pivots to 1943 and the German occupation, a common tendency in survivor testimony, as will be discussed in later chapters; see Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 1-2.

²⁶² Unlike Fausta's and her brother's exemptions, I was unable to confirm Edgardo's exemption with government records. I take Fausta on her word here.

²⁶³ Article 13.g of the November Racial Laws forbade Jews from working in banks "of national interest". Unfortunately, Edgardo's place of employment isn't specified, so we don't know if he worked in such a bank. Still, if he were exempted, this might not have mattered; see De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 703, and Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

²⁶⁴ Finzi, Interview, *ibid*.

were the providers. By putting Jewish men out of work, the Racial Laws stripped them of breadwinner status. When this traditional pillar of male identity crumbled, Nidam-Orvieto shows, Italian Jewish men suffered psychological depredations on top of financial loss.²⁶⁵ Sacerdote describes how this scenario played out within her family. After the Genoa prefecture seized her father's textile business, she says that "Dad started to go downhill, feeling himself cheated out of everything".²⁶⁶ Although Luciana's expulsion from school had left her alarmed but alright, history would not repeat. Marking a change in her and her family's story from that point forward, she notes that after her father lost his store, "things go badly."²⁶⁷

The Racial Laws also forced Italy's Jews to confront their Jewish identity, many begrudgingly, and many for the first time. Aldo Zargani, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, had a religious upbringing that matched common patterns in Italy. His father, Mario, was observant, and though he neither understood Hebrew nor observed Judaic orthopraxy, he kept the faith all the same in a "mythical and sentimental" way.²⁶⁸ Aldo's mother, Eugenia (Tedeschi), however, was an "atheist, agnostic, and a freethinker" who remained somewhat skeptical of spiritualism.²⁶⁹ Taking his mother's path, Aldo grew up a non-believer, and though the travails of the 1930s and '40s would lead him to lean on his Jewish heritage later in life as a way of sustaining faith in humanity, he remained a religious skeptic.²⁷⁰ Segre, reciting a refrain commonly invoked by survivors, says that the Racial Laws judged her "guilty of being born Jewish," but she didn't know that she was a Jew until

²⁶⁵ Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," 161–162.

²⁶⁶ "E di lì, papà ha cominciato andare giù, ecco sentirsi molto defraudato di tutto"; Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996. This episode compares well with that of Olderigo Fiano, in Florence. Nedo, Olderigo's son, recalls how his father "grew very old" between 1938 and 1943 – "just five years"; Nedo Fiano quoted in Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 89.

²⁶⁷ "adesso le cose vanno male"; Sacerdote, *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ "mitico e sentimentale"; Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 83.

²⁶⁹ "La mamma ... era atea, agnostica e libera pensatrice, con qualche scettica inclinazione per lo spiritismo"; *ibid.*, 84. As Klein notes though, the Zarganis did avoid eating ham on Saturday, the Sabbath; Shira Klein, "Challenging the Myth of Italian Jewish Assimilation," *Modern Judaism* 37:1 (February 2017), 93.

²⁷⁰ Zargani, *ibid.*, 226, 229.

the state told her so, just before her eighth birthday.²⁷¹ Describing her family as lay and “completely agnostic” (*agnostica completamente*), Liliana tells how she grew up without a trace of Judaism in her home or in her life.²⁷² She never went to the synagogue, she was unfamiliar with Jewish holidays, and she “never heard a word about Judaism” at home.²⁷³ Reflecting on this void many years later, she ponders whether this lack of familiarity with her Jewish roots had left her ill-prepared for events to come. “[I]f I had been aware that I was part of the Jewish community,” she reasons, “maybe I would have borne certain events, then and later, with a different spirit, with more consciousness.” She was only able to fill this gap much later in life by becoming a witness.²⁷⁴

Finzi, in contrast to Segre and Zargani, appears precocious in developing and defending her Jewish identity from a young age, a practice that seems to have gone against the collective instincts of Italy’s Jewish population. Already cultivating her Jewish identity with friends for some time, Fausta steered headlong into that curve after the Racial Laws were passed. Recalling some youthful defiance, she says, “At a certain moment, I had a little, a sense of rebellion. I said, ‘...where can I go to pray,’” despite the inherent danger in doing so.²⁷⁵ Saved from the Racial Laws by the grace of her baptism, Fausta was evidently a master at keeping her furtive prayer sessions a secret. The police chief who reported on her status positively noted that she had never been caught making outward expressions of devotion to Judaism.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ “la colpa di essere nata ebrea”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, Liliana Segre, 18.

²⁷² Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. See also: Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 17.

²⁷³ “in casa non avevo mai sentito parlare di ebraismo”; Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 19. See also: Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

²⁷⁴ “se avessi avuto una consapevolezza della mia appartenenza ebraica, forse avrei sopportato certi eventi, allora e in seguito, con uno spirito diverso, con più coscienza”; Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁷⁵ “Poi in certo momento anche io ho avuto un po’, un senso di ribellione. Ho detto, ‘...dove andare a pregarli?’”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

²⁷⁶ Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Regia Prefetto di Milano, 16 maggio 1941, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 14, ASMilano. As the document indicates, the same was true of her brother, who identified neither as a Jew nor as a Catholic.

While compelling Jews to confront their own identity, an identity that the state alone had given many of them, the Racial Laws shone a spotlight on a minority group that had gone to great lengths to integrate into the national community. Ever since antiquity, Jews had comprised a tiny population on the Italian peninsula, never more than one-tenth of a percent, and after unification, they weren't just small, but they were well-integrated, too. As part of their integrationist programme, Italy's Jewish community had mostly turned their religiosity inward and homeward, to the extent that they remained observant at all. "Following emancipation and the process of assimilation," Liliana Picciotto writes, "Jews had become virtually invisible in Italian society."²⁷⁷ In Milan, where agnosticism was common and interfaith marriage the rule, this went double. The results of the August 1938 census showed that this proportion hadn't changed, recording a mere 58,412 people "of Jewish race" living in Italy (48,032 Italian and 10,380 foreign) – though Demorazza's total exceeded the number of self-identifying Jews by more than 10,000. Milan, with 10,219 racially-defined Jews, still had the second-largest Jewish population behind Rome (12,799).²⁷⁸ By isolating a fraction of the Italian population – and one fused with the majority – segregating it from the rest, and identifying it as the source of Italy's problems, the Fascist regime undid the process of Jewish integration and, in the process, returned visibility to a group that had expended great efforts to blend into the general populace, if not disappear entirely.

Branded national villains and divorced from the rest of the population, Italy's Jews suffered a break with the state and ruptures with ordinary Italians (which included many of their former Gentile friends). Collotti explains how, throughout the Fascist hierarchy, officials eagerly put the

²⁷⁷ Liliana Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 220. These arguments are echoed in Fabio Levi, "Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, entire.

²⁷⁸ If we look instead at the number of Jews against the general population, Milan had the fourth-highest percentage in Italy at 9/1000, trailing Trieste (25/1000), Livorno (18/1000), and Rome (11/1000); Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 4. I have privileged Collotti's statistics for their specificity. For comparison, Klein notes that the August census identified 57,425 people of Jewish race, while a 1936 tally conducted by the Union of Italian Jewish Communities recorded 45,998 self-identifying Jews (36-37,000 Italians and 8-9,000 foreigners); Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 88.

regime's antisemitic policies into practice, much like Finzi's doctrinaire principal. Attributing their motives less to racism than to conformism, he argues that countless peripheral agents, prefects, mayors, and questors (police chiefs) zealously enforced the directives emanating from Rome, engaging in "a type of competition" amongst one another and even sending recommendations back up the hierarchical ladder.²⁷⁹ Among ordinary Italians, although reception can be difficult to quantify, a newer school of thought maintains that the Racial Laws and their precursors indeed found fertile soil among the non-Jewish populace. Sandro Servi, to give an example, contends that the regime's antisemitic "propaganda machine" – with *La difesa della razza* as its most effective gear – persuaded the average Italian to adopt negative feelings "toward his or her Jewish neighbor (or toward the abstract idea of the Jew, but which nonetheless led all the same to the denigration or physical harming of a flesh-and-blood human being)."²⁸⁰ By assessing broad strata of Italian society, from the middle and upper classes to state and non-state actors, Sarfatti similarly concludes that a disturbingly large cross-section of the Italian population consented to the regime's anti-Jewish legislation:

King Victor Emmanuel III of Savoy signed each and every law. Pope Pius XI protested publicly ... only against the rule forbidding the 'trascrizione' (that is, the recording in the marriage registers by Italian state authorities) of racially mixed marriages celebrated with Roman Catholic rites. His successor, Pius XII, never made any public protest whatsoever. The great majority and sometimes the totality of the noblemen and high-ranking army officers who sat in the Senate voted in favor of the anti-Jewish laws.

Students and young Fascist intellectuals zealously supported and publicized them. Older intellectuals decided to remain members of the aryanized academies. Low- and high-level officials of the National Fascist Party applauded the new laws and acted as propagandists. The newspapers belonging to the Fascist party cheered while the so-called independent press joined the chorus.²⁸¹

In light of such research, it is difficult to accept Renzo De Felice's long-dominant stance that Italians, impervious to racism, rejected the antisemitic laws wholesale.

²⁷⁹ "*una sorta di competizione*"; Collotti, *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Sandro Servi, "Building a Racial State: Images of the Jew in the Illustrated Fascist Magazine, *La Difesa della Razza*, 1938–1943," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 150.

²⁸¹ Sarfatti, "Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938–1943," 77–78.

Segre certainly wouldn't endorse such views. In words echoing Primo Levi and, perhaps, Elie Wiesel, she says that with the passing of the Racial Laws, "We were suddenly thrown into the *grey zone* of indifference, a fog that," like a serpent, "softly envelops you at first, only to then paralyze you with its invincible pincer. An indifference that is more violent than any violence, because it is mysterious, ambiguous, never spoken: it is an enemy that strikes you without you ever being able to see it distinctly."²⁸² Only rarely, in both her experiences and her appraisal, did ordinary Italians seem openly antisemitic. Instead, "most simply turned the other way."²⁸³ Goti Bauer would not accept De Felice's position, either. She remembers how "the Jew was presented as a spy, as a dangerous person, someone with whom it was better to not have relations," and she lost a friend because of it, "the daughter of a Fascist teacher":

I believe that it hurt her when she could no longer greet me. But I'm certain that it was her father who said to her, "Look, your friend, don't say 'Hi' to her anymore because I wouldn't want anyone to see you."²⁸⁴

'Maintaining relations with a Jew,' to complete the sentence. In a twist of fate, the year before Goti's 1995 interview, her sister-in-law took an English class in Milan with Goti's former friend. Although the two were put back in touch, Goti relates how the other woman refused to admit what she had done as a child. "*Ma com'è?*" she asked Goti. "What do you mean?"²⁸⁵

In general, Goti notes that ordinary, non-Jewish Italians adjusted well enough to the Racial Laws, not showing any strong signs of resistance. Though some displayed genuine kindness and friendship toward the Jews, with her own family enjoying "the generous solidarity of our neighbors,"

²⁸² "*All'improvviso eravamo stati nella zona grigia dell'indifferenza: una nebbia, un'ovatta che ti avvolge dapprima morbidamente per poi paralizzarti nella sua invincibile tenaglia. Un'indifferenza che è più violenta di ogni violenza, perché misteriosa, ambigua, mai dichiarata: un nemico che ti colpisce senza che tu riesca mai a scorgerlo distintamente*" [emphasis in original]; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 18.

²⁸³ "*pochi si schieravano per un antisemitismo ostentato. No: la maggior parte voltava semplicemente la faccia dall'altra parte*"; *ibid.*, 21.

²⁸⁴ "*l'ebreo era presentato come una spia, come una persona pericolosa, una persona con cui era meglio non avere rapporti*"; "*era figlia di un maestro fascista. Credo che lei abbia sofferto non salutarmi più. Ma sono sicura che è stat oil padre a dirle, "Guarda, la tua amica, non salutarla più perché non vorrei che qualcuno ti vedesse"*"; Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

many of their acquaintances severed their ties, and this was a more accurate reflection of the population as a whole.²⁸⁶ Feeling the pangs of social ostracism, Goti's friends no longer invited her places, nor did they RSVP her, and while walking down the street, she often noticed non-Jews performing one of bigotry's most classic, pedestrian acts: they crossed to the other side.²⁸⁷ Like Segre, Bauer does not believe that ordinary Italians were acting out of "antipathy".²⁸⁸ (The word '*antipatia*' is hers, although many memories in her and Segre's testimonies might put this interpretation to the test.) Rather, she feels that some non-Jews "were afraid of compromising themselves," like the father of her fair-weather, incredulous friend; others suffered from "mental baseness" (*bassezza mentale*); and still other were opportunists, profiting off the Jews' oppression.²⁸⁹ Ultimately, however, the most common traits she encountered were "cowardice" (*vigliaccheria*) and "a grand indifference" (*una grande indifferenza*).²⁹⁰

Adjusting to the Extraordinary

After the initial stun, most Jews in Italy found ways to adjust to their circumstances. One common way of doing so, Nidam-Orvieto notes, was by developing closer ties with extended families and local Jewish Communities. Mutual-aid organizations also stepped in as substitutes for state aid, proving especially helpful to foreign Jews living or stranded in Italy.²⁹¹ The largest and most effective of these was the Aid Committee for Emigrants (*Delegazione per l'Assistenza agli Emigranti*, Delasem). Spiritual successor to Comasebit, which the state had dissolved in August 1939, Delasem was

²⁸⁶ "ha goduto della generosa solidarietà dei nostri vicini di casa"; *ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 1-3.

²⁸⁸ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

²⁸⁹ "avevano paura anche di comprometersi?"; Bauer, interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 2-3. See also: Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. A postwar article by Italian film critic, Tullio Kezich, confirmed the 'opportunism' thesis for her.

²⁹⁰ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 3, 4. Goti confesses that it is hard to assess the general Italian temperament in the wake of the Racial Laws, admitting, "I don't know. It's so difficult to judge their comportment" (*Non lo so. È così difficile giudicare il comportamento*); Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

²⁹¹ Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," 165.

founded just a few months later on 1 December 1, and its mission was to facilitate the emigration of foreign Jews from Italy while providing them with assistance until they could leave.²⁹² Linked to the central Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Delasem had branches in every Jewish Community, and although its seat was in Genoa, Milan's large refugee population made the Lombard capital the "focal point" of the organization's efforts.²⁹³ Accordingly, Milan's Jewish Community used the committee to continue providing relief for its foreign population. After the Germans arrived on the scene in September 1943, Delasem went underground and, with the help of many non-Jews, provided services such as financial assistance and false documentation.²⁹⁴

Even before Delasem's launch, however, another aid organization had already been established in Milan. On 15 October 1939, an engineer by the name of Israel Kalk founded the Children's Canteen (*Mensa dei bambini*), a humanitarian center that assisted refugee children. A Jewish immigrant himself, Kalk had been born and raised in Latvia. During the First World War, his "rigorously observant" family found itself on the Eastern Theatre's frontlines, where local Jewish populations routinely fell prey to pogroms committed by Russian troops. Barred by the Latvian government from attending university because of his Jewish background, Kalk took up his uncle's invitation to move to Milan, where the latter worked as a dentist. After earning his engineering degree from the prestigious Polytechnic University, Kalk married an Italian citizen, Giorgetta (Lubatti), in 1928. Because Giorgetta was Italian by race as well as nationality, if the state had

²⁹² The Aid Committee for Jews in Italy (Comasebet) was in fact the third iteration of the *Comitato*. Originally launched in 1933 as the Aid Committee for Jewish Refugees from Germany (*Comitato di Assistenza per gli Ebrei Profughi dalla Germania*), an initiative started by a group of Milanese Jews led by none other than Federico Jarach, the *Comitato* rebranded itself as the Aid Committee for Jewish Refugees (*Comitato per gli Ebrei Profughi*) after the *Anschluss* before changing to Comasebet on 20 November 1938, three days after the Racial Laws were passed; see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 165-166; and Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 160-166.

²⁹³ Comasebet and its earlier iterations had been headquartered in Milan; see Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 165; and Hamaui, *ibid.*, 160-164.

²⁹⁴ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 164-166. Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 208-209. For a closer look at Delasem, see De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 413-418.

followed through with its intention to expel all foreign Jews ten years later, Kalk's marriage would have spared him this fate.²⁹⁵

One day in 1939, while walking through Milan's public gardens, Kalk took note of the awful living conditions of the city's homeless, orphaned refugee children. He could tell they were Jewish, because they were speaking in Yiddish. It happened that at that same time, Kalk was reeling from some personal losses of his own; he had been dismissed from his engineering job, and his son had recently been expelled from school. In an unofficial way, the *Mensa* got started that very day when he treated the refugee children to a warm meal. Hoping to alleviate their circumstances, and inspired by this encounter, Kalk rented out an abandoned restaurant on Milan's Via Guicciardini and converted it into his Children's Canteen. Serving a clientele that consisted mostly of Jewish refugee children from Hitler's expanding empire, the *Mensa* offered them life's essentials (like meals, heated shelter, and free medical services) and recreational opportunities (such as local excursions and tickets for movies and circuses), while sponsoring after-school programs and hosting celebrations for Jewish holidays and milestones. Kalk's only requirement for admittance was that children be enrolled in school. Not long after opening, the *Mensa* extended its services to other refugee groups, especially those who were plagued by poverty, such as the elderly, the ill, and pregnant women. During the war, when foreign Jews were interned in concentration camps, the *Mensa* furnished care packages for the largest such facility at Ferramonti.²⁹⁶

Because Kalk fared poorly in his relations with other organizations, his center mostly relied on individual benefactors. Still shell-shocked from the dissolution of Comasebit, Milan's Jewish Community was too wary about re-stoking the ire of the authorities to offer Kalk's *Mensa* any support. As for Delasem, Kalk's relations with Comasebit's replacement were downright frosty.

²⁹⁵ Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 39-41. Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 167.

²⁹⁶ Costantini, *ibid.*, 40-43. Hamaui, *ibid.*

Accusing Delasem's leaders of being ignorant to the culture of eastern European Jews, Kalk lacked faith in the organization and its ability to adequately provide for such refugees. Delasem's members, he lamented, couldn't even communicate with eastern European Jews in their mother tongue of Yiddish. Fortunately, Kalk had the steady backing of about 150 Milanese patrons, Jews and Gentiles alike, though he could only accommodate an equal number of children at a time.²⁹⁷ In August 1943, when the center on Via Guicciardini was destroyed by aerial bombardment, Kalk relocated the *Mensa* northward to Lucino, in Como province. From there, he orchestrated flights across the border to nearby Switzerland, and when Kalk himself made this trip in October, the Canteen's operations came to an end. Exactly two years later, in October 1945, Kalk returned to Milan and resumed his former activities, this time offering assistance to survivors of Nazi and fascist persecution.²⁹⁸

Mussolini's regime may have backed off its threat to banish Italy's foreign Jews, but it faithfully followed through with its other Racial Law of September 1938: the expulsion of all Jews from Italy's public-school system. Again, Milan's Jews were quick to respond. Provisions in the Racial Laws allowed Jews to administer their own schools, and before the year was through, two such facilities were up and running in the city. At the forefront of these efforts was the de facto, and at times de jure, leader of the local Jewish Community, Federico Jarach, aided greatly by Milan's new chief rabbi, Gustavo Castelbolognesi.²⁹⁹ In October, a Jewish section was added to the Via Spiga School, although conditions there were far from ideal. The Via Spiga School served both Jewish and Aryan children, but to maintain racial purity, they attended at different times of day. Aryan children attended in the morning, when the building's boiler was running, while Jewish children were educated in the afternoon, when the heating was turned off. Still, Via Spiga provided a place where

²⁹⁷ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 167-168.

²⁹⁸ Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 41-43. Hamaui, *ibid.*, 168.

²⁹⁹ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 25.

not only Italian Jews, but also refugee children from the Third Reich and Nazi-occupied Europe could resume their education.³⁰⁰

The following month, the much more culturally significant Jewish School of Milan (*Scuola ebraica di Milano*) opened its refurbished doors on Via Eupili and welcomed a deluge of students, teachers, and professors who had been barred from their previous institutions. A two-building facility, the structure at Via Eupili 6 had opened in 1929, while the adjacent building at #8 followed two years later, but both buildings had to undergo significant renovations to support an incoming population of 250 to 400 students.³⁰¹ They were ready to do so by 7 November, only two months later, and in the wake of the Racial Laws, the Jewish School of Milan became “the true center of Jewish life in the city.”³⁰²

Probably the most famous attendee of the Jewish School of Milan was Guido Lopez, who, in the postwar period, went on to have an illustrious career as an author, journalist, and local historian.³⁰³ But the Via Eupili school catered to Jews of all backgrounds, and an entire section was reserved for German and Austrian students.³⁰⁴ Turkey’s expatriate community found representation there, too; Samuele Dana attended Via Eupili until third grade, when he and his siblings switched to private schooling, and Lina Jaffè enrolled her six-year-old son there, as well.³⁰⁵ In 1942, when bombardments in the city intensified, the number of students fell dramatically, and in fall 1943, the German occupation once again fundamentally changed the situation. Being ‘the center of Jewish life’ in Milan made the Via Eupili school a prime target for roundups and raids, so the school’s

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 151. Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 19-21.

³⁰¹ Hamaui puts the number at 250, while Costantini records 400; see Hamaui, *ibid.*; and Costantini, *ibid.*, 20. Meanwhile, the CDEC website merely mentions that “some hundreds” (*qualche centinaio*) of students enrolled at the Jewish School after the Racial Laws were passed; “Cenni storici sulla scuola ebraica di via Eupili,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/progetti/info/scuola-ebraica-via-eupili.html>. Fittingly, CDEC is today housed in building #8.

³⁰² “*il vero centro della vita ebraica cittadina*”; Hamaui, *ibid.* See also 153; and “Cenni storici sulla scuola ebraica di via Eupili.”

³⁰³ His father, Sabatino – a university professor and a well-respected author in his own right – helped bolster the school’s curricula by offering supplementary courses and cultural activities; see “Cenni storici sulla scuola ebraica di via Eupili.”

³⁰⁴ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 153.

³⁰⁵ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996. Jaffè, Interview, 20 novembre 1995.

administration had no other choice but to shut down. The Jewish School of Milan would be revived in the early postwar period, however, where it played a pivotal role in the reconstruction of Milan's Jewish community.³⁰⁶

If the Racial Laws encouraged many Jews to embrace Judaism, or at least their local Jewish Communities, it had the opposite effect for thousands of others. From 1938 to 1941, anywhere from 4,528 to 5,429 people formally left Italy's Jewish Community, either through conversion or by unenrolling in their official Community registers. During the years of German occupation and the Republic of Salò, from 1943 to 1945, this number approached 6,000.³⁰⁷ Mostly an upper-class phenomenon, baptism was perhaps the least effective way to try to circumvent the *Racial Laws*.³⁰⁸ Born into a prosperous textile family, Segre exemplifies conversion's futility. To spare Liliana from the state's new restrictions, her Catholic aunt, Enrica Fumagalli (Amedeo's wife), recommended that her niece be baptized into her faith. It had been Enrica who encouraged Alberto to enroll Liliana in the Marcelline Institute, where baptism was a prerequisite for admission. (Thus, while Catholic schools were another possibility for education outside the public system, the conditions for enrollment were trickier, requiring an extra step.) For political reasons, Liliana was baptized in San Vittore Church in October 1938.³⁰⁹

The experience was a disorienting one for eight-year-old Liliana. Religion having never been a part of her life, she recalls "feeling confused that I was something that I didn't want [to be]".³¹⁰ Adding insult to injury, she immediately realized how pointless the procedure had been; despite her membership in the correct religion, she still couldn't attend public school. As would later become

³⁰⁶ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 151-154. "Cenni storici sulla scuola ebraica di via Eupili."

³⁰⁷ Zimmerman, introduction, 5.

³⁰⁸ De Felice, *The Jews of Fascist Italy*, 322.

³⁰⁹ Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 35-36.

³¹⁰ "sentivo confusamente che era una cosa che volevo"; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

clear to her, “I was of the Jewish race, so baptism mattered little in reality.”³¹¹ Importantly, she had also missed the 1 October cutoff date. For such reasons, although the state recorded that Liliana had been “baptized with the Catholic rite” (*battezzato col rito cattolico*), her conversion failed to change her status.³¹² Milan’s prefect may have deemed her and her family to be “of proper conduct”, but they were still considered part “of the Jewish race and religion”.³¹³

Baptism, as Nidam-Orvieto explains, could come with an added downside, for it left converts in a kind of spiritual-communal limbo state. Scorned by religious Jews on one hand and derided by “real” Christians on the other, converts often found themselves in a hostile no-man’s land between members of their old faith community and their new one. As the Jewish anti-Fascist and leftwing politician, Vittorio Foa, put it, converted Jews should be pitied, “but when I speak of pity I mean the pity you feel toward lepers, as people that are doomed forever, condemned without hope. But we wouldn’t give a leper any task of responsibility ... We would be scared and disgusted to shake his hand.”³¹⁴

While thousands of Jews left Judaism and their Jewish Communities, thousands more chose to leave Italy. De Felice calculates that from 1938 to 1941, 5,966 Italian Jews emigrated.³¹⁵ One social repercussion of mass Jewish emigration was brain drain, which, though not as severe in Italy as it was north of the Alps, still left palpable, consequential losses. Notably, some physicists who relocated to the United States joined their fellow Jewish émigré, Albert Einstein, in the Manhattan

³¹¹ “*Ero di razza ebraica e battesimo contava poco in realtà*”; *ibid.*

³¹² Raffaele Galleani, Il T. Colonnello Commandante della Legione territoriale dei carabinieri reali di Milano, Gruppo Interno Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 18 aprile 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano.

³¹³ “*Tutte le suddette persone sono di razza e di religione ebraica e risultano di regolare condotta*”; G. Marzano, Il Prefetto di Milano, Comunicazione al Ministero dell’Interno, Demorazza, Roma, 19 febbraio 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano.

³¹⁴ Vittorio Foa quoted in Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 169–170.

³¹⁵ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 355, cited in Zimmerman, introduction, 5.

Project, including the Nobel Prize-winning pair of Emilio Segrè and Enrico Fermi.³¹⁶ Taken together, conversion and emigration reduced the Italian Jewish population by a full quarter.³¹⁷

Still, the significant majority remained, and while it is true that physical and financial constraints – at a time when Jewish incomes were under attack – prevented many Jews from emigrating, most of Italy’s Jews, confident in the belief that the Racial Laws would soon pass, never even tried. Fausta Finzi, for example, recalls that although several family friends left Italy to escape the antisemitic discrimination, her family never felt the need to. Sure, they had to make regular visits to the police station and present their papers to the questor – especially her mother’s documents proving that Fausta and Carlo were Catholic products of a mixed marriage – “but this never really posed any problems,” she maintains.³¹⁸ The antisemitic legislation, after all, affected only one of the four family members directly, her father, and it was his lawful inheritance of an abandoned chemical business that had kept the Finzis in sound financial standing. The Sacerdotes, on the other hand, were a fully Jewish family (at least in a racial sense), but save an uncle who fled to Lima, Peru, they all chose to stay, too. Despite the antisemitic measures, Luciana remembers Italy’s Jews telling themselves that nothing would happen to them. Why? Because “in Italy it’s different.”³¹⁹

Rather than living compromised lives in Italy or leaving behind the (increasingly less) *bel paese*, Italy’s Jews – Italian and foreign alike – could try to bypass the Racial Laws altogether by appealing for exemption. Indeed, the mere fact that exemptions existed was enough to instill hope, albeit usually of the false variety. At the outset of the Racial Laws, as Nidam-Orvieto explains, many Jews believed that only individuals who had shown themselves disloyal to Mussolini and his regime

³¹⁶ Zimmerman, *ibid.*, 12n.21. Though not Jewish himself, Fermi’s wife, Laura Capon, was.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹⁸ “*però questo non ha mai creato veramente dei problemi?*”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996. Not all Jews shared this perspective. Liliana Segre, for example, recalls the everyday harassments by the police, who routinely presented themselves at the Segre house, inspecting their documents and ensuring that their radio was set to a single, pre-approved Italian station; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 20. It isn’t clear at which stage of the Segres’ discrimination or persecution these harassments began.

³¹⁹ “*In Italia non succede niente ... Figurarsi, in Italia è diverso?*”; Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

would suffer under the new legislation. The majority, they thought, would be exempted and receive *discriminati* status. By exaggerating the number of exemptions to be issued, many high-ranking Fascist officials did their part to encourage this delusion.³²⁰ What was not fully realized at the time is that by 1938, the regime had begun to understand and paint *all* Jews as traitorous, their ‘double loyalties’ lying with anti-Fascism and Zion. So, while many Jews clung to the belief that only a few of their number would be discriminated against, the reality was that only a few thousand Jews would be *discriminati*.

De Felice estimates that, all told, 11,000 – 12,000 Jews theoretically qualified for some kind of exemption, and by 1 June 1942, 8,171 exemption requests had been submitted on behalf of 15,339 people (exemption being transmittable in some cases). Yet, as of 15 January 1943, the Ministry of the Interior’s Department of Demography and Race (Demorazza) had only evaluated 5,870 of these requests, rejecting 3,384 and accepting 2,486. No doubt because of the war and the state’s mounting crackdown on the Jewish community at large, exemption became rarer from 1940 onward. De Felice records that as of 9 February 1940, before Italy entered the war, 1,358 exemptions had been granted against only 219 rejected; by 31 December 1941, 2,479 exemptions were approved against 1,692 denied; and the records for 15 January 1943 (the last date provided) reveal the 2,486 approvals and 3,384 rejections cited above, “meaning that in 1942 Demography and Race rejected 1,692 and accepted only 7”.³²¹ Analyzing De Felice’s data, Sarfatti observes that “about 90 percent [of exemptions] were granted in the years 1939-40, but virtually none after February 1942”.³²² Meanwhile, at least 2,301 requests went unexamined altogether. In total, 6,494 persons would receive *discriminati* status.³²³ Moreover, while the *Declaration on Race* had only expressly

³²⁰ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 160 and 177n.8.

³²¹ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 354-355.

³²² Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 137.

³²³ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 354.

prohibited *discriminati* from teaching in public schools, Demorazza carried out its duties far more stringently than the guidelines provided. As Sarfatti writes, in addition to public-school posts, exempted Jews remained effectively barred from other areas of public employment, military service, the National Fascist Party, banks, “and so forth. They were, in short, exempted from just a few of the persecutory measures”.³²⁴

As the early years had demonstrated, however, exemption wasn’t always a pipe dream, and many Jews appealed to the state to alleviate their conditions accordingly, reassured by the regime’s guarantees. In February 1939, Isaac Jaffè, Lina’s husband, wrote to Milan’s prefect asking for permission to retain the family’s Aryan domestic servant. Article 12 of the November Racial Laws had forbidden Jews from employing “Italian citizens of the Aryan race” as domestics, but Isaac hoped to be excused all the same. The reasons the Jaffès required a domestic servant, he explained, were twofold: first, Lina’s mother, already advanced in age, needed a personal assistant after suffering a recent car accident; and second, he and Lina had a young child, whom their domestic servant helped care for.³²⁵ Unfortunately for Isaac, without any merits for exemption in his favor, the prefect denied his request on the questor’s recommendation.³²⁶

The Segres’ appeals for exemption were more successful. Liliana’s uncle Amedeo could check off numerous boxes in support of his candidacy. To recap, he had fought in World War I as an artillery lieutenant, receiving the War Merit Cross (*Croce al Merito di Guerra*) for his service. If not a Fascist of the First Hour in the strict, San-Sepolcriste sense, he had nevertheless enrolled in the

³²⁴ Sarfatti, “Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943,” 72.

³²⁵ Elia Jaffè, Lettera a Sua Eccellenza il Prefetto, 17 febbraio 1939, Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 21, ASMilano. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 702.

³²⁶ See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 21, ASMilano: Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all’Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, 21 febbraio 1939; G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 14 marzo 1939; and Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all’Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, 18 marzo 1939. Milan census records from February 1939 show that Isaac could not provide a passport, but that does not seem to have factored into the decision-making process for his appeal. Neither the prefect nor the questor, who treated his case the following month, makes any mention of it; *Stranieri ed Ebrei Stranieri, A.A.GG. (1930-1956)*, Busta 12, PS, MI, ACS.

National Fascist Party at the early date of January 1, 1922, and then served as a district Party leader. Topping things off, he had taken a Catholic-Aryan woman for a wife. With all of these credentials working in his favor, he received positive recommendations from Milan's questor and from the colonel commander of his former *carabinieri* unit. Despite these glowing credentials, the prefect failed to endorse Amedeo's candidacy in his report to Demorazza, apparently regarding his late baptism (17 December 1938) to be sufficient grounds for disqualification. Nevertheless, the Ministry of the Interior approved Amedeo's request on 6 July 1939 and, in the process, extended his exemption to his father, Giuseppe, and his mother, Olga. From a personal standpoint, Milan's questor actually opposed Giuseppe's candidacy, deeming the elder Segre's character to fall short of the "exceptionality" (*eccezionalità*) required, but the police chief yielded to the law, judging that Giuseppe could "automatically" (*automaticamente*) claim 'discriminati' status through Amedeo's exemption, an observation that Demorazza confirmed. As Sarfatti notes, 'discriminated' status could be extended to "forebears and descendants up to and including the second degree of kinship", and this enabled Amedeo to pass along his exemption to his parents.³²⁷ In this way, Giuseppe was permitted to keep his profitable textile business, but Liliana does recall the state seizing the family horse stable, which supports Sarfatti's claim that many things fell outside the bounds of exemption.³²⁸

Interestingly, even before Amedeo submitted his request for exemption in January 1939, municipal authorities approved both his and his father's requests to retain their Aryan domestic servants. Amedeo submitted his petition on 3 December 1938, and Giuseppe did the same two days

³²⁷ See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano: G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione a S.E. Il Prefetto di Milano, 6 febbraio 1939; G. Marzano, Il Prefetto di Milano, Comunicazione al Ministero dell'Interno, Demorazza, Roma, 13 marzo 1939; Raffaele Galleani, Il T. Colonnello Commandante della Legione territoriale dei carabinieri reali di Milano, Gruppo Interno Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 18 aprile 1939; Il Ministro dell'Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione a S.E. Prefetto di Milano, luglio 1939; L'Ingegnere Capo Erariale, Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 25 novembre 1939; and L'Ingegnere Capo Erariale, Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 18 dicembre 1939. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 135.

³²⁸ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 40.

later. After receiving positive recommendations from the questor, the prefect signed off on both of their petitions before the month was through. There was one condition though; as prescribed by the questor, each Segre could only employ one Aryan domestic servant. For Amedeo and his wife, Enrica, this posed no problem, since they only had one Italian-Aryan housekeeper to begin with, but for the ailing Giuseppe and his elderly wife, Olga, this meant that they could only keep one of their two Italian-Aryan caretakers.³²⁹

With a bit more difficulty, Alberto was able to secure a governess for Liliana, too. On 19 December 1938, a couple of weeks after his father and brother submitted their appeals, he also requested permission to retain an Aryan domestic servant. Addressing his letter to Milan's questor, he explained how he needed someone to look after his young, motherless, and *baptized* daughter while he was at work.³³⁰ To bolster his case, he added that he had served in the Italian military and enrolled in the PNF, but both the questor and the prefect denied his request. Redoubling his efforts, Alberto submitted a second letter two months later, addressing this one to the prefect. The content of his appeal hardly changed, but a few more specifics and a more embellished tone achieved their desired effect; this time, without providing much commentary, the questor endorsed his request – again, on the condition that he limit his family to one Aryan domestic servant – and the prefect provided his stamp of approval.³³¹

³²⁹ See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano: Amedeo Segre, Lettera all'Ill. Sig. Prefetto di Milano, 3 dicembre 1938; Giuseppe Segre, Lettera a S.E. il Ministro dell'Interno, 5 dicembre 1938; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, 8 dicembre 1938; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione al Comandante Gruppo di Milano, 10 dicembre 1938; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, 20/28 dicembre 1938; G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 22 dicembre 1938; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, 23/24 dicembre 1938; and G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 24 dicembre 1938. Although Amedeo made sure to note in his request that their housekeeper was in the employ of his wife, who was "of the Aryan race" (*di razza ariana*), he and Enrica were still limited to one Aryan domestic servant, just like his parents were, who were both Jewish.

³³⁰ For his part, Amedeo had submitted his request to Milan's prefect, while Giuseppe appealed directly to the Minister of the Interior in Rome. Both of their cases were handled at the municipal level, though.

³³¹ See the following documents, located Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano: Alberto Segre, Lettera all'Ill. Sig. Prefetto di Milano, 3 dicembre 1938; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Ill.mo Signor Questore di Milano, gennaio 1939; G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 27 gennaio 1939; Alberto

The state's authoritarian beneficence stopped, however, at Alberto himself. While *discriminati* status could be passed upward and downward, it could not go sideward, so Alberto was unable to benefit from his brother's exemption. When Alberto appealed to the state on his own behalf, he received negative recommendations from the triumvirate of the prefect, questor, and colonel commander of the local *carabinieri* unit, and so, Demorazza denied his request. Nor could Giuseppe pass his exemption to Alberto. The questor's evaluation of Giuseppe's non-exceptional character once again came into play, and the Interior Minister rejected his appeal accordingly.³³² In any case, it was only by grace of Amedeo's exemption that Giuseppe had been granted *discriminati* status. On the Segre family tree, Amedeo alone could burnish the proper Fascist credentials, and as the beneficiary of someone else's exemption, Giuseppe was unable to extend his exemption to his other son.

Segre, Lettera a S.E. il Prefetto di Milano, 11 febbraio 1939; Il Prefetto di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Ill.mo Sig. Questore di Milano, 17 febbraio 1939; Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di Milano, 2 marzo 1939. Because Giuseppe and Alberto, who lived in the same house, were both able to retain an Italian-Aryan domestic servant, it's possible that Giuseppe didn't lose his two caretakers after all. However, the historical record is too unclear in too many ways to know for sure. In Giuseppe's letter to the Interior Minister, he lists 'Susanna Aimò' and 'Lizier Guiditta' (Guiditta Lizier) as his Italian-Aryan domestic servants. (According to his letter, although Guiditta had been born in Holland, she naturalized.) When Milan's questor and prefect approved Giuseppe's request, they limited him to one domestic servant, although they did not specify whom. As for Alberto's domestic servant, records for his request yield no name. In Liliana's testimonies, she says that the Racial Laws prevented her family from legally keeping Susanna Aimò in their employ, although she explains that Susanna continued to work for them clandestinely and even safeguarded many of the family's possessions after they were deported. However, she does not mention a second domestic servant, nor does she bring up her father's or grandfather's exemption requests; see, for example, Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 39, 44. Was Susanna, in fact, working for the Segres legally, and these details weren't explained to young Liliana? What happened to Guiditta Lizier? To add to the confusion, Amedeo and Enrica's domestic servant was named 'Caterina Lizier', but according to Amedeo's letter to the prefect, she was born in Travesio, not Holland, and it isn't mentioned whether or not she was related to Guiditta. It's a curious situation. Had the Segre family found a way to subvert the Racial Laws? It's possible, but the spotty historical record prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions.

³³² See the following documents, located in Pratiche Ebrei, Busta 43, ASMilano: G. Laino, Il Questore di Milano, Comunicazione a S.E. Il Prefetto di Milano, 28 marzo 1939; G. Marzano, Il Prefetto di Milano, Comunicazione al Ministero dell'Interno, Demorazza, Roma, 19 aprile 1939; Raffaele Galleani, Il T. Colonnello Commandante della Legione territoriale dei carabinieri reali di Milano, Gruppo Interno Milano, Comunicazione alla Regia Prefettura di (Gabinetto) Milano, 20 aprile 1939; Il Ministro dell'Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 24 gennaio 1940; Il Questore di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione all'Eccellenza di Prefetto di Milano, 15 febbraio 1940; Il Ministro dell'Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 20 settembre 1941; Il Ministro dell'Interno, Demorazza (name illegible), Comunicazione al Prefetto di Milano, 13 dicembre 1941; and L'Ufficiale dello Stato Civile (name illegible), Comune di Milano, Ufficio Stato Civile, Comunicazione alla R. Prefettura di Milano, 3 gennaio 1942. The *carabinieri* officer failed to endorse Alberto's candidacy despite pointing out that Alberto had, in a "gesture of patriotism", donated a sum of money in 1935 "as propaganda against the iniquity of the sanctions" that followed Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. The full passage reads: "*Nel 1935, per il suo gesto di patriottismo, ebbe un plauso dalla federazione dei fasci di combattimento di Milano per la somma da lui destinata per propaganda contro l'iniquità delle sanzioni*".

World War II

For Italy's Jews, a group already tarred as disloyal by the Fascist regime, the cloud of suspicion looming over their heads darkened even more when Italy entered the Second World War. As Anglo-American bombardments drove Jews, like Gentiles, out of the cities and into the surrounding countryside, the state placed new restrictions on its treacherous Jewish population, restricting their freedom of movement while further limiting their economic horizons. As foreign Jews were rounded up and placed in concentration camps, many Italian Jews found themselves pressed into forced labor, their mobility likewise restricted.³³³ Meanwhile, as the always-shrinking sphere of economic activity open to Jews contracted even more, the state revoked peddling licenses in 1941, and while this had little effect on Italy's mostly middle-class Jewish population – including those in Milan – it drove the already poor Jews of Rome into a state of collective penury.

Though Italy's entry into the Second World War worsened things for the Jewish population, beyond the obvious factor of the war itself, scholars do not agree as to why. Tracing his analysis to September 1939 – after the war in Europe began, but well before Italy joined the fray – Collotti describes how the outbreak of the war reignited the regime's antisemitic propaganda engine. With Giovanni Preziosi and his journal, *La vita italiana* (Italian Life), leading the charge, Italy's antisemitic press placed blame for the war squarely on Jews' backs – or banks. By alleging that international Jewish finance had caused the war – indeed, had planned and precipitated the war – antisemitic ideologues and propagandists fulfilled the prophecy that *der Führer* had foretold during his Reichstag speech of 30 January 1939. While the antisemitic press identified the 'Jewified plutocratic democracies' (Britain and the United States) as the high planners of the war, Italy's Jews were members of the global Jewish community. For that reason, they, too, had natural and inherent parts

³³³ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6.

to play in this plot, and the antisemitic media offensive attacked them accordingly.³³⁴ Liliana Segre, for instance, recalls how Italy's Jews, falling under increased suspicion during the war, became the daily prey of newspaper propagandists.³³⁵ In Collotti's estimation, antisemitic propaganda reflected the regime's official position: global Jewry had plunged the world into another long, drawn-out, unwanted conflict, and Italy would soon be caught in its clutches. With Jews scapegoated as the orchestrators of the war, tarred and feathered in the press for all Italians to see, the state could assume the responsibility to punish all of them in its midst in an increasingly draconian manner. Though parts of Collotti's argument are plausible, his study does not present examples of Mussolini's administration actually endorsing this grandiose conspiracy theory, nor does he mention Fascism's militaristic and expansionist nature, which were present from the beginning and blatantly on display during World War II in the Balkans and northern Africa.

Focusing on the state itself, and not the regime's propaganda wing, Nidam-Orvieto explains how Italian authorities fudged the data to make it look like Jews were defeatists at best and traitors at worst. It was a well-known fact that Italy's Jews opposed Hitler's Germany – how couldn't they – and this led them to decry the Axis alliance, but their devotion to their patria and its people was never in question. As a result, when the war broke out and Italy entered the conflict, Italy's Jews found themselves in the impossible position of (i) opposing the Axis' war effort and (ii) hoping that Italy didn't lose.³³⁶ (Though these once-incompatible desires became possible, in theory, when the Kingdom of Italy joined the Allies in September 1943, by then it was too late, since the German

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

³³⁶ Indeed, despite the prohibition on military service, hundreds of male Jews volunteered to enlist anyway, writing to Mussolini directly. Not all still supported the Minister of War and his Fascist regime, but they remained committed to their Italian homeland and to their fellow Italians. For such individuals, Nidam-Orvieto explains, it was the state's rejection of their appeals that caused the scales to fall from their eyes, at last allowing them to clearly see the true intent behind the antisemitic legislation. "When the Jews realized they would not be allowed to defend Italy as they had proudly done since the *Risorgimento*," she writes, "they finally understood that the racial laws were intended to be permanent and were stronger than their own sense of Italian or Fascist identity"; Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," 176. See also 173–175.

army was already in position on the Italian peninsula, ready to stage its occupation.) Already associating Jews with disloyalty, the state read their opposition to the Axis as an endorsement of the Allies. This was not true – not yet, anyway – and thanks to police reports and personal letters to the Duce, Italian authorities knew it. Nevertheless, the regime chose to broadcast the Jewish community's opposition to the war while ignoring their unwavering commitment to their country. Hope for an Allied victory would only materialize among Italy's Jews as the war dragged on, Italy's own effort continued to sour, and bombings, hunger, and dislocation became part of everyday life.³³⁷ Bear in mind, these feelings mirrored those of the general population, but similar to before, authorities downplayed complaints coming from ordinary Italians while amplifying those voiced by Jews.³³⁸ Although Nidam-Orvieto does not engage the novel, war-related antisemitic laws directly, we can extrapolate from her assessment that Italian authorities were guided by a logic that saw – or a narrative that presented – Jews as dangerous and disloyal, and so the state had no other choice but to crack down on them even harder during a delicate time of war.

From a different angle, Sarfatti presents the regime's early-war actions (1940-41) as a continuation of prewar antisemitic policy. It was not the war's onset that hastened additional measures, he argues, but rather its course and its geographical spread, both of which frustrated the regime's grand goal of expelling every last Jew from Italy. With emigration routes blocked, destinations inaccessible, and Italy's military campaign always on the verge of complete disaster, the state's antisemitic policy became ever more "sweeping and persecutory." In the process, temporary measures ossified and new laws came into effect. Concentration camps, for instance, originally

³³⁷ It would stand to reason that this position became even stronger after the Kingdom of Italy abandoned Mussolini in July 1943 and switched sides to join the Allies a little over a month later.

³³⁸ Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," 173-174.

meant to be way stations *en route* to more finite, faraway destinations,³³⁹ became fixtures taking in ever larger populations, and in 1942, the state pressed thousands of Jews into forced labor.³⁴⁰

All things considered, the outbreak of the war seems like an inescapable precipitating factor in the state's decision to intensify its antisemitic campaign. Mussolini had already publicly denounced Jews as traitorous even in times of peace, notably in the October 1938 *Declaration on Race*, and that same text revealed that Jews especially couldn't be trusted in moments of crisis, like war. The passage on "Jews and Judaism" that appears in the Fascist Grand Council's official document faithfully reproduces the Duce's original handwritten manuscript almost to the word:

The Grand Council of Fascism reiterates that worldwide Judaism – especially after the abolition of Freemasonry – has been the instigator of anti-Fascism in all fields and that foreign and external Italian Judaism – at some crucial moments as in 1924-25 and during the Ethiopian war – were unanimously hostile towards Fascism.

The immigration of foreign elements – strongly increased since 1933 – has worsened the frame of mind of Italian Jews, with respect to the Regime, which is not sincerely accepted, since it is antithetical to the psychology, the politics, the internationalism of Israel.

All anti-Fascist efforts can be traced back to a Jew; worldwide Judaism is, in Spain, on the side of the Bolsheviks of Barcelona.³⁴¹

With war now coming home to Italy, on a much grander scale and with infinitely greater stakes, it stands to reason that Mussolini and his regime would double down on their persecution of an already highly suspect minority group (or at least a group branded as such). Even if Sarfatti is right

³³⁹ Such as Ethiopia, perhaps, though Sarfatti does not think so (see note 222).

³⁴⁰ Sarfatti, "Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943," 76. Decades earlier, De Felice came to the same conclusion. In *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, he writes that Mussolini accepted a proposal, put forth by Demorazza, to Aryanize assimilated Jews (meaning, in this case, Jews married to Catholics) and to expel the rest. Ultimately, however, the war prevented the regime from realizing this "Italian-style 'Final Solution'", so they abandoned the idea; De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 342-343, 358-359.

³⁴¹ Parts of this document appear quoted in chapter one. Mussolini's handwritten draft of "Jews and Judaism" reads as follows: "The Grand Council recalls that worldwide Judaism – especially after the abolition of Freemasonry – has been the instigator of anti-Fascism in all fields and Italian Judaism inside Italy and among those in exile outside Italy has been – in some key moments as in 1924-25 and during the Ethiopian war – unanimously hostile towards Fascism. ¶ The immigration of foreign elements – greatly increased since 1933 – has worsened the feelings of Italian Jews towards the Regime, that Italian Judaism cannot sincerely accept since it is antithetical to the psychology, the politics, the internationalism of Israel. ¶ All anti-Fascist efforts can be traced to a Jew; worldwide Judaism is, in Spain, on the opposite side"; for various drafts of the *Declaration on Race*, all of which include the "Jews and Judaism" passage, see De Felice, *ibid.*, 690-700.

to argue – and I think he is – that the war frustrated Fascism’s ultimate goal of expelling all Jews in order to create a Jew-less Italy, the onset of the war would have necessitated more drastic measures even lacking such an elaborate master plan. And even if the regime’s early-war antisemitic actions continue a pattern of discrimination that had commenced in the prewar period – as they assuredly do – Italy’s entry into the conflict would have upped both the scale of severity and the timeline of implementation. Indeed, the state called for the internment of certain ‘dangerous’ Italian Jews on the very day that Italy declared war. Not to mention, by adopting a more rigid approach toward the Jews, the regime could further equate the Italian-Aryan race with the Italian nation at a time when hearts needed to be especially hardened against purportedly dangerous outsiders and insiders. The war itself, then, prompted the escalation in the Fascist regime’s antisemitic policy, while the war’s particular course forced the regime to change its final answer to the Jewish Question. This situation came to a head in summer 1943, and from that point forward, Fascism’s grand goals for Italy’s Jews started to be supplanted by National Socialism’s.

By declaring war on Britain and France on June 10, 1940, Italy officially joined the Second World War. Yet, as scholars like Sarfatti and Klaus Voigt have shown, the Italian government had begun making new arrangements for foreign Jews before Germany even invaded Poland. First, Mussolini’s administration worked to secure Italian borders. Until August 1939, foreign Jews were permitted to enter the country with tourist visas, which permitted them six-month stays. But on the 19th of the month, authorities suspended the policy after discovering that some 5,000 mostly destitute people had used their visas solely to flee Nazi persecution. There may have been more to it than that, though; not only were Jews from Germany denied temporary residence (*soggiorno*) status, but so too were those from Poland, Hungary, Romania, and later, Slovakia. By 18 May 1940, Jews

from those states couldn't even get transit visas to pass through the country, and when Italy entered the war the following month, the border was effectively closed to all Jews coming from abroad.³⁴²

It was around that time that the Italian government also began passing new measures against foreign Jews inside Italy. On 16 May, when there were approximately 5,500 to 6,000 non-Italian Jews living in the country, Mussolini's administration made the decision to intern the roughly two-thirds of them who weren't authorized to be there.³⁴³ As the war's trajectory made expulsion, the ultimate objective, less and less likely, thousands of foreign Jews found themselves in a state of perpetual internment. In spring 1943, for example, just months before Mussolini's downfall, a total of 6,386 foreign Jews were confined in Italian towns (4,339) and concentration camps (2,047).³⁴⁴ In Milan, according to Hamaui, about a third of the foreign Jewish population was arrested, and in Fiume, Goti Bauer recalls Fascist authorities detaining some family acquaintances, although the Herskovitses themselves were left alone.³⁴⁵

Collotti writes that fifty-one concentration camps in all were established to hold Italy's foreign and stateless Jewish population, which consisted mostly of refugees, but also Jews whose citizenship had been revoked.³⁴⁶ The majority of these camps were located in the central and

³⁴² Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 141. Klaus Voigt, "The Children of Villa Emma at Nonantola," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 185. Voigt adds that this last ban was later extended to the Yugoslav territories that Italy annexed.

³⁴³ According to Sarfatti, by June 1940, 10-11,000 foreign Jews had left Italy because of the September 1938 expulsion decree, but in the meantime, 5-6,000 had arrived illegally. He estimates that as of June 1940, there were 5,500-6,000 foreign Jews residing in Italy: 2,000 with permission and 3,500-4,000 without. The 2,000 foreign Jews with residence permits were not included in the 16 May 1940 internment order. The following month, on 15 June, the Ministry of the Interior further clarified the government's intentions: German, Czech, Polish, and stateless Jews would be detained in concentration camps, while Jews from Romania, Hungary, and later again, Slovakia, were to be expelled; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 141-142. It wasn't just foreign Jews, however, whose situation was changing before Italy entered the war. In February 1940, Mussolini himself informed Dante Almansì, President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, that all Jews would eventually have to leave Italy; Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 145.

³⁴⁴ Sarfatti cites Voigt's data; see *ibid.*, 142 and 344n.236.

³⁴⁵ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 165-166. Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. As Turkish Jews, Lina (Ventura) Jaffè and Samuele Dana, as well as their families, were not subject to arrest.

³⁴⁶ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6. Note that this pertains only to the number of concentration camps. Collotti writes that more than 250 places of "internamento libero" would ultimately be established, while De Felice puts the number of "remote exile locations" that were established at four hundred; see Collotti, *ibid.*; and De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 359.

southern parts of the country, and future developments would prove this decision fortuitous.³⁴⁷

When the Germans invaded and brought the Shoah to Italian soil, the strength of their occupation was in northern Italy and the Julian March (*Venezia Giulia*) along the Adriatic coast. As a result, the lives of thousands of foreign and stateless Jews in Italian detainment were spared.³⁴⁸ The history of the largest and most important of Italy's refugee concentration camps, Ferramonti di Tarsia, bears this out. Located in Cosenza province, toward the southern tip of the peninsula, Ferramonti began receiving prisoners on 29 June 1940 and remained in operations until September 1943, when the Allies landed on Calabria's shores. Unlike most such facilities in Fascist Italy, which were grafted onto preexisting structures, Ferramonti was built to be a concentration camp, and more foreign Jewish prisoners would be detained there than at any other Italian camp.³⁴⁹ With the arrival of the Allies, Collotti writes, "The rout of the German troops, forced to make a rapid retreat from the tip of the boot of the Italian peninsula, was the salvation of the Ferramonti camp, the first to be liberated by the Allies".³⁵⁰

By that time, as Sarfatti reveals, fortune had already smiled a bit on Ferramonti's Jews in another way. An Interior Ministry document dated 25 July 1943 shows that Mussolini's administration was weighing the transfer of 2,000 foreign Jews from Ferramonti all the way to Bolzano province in the far north, located in Alto Adige on the border of Nazi Europe. From there, the plan was to either hand them over to the Nazis (under the guise of repatriation) or use them as

³⁴⁷ Collotti speculates that the regime established these camps in central and southern Italy because relocating foreign Jews away from Italy's land borders would help sever their ties with the outside world. They were, after all, a suspect community whose allegiance allegedly lay elsewhere; Collotti, *ibid.* However, Michael R. Ebner writes that from 1935 onward, the regime began sending detainees to the *Mezzogiorno* mainly because there was nowhere else to put them (although the predominantly rural south did have the added benefits of low anti-Fascism and a socially conservative populace); Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 133-134.

³⁴⁸ Italy, then, is a rare exception to the rule that across Europe, east to west, foreign and stateless Jews suffered more than Jews who had citizenship. Nevertheless, the ultimate fate of Italy's foreign Jews was more an accident of history than a reflection of the regime in power's intentions.

³⁴⁹ John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 76. Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6.

³⁵⁰ "La rotta delle forze tedesche costrette a una rapida ritirata dalla punta dello stivale della penisola italiana fu la salvezza del campo di Ferramonti, il primo ad essere liberato dagli alleati"; Collotti, *ibid.*

ransom or bargaining chips to secure the safe return of Italians in German custody. Sarfatti himself leans toward the former interpretation, especially because ten days prior, Rome's chief of police had agreed to turn German Jews over to the Nazis, no doubt with Mussolini's consent. But on the same day that the Interior Ministry delivered its fateful letter, 25 July 1943, the Fascist Grand Council and the Italian monarch toppled Mussolini from within, thus nipping this inchoate, harrowing plan in the bud.³⁵¹

While foreign and stateless Jews, to a person, were subject to arrest (barring permissions), Italian Jews were not immune to imprisonment and internment. The same day that Italy entered the war, 10 June 1940, Mussolini's government announced a measure calling for the detainment of any Italian Jew deemed dangerous. A 'dangerous' Jew, for example, could be someone accused of espionage. For Jews in Italy (like elsewhere), such indictments were nothing new – we recall Bauer discussing how they accompanied the Racial Laws – but a Jewish spy during a time of war was an especially grave threat to the national interest. A 'dangerous' Jew could also be a defeatist, especially one who spread such propaganda. This was a label ascribed to Jews even before the war began, given how the Fascist regime equated Jews with anti-Fascism, and this disposition had seemingly been proved by their opposition to Hitler's Germany and the Axis alliance. Or a 'dangerous' Jew could just be a Jew, for racial theory held that someone of the Jewish (or Semitic) race was a hazard to the health and well-being of the Italian-Aryan race.³⁵² Though much fewer in number than their

³⁵¹ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 143-144, 161. It must be noted, however, that 'most' and 'all' are very different words, and not every foreign Jewish prisoner detained at Ferramonti or elsewhere would survive. Foot writes that 141 Jews held at Ferramonti were later transferred to other locations, and only eleven of them would see the war's end. Meanwhile, other detainees became victims of time and geography. When the Kingdom of Italy broke with Germany in September 1943, for instance, and Hitler responded by occupying the northern half of the peninsula, the concentration camp at Civitella del Tronto, located northeast of Rome and across the peninsula, fell inside German-RSI territory. Very quickly, 151 Jews were arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau; see Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, 75-76; and Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews': A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Arrests during the Holocaust in Italy," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 64-66, 69, 82.

³⁵² Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 146-147.

foreign counterparts, all told, somewhere between 300 and 400-plus Italian Jews were interned, most of whom were detained on the former two charges, suspicions of anti-Fascism or defeatism.³⁵³

Although these numbers show that most Italian Jews were *not* arrested for being threats, defeatists, or anti-Fascists, it is equally true that the Fascist regime had come to associate all Jews with these traits. If more Italian Jews were not arrested, it is because determining whom should be arrested was subject to the whims of the various provincial prefects.

As strange as it sounds, scholars have often painted the concentration camps in brighter colors than they deserve (even if, we must admit, inmates themselves often contributed to this image). They point to, for instance, the reconstruction of community life, the cordial relations that obtained between internees and officials, and the lack of physical, corporal violence committed against Jews. But such accounts overlook the fact that internment itself was an act of institutionalized violence and repression perpetrated against Italy's Jews (and many, many others). For this reason, Carlo Spartaco Capogreco comes closest to the mark when he says, "If it is true that in the fascist camps for the Jews the dignity of the inmates was not offended, it is also true that the dignity of man was offended by the very fact that these camps existed – as an extreme consequence of the 1938 racial laws – which denied many thousand innocent people of their liberty."³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Sarfatti puts the number higher than 400, while Collotti estimates between 300 and 400; see Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 147; and Colotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6.

³⁵⁴ Carlo Spartaco Capogreco quoted in Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, 76. The authoritative text on the Fascist concentration camps (including the conditions of Jewish detainees therein) is Capogreco's *I campi del Duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006). For various other accounts, see Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 165-166; Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 142-143, 146-147; Sarfatti, "Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943," 76; and James Walston, "History and Memory of the Italian Concentration Camps," *The History Journal* 40:1 (March 1997). As Ebner observes, Fascist Italy's entire penal policy of *confino* is likewise viewed through rose-tinted glasses. Far too often and for far too long, scholars have looked to the Fascist example to underscore the brutality of other, coterminous regimes, such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Francoist Spain, in the process misrepresenting the extent and centrality of violence to Fascism itself. While the Fascist regime did not intend for detainees to die, *confino* was a lethal environment and administered as such. As he summarizes, "The tens of thousands of Italians sentenced to *confino di polizia* collectively experienced prison, filth, sleeplessness, exhaustion, malnutrition, thirst, disease, homesickness, illness, fear, physical violence, financial ruin, and pernicious uncertainty." And many did die; see Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 137-138. See also 6n.15, 8-11.

Above, the point was made that the Racial Laws did not necessarily spell economic ruin for Italy's Jews. A major qualification to this thesis, however, is Rome. In modern Jewish history, Rome stands as the contrast to the general Italian picture and the antithesis to Milan. If Milan stands out among Italy's major Jewish centers for the wealth of the local community and the agnosticism of its members, then Rome's Jews, a community of believers living in a state of impoverishment, are unique for the opposite reasons.³⁵⁵ Long after being released from under the pope's thumb, Rome's Jews continued to suffer the socioeconomic aftereffects of papal discrimination, and when the Fascist regime's antisemitic legislation came into effect, it drove them further toward destitution. By looking at the testimonies of individuals whose livelihoods, if not lives, were ruined by the Racial Laws, we get a better sense of how financially devastating Italy's antisemitic legislation could be.³⁵⁶

One such individual was Giuseppe Di Porto. Giuseppe and his family, like much of the Jewish community, lived near the heart of the old Roman ghetto. The walls had come down throughout Italy, but in Rome, the people stayed in or around their old environs. As Stille writes, "Most Jews under fascism belonged to the professional and commercial classes, but more than half of Rome's Jews (the largest community in Italy) still lived in and around the old ghetto area where they had been confined for centuries, dirt poor and barely literate ... [T]he Jews of the Rome ghetto lived in a world apart, locked into a daily struggle for survival."³⁵⁷ The Di Portos also boasted a large, traditional family, another staple of Rome's Jewish community. While Jews living elsewhere in Italy

³⁵⁵ Zimmerman provides the following excellent overview of the uniqueness of Rome's Jewish community: "Despite the Italian Jews' overwhelmingly urban and middle-class character, there were significant regional, social, and religious variations. Most significant in this regard," he writes, "was the Jewish community of Rome, Italy's largest center with a Jewish population of 12,494 in 1938. A significant portion of Roman Jews inhabited the old quarter of the former Jewish ghetto, were largely poor and working class, and had retained a high level of religious observance and social isolation. The contrast between the Roman Jews and other major Jewish centers can be illustrated by the divergent rates of intermarriage. Although the percentage of Jews marrying outside the faith in interwar Italy was 43.7 percent as a whole and even higher in such large cities as Trieste (59 percent) and Milan (56 percent), only 8 percent of Roman Jews intermarried during the same period"; Zimmerman, introduction, 4.

³⁵⁶ Another caveat to the Roman case that we can't ignore is that Jews in the capital, liberated only in 1870, were decades behind their religious peers on the road to social mobility and integration.

³⁵⁷ Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 14. Klein records that by 1928, less than sixteen percent of Rome's Jews were still living in the former ghetto proper; see Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 31.

had, over the generations, pared down their family size, Roman Jewish families continued to feature anywhere from five to nine children. Giuseppe, born June 3, 1923, was one of eight. As an observant family led by the *paterfamilias*, the Di Portos once again fit the Roman mold. Giuseppe recalls how his father, Sabatino, expected him and his siblings to conduct themselves according to Judaic tradition, and together with his mother, Letizia (Sed Piazza), his parents taught him “to be a good Jew.”³⁵⁸ Lastly, Sabatino labored as a street vendor, selling ties, belts, and suspenders, and his work allowed the family to carve out a normal, lower-middle-class life.³⁵⁹ As Giuseppe poetically puts it, “Until then [the Racial Laws], we never swam in gold, but we were always able to eat.”³⁶⁰

When the state revoked Jewish peddling licenses in 1941, it came as a devastating financial blow to Rome’s community, including the Di Portos. Unlike in other parts of Italy, like Milan, where Jews predominated in the fields of banking, finance, and commerce, peddling remained the principal Jewish occupation in Rome – just as *Cum nimis absurdum* had ordained. When this antisemitic measure came into effect, there were between 600 and 900 Roman Jews working as street vendors.³⁶¹ Occupying “the lowest rungs of the economic ladder”, as Nidam-Orvieto remarks, outright poverty was the inevitable result when the state stripped them of their vending licenses, robbing them of their already meagre livelihoods.³⁶² “In most cases,” she explains, “these peddlers were the sole breadwinners of large families that often consisted of five to nine children in addition to their elderly

³⁵⁸ “I miei genitori mi hanno insegnato a essere un buon ebreo”; Giuseppe Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene. Una testimonianza inedita di un sopravvissuto ad Auschwitz* (Rome: Quaderni, 2009), 13. See also 15-16; Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, 16 novembre 1986, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000178/giuseppe-porto.html>; and Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

³⁵⁹ Giuseppe describes the Di Portos as “una famiglia media” (an average family); Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

³⁶⁰ “Fino ad allora non avevamo mai navigato nell’oro, ma certo riuscivamo a mangiare”; Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 16.

³⁶¹ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 161. Almansi, president of the Union at the time, wrote that there were almost 900 Jewish street vendors in Rome, while scholar E.F. Sabatello counted 600 Roman Jews working as peddlers at the beginning of 1939; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 367n.425. Nidam-Orvieto, meanwhile, writes that there were more than 800 Jewish peddlers in Rome; Nidam-Orvieto, *ibid*, 178n.16.

³⁶² Nidam-Orvieto, *ibid*, 161. Sarfatti agrees that because of the law denying Jews the right to work as street vendors, economic hardship was probably greatest in Rome; Sarfatti, *ibid*, 173. Klein has likewise referred to Rome’s Jewish community as Italy’s “largest and poorest”; Klein, “Challenging the Myth of Italian Jewish Assimilation,” 83-84.

parents or in-laws. Losing their sales licenses was for them a complete disaster, leading to even deeper poverty.” In hopes of having their licenses restored, she relates, a group of fifteen cashiered peddlers appealed directly to the Interior Minister, with one of the venders writing:

At present, I am without work and my family is suffering enormously, especially the children who are being deprived of the most basic necessities. I have a disabled child who needs special care.... Since this is a very sad case of an extremely poor family, I beg you, Your Excellency, to show some interest [in our case]. Otherwise, during the winter, we will have to sleep on the street because of the lack of money for rent.³⁶³

The outcome of this plea isn’t provided, but it is doubtful that the Ministry of the Interior assented to their request, if they even got around to looking at it.

Like so many other Roman families, the loss of Sabatino’s peddling license had a drastic effect on the Di Portos. In truth, beforehand, the Di Portos had probably been worse off than Giuseppe let on. When he was only seven years old, Giuseppe began splitting his day between attending school in the morning and pushing carts alongside his father in the afternoon. After he was barred from his public school in 1938 – an experience he recalls with deep sadness, for it severed his relations with his Catholic friends – work took over for good.³⁶⁴ When the state revoked Sabatino’s vending license in 1941, Giuseppe’s father was no longer able to support his family of ten, leaving the Di Portos impecunious. As a result, while Sabatino tried to make ends meet by selling off the family’s possessions, Giuseppe and his siblings raised what little money they could by taking on a variety of menial jobs.³⁶⁵ For his part, Giuseppe labored as a bricklayer by day, before spending his nights working the marketplace as a porter from 2:00 to 6:00am. But so desperate was their situation that the need to earn some kind of income took Giuseppe from the humbling to the humiliating. “With much discomfort,” he explains, “I went door-to-door, asking people for their

³⁶³ Nidam-Orvieto, *ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 16. Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

³⁶⁵ Nidam-Orvieto notes that it was common for Jewish children to take it upon themselves to search for work and food and to manage the household; Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 165.

garbage.”³⁶⁶ Still not enough, he also made money by collecting used clothing and scrap metal and, swallowing his pride, selling sweets during Fascist parades. “I was ashamed,” he says, “but I had no other alternative.”³⁶⁷ Nor was this the last time that the Racial Laws would alter Giuseppe’s work status.

With Italy’s war effort souring and emigration no longer possible, the regime turned to forced labor (*prevezazione*) in 1942.³⁶⁸ In his capacity as director of Demorazza, Undersecretary of the Interior Guido Buffarini-Guidi issued a directive to Italy’s prefects on 6 May, permitting them to subject all Jewish men and women aged 18 to 55, even if *discriminati*, to forced labor. According to Sarfatti, taken together, internment camps and forced labor signaled the extreme limit of Fascist Italy’s persecution of the country’s Jews.³⁶⁹ Publicly, this first measure was presented as step one in the creation of a generalized “labor service” encompassing all Italian males of the same age range who had been exempted from military service. However, Sarfatti and Collotti have demonstrated that its true purposes were political, persecutory, and punitive, not productive. As Sarfatti shows, just over a week later, the Ministry of Corporations asked the prefect “to draft for labor service Jews and the listed idle professionals, taking out of circulation once and for all individuals who are a dead weight on Italian life and who give offense by their indolent existence.”³⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Collotti explains how Fascist officials put the Jews in an impossible bind; they barred them from the military, blamed them for the war, and then denounced them for not serving. With Italy’s war prospects looking dimmer and dimmer, the Jews once again made a convenient scapegoat, and forced labor

³⁶⁶ “Dal 1939 cominciai anche a cercare di guadagnare recuperando quello che la gente buttava. Con molto disagio giravo per le case, bussando alle porte chiedendo alla gente le cose che non occorreivano più”; Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 17.

³⁶⁷ “Mi vergognava, ma non avevo alternativa”; *ibid.* See also Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

³⁶⁸ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 147.

³⁶⁹ Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 150.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 147-148, 349n.270.

was the punishment leveled for their “abstention”.³⁷¹ Taking the bait, antisemitic propagandists weaponized their presses as they had done before, with the *Maremma* of Grosseto telling its readers:

The tribe of Israel makes contact with the pickaxe and the spade and learns how honest sweat sanctifies the toil of man ... The Jew is not a producer. In the wealth of peoples, he has the function of the fungus. He is essentially a parasite that traffics on the wealth produced by the rest of humanity, drawing the greatest profits and the best earnings.³⁷²

Yet, despite their alleged allergy to manual labor, that is exactly the type of work that Italy’s Jews were conscripted to do. In point one of a memo that Buffarini-Guidi distributed to Italy’s prefects on 5 August 1942, the Interior Undersecretary specified that, “Generally, except for specifically stated discriminations, the mobilized Jews must be assigned to manual labor, with prior ascertainment, in cases of doubt, of their physical fitness.”³⁷³ For Jewish men, this meant excavation jobs, logging, sorting scrap metal, loading and unloading various items, construction work, and agriculture, while Jewish women were assigned jobs in the production of boxes and military garb. While forced workers were paid for their labor, it came at a pittance; Rome’s Jews, for instance, earned only a quarter of what their non-conscripted Gentile counterparts did.³⁷⁴

De Felice, who has scoured the Italian archives like perhaps no scholar before or since, admits that statistics regarding Jewish forced laborers are hard to come by. However, a Demorazza report from 31 July 1943 reveals that 15,517 Jews had been drafted by that date; of that total, 2,410

³⁷¹ A Demorazza report cited by De Felice supports this conclusion: “free from military service obligations,” it reads, “they [Jews] could dedicate their time to business and leisure, leading a kind of life that was obviously insulting to the masses of Italians who were working and fighting to achieve victory”; Demorazza report cited in De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 359-360. De Felice’s conclusions are in agreement with Collotti’s and, presumably, Sarfatti’s about forced labor’s punitive dimension, although he also thinks it was deployed to “use all available manpower to attain victory”, an argument that later authors do not support.

³⁷² “La tribù d’Israele prende contatto col piccone e la vanga e apprende di quale onesto sudore è santificata la fatica dell’uomo ... L’ebreo non è un produttore. Ha, nella ricchezza dei popoli, la funzione del fungo. È sostanzialmente un parassita che traffica sulla ricchezza prodotta dal resto dell’umanità, traendone i maggiori profitti ed i migliore guadagni”; *Maremma* article quoted in Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6.

³⁷³ Buffarini-Guidi quoted in De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 722. De Felice provides two Interior Ministry documents related to the implementation of the Jewish forced-labor law: the first is dated 5 August 1942, and the second, 15 July 1943; see 722-724.

³⁷⁴ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 148-149. Another Di Porto, Giacomo (relation unknown), was arrested and interned for protesting his unequal payment; see Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 349n.277.

conscripts had been excused temporarily and 1,301 permanently, leaving 11,806 draftees fit to work. However, of *that* total, only 2,038 Jewish laborers had actually been put to work.³⁷⁵ Why so few? Although the law did provide for a series of exemptions, it seems that the real factor or factors lay elsewhere.³⁷⁶ De Felice credits Fascism's fall in late July 1943 as the main reason why so few draftees were actually levied, but he also cites a lack of diligence on the parts of Italy's prefects as a contributing factor.³⁷⁷ This isn't far off from Sarfatti's conclusion, which holds that Fascist authorities in charge of Jewish work brigades were "quite possibly" engaging in acts of passive resistance.³⁷⁸ Still, even accepting that centralized totalitarian governments never achieve complete control over their diffuse, tentacular apparatuses, Fascism's internal collapse is a difficult factor to overlook, especially since the regime was pushing toward the establishment of *bona fide* forced-labor camps in the summer of 1943.³⁷⁹

Giuseppe Di Porto ended up among the 2,038 Jews actually forced to work. Italy's capital was one of the first cities to dispatch a forced-labor brigade, doing so on 3 June 1942, and Giuseppe relates that two days later, he received police orders compelling him and 199 other Roman Jews to work the banks of the Tiber. There, not far from the old ghetto and still in the shadow of the Vatican, they were tasked with digging up sand and cleaning the riverside.³⁸⁰ A fan of neither the

³⁷⁵ De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 360. Sarfatti cites De Felice's data; Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 148.

³⁷⁶ At various times while the forced-labor law was in effect, some or all members of the following groups of people were exempted: Jews with Aryan spouses or children; the unfit or the unwell; women with young children or in advanced stages of pregnancy; doctors; and rabbis. One group that the regime flipfopped on was foreign Jews. At first, they were included in the forced-labor draft, but then, in response to foreign outcry, Demorazza excluded them, only to lift the blanket exemption at a later point in time. For information on exemptions from Fascist Italy's forced-labor law, see: De Felice, *ibid.*, 359-360, 722-724; and Sarfatti, *ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Another factor that De Felice throws in the mix is Jews' lack of productivity as manual laborers, which dissuaded companies from requesting them. As he puts it, "Most of them proved very unproductive and not capable of functioning as manual laborers, so that few companies and organizations requested their services"; De Felice, *ibid.*, 361. This seems to be a case of taking prejudiced sources at face value.

³⁷⁸ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 148-149.

³⁷⁹ Such facilities never came into being, but they had been agreed upon by summer 1943. Once again, Mussolini's fall from power came as a saving grace, forestalling yet another moment in the radicalization of antisemitic policy in Fascist Italy; *ibid.*, 147-152.

³⁸⁰ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 17. Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. De Felice records 176 forced Jewish laborers in Rome at the end of November 1942, where they worked along the Tiber River and in road repair. With Italy's largest

work nor the pay, Giuseppe tells how when the guards left their posts, he would slip away by diving into the river and swimming out of sight. After resurfacing a safe distance away, he'd go look for work somewhere else. Often wondering how he kept getting away with it, given that the authorities had work rosters, he learned after the war that the police repeatedly arrested a different man named Giuseppe *di* Porto. Other Giuseppe also survived the war, and afterward, the two made amends (although Mr. *di* Porto was understandably displeased with the matter).³⁸¹

For our Giuseppe Di Porto, the Racial Laws came not just as a “shock” but as a “tragedy” (*tragedia*), bringing financial ruin to his already destitute family.³⁸² Correspondingly, they loom much larger in his testimony than they do in testimonies of other witnesses, who tend to “skip ahead” to the German occupation, the Italian Social Republic, and the Shoah. The Di Portos experienced the Racial Laws, collectively, as a true breaking point in their family timeline; the problems they experienced from 1938 on, Giuseppe explains, hadn't existed before. And Giuseppe palpably detected the situation deteriorating not just for his family, not just for Rome's Jews, but for all Italian Jews. “[W]e Italian Jews were treated like foreigners,” he explains, “unwanted and poorly looked-upon, forced to suffer innumerable restrictions and persecutions.”³⁸³ Although they remained Italian citizens, they were no longer free, and “In that moment,” he relates, “like thousands of other Italian Jews, I lived like an undocumented person.”³⁸⁴

Jewish population, Rome exploited forced Jewish laborers more than any other municipality. Per a Demorazza report from February-July 1943, Roman authorities conscripted an average of 393 forced Jewish laborers per month. For comparison, Milan was second, with 179, less than half of Rome's monthly average; De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 361-362.

³⁸¹ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 17-18. In Fiume, Goti Bauer recalls many Jews being compelled to work in factories and as street cleaners, though she herself was unaffected; Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

³⁸² Di Porto, *ibid.*

³⁸³ “*noi ebrei italiani fummo considerati come cittadini stranieri, indesiderati e mal visti, costretti a subire innumerevoli restrizioni e persecuzioni*”; *ibid.*, 16.

³⁸⁴ “*In quel periodo, come migliaia di altri ebrei italiani, ho vissuto come un clandestino senza cittadinanza*”; *ibid.*, 17. See also Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

Beyond the new antisemitic measures, the war itself caused major disturbances in the everyday lives of Italy's Jews. For the urban majority, most disruptive – and often destructive – were the Allied bombardments, and Milan's importance as Italy's economic and industrial capital made it an ambrosial target for enemy aircraft. At first the bombing was light, and Milan went untouched from the end of December 1940 straight through the fall of 1942, but on 24 October of that year, the heavens opened up to rain fire on the Lombard capital, twice. The first wave was especially deadly, claiming 150 Milanese lives and leaving another 316 wounded. For the residents of Milan, the war, which long seemed so distant, had now been delivered to their doorsteps and dropped on their roofs. It would remain this way until the war's end, as the bombings over Milan became heavier and more frequent from then on. At the end of the war, when the dust settled and the last of the bombers landed, only Naples (first) and Rome (second) were more bombed out than Milan among Italy's major urban centers.

Doubtless the nadir came almost two years to the day later when, on October 20, 1944, an errant US bomb struck the Francesco Crespi Elementary School in Milan's Gorla district, just north of Milano Centrale station, killing 184 students, 19 teachers and assistants, and the director of studies at the school, as well as 400 other civilians in the vicinity.³⁸⁵ Allied bombardments didn't spare Milan's Jewish Community either, striking its very heart. On August 13, 1943, an incendiary bomb almost completely destroyed the Via Guastalla Synagogue. Only the façade and the marble floor survived, and to this day, they are the only parts of the original structure that remain.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Francesco Ogliari, *25 aprile 1945. Milano prima e dopo: I bombardamenti aerie 1940 – 1945*, Vol. 1 (Pavia: Edizioni Selecta, 2011), 39-40, 57-64. Ogliari, *25 aprile 1945*, Vol. 2, 71. Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory*, 105-108.

³⁸⁶ Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 70-71. Allied bombardment destroyed every part of the Central Synagogue except for the façade and the marble floor, but Via Guastalla was rebuilt in 1953 and then restructured in 1997; see Stefania Consenti, *Luoghi della memoria a Milano. Itinerari nella città Medaglia d'Oro della Resistenza* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2015), 83.

With heavy shelling from above descending on their homes and their heads, urban Jews and their Gentile neighbors fled to the countryside *en masse*, eking out temporary livings until the war stopped, or at least until the bombings subsided. All the while, they hoped that their homes would still be waiting for them when they returned.³⁸⁷ Among those to evacuate Milan were the Danas, who fled to the town of Calcinate, near Bergamo and Brescia, in 1943.³⁸⁸ Bombardments also prompted the Segres to flee the Lombard capital. Taking out a five-year lease on a place in Inverigo, a small village south of Lake Como, Alberto evacuated the entire Segre family – himself, Liliana, and his parents, Giuseppe and Olga – in October 1942, the very month the bombings returned to Milan. Thus ended Liliana’s life as a schoolgirl, for the only learning center nearby was public. Instead, twelve-year-old Liliana passed the time covertly listening to Radio London next door with her neighbors. Though Liliana admits that, despite the best efforts of “Colonel Good Evening” (*Colonnello Buonasera*), Harold Stevens, she struggled to follow the course of the war, it was at Inverigo that she first learned of the Nazis’ cruelty in their occupied territories – and what that might portend for all of Europe’s Jews. Yet, since all the news that they received seemed to be hearsay and word-of-mouth, the Segres weren’t sure what to make of it.³⁸⁹ Not all Jews chose to leave, though. In their family home on Via Mario Pagano, not far from the Segres’ Milan residence on Corso Magenta, the Finzis hunkered down and rode out the storm. Though Fausta recalls fires breaking out and nearby houses collapsing, their home was spared. “The experience was traumatizing enough,” she says, while adding that it paled in comparison to what awaited them.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Although bombardment was a shared experience that, theoretically, spared no city dweller, when ordinary Italians (like their German counterparts) complained after the war that they had suffered tremendously from the bombings, making them war victims too, they might have been more charitable to their Jewish neighbors.

³⁸⁸ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

³⁸⁹ Another antisemitic measure passed during the war (1940-43) was the confiscation of radios, an escalation of a prior policy: see note 319; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995; and Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 166.

³⁹⁰ “È stata un’esperienza abbastanza traumatica”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

Outside Milan, bombardments over Genoa displaced the Sacerdote family to Rapallo, just southeast along the coastline, sometime in either 1940 or 1941.³⁹¹ While the exodus from Milan began only in autumn 1942, Genoa came under attack earlier and more often in the war's first years, likely the result of its prodigious shipbuilding industry and its accessible coastal positioning. Bombed by the British the night of 11 – 12 June 1940, less than two days after Italy's war began, Genoa joined Turin as one of Italy's first two cities to suffer aerial attack.³⁹² While the Sacerdotes were displaced in Rapallo, news first began trickling back to them from friends who had quit Italy altogether and fled to Switzerland. Convinced by what he was hearing, Luciana's father entertained the same idea for the Sacerdotes, but her mother was resolutely opposed. "If we leave, we'll never return," she objected, and so, the Sacerdotes stayed.³⁹³

Another family forced to take to the countryside were the Bayonas, dislocated by the war for the second time (and not the last). On January 27, 1926, Isacco Bayona was born into a family of Italian citizens living abroad in Thessaloniki, Greece. In 1945, he would "celebrate" his nineteenth birthday by being liberated from Auschwitz-Birkenau.³⁹⁴ Isacco's father, Raffaele Bayona, worked in Greece as director of Italy's overseas Tobacco Monopoly (*Monopolio dei Tabacchi all'estero*), overseeing tobacco cultivation and preparation before it was exported to the fatherland.³⁹⁵ It was presumably in this capacity that he met Isacco's mother, Diamante Jacob, who was Salonican from birth, and after marrying, the pair had four children together: first came Carlo, born December 29, 1923, then

³⁹¹ Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

³⁹² Ogliari, *25 aprile 1945*, Vol. 1, 13.

³⁹³ "Se andiamo via, non ritorniamo più"; Ernestina quoted by Sacerdote in Interview, 2 marzo 1996. The Sacerdotes did, however, acquire false documents while in Rapallo, though Luciana forgets their assumed Aryan names. As she jokingly instructs the interviewer, "Don't ask me this, because I don't remember what I did yesterday," much less forty-five years ago ("Non mi chiedi questa cosa perché io non ricordo quello che ho fatto ieri"); Sacerdote, *ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Isacco Bayona, Interview by Andrea Devoto, Livorno, 1 marzo 1989, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000215/isacco-bayona-1.html>.

³⁹⁵ *Viaggio nella memoria. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2013), 40.

Isacco, and then his younger sisters, Lucia (b. 6 February 1932) and Dora (7 March 1934). No doubt because of Raffaele's respected position, this family of six was in a comfortable financial situation.³⁹⁶

On a personal level, Isacco recalls that he wasn't very religious in his youth, mostly because he didn't study Judaism. But much like Thessaloniki's large Jewish population, the Bayonas were an observant family, with Raffaele at their head. Fondly remembering "so many Jews" (*tanti ebrei*) living in Thessaloniki at the time, all inhabiting their own quarter, in one interview, when asked if he lived a good life there, he replies in the affirmative by first pointing to the large Jewish community.³⁹⁷ He wasn't wrong, either; the "Jerusalem of the Balkans" possessed not only the largest Jewish population in Greece, but also the largest community of Sephardi Jews in the entire world, numbering around 50,000.³⁹⁸ Appropriately, at home, the Bayonas principally spoke Spanish (maybe Ladino, the language of the Iberian diaspora), "Because in Greece almost all the Jews spoke either French or Spanish." Meanwhile, at school, the Bayona children learned French while bolstering their Italian and Greek, two other languages they also spoke at home.³⁹⁹ Improving their situation still, Isacco recalls having good relations with the non-Jewish population, as Thessaloniki's Jews were accepted into the greater community without issue.⁴⁰⁰

Things began to change, however, in 1939, when Italy's Racial Laws extended their reach across the Adriatic. The Italian Consulate removed Raffaele from his post, and Carlo and Isacco

³⁹⁶ "Bayona, Carlo," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-678/bayona-carlo.html>. "Bayona, Dora," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-680/bayona-dora.html>. "Bayona, Isacco," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-975/bayona-isacco.html?persona=%22Bayona%2C+Isacco%22>. "Bayona, Lucia," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-681/bayona-lucia.html>. "Jacob, Diamante," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4150/jacob-diamante.html>. Isacco Bayona (Bajona), Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, *"Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996*, Livorno, 1 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000011/isacco-bajona.html>.

³⁹⁷ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

³⁹⁸ "Salonika," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USHMM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/salonika>. Rodogno estimates that in 1940-41, 56,000 of Greece's 80,000 Jews lived in Thessaloniki; Rodogno, *"Italiana brava gente?"* 232.

³⁹⁹ *"Perché in Grecia quasi tutti gli ebrei parlavano o francese o lo spagnolo"*; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. See also: Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989; and *Viaggio nella memoria*, 40.

⁴⁰⁰ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

were expelled from their Italian school, Santorre Santarosa.⁴⁰¹ Then, after Italy invaded Greece on 28 October 1940, Bayona recalls the Greek government responding by arresting and interning Italian males aged eighteen and older, intending to use them for prisoner exchange. As a result, Raffaele and Carlo were detained in a concentration camp, and Isacco, his mother, and his sisters had to present themselves before Greece's gendarmerie once a week.⁴⁰² Not long afterward, the Bayonas made their way to Livorno, Italy, though it isn't precisely clear when, why, or how. The following is the most commonly given account: in April 1941, Isacco, his mother, and his sisters were repatriated, perhaps with help from the Swiss Consulate, while his father and brother remained interned. They first arrived in Trieste, before ultimately settling in Livorno, where Raffaele and Carlo later joined them after being released from detainment.⁴⁰³ By leaving Greece, by choice or by force, the Bayonas avoided the annihilation of Greece's Jewish population, including the thriving, historic Thessaloniki community they were once a part of.⁴⁰⁴ However, their new homeland would prove to be a precarious refuge for them, like it was for thousands of Jews from across Europe.

⁴⁰¹ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 40. Lucia and Dora were not yet of school age.

⁴⁰² It isn't clear exactly where Raffaele and Carlo were detained. In an oral interview from 1996, Isacco says that he thinks they were held in a camp on Corfu, while in a prior interview from 1987 and in the book, *Viaggio nella memoria*, it is mentioned that they were detained on "the island of Argos" (*nell'isola di Argos*). But Argos is not an island, while Corfu is; see Isacco Bayona, Interview by Gigliola Colombo/Lopez, *Ricerca sulla Deportazione*. Livorno, 1987, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000182/isacco-bayona.html>; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996; and *Viaggio nella memoria*, *ibid*. Also, we note that Carlo turned seventeen years old in December 1940, so he should not have been subject to arrest yet. The dates in Isacco Bayona's many accounts do not always align (see the following note).

⁴⁰³ Other accounts variously state that Diamante, Isacco, Lucia, and Dora repatriated, or were repatriated, in 1940 (e.g., Bayona, Interview, 1989); that Diamante and her three youngest children "decided" (*decisi*) to return to Italy (e.g., *Viaggio nella memoria*, 40); that all of the Bayonas, not just Raffaele and Carlo, were sent to Italy as part of a prisoner exchange (e.g., Bayona, Interview, 1987); and that they passed through Yugoslavia before arriving in Trieste (e.g., Bayona, Interview, 1996). Relatedly, it's possible that the Greek government implemented prisoner exchange or repatriation in response to Italy's repatriation of most Greek Jews; see Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 142.

⁴⁰⁴ After the Axis powers conquered Greece, the defeated state endured dual occupation by the Germans and Italians, and the Shoah arrived when deportations commenced in March 1943. Italians protested the deportation of Italian Jewish citizens living in Greece, with the result that the Italian state saved most of its Jewish citizens, except those whom the Nazis had already deported and those still in the process of acquiring citizenship. The situation changed, of course, when the Kingdom of Italy announced its armistice with the Allies on 8 September 1943, after which all Italian Jews in Greece were subject to deportation. Ninety to ninety-four percent of Thessaloniki's Jewish community would perish in the camps; see Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, 164-165; Simone Veil, foreword to *Inside the Gas Chambers: Eight Months in the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz*, by Shlomo Venezia (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, MA: 2009), 33; and "Thessaloniki," USHMM, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/holocaust-in-greece/thessaloniki>. One of the few Jewish deportees from Thessaloniki to return after the war was Shlomo Venezia,

Why the Bayonas chose to settle in Livorno is much clearer, because in reality, they were re-settling there; generations ago, the Bayona family had hailed from the seaside Tuscan city. Upon arriving, they first found lodging in a convent, but when the administrators learned they were Jews, they forced them to leave. Fortunately, the local Jewish Community was able to find them other accommodations, as well as a job for Isacco. With Raffaele and Carlo locked away in another country, Isacco became the *de facto* head of the family while they were gone, so it was up to him to provide for his mother and sisters. School, therefore, was out of the question, but according to Isacco, it wouldn't have been an option anyway. Although there was a Jewish school nearby, he recalls that "it wasn't open."⁴⁰⁵ Assuming his role as "*capo famiglia*", Isacco took a job at the Montecatini chemical factory, a lithopone manufacturer, and he remembers the work being unbelievably intense. Incredibly, he compared it to camp labor, hinting strongly at where his story was going. When the Bayona family was reunited, Carlo joined him at the factory, but their father was unable to work because World War I had left him disabled (*invalido di guerra*). It's possible that Raffaele's disability kept him permanently unemployed, because on Isacco's word, the Montecatini plant was the only game in town for Jews. No one else would hire them. Nevertheless, despite the discriminatory hiring practices, despite the unbecoming example set by the nuns, and despite the fact that local conditions made it impossible for Jews to organize a Jewish circle (*circolo*), Isacco insists that Livorno wasn't an antisemitic city (*una città non antisemita*).⁴⁰⁶ Like with Bauer's testimony, presented in the introduction to chapter one, widespread antisemitism exists just beneath the surface of Bayona's testimony.

who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau as a *Sonderkommando*. He provides an eyewitness account of his experience in his memoir, *Inside the Gas Chambers*.

⁴⁰⁵ "*non funzionava*"; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. See also: *Viaggio nella memoria*, 40.

⁴⁰⁶ Bayona, Interview, 1987. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

Isacco recalls evacuating Livorno with his family in summer 1943. “Already after the first bombardment,” he says, “Livorno was almost half-destroyed,” and residents fled the city in greater number as the bombings intensified.⁴⁰⁷ Together with two other Jewish families, the Modianos and the Baruchs, the Bayonas escaped to Gabbro, a village southeast of Livorno, where they stayed in a farmhouse (*colonica*) owned by some of the Modianos’ friends. The only member of the Bayona family (and of all three families) to not evacuate was Raffaele, who stayed behind in a Livorno sanitarium to recover from a knee procedure (perhaps related to the injury he sustained in the First World War). This would prove to be a blessing.⁴⁰⁸

Later, when the Shoah came to Italy, Jewish opinion became a bit more mixed on the bombardments. From his time in San Vittore prison, Samuele Dana’s clearest memory is the “terror of bombardments” (*terrore di bombardamenti*). They are the first thing his mind goes to when asked about his prison experience. More than the cold, more than the hunger, more than the guards, it was the bombardments that frightened him most.⁴⁰⁹ Aldo Zargani, however, explains how Jews almost looked forward to the bombardments, for they offered a reprieve from the ‘Jew-hunt’ (*caccia all’ebreo*). Jew-hunts, like the entire Shoah enterprise, required “calm, organization, and bureaucratic rituality”, he explains, and when bombardments disrupted this, Jews were able to blend in with the “normal people” (*persone normali*).⁴¹⁰ Nevertheless, re-exposing themselves as Jews in the midst of the chaos could leave them vulnerable, as the Zarganis learned firsthand. On one occasion, after discovering that the Zarganis were Jewish, a friar revoked his offer to shelter them in his church by slamming its door in their faces.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ “Già primo bombardamento Livorno è stata quasi mezza distrutta”; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. See also: Bayona, Interview, 1987. Livorno was heavily bombed for the first time on 28 May 1943.

⁴⁰⁸ Bayona, Interview, 1987. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁴⁰⁹ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

⁴¹⁰ “calma, organizzazione e ritualità burocratiche”; Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 37. Jew-hunts were often chaotic and disorganized, but Zargani depicts them otherwise because he presents them as part of the Shoah in its entirety.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

Through it all, one thing that sustained Italy's Jews, Italian, foreign, and stateless alike, was the fundamental conviction that they were better off than their peers in the Third Reich and Nazi-occupied Europe. For years, the German example had provided them with a compelling counter to their own situation; even as their own rights were being ruthlessly stripped away, a glance northward could put their minds at relative ease. All the while, the thousands of Jews pouring into Italy from the Third Reich, horror stories in tow, seemed to reinforce this belief. After the war broke out, unauthorized refugees continued to find their way to Italy, and as they now told tales of truly untold terror from Hitler's ever-expanding European empire, the contrast came into even sharper relief. Hearing these stories, many of Italy's Jews believed themselves to be safe from harm.

The Segres, for instance, ignored the impassioned pleas of friends and family who begged them to leave Italy, because as Liliana explains, there were just too many factors compelling them to stay. For starters, the Segres had been Italian for generations (*italiani da generazioni*), so the thought of leaving their ancestral homeland behind was too bitter a pill to swallow. Liliana's age also factored into their decision, for she was still a young child, and so too did her grandfather's health, which was constantly deteriorating. Their lack of familiarity with foreign languages threw up another roadblock, as did their inadequate means. Lastly, while they had been told stories of atrocities occurring "in the East", these remained unverified rumors coming from strange, distant lands – and even if they were real, there was no way that these horrors would, or could, ever happen in Italy.⁴¹² On their own, perhaps none of these factors would have acted as a brake, and the Segres might have fled to Switzerland, or the United States, or somewhere else safe. But with so many forces constraining them, the Segres had little choice but to remain in Italy and hope for the best.

According to Zargani, it was this dogged insistence on Italy's difference from Germany that got his uncle Carlo Morais and his entire family killed. By the late 1930s, Carlo Morais had made a

⁴¹² Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 22-23.

successful life for himself and his family in Milan. An engineer by trade, Carlo became a manager for Pirelli, Milan's signature industrial enterprise, at a young age, and this served as his entry ticket to Milan's high society.⁴¹³ On the treelined street where the Morais family lived, close to Milan's central station, each beautiful terraced house boasted an interior garden, accessible only to the wealthiest people in the neighborhood who lived at ground level. The Moraises had access to the garden. After the Racial Laws forced Carlo out of his job with Pirelli, he rebounded by founding a tire company of his own, specializing in vulcanization and the salvaging of old tires – important skills in times of autarky and war. As a result, the Morais family didn't just stay afloat after the antisemitic legislation came into effect; they remained as wealthy as before. But this came at a cost, for Aldo asserts that his uncle's wealth and assimilation blinded him to the threats posed by the regime's antisemitic discrimination and divorced him from the realities of Italy's Jews, past and present.⁴¹⁴ “The Jews who were most gripped by the Shoah in Western Europe,” Aldo maintains, “were those who were too poor to survive and those like Uncle Carlo who, lacking that ancestral fear, weren't able to understand.”⁴¹⁵ A Jew with access to the garden could never relate to a Jew locked inside a ghetto.

The other factor that discouraged Carlo from fleeing, Aldo remembers, was his stubborn disbelief that Italy could ever be penetrated by the “barbarism of the East” (*barbarie dell'Est*), and he tried to convince Aldo's father, Mario, as much. Hedging that “no one can be certain, neither in Milan nor in Turin, when reason has faded everywhere,” Aldo's father didn't listen to his brother.⁴¹⁶ Instead, the Zarganis fled to Italy's northwestern hinterlands, where they hid in partisan territory until the war's end. On January 30, 1944, the entire Morais family – Carlo, his wife, Malfalda (Ida

⁴¹³ It was Carlo's assimilation into Milan's wealthy upper-middle class, Aldo claims, that made him even “less Jewish” (*meno ebreo*) than Aldo himself, who was practically agnostic; Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 190, 192.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴¹⁵ “Gli ebrei più colpiti dalla Shoah in Occidente furono quelli sufficientemente poveri da non poter sopravvivere e quelli come lo zio Carlo che, non più allertati dalla paura ancestrale, non riuscivano a capire”; *ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ “nessuno può essere sicuro, neppure a Milano o a Torino, quando la ragione è tramontata dappertutto”; *ibid.*

Tedeschi), and their children, Graziella and Alberto – were deported from nearby Milano Centrale station to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they would all be killed.

Conclusion

In 1938, Benito Mussolini and the Fascist state set out to create an Italy without Jews. Emboldened by the success of the Ethiopian expedition, and intent to refashion Italian society along similar racial principles, the regime enacted its ambitious new plan to create a race of Fascist New Men, and there could be no Jews in an Aryan racial state. Building off the steam generated by the antisemitic, race-conscious press machine, which had been running on overdrive since the year prior, the Fascist state developed an architecture of antisemitic legislation – and the ministries to enforce it – that was designed to make the lives of Italy’s Jews unbearable. Stopping shy of promoting bodily harm, the Duce’s regime determined to eliminate Jews from the national community. Barred from public employment and much of public life, choked out of even the economy’s private spheres, and transformed into a social leper, ‘the Jew’ – the *Uomo nuovo*’s other – would be left with little choice but to leave (by “voluntarily” emigrating). As for foreign Jews, they would simply be sent packing. A testament to the Fascists’ resolve, after Germany’s November Pogrom, the Nazis had to “catch up” to the Italians in the fields of public education and foreign Jewry.

To protect its little warriors, Fascism’s advance guard in its race war against the Jews, the regime targeted public schools first, shuttering their doors to Jewish pupils, teachers, professors, and staff. A mere two days later, the regime issued its expulsion edict, ordering foreign Jews, under pain of deportation, to abandon Italy and its possessions, while revoking citizenship to Jews who had naturalized after January 1919. In November 1938, the state commenced its frontal assault on its new internal enemy with royal decree n.1728, effectively casting Jews out of the public sphere, and the following June, Jewish private opportunities came under attack as well, as many Jewish

professionals were limited to like-patrons only, while others were barred from their professions outright. When the course of the Second World War – namely, Italy’s lacking performance therein – thwarted Fascism’s grand goal of creating a Jew-free state, the regime opted instead to press thousands of Italian Jews into forced labor while subjecting its foreign Jewish population to mass internment. At the time of Mussolini’s downfall in July 1943, these measures represented the extreme limits of antisemitic persecution under Italian Fascism.

Italy’s Jews responded to this new, unexpected offense in myriad ways. Some converted to Catholicism to dodge the legislation, an often hapless endeavor, while others strengthened their faith and found support in their Communities and the Union.⁴¹⁷ True-blue Christian companions existed, and were an invaluable resource when they did, but more often than not, Jews found themselves cut off from their former social circles, limited to their Jewish friends and relying on family or communal networks. While most Jews, securely middle-class (and often better), had the wherewithal to maintain or recoup financial equilibrium, Rome’s Jewish community was pushed to the brink of subsistence living, and the Racial Laws hit them the hardest. Finally, all Jews were made to grapple with their Jewish identity, often a discomfiting process, with many being “introduced” to it for the first time. For Jews like Liliana Segre, they were told they were Jewish out of the blue and then they were punished for it.

Though emigration remained a solution – indeed, for the regime, it was the final one – the majority of Italy’s Jews chose to remain. Even as the future of Italy became ever more dependent on Germany’s success in the war, the Jewish population stayed faithful to the Fatherland that had liberated them, and which they had helped create. Only after the Nazis occupied the northern half of

⁴¹⁷ It would be difficult to find someone with better credentials for exemption than Amedeo Segre, yet even he failed to secure an endorsement from the prefect, though Demorazza approved his request anyway.

Italy and installed the far more collaborationist government of the Italian Social Republic did most Jews unfix this opinion and decide to leave – which is to say, after it was too late.

Chapter III

Hunted: The Shoah Reaches Italy

The drama begins 8 September 1943.

Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, 1982

Introduction

The Fascist state's Racial Laws, an affront to the collective dignity of the Jewish population, had presented Italy's Jews with enormous obstacles, isolating them from the national community and introducing convulsive changes to their everyday lives.⁴¹⁸ For a population that prided itself on its demonstrable *italianità*, its contributions to the homeland in peace and war, and perhaps most of all, its unwavering devotion to nation and state, royal dynasty and patria, the shock of the antisemitic legislation fostered a deep, permeating sense of betrayal. But for reasons ranging from acquired wealth and economic opportunity, to geography and language, to the strength of family, neighborly, and communal networks, the effects of the legislation varied. Not to mention, for thousands, there was also the prospect of exemption. Therefore, an affluent Milanese industrialist who, after being forced to forfeit his company, founded a different business not 'in the national interest' but just as profitable, wouldn't financially suffer nearly as much as a cart-pushing pauper in the Roman ghetto whose license was revoked. An Italian Jew forced to shovel sand might grouse about doing manual labor, but he could at least return to his home at the end of the workday, unlike his foreign counterpart who was confined in a concentration camp. A teenaged girl barred from school might be able to find solace in a faithful cohort of Catholic friends, helping her maintain a sliver of normality and a crucial support network while ameliorating social isolation's acute sting. Most importantly of all, no matter what their circumstances, all of Italy's Jews could glance northward and

⁴¹⁸ "Il dramma inizia l'8 settembre 1943"; Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, dicembre 1982, p. 2, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

eastward and, while taking pity on Jews being persecuted elsewhere in Europe, take comfort in the fact that they themselves were safe. Once the war ended, they convinced themselves, their lives could go back to normal.

When the Germans arrived, all hopes evaporated and delusions crumbled. If they had not acknowledged it before, Italy's Jews could no longer deny that they were living in hostile enemy territory, with stakes that had become infinitely greater. By and large, Italy's Jewish community was able to self-stabilize during the period of the Racial Laws (1938 – 1943), at least in the short term, and though their livelihoods were impacted, their lives were not. The German occupation of September 1943, however, and the subsequent installation of the collaborationist Italian Social Republic (RSI), triggered an existential earthquake for a population whose lives had suddenly been put in jeopardy. For Italy's Jews, their trusty German counter, far from ceasing to exist, had been visited upon them.

The stages of the Shoah in Italy, all occurring in succession, involved (i) 'Jew-hunts' and arrests, (ii) imprisonment and internment, and (iii) deportation.⁴¹⁹ Although massacres did happen, sometimes of Jews alone (e.g., Lake Maggiore, 22 September 1943) and other times with Jews as part of a larger victim group (e.g., Ardeatine Caves, 24 March 1944), murdering Jews outright was a rare, sporadic phenomenon in Italy. This especially held true when the perpetrators were Italians. According to the best available data, of Italy's 5,969 Jews who perished in the Shoah, somewhere from 322 to 682 victims died before deportation, a number that also includes individuals who committed suicide.⁴²⁰ With a few exceptions, Italy's experience with the Shoah involved the

⁴¹⁹ In the context of the Shoah in Italy, 'hunt' should be understood as 'hunt and capture', not 'hunt and kill'.

⁴²⁰ Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 2002), 28. Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews': A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Arrests during the Holocaust in Italy," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 85n.12. In Italy, anti-Resistance massacres punishing partisans, anti-Fascists, and their alleged enablers were far more common, and deadly, than anti-Jewish massacres. The Ardeatine Caves massacre, which claimed 335 lives (75 Jewish), was one such incident, and other notorious examples

preparatory stages for the genocidal killings that took place elsewhere, primarily in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

This chapter, focusing on stage one of the Shoah in Italy, examines Jewish experiences of being hunted down and arrested. To escape the mortal danger into which their lives had been cast, tens of thousands of Italy's Jews went into hiding, where, thanks to the efforts of benevolent individual actors, the majority survived. Others attempted to escape German-occupied Italy for their closest possible salvation, but flight was a daunting proposition, despite the risk-reward payoff. Reaching Allied territory to the south required crossing the frontline, while fleeing northward to Switzerland, the most common destination, meant trudging upward into the Alps and crossing a border policed by German and Italian sentries. When relatives, especially the elderly and the infirm, proved too frail to endure the arduous trip, deciding to flee meant breaking up the family. Some left (secretly, of course) only after receiving state assurances that their relatives would not be harmed or molested. Others chose not to leave at all, *che sarà, sarà*. At a time when the RSI was robbing Jews blind, flight was also an expensive endeavor, often prohibitively so, as smugglers, who were sketchy characters to begin with, needed to be paid, and border agents might need to be paid off. As if possessing the requisite means weren't challenging enough, a successful flight to Switzerland commonly required having a job lined up in the receiving state, or at least a promising résumé, as well as a local to speak in one's favor. Foreign-language skills were an added bonus. While Swiss authorities did accept the majority of refugees, one in ten hopeful immigrants was rejected – not good odds – and to be turned away could be a death sentence, for weary travelers had to pass through the heavily guarded border once again, with little to no rest, and this time without the aid of smugglers. Not surprisingly, a dense arrest cluster broke out at the border, ensnaring hundreds of

include the Sant'Anna di Stazzema massacre (Tuscany) of 12 August 1944, which claimed 560 lives, and the Marzabotto massacre in the Emilia-Romagna, which lasted from 25 September to 5 October 1944 and resulted in over 770 deaths.

dejected, rejected refugees, many of whom hailed from nearby Milan. Flight, then, was a decision that Italy's Jews, like Jews throughout Hitler's Europe, did not make lightly.

Adapting the research of Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, I divide the 'hunt for Jews' (*caccia all'ebreo*) in the Italian Social Republic into three phases. Phase one, which spanned from September 1943 into November, commenced with the Nazi occupation. Accordingly, Germans carried out the majority of the raids and arrests. During this phase, the Final Solution in Italy reached its peak in October, with the raid on the old Roman ghetto being the most successful 'hunt'. Phase two began toward the end of November 1943, when Italians seized the initiative. As the central government of the RSI passed the most draconian antisemitic laws in the history of modern Italy, Italian police supplanted the German occupiers as the majority arresters, a pattern which held until the end of the year. From January 1944 until February 1945, phase three, Germans and Italians arrested a comparable number of Jews. Though this last phase spanned fourteen months instead of four, far fewer Jews were arrested overall.

Knowledge and Participation: An Overview of the Shoah in Italy

Approximately eighty percent of Italy's Jews lived to see the end of the Second World War. Among European states involved in the conflict, only Denmark and Bulgaria had higher survival rates.⁴²¹ Even more noteworthy, the overwhelming majority of Italy's Jews were concentrated in the central and northern parts of the country, the areas controlled by the Germans and the collaborationist Republic of Salò. By contrast, as of early October 1943, there were a mere 2,400 to 2,600 Jews living in the liberated Allied zone (that is, Calabria, Campania, Basilicata, and Puglia on the mainland, and Sicily and Sardinia in the sea): 200 to 400 of these Jews were Italians, while 2,200 were foreigners

⁴²¹ Joshua D. Zimmerman, introduction to *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 339.

(1,500 of whom were interned in Ferramonti). Contrast this with the 43,000 Jews (35,000 Italian, 8,000 foreign or stateless) who found themselves trapped in central and northern Italy on 8 September 1943, the date that the portentous Armistice of Cassibile was announced.⁴²² 8,529 of these Jews were arrested (20%), 6,700 to 7,800 of whom were deported (15.5 – 18%).⁴²³ Shira Klein, using data provided by Liliana Picciotto and Michele Sarfatti, estimates that approximately 30,000 Jews in Italy, Italian and foreign, survived the war and the Shoah (the number might be higher, though sources vary, even different sources by the same researcher). Of these, 24-25,000 survived in hiding, 5,500 to 6,000 escaped to Switzerland, and 500 were able to cross in Allied territory. Alongside these statistics, one often hears stories of Catholic clerics who sheltered Jews and of officials in Italy's occupied territories who defied Germany's deportation demands. As Klein notes, "Most if not all of these survivors received some measure of help from non-Jewish Italians," and Italians have been internationally recognized for their efforts. Of the fifty-one states acknowledged by Yad Vashem's "Righteous Among the Nations", Italy, with 734 honorees, places eighth (as of 1 January 2020).⁴²⁴ Such stories and statistics are widely known and rightly celebrated, but for too long, their ritual recitation has produced a reading of Italy's human-rights record during the Shoah that is too one-sided and optimistic. As a result, hagiography has come to stand in for history – and,

⁴²² Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 178-179. Picciotto puts the number at 32,307, though she presumably refers to Italian Jews only; Liliana Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 209.

⁴²³ The statistics provided are culled from a variety of sources. Picciotto, whose *Il libro della memoria* remains authoritative, puts the total at 6,806 deportees, though this number could rise as high as 7,806 when we add the 900 to 1,000 victims whose identities are unknown. For a lower estimate, Simon Levis Sullam writes that 6,746 Jews were deported from the Italian peninsula; see Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 28; and Simon Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners: revisiting the role of Italians in the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 19:1 (2017), 33.

⁴²⁴ Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 121. "Names of Righteous by Country," Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html>.

specialists aside, these limited understandings remain common in academic circles, where Italy continues to be a Shoah backwater with only Primo Levi adrift at sea.⁴²⁵

A fuller, fairer picture would show how, after 8 September 1943, the lives of all Jews in central and northern Italy were in peril, and that Jews who were deported from Italy were killed at rates similar to those deported from other European states. Taking Picciotto's oft-referenced total of 6,806 Jewish deportees as reliable, only 837 returned, barely twelve percent. When we highlight the 6,007 Jews who were deported to Auschwitz, the principal destination for Italy's Jewish victims, the numbers become even more grim. Only 363 Auschwitz deportees survived, a mere six percent.⁴²⁶ Meanwhile, Greek Jews inhabiting Italy's Dodecanese possessions were decimated, especially the community living on the island of Rhodes; 1,819 of the island's roughly 2,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz, where 1,639 of them – that is, ninety percent – were killed.⁴²⁷ When we combine the number of Jewish deportees from central and northern Italy (including Germany's annexations) with those from the island of Rhodes, we arrive at a total of 8,625 Jewish deportees.⁴²⁸ Only 1,017 of these Jews lived to see the end of the war, less than twelve percent.⁴²⁹

A more well-rounded picture would also call attention to the Italians who were present at every stage of the persecutory process, at least until the trains crossed the Italian border.

⁴²⁵ Against this intellectual oversight, scholars who focus on the Shoah in Italy have done much to improve our knowledge of the actual situation, especially in recent decades. Even Renzo De Felice's *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, the book that opened the field in 1961, acknowledged the role played by many non-Jewish Italians in the persecution of their Jewish neighbors. Important works in this tradition include: Enzo Collotti, ed., *Ebrei in Toscana tra occupazione tedesca e RSI. Persecuzione, degradazione, deportazione (1943-1945)* (Rome: Carocci editore, 2007); Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012); Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews'"; Robert S.C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Simon Levis Sullam, *The Italian Executioners: The Genocide of the Jews in Italy*, trans. Oona Smyth with Claudia Patane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*; Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*; and Zimmerman, ed., *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*.

⁴²⁶ Picciotto, *ibid.*, 28, 31.

⁴²⁷ Picciotto, *ibid.*, 33. Zimmerman, introduction, 10n.2.

⁴²⁸ Again, this excludes the 900 to 1,000 unidentified victims.

⁴²⁹ For almost the same estimate, see Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 8. Collotti counts 1,820 deportees from the Dodecanese (not Rhodes, specifically) instead of Picciotto's 1,819. Otherwise, his numbers are exactly the same. Excluding foreigners, he estimates that slightly over ten percent of Italian Jews returned to Italy after the war.

Throughout their European empire, Germans relied on local collaborators to help them carry out the Final Solution in foreign territory, and Italy was no different.⁴³⁰ As Aldo Zargani wryly remarks, “Usually ... the Jews captured by Italian Fascists were delivered to the SS without many quibbles.”⁴³¹ Having evaded multiple Jew-hunts, Zargani knew of what he spoke. Thus, Collotti asserts that “without the active collaboration of the RSI’s political authorities and police, the deportation of Italy’s Jews to the extermination camps absolutely would not have been possible.”⁴³² Non-Jewish Italians denounced, despoiled, hunted down, rounded up, arrested, detained, deported, and (although it was rare) killed outright the Jews among them.⁴³³ Abandoning prior schools of thought, specialists now characterize Italian collaboration as “widespread” and “unwavering”.⁴³⁴ More than that, it was necessary. The Italians who staffed the RSI’s military, paramilitary, and police forces spoke the language (and dialects) and knew the territory much better than the German occupiers, and who better to guide squads of German Jew-hunters through unknown city streets than sympathizing local Fascists?⁴³⁵

To be fair, among scholars of the Shoah in Italy, the fact of Italian collaboration has never been in question, but determining the reason(s) for collaboration has proved contentious. When Renzo De Felice opened the field of study in 1961, he concluded that officials of the RSI were doing the Germans’ bidding. It was only by their grace that the Italian Social Republic existed in the first place, he rightly contended, but he erred by concluding that Italian authorities had little say in the

⁴³⁰ Levis Sullam, “The Italian executioners,” 33. Collotti, *ibid.*, ch. 7.

⁴³¹ “Di solito però gli ebrei catturati dai fascisti italiani venivano consegnati alle SS senza tanti cavilli”; Aldo Zargani, *Per violino solo. La mia infanzia nell’Aldiqua (1938-1945)* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995), 105.

⁴³² “senza la collaborazione attiva delle autorità politiche e di polizia della RSI la deportazione degli ebrei dall’Italia verso i campi di sterminio non sarebbe stata assolutamente possibile”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7.

⁴³³ While physical violence was a central, unifying element of Italian Fascism, and the regime unleashed a consistent, seven-year-long campaign of institutionalized violence against the Jews, corporal violence was a phenomenon that existed, for the most part, beyond the pale of Italian antisemitism.

⁴³⁴ Giordano and Holian, “Retracing the ‘Hunt for Jews,’” 57. Levis Sullam, “The Italian executioners,” 30.

⁴³⁵ Fabio Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 203. Levis Sullam, “The Italian executioners,” 30.

matter. Nevertheless, he goes on to state that because the RSI was broke, Italian officials plundered Jewish assets to replenish state coffers. In theory, the RSI's antisemitic extremes stopped at detainment and confiscation, he alleges, but because the Germans were calling the shots, this inevitably and predictably led to deportation (and death). As he observes, "anyone with any common sense could clearly see that, due to the unstable conditions of the actual power of the RSI and with armed Germans in the country and in total control of the situation, to concentrate the Jews really meant allowing the Nazis to take them whenever they chose and therefore to exterminate them."⁴³⁶

It cannot be denied that the Nazis brought the Final Solution to Italy, and the German occupation remains central to the equation; it is the *sine qua non* of the Shoah in Italy. As the field has developed in recent decades, however, scholars have begun placing more emphasis on the Italian context of the catastrophe, as well as local motivations for participating. Simon Levis Sullam cites the war – and, above all else, Italy's civil war-within-a-war – as fundamental to understanding the hunt for internal enemies (namely, Jews and antifascists) in the RSI.⁴³⁷ In addition to the German occupation, Frauke Wildvang highlights the importance of state dissolution in her analysis of Rome before Liberation. As the abandoned capital devolved into an urban Wild East (albeit without the wanton murder), varieties of Romans from police agents, to marauding gangs of Fascist thugs, to ordinary city residents exploited the lawless situation to their own benefit. "The German occupational regime," she writes, "had created the opportunity for individual initiatives as well as for the establishment of more or less formalized structures of Italian collaboration in persecuting Rome's Jewish inhabitants":

⁴³⁶ Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert L. Miller (New York: Enigma Books, 2001), 433. See also 432-437. Though outdated, De Felice's argument occasionally gets cited today; see, for instance, Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 57.

⁴³⁷ Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 28.

Apart from the weakness of the German occupying forces, the Italian perpetrators further profited from the dissolution towards the end of the war of the administrative structures of the state in the context of the regime of occupation.⁴³⁸

Expanding her analysis of Rome to the entirety of the RSI and German-occupied Italy, she concludes:

Compared to the behaviour of other Western European people under occupation, Italian collaboration in deporting Jews seems to be more adequately explained by the structural conditions of regimes of occupation and the dissolution of the state late in the war than by any assumption about specific mental or moral states of an entire people.⁴³⁹

Scholars have also begun to prioritize Italian antisemitism, a factor that merits more consideration than it typically receives. Tackling De Felice head-on, Collotti contends that “the hypothesis advanced by De Felice, that the confiscation of Jewish assets was ‘an expedient to procure some oxygen for the RSI’s exhausted coffers’, does not appear plausible in any way, much less convincing.”⁴⁴⁰ Arguing that “it is not possible to separate the deprivation of Jews of all their assets from the direct threat now brought to their physical existence,” Collotti understands despoliation and physical destruction as manifestations of the same design, the RSI’s programmatic antisemitism.⁴⁴¹ Even Wildvang, who downplays “mental or moral states of an entire people”, accepts an “anti-Semitic consensus” among the general Italian populace, fostered by legislation and discrimination that predated the occupation. “This situation of disintegration,” she contends, “contributed to a further radicalization of the persecution of the Italian Jews, which would not have been possible without the five years of legal segregation and social isolation of Italian Jews resulting from Fascist anti-Jewish policies since 1938. The deeds of the Italian collaborators,” she continues,

⁴³⁸ Frauke Wildvang, “The Enemy Next Door: Italian Collaboration in Deporting Jews during the German Occupation of Rome,” *Modern Italy* 12:2 (June 2007), 201.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴⁴⁰ “*l’ipotesi avanzata da De Felice che la confisca dei beni ebraici fosse ‘un espediente per procurare alle case esauste della RSI un po’ di ossigeno’ non appare in alcun modo plausibile, tanto meno convincente*”; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7.

⁴⁴¹ “*non è possibile separare la privazione ai danni degli ebrei di ogni bene patrimoniale dalla minaccia diretta portata ora alla loro esistenza fisica*”; *ibid.*

“are only explicable within the context of a broader mood of public acceptance, which was, at the least, passive”:

Even if this perception is difficult to prove empirically, it can be argued that the anti-Semitic consensus which had already allowed the implementation of the Race Laws and the subsequent radicalization of Fascist anti-Jewish policies up to the summer of 1943 also enabled the escalation of Jewish persecution during the nine months of German occupation.⁴⁴²

“Whatever motivation the Italian perpetrators had,” she argues, “their deeds implied at least an implicit acceptance of, if not explicit support for, the racial persecution conducted by the German occupying forces”:

In Rome it meant that the comparatively small German forces could not have succeeded in their aim of persecuting the local Jews without the help of willing denouncers and collaborators from the Italian population. As Robert Gellately has put it for the German case: “All denunciations contributed greatly to the enforcement of the most invasive policies, including antisemitism.”⁴⁴³

Nowadays, the field appears to have come full circle. Flipping the De Felice thesis on its head, Picciotto contends that RSI officials saw antisemitism as the one policy area where they could carve out some autonomy for themselves, and they pounced. “The anti-Jewish question,” she writes, “seemed the perfect issue for the new Fascist rulers to assert an authority they were unable to hold on other matters”:

Arrogating to themselves the handling of the Jewish question – where they could look back on a tradition established since 1938 – and declaring legal the arrest of Jews was a decision which no doubt was aimed at competing with the Germans.⁴⁴⁴

I share this interpretation.

A related question, one often asked but rarely answered, is, “Did Italians know?” Did Italians know the full extent of the Shoah? When they spoke or heard tell of people being sent “to the east”, were they aware of the massacres, the killing fields, and the gas chambers that awaited the

⁴⁴² Wildvang, “The Enemy Next Door,” 201.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 217. Later scholars have endorsed these views; see, for instance, Wildvang, *ibid.*, 192.

victims? And for Italians who collaborated, did they know the ultimate consequence of their actions? From top to bottom, from the Duce to the average Giuseppe, Italians knew more than conventional wisdom has let on, and they certainly knew *enough*. Even in the monarchy days, Benito Mussolini and the Fascist central government had intimate, if incomplete, knowledge of the Final Solution. Dino Alfieri, Italy's ambassador to Berlin, had relayed knowledge of the atrocities to his superior, Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, a man with direct professional and personal lines to Mussolini. Without mentioning the actual existence of killing centers, Alfieri informed Ciano that the Germans were emptying the Warsaw and Lublin ghettos, in part to destroy their inhabitants. If, for some reason, Ciano failed to alert his boss, no matter; Mussolini heard it straight from the German horse's mouth. During a visit to Rome on October 11, 1942, Heinrich Himmler outlined to the Italian dictator how the Germans were solving the Jewish Problem. (Admittedly, he couched his explanation in the guise of the 'Jew saboteur', and he glossed over some important details, including the totalizing scope of the genocide).⁴⁴⁵ If for no other reason than this meeting, Picciotto affirms that by autumn 1942, "both Mussolini and his government circles were fully cognizant of the German extermination policy."⁴⁴⁶ Summing things up in his typical polemical manner, Collotti forcefully concludes:

That the Fascist government didn't know what fate was reserved for Jews in the area controlled by the Third Reich is an affirmation that no serious historian could make today with any degree of trustworthiness. The Fascist government knew. One can only discuss if the government knew all of the details of the planned extermination and where its knowledge ended.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ For an Italian translation of Himmler's report, see Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy," 218.

⁴⁴⁷ "*Che il governo fascista non sapesse quale sorte era riservata agli ebrei nell'area controllata dal Terzo Reich è affermazione che oggi nessuno storico serio potrebbe sostenere con un minimo di attendibilità. Il governo fascista sapeva. Si può discutere soltanto se conosceva tutti i dettagli dello sterminio pianificato e dove si arrestavano le sue conoscenze*"; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 6. Once again going for De Felice's throat, Collotti concludes his passage by asking, in light of these many examples, "Can Italy really be called 'outside the shadow of the Holocaust', as authoritative historians (De Felice) would like?" [*Davvero l'Italia si può chiamare "fuori dal cono d'ombra dell'olocausto", come vorrebbero autorevoli storici (De Felice)?*]; *ibid.* The quote comes from an interview De Felice gave to *Corriere della Sera* in December 1987, when, burnishing his academic credentials, he affirmed, "I have made, and I make, my work as a historian of fascism. I know that Italian Fascism is sheltered from the accusation of genocide; it is outside the shadow of the Holocaust" (*Io ho fatto e faccio il mio lavoro di storico del fascismo. So che il fascismo italiano è al riparo dall'accusa di genocidio, è fuori dal cono d'ombra dell'Olocausto*); Renzo De Felice quoted in Guri Schwarz, "Crisi del discorso antifascista e memoria della persecuzione razziale nell'Italia degli anni Ottanta," in *Dopo i testimoni. Memorie*,

Like their leader, Fascist functionaries were also mostly up to speed on events taking place in eastern Europe, a fact that became undeniable during the years of the Italian Social Republic. For that reason, when RSI officials formalized their radical antisemitic platform in November 1943, they did so “in full awareness of the dimensions of the Shoah”, as Wildvang maintains.⁴⁴⁸ Here, special mention must be made of Giovanni Preziosi. Following Fascism’s collapse in summer 1943, Preziosi and a group of Fascist diehards fled to Germany, where they received warm welcomes. For someone who habitually harangued his fellow Italians, Fascists included, for what he perceived was their lukewarm and noncommittal antisemitism, Preziosi probably felt more at home in Germany than he ever had south of the Alps. It was fitting, then, that he found safe refuge in Munich, where he quickly resumed his former activities. From National Socialism’s cradle, he churned out one viciously antisemitic article after another in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official organ of the Nazi Party, and he broadcast pro-fascist radio propaganda back home to Italy. He also served as Adolf Hitler’s expert informant on the situation in Italy, and one shudders at the colorful conversations the two might have had. The most zealous antisemite in the galaxy of Italian Fascism, Preziosi was fluent, near-native even, in the Führer’s brand of antisemitism. No doubt because of his obsession with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (and other turn-of-the-century antisemitic screeds), Preziosi, like Hitler, reflexively found the ‘Jewish hand’ behind every development of national or global significance that he disagreed with.

The following year, Italy’s most ardent antisemite received the call of a lifetime. In spring 1944, Mussolini summoned Preziosi to Desenzano del Garda and appointed him Chief Inspector of the General Inspectorate of Race (*Ispettorato generale per la razza*), answerable to *il Duce* alone. Despite

storiografie e narrazione della deportazione razziale, eds. Marta Baiardi and Alberto Cavaglion (Rome: Viella, 2014), 177 and note 25.

⁴⁴⁸ Wildvang, “The Enemy Next Door,” 192.

Preziosi's signature role in the elaboration and propagation of Fascist antisemitism, his appointment as head of the General Inspectorate of Race marked his first official role as an anti-Jewish policymaker.⁴⁴⁹ The newly formed General Inspectorate combined the racial functions of Demorazza, now defunct, with those of the Ministry of Popular Culture's Office for Race Study and Propaganda. Among the department's tasks were to determine the "racial situation" of Italian citizens, oversee the confiscation of Jewish assets, and disseminate antisemitic propaganda in schools and in the press, Preziosi's wheelhouse. Extolling the Nazis' uncompromising antisemitism over the wishy-washiness of Italian Fascism's, Preziosi fashioned most of his proposals for the General Inspectorate on National Socialist models. He also spoke of the "radical solution of the Jewish problem", which, as Levis Sullam suggests, "most likely reveals his knowledge and awareness of the ongoing Nazi 'Final Solution'."⁴⁵⁰ On April 26, 1945, with the war's end in sight and Mussolini's backers in flight, Preziosi evaded justice (courtroom or street) by taking his own life – but not before publishing his fifth and final edition of the *Protocols* earlier that year.⁴⁵¹

It was not just Mussolini and his inner circle, however, who were privy to their ally's dark secret. According to Collotti, no institution in Italy had better knowledge of the Shoah than the Holy See, especially with regard to Poland. Indeed, it beggars belief that the Catholic Church would be unaware of events taking place in its central European stronghold, despite repeated claims to the contrary in the postwar period.⁴⁵² Also incredibly well-versed on the matter were civil and military

⁴⁴⁹ Until that point, Collotti writes, Preziosi had mostly acted as an *éminence grise* ("eminenza grigia") in Fascist Italy, influencing antisemitic policy from behind the scenes. The reason the regime kept him out of the public eye, he explains, is because Mussolini wanted to present a façade of moderation to outside observers. Appointing an antisemitic radical like Preziosi to a position of power would have jeopardized this false face; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 3. See also ch. 7.

⁴⁵⁰ Preziosi quoted in Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 29.

⁴⁵¹ Preziosi's wife, Valeria, committed suicide alongside him. For various accounts of Preziosi's last years, from his self-imposed German exile in 1943-44 until his suicide in April 1945, see: Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7; De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 437-443; Levis Sullam, *ibid.*, 28-29; Richard Levy, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, Vol. 2 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2005), 565-567; and Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 190.

⁴⁵² Collotti, *ibid.*, ch. 6. For fuller accounts of the Vatican and the Shoah, see: Frank J. Coppa, "The Papal Response to Nazi and Fascist Anti-Semitism: From Pius XI to Pius XII," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman; Susan Zuccotti, "Pius XII and the Rescue of Jews in Italy: Evidence of a Papal Directive," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and*

authorities in Italy's occupied areas. Stationed just across the border from German operation zones, occupation officials were kept up to date by the Germans themselves, who incessantly harassed them for deportees, as well as by the thousands of Jewish refugees who fled to Italian territory. As a result, when these Italian officials expelled Jewish refugees or denied them entry, as they routinely did, they knew full well what likely fate awaited them.⁴⁵³

Finally, what about ordinary Italians: what did they know about the atrocities being carried out in Hitler's empire? When non-Jewish Italians alerted the authorities, German or Italian, to Jews hiding next door, did they know that they were consigning their neighbors to death, or at best, despair? While we may never be able to say for sure, at the very least, ordinary Italians knew that nothing good awaited Jews who were deported to eastern Europe. Even if only in the form of rumor or hearsay, there was simply too much information circulating for the general population to claim ignorance, then or later. Listing the various information outlets available to ordinary Italians, Wildvang summarizes the matter well:

Although it has been impossible to clarify the precise knowledge the Italians had of the Holocaust, they must have been aware of what awaited Jewish victims in the hands of the Germans. Italian soldiers returning to Italy from the Eastern Front had spread rumours about German atrocities against Jews (Rochat 2003; Fondazione CDEC 2004, p. 180). Radio Londra had already broadcast reports of German mass killings of Jews in Poland in June

Nazi Rule, 1922-1945, ed. Zimmerman; and Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵³ Officials in the Balkans also compelled Jewish refugees to return to the Independent State of Croatia, where, under Ustaša rule, they were subjected to starvation, torture, rape, and personal, face-to-face murder. Occupation authorities knew this, too; see Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 101-102. If more foreign Jews weren't turned over or turned away, this has to do primarily with occupation officials creating some autonomy for themselves *vis-à-vis* their senior German partners. Italian occupation policies, as Davide Rodogno explains, "were often a reaction to what Rome perceived to be Nazi interference in its own exclusive sphere of influence." In this calculation, Jews became "pawns" that Italians could deploy in a number of ways. They could use them as bargaining chips in negotiations with the Germans or the Allies, for instance, or they could point to their benign treatment of Jewish refugees as evidence of their comparatively benevolent rule. This instrumentalization of beneficence worked as planned, as 'humanitarianism' became the standard interpretation of Italy's wartime conduct in the occupied territories in the postwar era; see Davide Rodogno, "Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's Policy toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943," *European History Quarterly* 35:2 (2005), entire. See also: Collotti, *ibid.* Only in recent decades have scholars begun to discredit this narrative. Along with Rodogno's many works ("Italian soldiers in the Balkans," 2004; "Italiani brava gente?", 2005; and *Fascism's European Empire*, 2006), see also: James Walston, "History and Memory of the Italian Concentration Camps," *The History Journal* 40:1 (March 1997); and Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *The Italian Army in Slovenia: Strategies of Antipartisan Repression, 1941-1943*, trans. Elizabeth Burke and Anthony Majanlahti (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

1942 (Laqueur 1989, p. 64). At the very latest, after the round-up of 16 October 1943 it must have been clear to anybody in Rome – Jews and non-Jews alike – that the Germans aimed to exterminate the Jews. And even if the average Roman Italian in 1943–44 did not know the exact circumstances, they must have known at least enough to be aware that deportation generally meant no return.

Taking this conclusion a step further, she adds, “One could even assume that the fatal impact of their denunciation was not only clear to the perpetrators but also provided them with the security that nobody would later claim back the belongings they had stolen.”⁴⁵⁴ In this reading, ordinary Italians weren’t just aware that denunciation and deportation likely meant death; they were counting on it.

If collaboration, then, were extensive in Italy, whether systematic or sporadic, and knowledge of the atrocities was considerable, then what can be said about the “good Italians” who did assist Jews during the Shoah? For starters, we should disregard ‘mental or moral states of an entire people’ – such as *italiani brava gente* or a universally-shared Christian humanism – as valid explanatory factors. As a rule, Italian Gentiles offered aid to Jews on an individual, personal basis.⁴⁵⁵ When Andrea Schivo, a guard at Milan’s San Vittore prison, distributed food and other necessary contraband to imprisoned Jewish children – which led to his deportation and murder at Flossenbürg – he was most likely acting in accordance with his own conscience, and not because of some shared cultural heritage or ethnic essence, as *brava gente* would have it.⁴⁵⁶ Similarly, while Jews couldn’t rely on the institution of the Catholic Church for help, many individual clerics, including priests, bishops, and head nuns, did open their doors to provide Jews with safety and shelter.⁴⁵⁷ Such examples call to

⁴⁵⁴ Wildvang, “The Enemy Next Door,” 198–199. Klein notes that many Italians clandestinely listened to Radio London, which had Italian-language programming, and from June 1942 onward, they learned more and more about the Germans’ mass-killing operations in eastern Europe. At the time, over a million Italians owned a personal radio; Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 120.

⁴⁵⁵ Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” 203.

⁴⁵⁶ Anna Bravo, “The Rescued and the Rescuers in Private and Public Memories,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 317–318. We also shouldn’t overlook the fact that Schivo was guarding prisoners, children among them, who were being detained for a crime of birth, so goodness has its limits.

⁴⁵⁷ Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” 203. In fact, as Zuccotti demonstrates, there is ample evidence that Pope Pius XII disapproved of clergy members using Vatican properties to shelter Jews and other ‘fugitives’. She

mind the research of Nechama Tec, whose observations regarding Righteous Poles seem to apply to their Italian counterparts, as well. Tec concludes that five main traits persuaded Gentiles to engage in “altruistic rescue”: first was a feeling of individualism or detachment from one’s social environment, which fostered non-conformism; second was a deep sense of personal morality, which encouraged rescuers to act in accordance with their moral convictions;⁴⁵⁸ third was a history of charitable acts toward the weak and the dependent; fourth was a perception of helping as something unassuming, matter-of-fact, unheroic (even if Jews often depicted their Gentile saviors in that light); and fifth was an impulse to actively oppose persecution and suffering in general – meaning, not to the victims’ Jewishness in particular.⁴⁵⁹

The Calm before the Storm: The Forty-Five Days of Summer

When Mussolini fell, Italians rejoiced. Late during the night of 24 – 25 July 1943, with British and US forces moving breezily through Sicily, members of the Fascist Grand Council voted to remove their leader from power. Perhaps incredulous, the deposed dictator returned to his office the next day, only to be arrested on the king’s orders. When news filtered out to the public, Italians of all stripes, wealthy and poor, conservative and liberal, Gentile and Jew, emptied into the streets, reveling in the mistaken belief that the Duce’s downfall would bring an end to the war they never wanted.⁴⁶⁰ The reality, of course, was that the war would soon come home to Italians in a way like

thus concludes her chapter in Zimmerman’s edited volume by writing, “Pius XII cannot take credit for the courageous acts of rescue taken by men and women of the Church in Italy and elsewhere in German-occupied Europe”; Zuccotti, “Pius XII and the Rescue of Jews in Italy,” 300.

⁴⁵⁸ As one helper named Janka said, “I have to be at peace with myself, what others think about me is not important. It is my own conscience that I must please and not the opinion of others ... Public opinion is fickle, it depends on the way the wind blows”; Janka quoted in Nechama Tec, “Righteous Gentiles,” in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Donald L. Niewyk (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 218.

⁴⁵⁹ As another helper, Dr. Estowski, put it, “It was not for us a question of them being Jews or not, just anyone who needed help had to get it.” Nevertheless, Estowski did note that Jews “had to be helped the most”; Dr. Estowski quoted in Tec, “Righteous Gentiles,” 222. For the entire passage, see Tec, “Righteous Gentiles,” 217-223. An additional observation Tec makes is that rescue tended to be unplanned and often spontaneous.

⁴⁶⁰ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life Under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 493-497.

no other, and in its midst, a grisly civil war would break out that matched resolute fascists and *repubblicini* against antifascist partisan resisters. But in late July 1943, the mood was one of celebration.

In Asti, young ‘Aldino’ Zargani, not yet ten years old, joined his father in the spontaneous manifestations that broke out in the city.⁴⁶¹ For the Segres, the collapse of Mussolini and his Fascist regime capped a month of utter joy amidst the chaos of war. Earlier in July, Alberto and Liliana had ditched their Inverigo refuge for the splendor of the Italian Alps, where they enjoyed a vacation in Bormio with Liliana’s maternal grandparents, Alfredo Foligno and Bianca (Levi).⁴⁶² When news broke of Fascism’s ruin at the end of the month, Alberto, overjoyed, threw his characteristic caution to the wind. Soon the Segres would return to their Milanese home, he exclaimed, and Liliana would return to school, unencumbered by the weight of discrimination. Liliana even recalls how her usually timid father chastised an openly antisemitic authority figure – Inverigo’s Fascist *podestà*, she thinks – by saying, “*Si vergogni!*” Shame on you!

But Liliana didn’t share her father’s sanguine outlook, explaining to him, to no avail, that he ought not say such brash things. Reflecting on those forty-five days, her hindsight sharpened by fifty years of rumination, she sees that the mid-summer bliss of 1943 was just a “delusion” (*delusione*), a false deliverance.⁴⁶³ And there was indeed reason to be wary, for sinister developments were paralleling the spirit of jubilee. In June 1943, the Wehrmacht High Command had begun moving soldiers into southern Italy and onto the islands of Sardinia and Corsica, all of which were threatened with invasion after the Allies wrapped up their North Africa campaign the month prior.

⁴⁶¹ Zargani, *Per violin solo*, 152-153.

⁴⁶² Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000092/liliana-segre.html>.

⁴⁶³ Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 48-50. Segre, Interview, *ibid.*

Then, after Anglo-American forces landed in Sicily on 10 July, Germany responded by sending over 200,000 additional troops to the Italian peninsula, with SS units never far behind. This time, however, the army divisions were stationed in the central and northern parts of the peninsula. As Carlo Gentile argues, this was ostensibly done to secure coastal points and supply routes, but in reality, the Germans were staging a “cold” occupation of their chief, but unreliable ally. In the wake of Mussolini’s dismissal and detainment, Adolf Hitler had intuited that the Italians, now shorn of the Fascist dictatorship, would forsake their Axis alliance. His empirically guided gut feeling proved right; although Pietro Badoglio, in his first official announcement as prime minister, had reassured the Führer that Italy would continue the fight alongside the Germans, his new government had already begun secretly negotiating a ceasefire with the Allies by early August.⁴⁶⁴

During those forty-five days of respite, Badoglio’s new regime annulled some antisemitic measures and allowed others to lapse (such as the revocation of street vendor licenses), released all foreign and stateless Jews from captivity and the camps by 10 September, and ordered that Jews in Italian-occupied France, Croatia, and Greece be shielded from deportation. In addition, the Ministry of Popular Culture suppressed its Office for Race Study and Propaganda, and the idea to establish forced labor camps was quashed for good. None of this meant, however, that Italy’s Jews could rely on the Badoglio government for salvation. Anything enshrined in law remained untouched, mostly for fear of provoking the Germans (if Badoglio himself can be believed), but in part to appease certain sectors of Italian society, such as the Catholic Church.⁴⁶⁵ Filed away while the Badoglio regime focused on helping the Allies win the war (or, more accurately, surviving), the last of the antisemitic laws wouldn’t come off the books until 1987, although they weren’t enforced in the four

⁴⁶⁴ Carlo Gentile, “The Police Transit Camps in Fossoli and Bolzano,” Historical report in connection with the trial of Michael SEIFERT, 2005, 2-3. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 174-175; and *Viaggio nella memoria. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2013), 21.

⁴⁶⁵ Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 174-177.

intervening decades.⁴⁶⁶ More damningly, when the Marshal, his new administration, and the royal court fled Rome for the safety of the Allied-occupied south, they abandoned the 43,000 racially-defined Jews who remained stuck in central and northern Italy, leaving them at the mercy of the German occupiers and their *repubblichini* helpers.⁴⁶⁷

Landfall: The 8 September Armistice and the Arrival of the Shoah

The Armistice of Cassibile, announced by the Kingdom of Italy and the Allied Powers on 8 September 1943, delivered the Jews of southern Italy from the evil of Nazi-Fascist tyranny. But for Jews living in central and northern Italy, as well as those in the Italian-occupied territories, it served as a death warrant. The day after the Armistice, the Badoglio government and the royal family deserted the Italian capital for the safe, Allied-controlled pastures of the south. The Germans, their military fifth column already in place, quickly filled the void, occupying the territories left behind and absorbing some of them directly into their European empire. As Lutz Klinkhammer has affirmed, by the time Italy and the Allies signed the Armistice on 3 September (five days before its proclamation), “the German occupation of Italy was already a *fait accompli*.”⁴⁶⁸

For Jews who suddenly found themselves trapped in German territory, whether on the Italian mainland, in the Balkans, or on the Dodecanese Islands, the situation immediately became desperate. For all intents and purposes, the Shoah arrived in Italy that very day. Segre, entrapped in northern Italy, explains how the fallout from the Armistice made life for her and her fellow Jews

⁴⁶⁶ Claudio Fogu, “*Italiani brava gente*: The Legend of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 168-170. For the two parliamentary proceedings on the abrogation of the antisemitic Racial Laws, see Emiliano Perra, “Narratives of Innocence and Victimhood: The Reception of the Miniseries Holocaust in Italy,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22:3 (Winter 2008), 440n.173.

⁴⁶⁷ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 174-177.

⁴⁶⁸ Lutz Klinkhammer quoted in Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 502-503 and 652n.11.

“unsustainable” (*insostenibile*).⁴⁶⁹ So dire did the situation become for them, so precarious their very existences, that the German occupation would come to dominate survivor memories of discrimination and persecution, even dwarfing the (original) Fascist regime’s own antisemitic campaign. This makes perfect sense. Generally speaking, while Mussolini’s first regime was in power, Italy’s Jews had found ways to accommodate the Racial Laws, and though their livelihoods may have been in jeopardy, their lives weren’t. The onset of the Shoah provided no such leeway or wiggle room, and the consequences were far graver.

Consequently, survivors mark 8 September 1943 – not 17 November 1938 – as the true breaking point in the collective timeline of Italian Jewry, a rupture that marked, for many, the point of no return. On multiple occasions, when asked about the Racial Laws, Fausta Finzi fast-forwards to the Armistice and the German occupation to underscore the differences between Fascist/Italian and Nazi/German oppression, in effect downplaying the severity of the Italian state’s antisemitic measures. Notably, she often contrasts her family’s status during the era of the Racial Laws (1938 – 1943), when it didn’t change much, to their status after 8 September, when their circumstances drastically deteriorated. As she reiterates, “It was later, long after [the Racial Laws], above all after the German occupation” that things truly took a turn for the worse for her family.⁴⁷⁰ Agata Bauer pushes this contrast to its conceivable limit when she characterizes the period before the Armistice as “relatively calm” (*relativamente sereno*).⁴⁷¹ In a later testimony, it should be noted, she does temper this point, explaining that the years of the Racial Laws were in fact difficult, just much less so when

⁴⁶⁹ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Other translations for ‘*insostenibile*’ include ‘untenable’, ‘intolerable’, and ‘unbearable’, all of which apply; see Catherine E. Love, ed., *Webster’s New World Italian Dictionary: Concise Edition* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992), 217.

⁴⁷⁰ “È stato dopo, molto dopo, soprattutto dopo l’occupazione dei tedeschi”; Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996, 2 maggio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000042/fausta-finzi.html>. Similarly, she says, “Instead, after 8 September, unfortunately things changed” (*Invece dopo otto settembre purtroppo le cose sono cambiate*).

⁴⁷¹ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Giti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 1.

contrasted with what came later.⁴⁷² Understandably, with the Final Solution upon them and the threat of near-certain death an everyday reality, survivors' accounts of the previous era are rosier than they otherwise might have been.

And yet, even as the Shoah made landfall in Italy, the threat of death encircling the Jews was not immediately perceived, as if they were living for a brief moment in the eye of the storm. To war-weary Italians, the Armistice of Cassibile seemed to cap a string of positive events in 1943, and the spirit of revelry that had commenced with Mussolini's July downfall carried over to the pronouncement of Italy's September Armistice. As Isacco Bayona recalls, everyone, himself included, broke out in celebration on 8 September, because Italians thought that their war had (actually) come to an end (this time).⁴⁷³ Capturing the mood of euphoria and shortsightedness, Zargani writes:

...the spring and the summer of 1943, after Stalingrad and the expulsion [of the Axis] from Africa, after the fall of Fascism, were peaceful, poor, and dusty months in the quiet of Asti, months that consisted of bike rides with Dad, of dips in the Tanaro [River] – before the hemp rotted, because afterward the river water was bad – of improvident celebrations over the fall of Fascism and the Armistice. It was an interval, a sweet interval, full of measles, rubella, mumps, scarlet fever, and the attendant recovering.⁴⁷⁴

That very evening, Asti's residents spontaneously held a "large celebration" (*grande festa*), believing that the Armistice marked the end of the war. Zargani remembers the event well:

Pucci arrived in the courtyard, wearing skirt-trousers, toward the evening of 8 September shouting: "The war is over, the war is over!" putting her foot on the brake and tossing her bicycle on the ground so that she could jump for joy and embrace everyone she saw. She hugged the soldiers on Corso Alfieri in the darkness of the coming night, running from one

⁴⁷² Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 25 febbraio 1987, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000211/goti-herskovits-bauer.html>.

⁴⁷³ Isacco Bayona, Interview by Gigliola Colombo/Lopez, *Ricerca sulla Deportazione*, Livorno, 1987, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000182/isacco-bayona.html>.

⁴⁷⁴ "...la primavera e l'estate del 1943, dopo Stalingrado e la cacciata dall'Africa, dopo la caduta del fascismo, furono mesi sereni, poveri e polverosi nella quiete di Asti, di gite in bicicletta col papà, di bagni nel Tanaro – prima della marcita della canapa perché dopo l'acqua dei fiumi fa male –, di improvvise feste per la caduta del fascismo e per l'armistizio. Fu un intervallo, un dolcissimo intervallo, pieno di morbillo, rosolia, orecchioni, scarlatina e convalescenze"; Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 65.

to the other to celebrate the day of her death, February 1945, when she was abandoned in a bunkbed at Auschwitz....⁴⁷⁵

That evening was the last time that Aldo saw his cousin Lidia (Pucci) and his aunt Rosetta.⁴⁷⁶

Like the Bayonas in Gabbro and the Zarganis in Asti, the Herskovitses in Fiume joined the greater Italian community in this spontaneous moment of national merrymaking. It was “a moment of unconscious euphoria” (*un primo momento di incosciente enforia*), Bauer recalls, and her family was swept up in the tide:⁴⁷⁷ “on the evening of 8 September, there was an explosion of joy: how beautiful, how beautiful, it’s all over; now our life will be peaceful like before! And there was only that rare person who said: don’t think that the Germans will leave this matter so easily.”⁴⁷⁸ A few days later, that rare person was proved correct when the Germans arrived in Fiume.⁴⁷⁹

The Shoah Takes Shape in Italy

On 10 September 1943, Adolf Hitler authorized German forces to occupy the parts of Italy not yet secured by the Allies. Alexander Stille estimates that central and northern Italy were firmly in German hands before the day was through.⁴⁸⁰ While the south and the islands were out of reach, the Germans quickly split the central and northern parts of the Italian mainland into three zones. In the far north, encompassing the provinces of Belluno, Bolzano, and Trento – including the ever-important Brenner Pass – the Germans established the *Operationszone Alpenvorland* (*Zona di operazione*

⁴⁷⁵ “Arriva Pucci nel cortile, in gonna-pantaloni, l’8 settembre verso sera, grida: ‘È finite la guerra, è finite la guerra!’ frenando in contropedale e lasciando per terra la bicicletta per saltare dalla gioia e abbracciare tutti quelli che vede. Abbraccia i soldati in corso Alfieri nel buio della notte incombente, corre dall’uno all’altro per festeggiare il giorno della sua morte, febbraio 1945, nel quale stava abbandonata nel letto a castello ad Auschwitz...”; *ibid.*, 153. See also 141.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁷⁷ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ “Mi ricordo che ... la sera dell’8 settembre c’era stata anche un’esplosione di gioia: che bello, che bello, è finito tutto, adesso la nostra vita tornerà serena come prima! E solo qualche rara persona diceva: non crediate che i tedeschi si lasceranno così facilmente fuori da questa faccenda”; Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 22-23, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

⁴⁷⁹ Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 23. See also: Agata “Goti” Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “Interviste alla Storia” – 1995-1996, Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>.

⁴⁸⁰ Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 83.

Prealpi, Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills). Along the eastern Adriatic coast, they formed the *Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland* (*Zona di operazione Litorale adriatico*, Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral) from the provinces of Fiume, Gorizia, Lubiana, Pola, Trieste, and Udine. Both of the Operation Zones' supreme commissioners, Franz Hofer in the Alpenvorland and Friedrich Rainer in the Adriatisches Küstenland, were appointed by Hitler and answered to him alone.⁴⁸¹ Placed under direct German civil and military control, these two zones functioned as direct annexations into Hitler's empire, essentially on par with Austria and the Incorporated Territories of western Poland.⁴⁸² If these regions remained part of Italy at all, it was only in the most nominal sense.

Cinzia Villani and Collotti agree that the Operation Zones were created for two main reasons. The first was pragmatic, relating to the military exigencies that emerged, or were exasperated, after the Kingdom of Italy left the Axis. The second motivation, however, was political, having to do with late-game Nazi nation- and empire-building. Given the large presence of German speakers in the Alpenvorland and the Adriatic possessions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Nazis wished to integrate these territories into the Greater German Reich. Toward this end, the civil administration of the Adriatische Küstenland was staffed with officials of Austrian origin and ancestry. Rainer himself was Austrian, and the chief of police and the SS, Odilo Globočnik, had been born in Austro-Hungarian Trieste in 1904. A leading figure of *Aktion Reinhard*, by the time Globočnik returned to his native city, he had four killing centers to his name: the Belžec, Sobibor,

⁴⁸¹ Cinzia Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945: Operationszone Alpenvorland and Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland" in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 244. Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7.

⁴⁸² Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), 233–234.

and Treblinka-II extermination camps, as well as Majdanek. He was the right man to oversee the Risiera di San Sabba, the only camp in western Europe equipped with a crematorium.⁴⁸³

Accordingly, in the Operation Zones, the Final Solution was a largely German enterprise. Picciotto goes so far as to affirm that “the Italian political authority there was virtually nonexistent. The arrests were made directly by German police without any Italian involvement.”⁴⁸⁴ In like manner, Villani writes, “In the two operation zones ... German occupation forces alone decided and organized the arrests and the spoliation of Jewish property...”. But unlike Picciotto, Villani doesn’t let the locals off the hook, concluding her point by stating, “...they could, however, rely also on the help of local collaborators.” Germans in the Operation Zones may have controlled both the civil and military administrations, but they were aided and abetted by “collaborationist local authorities”.⁴⁸⁵ Giordano and Holian go even farther. Though the Germans reigned supreme in the Operation Zones, their research shows that Italian authorities carried out a significant number of arrests in Trieste, capital of the *Adriatisches Küstenland*.⁴⁸⁶

The third novel zone of central and northern Italy was the Italian Social Republic. Commonly called the “Republic of Salò” after its capital on Lake Garda, the Italian Social Republic was a rump state with an ever-receding southern border.⁴⁸⁷ Recognized by Berlin on 28 September 1943 and given its official name on 1 December, the Italian Social Republic can best be thought of as a semi-autonomous puppet state that owed its existence to the efforts and the blessing of the Germans. Benito Mussolini, sprung from his prison cell by German paratroopers, was indeed installed as its head of government, but he constantly had a plenipotentiary of the Third Reich,

⁴⁸³ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7. Villani, “The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945,” 249. Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 118.

⁴⁸⁴ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 219.

⁴⁸⁵ Villani, “The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945,” 243–245.

⁴⁸⁶ Giordano and Holian, “Retracing the ‘Hunt for Jews,’” 71f.3.5k.

⁴⁸⁷ Sarfatti, citing Klinkhammer, identifies four total zones in central and northern Italy after the German occupation, dividing the RSI itself into two zones; Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista*, 233–234 and note 14. In my opinion, it makes sense to think of the RSI as a single, constantly shrinking territorial unit.

Rudolf Rahn, lurking over his shoulder. Nevertheless, while the RSI remained militarily subordinate to the German occupiers (and, thus, had no say in the conduct of the war), its civil and domestic administration functioned ‘largely independently’ of German influence.⁴⁸⁸ Salò officials used this considerable realm of administrative autonomy to intensify Fascist Italy’s antisemitic campaign to a previously unforeseen degree.

Whether compared against Italy’s own Jewish population or against those of most other Continental states implicated in the Shoah, arrest yields in Italy were low. Nevertheless, nowhere in occupied Italy did the Nazis struggle to introduce the Final Solution, at least in theory. (In practice, their efforts were often frustrated by the fractious state of Italy in the war’s later years, split in two and riven by civil conflict in the German-occupied north, and by obstructionist activities carried out by a sizable portion of the general population.) This was largely because the original Fascist regime had laid the groundwork for them. A steady stream of vicious anti-Jewish propaganda had marked Jews as the internal enemy *par excellence* for five years running, leaving much of the general population indifferent to their fates, at best. Even more devastating were the records from the Racial Laws, the Jewish censuses, and institutions like Demorazza, which provided Nazi officials with roadmaps pointing to Jews’ whereabouts.⁴⁸⁹ As Zargani explains, once again with his trademark cynical humor, “The [Gestapo] had our precise and up-to-date address, just as they had the address of every Jew, a gift from the ‘mild’ Italian racial laws to the German allies.”⁴⁹⁰ When the Nazis arrived in Italy, they merely needed to graft their murderous system atop the antisemitic infrastructure already in place. Fortunately, when the Gestapo searched the Zarganis’ Turin home in

⁴⁸⁸ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 209. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 180.

⁴⁸⁹ Picciotto, *ibid.*, 210. Sarfatti, *ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁹⁰ This passage appears on page 1 of the introduction to Zimmerman’s edited volume. For the original, see Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 35.

late fall 1943, they were hiding in the house of their former domestic servant (*donna di servizio*) across the street.⁴⁹¹

Presumably, this was even easier in the Alpenvorland and the Adriatisches Küstenland, where, significant borderland strife notwithstanding, the Germans had full control. In the RSI, where Italian authorities maintained semi-autonomous authority over the state's civilian administration, logistical obstacles cropped up, and the Germans' and the Italians' legislative frameworks were not always in lockstep. All the same, the reincarnated Fascist state showed itself to be more willing than its obstructionist predecessor to accept aggressive, permanent solutions to the Jewish Problem. At the highest levels of government, the authorities of the Italian Social Republic fully collaborated with the Germans in the Final Solution.⁴⁹² Unlike their monarchical forebears, the central officials of the RSI never rebuffed Germany's deportation demands.⁴⁹³ Meanwhile, at ground level, Italian police and *carabinieri* helped the Germans carry out these deportations. It took a couple of months to figure out the system, and nothing was ever set in stone, but the nature of this collaboration between Italian and German police forces took the form of task-sharing, whereby Italians handled searches, round-ups, arrests, and detainment, and Germans organized and conducted the deportations. "Although no explicit document has been found to date to prove this understanding," Picciotto explains, the operational pattern suggests itself by how the persecution of

⁴⁹¹ "It is the allegiance of female household help," Marion Kaplan observes, "that stands out in most narratives," especially if they were older women, who, having "worked for Jewish families for many years, sometimes for generations, felt part of the family and were treated as such"; Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40. Given the stories shared by Zargani and Segre, there is evidence to support this conclusion in Italy, too.

⁴⁹² Following his intuition and an admittedly select number of documents, Sarfatti came to the conclusion that the central authorities of the RSI agreed to fully collaborate with the Germans in the persecution and deportation of Italy's Jews, but unlike in Vichy France, this agreement was never made official. This "terrible secret" (*terribile segreto*), as he calls it, is the most recent historiographical intervention concerning the relationship between the central government of the RSI and the Final Solution in Italy; for an analysis, see Matteo Stefanori, *Ordinaria amministrazione. Gli ebrei e la Repubblica sociale italiana* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2017), ch. 6.

⁴⁹³ Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7.

Italy's Jews played out.⁴⁹⁴ Building off Picciotto's research, Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian aver that in the Republic of Salò, "Italian involvement in the hunt for Jews was extensive and systematic."⁴⁹⁵

Picciotto's data show that for the 6,806 Jews verifiably deported from the Italian mainland (Operation Zones or RSI), the identity of their arresters, when known, was quite evenly split. Italian officials arrested 2,283 Jews – 1,951 alone, 332 in concert with the Germans – while German authorities arrested 2,444 Jews. The remaining 2,079 Jews were taken by unknown captors.⁴⁹⁶ In a recent study, Giordano and Holian have fleshed out arrest patterns in Italy in even greater detail. German police tended to make arrests in concentrated areas, carrying out large-scale raids at single locations. Typically, this meant cities, but this was not always the case. For instance, a large arrest cluster arose at the northwestern border town of Borgo San Dalmazzo, a destination for many foreign Jews who had fled France after Vichy came to power. In the wake of the 8 September Armistice, after the German military forced Italian troops to retreat, German police quickly captured this refugee Jewish population. The pattern of Italian or Italian-led arrests, on the other hand, reveals a more dispersed array, targeting smaller population centers and Jews in flight (often toward Switzerland).

⁴⁹⁴ Referencing Picciotto, Wildvang writes, "These mechanisms of collaboration were based on an 'operational understanding to share tasks' (Picciotto 2005, p. 218), which, though never laid down formally, the Italians agreed to quite willingly"; Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door," 192. Stefanori importantly notes that, as a rule, the secret agreement made on high did not trickle down to the local level. As a result, key officials in the persecution of Italy's Jews, such as province capos and police chiefs, were left to determine the nature of their collaboration with the Germans on their own. He concludes that such officials never automatically turned Jews over to the Germans, and, with few exceptions, they defied requests for Jews who were exempted from persecution by RSI law (e.g., Jews who were elderly, gravely ill, or married to Catholic-Aryans). Because these officials owed their loyalty to Mussolini and Fascism, not to the German occupiers, Stefanori suggests that they might have acquiesced to German orders more willingly if the 'secret agreement' had been made public; see Stefanori, *Ordinaria amministrazione*, especially ch. 6, "La Shoah italiana," 292-336.

⁴⁹⁵ Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 56.

⁴⁹⁶ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 29. Citing Picciotto, Levis Sullam puts the totals at 2,210 Italian arresters (1,898 alone, 312 with German assistance), 2,489 German arresters (virtually all with Italian support or awareness), and 2,314 unknown arresters. I have been unable to confirm these statistics; see Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 33 and 38n.69. Since a large chunk of the arresters' identities remains unknown, just under one-third, this admittedly skews the overall statistics.

Giordano and Holian go on to delineate the consequences that followed arrest. Depending on their captors, Jewish prisoners remained in prison for drastically different lengths of time after being apprehended; German-arrested Jews spent on average 25 days in prison before being deported, while Italian-arrested Jews were detained for approximately 85 days. The reasons for this temporal disparity, Giordano and Holian say, are not currently known, but it undoubtedly influenced prisoner survival rates. The mortality rate for German-arrested Jews was a soaring 95.6%, while that for Italian-arrested Jews was 75.5% – still high but not sniffing one hundred. Similarly, Jews arrested by Germans were deported to Auschwitz, the principal destination for Italy’s Jewish victims, at an even higher rate of 96.3%, while 81.3% of Italian-arrested Jews ended up there. As evinced below, Germans carried out the majority of their arrests before Italians did, and this played a critical role in their victims’ ultimate fates; the earlier that Jews arrived to Auschwitz, the more likely they were to be killed.⁴⁹⁷ Nevertheless, regardless of captor identity, the principal destination for all of Italy’s Jewish victims, be they Italian, foreign, or stateless, was Auschwitz, where the overwhelming majority of them were killed.⁴⁹⁸ Lastly, the typical Jewish victim from Italy was Italian, not foreign.

The Hunt for Jews, Phase 1: Germany Leads the Way

It was the occupying Germans who introduced the Final Solution to Italy. As such, in the Italian Social Republic, it was they who spearheaded the first wave of the Jew-hunts, which lasted from September until November 1943. During this time, a single SS unit under the command of Captain Theodor Dannecker carried out the majority of the arrests. Dannecker, a favorite of Adolf Eichmann, had earned his stripes by directing the July 1942 Vel’ d’Hiv Roundup (*Rafle du Vélodrome d’Hiver*) in Paris. After Germany’s occupation of Italy, he was placed at the head of a flying squad

⁴⁹⁷ Giordano and Holian, “Retracing the ‘Hunt for Jews,’” entire but especially 66, 68-69, 71f.3.5.j-k, 72-74, 79-80, 82.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62, 64-65. Curiously, while Giordano and Holian’s numbers reveal that more women (3,194) than men (2,916) were deported, Picciotto’s research shows that more men (3,169) than women (2,794) were.

consisting of about ten paratroopers, all with *Einsatzgruppen* credentials, and together – but always with help from local police, given their paltry numbers – they raided their way northward.

Commencing their operations with the 16 October 1943 assault on Rome, they blitzed major cities like Genoa (3 November), Siena (5 November), Bologna (7 November), and Florence twice (6 and 26 November), before concluding their work in December with attacks on Milan, the Italian-Swiss border, and across northern Italy. By December's end, Italian police had assumed the lead in carrying out arrests, and in response, the Reich Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) dissolved Dannecker's unit. While his men were reassigned to another of Eichmann's selects, *Sturmabführer* Friedrich Boßhammer, who received a more permanent post in the RSI than his predecessor, Dannecker himself was transferred to Hungary, but not before making one last foreboding pit stop in Fossoli before departing.⁴⁹⁹

During this first phase, the overall peak of arrests occurred in October, punctuated by the raid on the former Roman ghetto and its surroundings on the 16th of the month. Not only was it the first anti-Jewish *Aktion* of that type, on that scale, carried out in Italy, but it was also the largest.⁵⁰⁰ On this “Day of Infamy”, as local resident Giuseppe Di Porto calls it, Dannecker's men rounded up and arrested 1,265 members of Rome's Jewish community. Although all of the captors in this case were Germans, Italian police provided them, as ordered, with address lists to facilitate the arrests,

⁴⁹⁹ Picciotto, “The Shoah in Italy,” 213-214. Carlo Gentile puts the number of Dannecker's men at eight to ten, while Klein provides a more inflated number of fourteen officers and thirty rank-and-file paratroopers; see Gentile, “The Police Transit Camps in Fossoli and Bolzano,” 12; and Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 113-114.

⁵⁰⁰ It was not, however, the first anti-Jewish raid overall in Italy. This occurred on either 15 or 16 September in the town of Merano, which had the largest population of Jews in the Alpenvorland. Scholars agree that the perpetrators carried out the Merano assault for reasons unrelated to formal, organized anti-Jewish persecution. What they do not agree on, however, is who the perpetrators were; Villani writes that the local population participated, even if the Security and Order Service (*Sicherheits-und-Ornungsdienst*) ran point, while Gentile contends that the Waffen-SS carried out the assault; see Picciotto, *ibid.*, 211; Villani, “The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945,” 245-246; and Gentile, “The Police Transit Camps in Fossoli and Bolzano,” 11. Also, by 1 October, nearly 400 Jews had already been arrested in Italy; see Giordano and Holian, “Retracing the ‘Hunt for Jews,’” 66f.3.2.

lists made hand-ready by the August 1938 Jewish census. Of the 1,022-23 victims who were deported to Auschwitz two days later, only sixteen or seventeen returned.⁵⁰¹

In Genoa at the time, Giuseppe avoided the raid. Sometime before, he had ventured to the Ligurian capital with his cousin, Amedeo Di Porto, in search of work. For shelter, the Di Portos stayed with non-Jewish acquaintances, people in the business of helping persecuted Jews, whom they knew from Rome. Sleeping by day, working by night, Giuseppe and Amedeo earned an income by selling sweets to soldiers. (By then, Giuseppe had made something of a habit of that.) Given the circumstances, money was good, with Amedeo earning enough to support his wife and son who, like Giuseppe's family members, had stayed behind in Rome.⁵⁰² Miraculously, Giuseppe's mother and all seven of his siblings evaded capture during the raid, fleeing their home via an internal courtyard that led away from the commotion. Amedeo's wife and son were able to elude the Germans, as well. However, some of Giuseppe's cousins and many of his friends were taken that day, and soon, the Shoah would catch up with Giuseppe and Amedeo, too.⁵⁰³ On 3 November, the Di Porto cousins were walking through the streets of Genoa when a passerby alerted them to a raid on the city's

⁵⁰¹ Giuseppe Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene. Una testimonianza inedita di un sopravvissuto ad Auschwitz* (Rome: Quaderni, 2009), 18. Picciotto, *ibid.*, 211. Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door," 190-191. Tiziano De Marino, Yuri Chung, and Alessandra Crotti, *Rome and the Memory of WWII* (Rome: Sapienza Università di Roma, 2018), 21-22. In a bitter twist of fate, evidence suggests that the original destination for Rome's Jews was Mauthausen. Given the location of the former ghetto beneath the Vatican's gaze, the Nazis were fearful of aggravating the pope. But when Pius XII issued no public protest, they knew that deporting the Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau would provoke no backlash from the leader of the Catholic Church; Picciotto, *ibid.*, 212-213. The sad story gets even sadder. The research of Robert Katz shows that London and Washington learned the intended fates of Rome's Jews beforehand, thanks to their interception, decoding, and translation of German transmissions issued from Berlin. Adopting the quasi-official Allied policy that winning the military war would bring an end to the Nazi genocide, Anglo-American officials opted to not intervene on their behalf; Robert Katz, "The Möllhausen Telegram, the Kappler Decodes, and the Deportation of the Jews of Rome: The New CIA-OSS Documents, 2000-2002," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman.

⁵⁰² Di Porto, *ibid.*, 18-19. See also: Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Rome, 28 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000031/di-porto-giuseppe.html>. Di Porto does not specify whether these soldiers were Italian or German.

⁵⁰³ Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, 16 novembre 1986, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000178/giuseppe-porto.html>. Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 19.

synagogue. Sensing the immediate danger, they rushed to their safehouse, only to be arrested by German and Italian police while packing their suitcases and trying to flee.⁵⁰⁴

It was during phase one of the *caccia all'ebreo* that Milan suffered its first anti-Jewish assaults. As in Genoa on 3 November and in Florence three days later, the first anti-Jewish *Aktion* in Milan, which took place on November 8, 1943, centered on the main synagogue on Via Guastalla, semi-destroyed but still partially operational.⁵⁰⁵ Rather surprisingly, the Nazis' anti-Jewish apparatus in Milan had been set up almost two full months prior (although Stille notes that when the Germans were haphazardly establishing their dominion over Italy, their first priority was to recruit Italian POWs and other males of fighting age into the army, or to deport to labor camps those who refused).⁵⁰⁶ On the same day that Hitler gave the go-ahead for the occupation of central and northern Italy, 10 September, the city and its 4,500 Jews had fallen into German hands.⁵⁰⁷ At the Hotel Regina (*Alberto Regina*), within eyeshot of La Scala and a short walk from the Duomo and the Galleria, the SS Security Police established their local command center. Converting the hotel into a holding cell and interrogation chamber, they used the facility to jail and torture various enemies of the state and race, including antifascists, partisans, and Jews. Meanwhile, outdoors, the glitz and glam of the ritzy downtown district gave way to barbed wire, piercing spotlights, and marching paratroopers of the SS and the Gestapo, as the Nazis transformed the historic heart of the city into Milan's "terror central" (*centrale di terrore*).⁵⁰⁸ Appointed to head the SS Security Police in Milan was former *Einsatzgruppe* squad member Theodor Saevacke, though he at times answered to Walter

⁵⁰⁴ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ Rony Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 26. Francesca Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 70, 83-84. For the raid on Florence's synagogue, see Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 30.

⁵⁰⁶ Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 84.

⁵⁰⁷ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 19, 26. Immediately after occupying Milan, the Nazis had attempted a raid on the Via Eupili School, but they found the building unoccupied because it was during the summer holiday; Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 21-22.

⁵⁰⁸ Stefania Consenti, *I luoghi della memoria a Milano. Itinerari nella città Medaglia d'Oro della Resistenza* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2015), 19-20. After 1970, the hotel was dismantled and replaced with a bank.

Rauff, the man responsible for implementing the gas vans. Beneath them was a fearsome foursome of subordinate officers: Franz Stalmayer, “the wild beast” (*la belva*), known for his whip and his wolfdog; Walter Gradsack, called “the butcher” (*il macellaio*); Helmut Klemm, who directed the German sector at San Vittore prison; and the infamous Karl-Otto Koch, a figure who appears over and over again in witness testimony.⁵⁰⁹ An officer in the Gestapo, Koch was appointed to direct Milan’s division of IV-B4, the branch of the Gestapo and the RSHA tasked with answering the Jewish Question. Dubbed “*Judenkoch*” (Jew-cooker) by his comrades, Koch was the SS commanding officer responsible for the expropriation, roundups, arrests, interrogations, and torture of Jews in Milan.⁵¹⁰

It was Koch who commanded the raid on the Via Guastalla Synagogue. (At the time, Dannecker and his men were still wreaking havoc farther south, in Tuscany and the Emilia-Romagna.) On the morning of 8 November, at 9:30am, two plainclothes members of the Gestapo knocked at the door of the synagogue, setting up the ruse. Believing them to be Jewish refugees, a clerk opened the door to let them in, but as soon as he did, an SS squad revealed itself and barged into the building. Alberto Bassi, an employee of Milan’s Jewish Community, recalls there being fifteen Jews present at the time, a mix of Italians and foreigners. All fifteen were lined up and arrested, but a Bulgarian refugee named Lazar Araf (sometimes spelled ‘Araw’) was shot dead while trying to escape through the ruins of the bombed-out synagogue. The others were taken to San Vittore prison. In hopes of finding buried treasure, the SS soldiers then sacked the synagogue, and while the treasure proved illusory – under threat of death, Bassi tried explaining to Koch that it

⁵⁰⁹ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 176. Not to be confused with the Italian, Pietro Koch, leader of the eponymously named *Banda Koch* that hunted down partisans in the RSI.

⁵¹⁰ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 14. See also: Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy*, 180-181.

didn't exist –the pillage patrol made off instead with various sacred items, silverware, and precious rugs.⁵¹¹

The Hunt for Jews, Phase 2: The RSI Asserts Itself

Beginning in November 1943 and lasting through the end of the year, agents of the Italian Social Republic took the lead in hunting down Jews.⁵¹² A scarce paper trail makes it difficult to explain the reason(s) for this shift with ironclad certainty, but three factors seem paramount: (i) the stability of the Salò Republic; (ii) the assertiveness of RSI officials over antisemitic policy; and (iii) German confidence in the Italians. In September and October, the fledgling, crudely assembled Italian Social Republic remained in primitive form, its institutions still staffed with skeleton crews. (We recall that the rump state didn't even receive its official name until the first of December.) The Germans were not necessarily on stable footing in Italy either during these early months, since the Nazi and Salò regimes had not yet formalized their respective spheres of autonomy, but the organizational ambiguity of the moment provided German occupying forces with more dictatorial authority and room to maneuver. Dannecker's exploits, for example, were a solely German operation and not done in accordance with any Italian policy.

During November, however, as the institutions of the Italian Social Republic stabilized, central government officials sought to assert their autonomy, vis-à-vis their German overlords, over the field of anti-Jewish policymaking. As Picciotto writes, "The Italian government of the RSI put the full weight of its apparatus in the services of the anti-Jewish persecution." Numerous departments of the Ministry of the Interior were oriented toward answering the Jewish Question, including the Department for Demography and Race (*Direzione Generale per la Demografia e la Razza*),

⁵¹¹ Hamau, *Ebrei a Milano*, 177-178. Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 70.

⁵¹² Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews'," 64-66.

prefectures, provincial police departments and their district-level counterparts. The Ministries of Finance, Justice, National Education, and Popular Culture, as well as the *carabinieri*, were tasked with persecuting Italy's Jews in various ways, as well.⁵¹³

Accordingly, it was in November that the Italian Social Republic passed the most radical and sweeping antisemitic measures in modern Italy's history. On 14 November, the Republican Fascist Party (*Partito Fascista Repubblicano*) adopted the *Manifesto di Verona*. Authored by Mussolini and two other individuals, the Manifesto of Verona was the closest document that the RSI had to a constitution. Article 6 of the Manifesto anointed Roman Catholicism as the state religion while confirming that other faiths would be tolerated (so long as they did not contravene the law). The next article, however, defined Jews not as a religious group, but as a race, a foreign one, and in times of war, an enemy. As Collotti insists, article 7 was nothing less than "a declaration of war against the Jews"; not only did it effectively bar Jews from citizenship for the first time since unification, but it also marked every Jew, to a person, as a nemesis of the Italian state and race.⁵¹⁴ Just over two weeks later, on 30 November, RSI Minister of the Interior Guido Buffarini-Guidi issued Police Order no. 5, which mandated the arrest and detainment of all Jews, regardless of nationality or exemption, and called for concentration camps to be established expressly for this purpose. No longer did distinctions need to be observed between Jews of 'Italian' or 'foreign' provenance, of course, because the Manifesto of Verona had rendered all Jews foreign. Consequently, the initiative for rounding up and arresting Jews in the Salò Republic passed from the German occupiers (especially Dannecker and his men) to the RSI's own police and *carabinieri* forces.⁵¹⁵ Finally, on 4 January 1944,

⁵¹³ Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy," 215-216. See also: Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door," 192. We should thus categorically reject De Felice's conclusion that "The anti-Semitic policies of the RSI, like most of the workings of the reborn Fascist regime in northern Italy, were, in practical terms, either dictated directly by the Germans or through their agent, Giovanni Preziosi"; De Felice, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 432.

⁵¹⁴ "*dichiarazione di guerra contro gli ebrei*"; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 7. See also: De Felice, *ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ On 10 December, the RSI passed a follow-up measure to Police Order n. 5 that allowed exemptions for elders aged 70 years or older, the gravely ill, and children of mixed marriages who converted before 1 October 1938. There is historiographical disagreement over whether or not these exemptions were observed. Picciotto and Stefanori write that

Mussolini decreed the confiscation of all Jewish property and belongings, legalizing the plunder of Italy's Jewish community. The totalizing and invasive nature of this measure cannot be overstated. As Villani explains, while Jewish ownership of "houses, land, bank deposits, stocks, or bonds" was obviously out of the question, Jews also could no longer possess "clothes, furniture, or things of daily use."⁵¹⁶

Given their obsessive commitment to the Final Solution and their general distrust of the Italians, the Nazis were surprisingly welcoming of this new arrangement. Himmler, you see, had deemed the raid on Rome, act one of the Shoah in Italy, a "failure". 1,022-23 victims were far too few for the *Reichsführer*, who had demanded that 8,000 Roman Jews be rounded up and deported. Soon, Himmler's assessment became the general impression that German officials had of Dannecker's Italian raids, which fell well shy of his Parisian masterstroke. Time and again, insufficient German forces had resulted in long preparation times and low yields. All the while, countless Jews were slipping away, fleeing into hiding, never to surface again. The Germans were thus more than willing to allow the locals to carry out the arrests, and they saw the Italians' punishing new anti-Jewish measures as furthering this effort. This much became clear during a meeting in Berlin from 4 – 14 December between the German Foreign Ministry and the RSHA (represented by, among others, Dannecker and his impending replacement, Boßhammer). Approving of the Salò regime's new antisemitic policies, especially Interior Minister Buffarini-Guidi's Police Order, all parties agreed that the Foreign Ministry would not interfere with Italy's

Italian authorities generally honored exemptions, while German authorities did not, but Giordano and Holian contend that neither Germans nor Italians observed exemptions. Picciotto also adds that discrepancies between Italian and German law often resulted in conflict and ambiguity over which groups of Jews should be subject to arrest; see Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy," 216-217; Stefanori, *Ordinaria amministrazione*, especially chapter six, "La Shoah italiana," 292-336; and Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 56-57. See also: Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 178.

⁵¹⁶ Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945," 251. When Germans in the Operation Zones ignored Mussolini's 4 January decree and plundered Jewish belongings there for themselves, Salò officials lodged their only protest against German policies outside the RSI, considering Jewish property in the Alpenvorland and the Adriatisches Küstenland to be their own. Unsurprisingly, the Germans did not acquiesce to Italian complaints, further demonstrating that they had total control over the Operation Zones; Villani, *ibid.*, 253.

internment policy. Dannecker would be sent on assignment elsewhere, and his men would be placed at the disposal of the RSI in an advising capacity.⁵¹⁷

* * *

While the Germans were agreeing to let their Italian partners handle arrest duty in the Italian Social Republic, the Segre and the Sacerdote families were plotting their escapes. They, like thousands of other Jews in northern Italy, had their sights set on Switzerland, so close, yet so very far away. According to Sarfatti, some 5,500 to 6,000 Jews from Italy – two-thirds Italian, one-third foreign – ultimately found safe refuge in the Swiss Confederation. 1,500 of these Jews hailed from Milan, a third of the city's Jewish population.⁵¹⁸ Knowing that Switzerland was a popular haven for targets of Nazi persecution, German military authorities had closed the Italy-Switzerland border on 16 September 1943, less than a week after staging their occupation. That same day, German border police (*Zollgrenzschutz*) set up a barracks at Ponte Tresa, a town straddling the eponymous river, which forms part of the natural boundary between the two countries. Their agents were ordered to arrest all who came near, and as Giordano and Holian's research demonstrates, one of the densest arrest clusters in Italy broke out at the border.⁵¹⁹ But there's a catch; by the time the border arrests began in earnest, in December 1943, Italian agents had assumed the lead, indicating that local

⁵¹⁷ Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 27-28. Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy," 217-218. Stefanori, *Ordinaria amministrazione*, 294-295. Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door," 191. Picciotto does note, however, that Rudolf Rahn participated in the drafting of the *Manifesto of Verona*, and his assistance was "perhaps not entirely welcome". She does not exactly say how his influence came into play, though; Picciotto, *ibid.*, 215. In one of her testimony interviews, Liliana Segre insists that the Germans were the "*padroni*" (masters) of Italian prisons in the Republic of Salò, saying that they fashioned Italian prisons on Nazi models, gave the orders, and maintained a Gestapo presence within; see Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. The extent to which this is true, however, is unclear, especially after the proclamation of Guido Buffarini-Guidi's Police Order no. 5. Certainly in the Jewish sectors of Milan's San Vittore prison, for instance, this would have been the case, even if there were also Italian warders on staff. And in a general sense, the Germans did remain the overlords in the semiautonomous Italian Social Republic, leaving little room for the Italians to act against their wishes. But if Italian actions furthered Nazi goals, as was the case with Police Order no. 5, which put arrest and detainment in the RSI firmly in Italian hands, the Germans were content to leave well enough alone.

⁵¹⁸ Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 233. For the Milanese statistics, see *Viaggio nella memoria*, 19.

⁵¹⁹ Klaus Voigt, "The Children of Villa Emma at Nonantola," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 193. Gentile writes that a mobile Frontier Protection Squad of the Security Police and SD guarded the Italy-Switzerland border; Gentile, "The Police Transit Camps in Fossoli and Bolzano," 9.

captors greatly outnumbered their German counterparts.⁵²⁰ Also part of a finance ministry, the RSI's, these *finanziari* evidently had just as few qualms as the Germans did about apprehending anyone who tried to cross the border without authorization. Records show that from 1 – 28 December 1943, ninety people were arrested in the border province of Varese, where Ponte Tresa is located. Nearly half of these prisoners, forty-three to be exact, were Jews.⁵²¹ The stories of some of these victims appear below.

For Jews who attempted to escape German-occupied Italy and the Republic of Salò, flight was a decision that they typically made only after much deliberation and hesitation. The path northward through the rugged Italian Alps was a treacherous one, and for the young and able-bodied individuals who could endure the trip, leaving Italy could mean leaving their elderly and infirm relatives behind. Like many of their ghettoed counterparts in “the east”, Jews in Italy were often unwilling to make such a sacrifice, come what may.⁵²² The Italian-Swiss border region was also in a state of utter chaos from 1943 to 1945, crisscrossed with refugees, smugglers, Italian and German border guards, and partisans, and while it was certainly possible to blend in amongst the masses, the heavy police presence and the suspect motives of smugglers and local Italians left Jews open to denunciation, betrayal, and arrest.⁵²³ Further complicating matters was that flight required resources, three of which were crucial: money, job prospects, and connections. Sarfatti concludes that because poor Jews in Italy suffered higher rates of deportation, they fared worse than their wealthier counterparts.⁵²⁴ Similarly, because money was needed to pay (or pay off) smugglers and Swiss border officials, often persons of dubious reputation, Jews with little or none of it were at a major

⁵²⁰ Giordano and Holian, “Retracing the ‘Hunt for Jews’,” 67f.3.3, 68f.3.4, 70f.3.5.b, and 71f.3.5.j-k.

⁵²¹ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 24. Situated north-northwest of Milan, most prisoners apprehended near Ponte Tresa were sent to the Lombard capital before being deported elsewhere.

⁵²² For Jewish flight and resistance in Poland and eastern Europe, see Yehuda Bauer, “Forms of Jewish Resistance,” in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, ed. Donald L. Niewyk, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010).

⁵²³ Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 84-85.

⁵²⁴ Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, 203.

disadvantage. Segre herself endorses this point. In addition to the most “intelligent” (*intelligenti*) Jews and those with the right foreign-language skills, she cites the wealthiest members of Italy’s Jewish community as among the first to leave.⁵²⁵ Relatedly, Jews who had jobs lined up in Switzerland (or at least the right business credentials) and people of good standing to speak in their favor also bolstered their chances of being approved.⁵²⁶ For the most part, Swiss officials were willing to take in refugees from Italy, but they privileged the economic imperative over the moral one, favoring individuals who could contribute to the Swiss economy. Nevertheless, sometimes unpredictable variables got in the way, like the whims of Swiss authorities, and even refugees who had done everything “right” could find themselves being escorted back to the border. Sarfatti estimates that Swiss officials rebuffed at least 300 Jewish hopefuls, adding that 250 to 300 Jews were arrested either before they reached Swiss soil or after being turned away.⁵²⁷

Rather than relocating to Switzerland, Alberto Segre had initially opted for internal flight. Even before the German occupation, Liliana recalls a Catholic lawyer advising her father to take his family away from Italy. Eavesdropping on their conversation, she remembers hearing the word ‘*scappare*’ for the first time. Meaning ‘to flee’, ‘to escape’, ‘to get or run away’, the word carried a “terribly negative” (*terribilmente negativa*) connotation. A thief *scappa*. People who are being pursued *scappano*. And yet, the term fit their situation: “We were not thieves,” she explains, “but we were certainly being pursued.”⁵²⁸ In the wake of the 8 September Armistice, a friend named Giorgio Pontremoli implored Alberto to gather his family and flee with him to Switzerland. Again, Alberto refused. Both of his parents were elderly, he told Giorgio, and his weak, ailing father seemed to get

⁵²⁵ Emanuela Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre: Una delle ultime testimoni della Shoah* (Milan: San Paolo, 2013), 23. By “intelligent”, she likely refers to Jews who correctly guessed the consequences of German occupation.

⁵²⁶ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 168.

⁵²⁷ Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 233. Hamaui puts the number of rejected Jews at a minimum of 600, but without providing citation; Hamaui, *ibid*.

⁵²⁸ “*Noi non eravamo ladri, ma certamente eravamo inseguiti*”; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

worse by the day. Another irrepressible factor that weighed heavily on his mind was his family's sense of comfort in Italy and attachment to their homeland. He abhorred the thought of removing Giuseppe, the *paterfamilias*, from the family home in Milan, and in spite of everything, the Segres still felt deeply Italian. "My family members did not believe that Italy would align itself with Nazi Germany to such a degree that our lives would be put in danger," Segre explains. "[T]hey did not have the foresight, they would not have had either the means or the mindset to become refugees. They were Italian; they wanted to stay in Italy."⁵²⁹

Instead of uprooting the entire family to a foreign country, Alberto decided to sequester his daughter in various places within northern Italy. As Liliana relates, after her father was summoned to the police station in Inverigo and "threatened" (*minacciato*) for his antifascist ideas, he realized how hazardous their situation was becoming. He secured false documents for himself and Liliana – his daughter, 'Liliana Cerubini from Palermo', defiantly refusing to assume her new name – and he found shelter for Liliana with some friends, the Pozzis, in nearby Ballabio. (Liliana's refusal to learn her false surname perhaps suggests a clinging to her Jewish identity, as if being persecuted for being a Jew compelled her to identify as one even more strongly, which would lend credence to Klein's thesis.) The Pozzis were "very courageous" (*molto coraggiosi*) people for agreeing to hide her, Liliana notes, but it was an unpleasant experience overall because food was scarce and their house was "very modest" (*modestissima*). Nor was Ballabio as safe as Alberto thought. One day in October 1943, while he was there visiting Liliana, Germans raided the town in search of partisans. Put on high alert by Resistance activity in the area, German police arrested all of the townsmen, about 200 in total, in an attempt to snuff it out. Signor Pozzi was among those apprehended, and Alberto was caught in the

⁵²⁹ "I miei non avevano creduto che l'Italia si sarebbe allineata talmente con la Germania nazista da metterci in pericolo di vita ... non avevano avuto questa lungimiranza, non avrebbero avuto le possibilità né la mentalità per diventare degli esuli. Loro erano italiani, volevano restare in Italia"; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 23. See also: Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

mix, too. While frisking the latter, the Germans found an Animal Rights card in his pocket, and in response, they asked Alberto if he were a veterinarian. He lied, “Yes,” and perhaps working toward the warped logic of their *Führer*, they let him go. What they had not found was his real identification card, with his real Jewish surname, which he also had on his person that day. Ultimately, the Germans released all of their temporary detainees in Ballabio, not realizing that there had been Jews among them.⁵³⁰

The close shave in Ballabio prompted Alberto to relocate Liliana, and he found lodging for her with the Civelli family in Castellanza, closer to Milan and farther from the border. While staying with the Civellis, the problems that had marred Liliana’s Ballabio experience did not repeat. Alberto’s well-heeled acquaintances lived in an elegant villa where they dined as if there weren’t a war raging outside. Nevertheless, Liliana remembers the situation there being “much more dangerous,” and it was during this time that she, too, started begging her father to evacuate the family, adding her voice to the pro-Switzerland chorus ringing in Alberto’s ears.⁵³¹ For a time, her father remained unyielding, but not long after, he secured a document from the Como questor assuring him that despite their race, his parents would not be turned over to the Germans for deportation. They could remain in Inverigo with their caretakers. Assured of his parents’ safety, Alberto agreed to take Liliana to Switzerland.⁵³²

It was in early December 1943 – much later than most Italians who fled, Liliana states – that she and her father began their trek north. Some friends of the family, perhaps the Civellis themselves, had arranged their trip, recruiting smugglers to guide them to Switzerland. These human

⁵³⁰ Liliana Segre, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000348/liliana-segre-2.html>. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 24. For ‘Liliana Cherubini’, see Liliana Segre with Daniela Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà* (Milan: Piemme, 2015), 108-109.

⁵³¹ “Era molto più pericoloso”; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁵³² Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 24-25.

contrabandists, who specialized in conveying Jews and deserters over the border, exacted a hefty price – 45,000 lire, Segre recalls – but Alberto was able and willing to pay. Joining them were two elderly cousins, Giulio and Rino Ravenna.⁵³³ Given their advanced age (Giulio was seventy-one years old, and Rino, sixty-nine), Liliana maintains that “This was not a good idea,” but Alberto couldn’t bring himself to abandoning kin.⁵³⁴ Departing from the Civellis’ Castellanza home, Alberto and Liliana traveled first to the neighboring town of Legnano before heading north to Varese. From there, the quartet continued northward and upward into the Italian Alps. Arriving at the village of Bisuschio, they shifted their direction eastward and passed through the contiguous villages of Viggiù and Saltrio, the latter located just across the border from Switzerland. All the while, their handlers, unscrupulous though they were, kept them hidden from police agents of the Salò Republic. Slipping through a hole in the border fence, the foursome spilled into a vacant “no-man’s land” that lay between the two states. Just across was the Swiss border town of Arzo, and on December 8, 1943, in the early hours of the morning, Liliana, Alberto, and the brothers Ravenna arrived in Switzerland, the “land of liberty” (*terra della libertà*).⁵³⁵ Their liberty would be fleeting.

In one of her many memoirs, Liliana refers to her attempted escape from Italy as “The Flight of Dreams” (*La fuga dei sogni*).⁵³⁶ When she and her companions reached Switzerland, it became a nightmare. From the moment they stepped foot on Swiss soil, their escape attempt turned into “a total fiasco” (*un fiasco totale*). Sentries minding the border confronted them on the Swiss side, opposite a ravine, and escorted them to the Arzo police headquarters. After a long wait, the

⁵³³ Klein notes that smugglers charged anywhere from 3-10,000 lire per person, “a monumental sum at a time when wage-earners made 1,000 lire a month”; Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 124.

⁵³⁴ “Non era una buona idea”; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 63. See also: Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁵³⁵ “ci trovammo nella terra di nessuno che divide gli Stati”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre*, 26. See also: Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 63-64; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995; and Ottavia Borella, “Liliana, una sopravvissuta. Nel ’43, a tredici anni da Milano a Birkenau,” *la Repubblica*, 4 maggio 1994, p. 7, VdS, Serie 1, Busta 24, CDEC.

⁵³⁶ Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 24-28.

German-speaking officer on duty informed them that they would not be permitted to stay. Accusing Alberto of being a draft dodger, he asserted that the Swiss Confederation would provide safe harbor neither to him nor to the impostors accompanying him. As if such an allegation weren't damning enough, the officer added that there was no room left in the Swiss inn, anyway. "*La barca è piena*"; the boat is full, Liliana cites him as saying, perhaps recalling the 1981 Markus Imhoof film.⁵³⁷ Throwing in the proverbial kitchen sink for good measure, the same official denied that Jews in Italy were actually being persecuted, declaring this to be a fabrication invented by Alberto to cover up his military desertion. Protesting in response that he had the requisite money and connections, Alberto stressed that he would also work to support himself and his daughter. Liliana, meanwhile, threw herself on the ground like a suppliant, wrapping her arms around the officer's legs, begging him to let them stay. But it was all to no avail. Alberto had deserted his post, the officer insisted, and he and his trickster (*imbroglioni*) companions must leave at once. "[T]he officer on duty condemned us to death," Liliana charges. With barrels and bayonets aimed at their backs, the armed guards behind them grinning the whole way, the quartet was marched back to the empty stretch of land that separated the phantom liberty of Switzerland from the deathly tyranny of Italy.⁵³⁸

When they reached the other side, they approached a standard-looking gate with a wooden profile that marked the outer edges of the Italian Social Republic. Hoping to slip back into Nazi-Fascist territory undetected and find their way home, they attempted to pass through, but when Liliana's hand touched the gate, it triggered a blaring siren that pierced through the silence of the mountainous border region. "It was the death knell for three of the four of us," she sighs.⁵³⁹ Almost as soon as the alarm began screeching, two border guards in Blackshirts appeared. After verifying

⁵³⁷ *Das Boot ist voll*, directed by Markus Imhoof, Switzerland, 1981.

⁵³⁸ "*l'ufficiale di turno ci condannò a morte*"; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 27. See also 27-28; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 66-68; and Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁵³⁹ "*Era stata la campana a morto per tre di quei quattro*"; Segre, Interview, *ibid*.

their race, the officers arrested the four bedraggled travelers and conducted them to a police station in nearby Saltrio. There, a German official interrogated them in perfect Italian, and the next day, 9 December, all four were transferred to Varese prison.⁵⁴⁰

Around the same time that the Segres' flight attempt was ending in disaster, the Sacerdotes were planning their own escape in Liguria. Claudio Sacerdote, Luciana's father, had remained in contact with a friend who already reached Switzerland, and sometime in mid-December 1943, the Sacerdotes decided that they, too, needed to flee. Until that point, they had resisted the idea, mainly because Luciana's mother, Ernestina (Borgetti), feared that her family would never return to Italy if they left. But by late fall 1943, with German occupiers and Italian collaborators in league against the Jews, their beloved homeland had become inhospitable. Departing from the Riviera town of Nervi, where they had been temporarily displaced, the four members of the Sacerdote family made their way north to Varese. Accompanying them were Luciana's fiancé, Mario Fubini, and his mother, Enrichetta Rimini. When they reached Varese, a hub for refugees trying to reach Switzerland, they linked up with their smugglers, three men who escorted them through the mountains and across the border without issue.⁵⁴¹

Luciana does not remember exactly where they landed in Switzerland, but based on what happened next, one wonders if they wound up in Arzo.⁵⁴² Although Claudio insisted that he could support his entire family, and on top of that, he had a friend in Switzerland who could vouch for

⁵⁴⁰ Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 69-70. Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Documents of their arrest from the authorities in Viggiù are reproduced in Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 71-74.

⁵⁴¹ Luciana Sacerdote, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Quinto, 2 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000078/luciana-sacerdote.html>. "Fubini, Mario," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2650/fubini-mario.html>. "Rimini, Enrichetta," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-6513/rimini-enrichetta.html>.

⁵⁴² Here (and elsewhere), Luciana defers to Liliana Segre, saying, "on this topic, Liliana [Segre] has a memory of iron" (*in questa Liliana ha una memoria di ferro*). She adds that while Liliana remembers everything, she herself only remembers the most momentous events; Sacerdote, *ibid.*

him, Swiss border officials gave him the standard run-around. “There was no more room,” Luciana recalls the guards saying, and with that, the party of six was turned back and escorted toward the border.⁵⁴³ Why the guards rejected Luciana and her family, she could never comprehend. It didn’t make sense to her that some refugees were able to pass into Switzerland “easily” (*tranquilli*), while others, like her and her companions, were denied entry. “I have never understood it,” she reflects. “Some, yes; some others, no. Without any reason ... We had money, we had connections ... It’s always been a mystery.”⁵⁴⁴

Rejection from Switzerland – “the only salvation possible”, the interviewer interjects – marks the turning point in the Sacerdote family history. From there, Luciana despondently notes, “Everything collapsed” (*crolla tutto*). The Sacerdotes had yet to learn of the extermination camps and killing centers, but from that moment on, they grew fearful of what might happen to them.⁵⁴⁵ And their worries immediately proved well-founded. Waiting for them across the border were German guards, who promptly arrested them and marched them to Varese Prison.⁵⁴⁶ It was December 18, 1943.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴³ At this point in the testimony, the interviewer references Imhoof’s film, *Das Boot ist voll*, but Luciana says that she’s unfamiliar with it; *ibid.* CDEC’s Digital Library webpages for all six individuals merely state that they were arrested at the “Italy-Switzerland border” (*Frontiera Italo-svizzera*); see “Sacerdote, Claudio,” <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-6802/sacerdote-claudio.html>; “Borgetti, Ernestina Diana,” <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-930/borgetti-ernestina-diana.html>; “Sacerdote, Laura,” <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-6814/sacerdote-laura.html>; “Sacerdote, Luciana,” <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-7639/sacerdote-luciana.html>; “Fubini, Mario”; and “Rimini, Enrichetta.”

⁵⁴⁴ “*Io non l’ho mai capito: certuni, sì; certi altri, no. Senza nessun motivo ... Avevamo i soldi, avevamo conoscenze ... È stato sempre un mistero*”; Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

⁵⁴⁵ “*l’unica salvezza possibile*”; *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ Sacerdote suggests that Swiss authorities knew, or had some inkling, of the fate that awaited refugees whom they denied once they returned to the Italian side of the border. She says that “All those who were sent back fell into German hands” (*Tutti quelli che era rimandata in dietro sono caduti tutti nelle mani dei tedeschi*); *ibid.* However, according to Sarfatti’s estimates (cited above), although many Jewish refugees turned away from Switzerland were indeed arrested upon reentry into Italy, this does not hold true for them all.

⁵⁴⁷ In her oral testimony, Luciana fumbles some of her dates. When asked the date that her family departed for Switzerland, she originally answers “1942”, but the interviewer follows up by asking her to clarify if they fled before or after the German occupation. When she replies “after”, it becomes clear that the Sacerdotes fled in late 1943. However, the month that she provides is October, though the date of arrest recorded by CDEC, the one that I observe, is 18 December 1943. This, in turn, gives rise to another discrepancy: the date of arrest for all members of the Sacerdote

Farther south from Nervi along the Tyrrhenian coast, the Bayona family remained in Gabbro, Tuscany, in late fall 1943, having been driven out of Livorno by Allied bombardments. As Isacco explains, his family lacked the necessary money and connections to flee to Switzerland. Nor were they yet aware of the fate that awaited Jews who fell into the hands of the Nazis and their helpers.⁵⁴⁸ On the evening of Sunday, 19 December – one day after the Sacerdotes’ arrest – the Bayonas and their housemates, the Baruchs and the Modianos, threw a small party (*festicciola*) at the farmhouse where they all were staying. It was as if they were all enjoying one last supper, but without knowledge of their impending doom. Lacking the cover of a city, three Jewish families sharing a village farmhouse – hiding from bombs, not people – must have stuck out like sore thumbs, and the commander of the local *carabinieri* squad learned of their whereabouts. Early the next morning, at 5:00am, he commanded his troops to raid their Gabbro sanctuary.⁵⁴⁹ “They surrounded the entire house,” Isacco recalls, and after arresting all of the men inside, they transported them to their station. Shortly thereafter, the women arrived. It might have been the

family is 18 December 1943, while the date of arrest for Mario Fubini and Enrichetta Rimini is 15 December 1943. See: Sacerdote, *ibid.*; and note 126.

⁵⁴⁸ Isacco Bayona (Bajona), Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, “*Interniste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Livorno, 1 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000011/isacco-bajona.html>. The Bayonas, of Grecian provenance, had already been displaced from one country by the war. One wonders if, in addition to the reasons Isacco provides, they were reluctant to make another move so drastic.

⁵⁴⁹ It is possible that Germans also participated in the arrest, but this is unclear and, based on what we know, unlikely. In three oral testimonies, Isacco stresses that their captors were Italian; in a 1987 interview, he says that they were arrested by “*repubblichini*”, while in two later interviews, in 1989 and 1996, he says that their arresters were *carabinieri*; see Bayona, Interview, 1987; Isacco Bayona, Interview by Andrea Devoto, Livorno, 1 marzo 1989, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000215/isacco-bayona-1.html>; and Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. However, in another testimony (date unknown) referenced in *Viaggio nella memoria*, the author mentions that the Gabbro marshal alerted “Germans” (*tedeschi*) and “*repubblichini*” to the presence of the Bayonas, Baruchs, and Modianos; see *Viaggio nella memoria*, 41. Meanwhile, two postwar documents, one from the Jewish Community of Livorno and the other from the Livorno prefecture, speak only of “*nazisti*” and “German troops” (*truppe tedeschi*), respectively. This, however, probably has more to do with the self-exonerating politics of memory in postwar Italy than anything else (to be discussed in chapter five); see S.A Toaff, Il Rabbino Capo, Comunità Israelitica di Livorno, Attestazione di Bayona Isacco, 23 aprile 1963, VdS, Serie I, Busta 2, CDEC; and Il Prefetto della Provincia di Livorno, Bayona Isacco, VdS, Serie I, Busta 2, CDEC. Ultimately, given (i) the date of the arrest, (ii) the fact that an Italian gendarmerie marshal would not have been commanding Germans, and (iii) Giordano and Holian’s research reveals no German arrests in the vicinity of Gabbro, the evidence indicates that Italians acted alone.

same day, 20 December.⁵⁵⁰ Of all members of the Bayona, Baruch, and Modiano families, only Isacco's father, Raffaele, who was still convalescing in Livorno, avoided capture. All the others were arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only Isacco would return.⁵⁵¹

The Hunt for Jews, Phase 3: Dividing the Labor

The Final Solution peaked early after arriving in Italy, spanning autumn 1943, but it would drag on for another fourteen months thereafter. During the much longer second wave of arrests, which lasted from January 1944 until February 1945, far fewer Jews were captured overall, and as Giordano and Holian's research shows, their captors were roughly evenly split between Germans and Italians. Although a high percentage of unknown perpetrators distorts the data, known statistics reveal that sometimes the two parties made arrests together, but far more often, they acted alone.⁵⁵² Given that the Germans held total control over the two Operation Zones, the Alpenvorland and the Adriatisches Küstenland, this pattern suggests that Italians continued to conduct the majority of arrests in the Italian Social Republic.

This conclusion holds doubly true for Lina (Ventura) Jaffè, whom Italian police arrested not once, but twice. On the first occasion, she recounts, she and her young son were taking a stroll through their Milanese neighborhood when they were stopped by Fascists searching for a "Lina Jaffè". When she identified herself as the person in question, they promptly arrested her and her son and took them to a nearby police station. From there, another officer was tasked with transferring them to San Vittore prison. Although Lina's pleading caused the blonde-haired young man (*ragazzino*)

⁵⁵⁰ "Hanno circondato tutta la casa"; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. See also: Bayona, Interview, 1987; and Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Isacco, like Sacerdote, stumbles through some of his dates. In his 1987 testimony, he says that the arrest took place in early October 1943, while in his 1989 interview, he claims that they were arrested in autumn. However, the two postwar documents cited in note 549 confirm that he was arrested on 20 December 1943.

⁵⁵¹ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁵⁵² While the percentage of unknown arresters from September to December 1943 is quite low, that number becomes and remains problematically high during the second wave, when as many as forty to fifty percent of arrests may have been made by captors of unknown national origin; see Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 66f.3.2.

biondo) to blush, he fulfilled his duty. Four days later, however, for reasons Lina does not explain, both of the Jaffès were released.⁵⁵³

Luck would not strike twice. Early the morning of May 8, 1944, around 4:00 or 5:00am, a squad of Italians burst through the front door of the Jaffè home, breaking the frame in the process. Brandishing revolvers – Lina makes the hand-shooting gesture – they arrested Lina, her husband, Isaac, and her mother, Regina Assael.⁵⁵⁴ Detained at their home, the Jaffès' arrest matched the standard pattern. Most Jewish prisoners from Italy, 65.9%, were arrested at their last place of residence, while 34.1% were arrested elsewhere.⁵⁵⁵ Soon afterward, Lina once again found herself in a San Vittore prison cell, but this time, there would be no early release. Later, while the Jaffès were languishing in the Lager, Milan's prefect ordered that all their personal property (*beni mobili*) in their apartment on Via Antonio Scarpa be confiscated.⁵⁵⁶

Still, even though they had been caught in the Nazi-Fascist dragnet – and dispossessed of their property in the meantime – there were two silver linings to their wretched situation. First, Lina and Isaac's son was not taken, nor would he ever be (save that first mishap). Presumably in the wake of the first arrest, Lina and Isaac arranged for him to stay with a family called the Ganders, who sheltered him throughout the remainder of the war and occupation.⁵⁵⁷ Second, around the same time that the state was seizing their possessions, a woman named Silvia Antonioli, who had lost her home

⁵⁵³ Lina Jaffè, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *"Interviste alla Storia," 1995-1996*, Milan, 20 novembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000053/lina-jaffe.html>.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.* At the time of the interview, Lina was still living in the Milanese house that she had inhabited during the Fascist and Nazi-Fascist periods. Toward the end, she shows the interviewer the doorframe at the building's entryway that her arresters ruined. See also: "Ventura, Lina," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-8232/ventura-lina.html?persone=%22Ventura%2C+Lina%22>.

⁵⁵⁵ Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 69.

⁵⁵⁶ See the following documents, located in Confische Ebrei, Busta 9, ASMilano: Il Capo della Provincia di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione al Comune di Milano, 22 luglio 1944; Il Capo della Provincia di Milano (name illegible), Confische beni Jaffè Isaac Elia, 22 luglio 1944; and Il Commissario dell'Ente di Gestione e Liquidazione Immobiliare (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura di Milano, 1 settembre 1944.

⁵⁵⁷ Jaffè, Interview, 20 novembre 1995.

to aerial bombardment, requested permission to occupy the Jaffès' vacant apartment.⁵⁵⁸ Beyond a letter from the Municipality (*Comune*) of Milan asking the prefect to review her solicitation, no further documentation seems to exist, and after the war, the Jaffès were able to return to their home without issue, so it appears that Antonioli's wish was not granted. Their stolen property was never restored, but at least their home was there waiting for them.

Earlier in 1943, before the occupation, bombs over Milan had forced another Turkish Jewish family, the Danas, to evacuate to Calcinate in the Lombard countryside. After the 8 September Armistice and the resultant German "invasion" (*invasione*), however, Samuele says that Nazis began overrunning the region where they had taken shelter, conducting anti-Jewish manhunts and deporting their quarry to far-off parts of Europe. In truth, it is more likely that Italians were behind the arrests, since they dominated the countryside, and as Giordano and Holian's research shows, Germans conducted arrests neither in Calcinate, the surrounding area, nor the nearby cities of Bergamo and Brescia.⁵⁵⁹ In any case, believing that they would be safer in the big city, where they thought they could enjoy the diplomatic protection of the Turkish consulate, the Danas returned to Milan in mid-April 1944 to avoid capture. When they arrived, they even found their home at Viale Espinasse 5 unoccupied, so they settled back in.⁵⁶⁰

The homecoming would be short-lived, though. Turkish officials proved unable to allay their fears, and on 8 May 1944, less than three weeks after they returned to their home, they too were hunted down.⁵⁶¹ It was the same day, around the same early hour, that the Jaffès were arrested.

⁵⁵⁸ Il Dirigente del Comune di Milano (name illegible), Comunicazione alla Prefettura Repubblicana di Milano, 21 luglio 1944, Confische Ebrei, Busta 9, ASMilano.

⁵⁵⁹ Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews'," 70f.3.5j.

⁵⁶⁰ Samuele Dana, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "*Interviste alla Storia*" – 1995-1996, Milan, 27 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000026/samuele-dana.html>. "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze, 1967*, 19 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC. Unbeknownst to me at the time, I stayed in this same building complex during a research trip in the winter of 2016-17. Big city, smaller world.

⁵⁶¹ "Dana Samuele," *ibid.*

Dating from the 1938 Racial Laws, thanks in no small measure to the assertiveness of the Turkish government, Turkish Jews had enjoyed a *relatively* privileged status in Fascist Italy, and this granted them some special permissions and exemptions that were denied to Jews of other nationalities (including Italians). Above all, they received an unusual degree of protection, and even after the German occupation, the Turkish consulate was able to secure the release of Turkish citizens taken prisoner. However, dating from 27 January 1944, German authorities adopted a new policy, whereby Turkish Jews would be detained and deported to Bergen-Belsen, ostensibly for a document check. Evidently, RSI officials did not object, and on 8 May, Italian police, perhaps aided by paramilitary forces, rounded up Milan's Turkish Jews.⁵⁶²

Early that morning, sometime before sunrise, Italian police officers showed up on the doorstep of the Danas' home.⁵⁶³ "They surrounded the entire house and they took us," Samuele says, in words identical to those of Isacco Bayona.⁵⁶⁴ The exact composition and identity of their arresters, however, are not clear. On one occasion, Samuele refers to them all as "*questurini*" (a term for 'police officer' with a sometimes-negative connotation, akin to 'cop'), while his father, Salomone, notes that the "Ettore Muti" Mobile Autonomous Legion, a squadrist paramilitary unit, accompanied the civilian police. Nevertheless, what does seem evident is that their captors formed a sizable group (*tanti*) – large enough to surround their apartment complex – consisting of exclusively Italian young men (*ragazzini*).⁵⁶⁵ At first, Salomone explains, the boyish officers explained that they

⁵⁶² Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 52. Survivor testimony leaves the Danas' citizenship status in 1944 up in the air. Samuele states that the entire family possessed Italian citizenship, but his father, Salomone, contradicts this, saying that he remained a Turkish citizen at the time. Given that the Dana family was rounded up in accordance with the new German policy, it is likely that they remained Turkish citizens, even though Samuele and his siblings had been born in Italy; see "Dana Samuele," *ibid.*; and "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze, 1967*, 22 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC.

⁵⁶³ Samuele puts the time of their arrest at 6:00am, while Salomone states that it occurred much earlier, at 3:30. Either way, the arrest took place early in the morning; see "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze, 1967*, 19 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC; and "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze, 1967*, 22 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC.

⁵⁶⁴ "Circondarono tutto l'abitato e ci presero"; "Dana Samuele," *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁵ Samuele variously describes their arresters as "*fascisti*" (1996 interview) and "*civili*" and "*questurini*" (Bosshammer trial), any and all of which could be true. However, he also calls them "*militari*" (soldiers) during his 1996 testimony, which

were simply taking them to a local command post (*comando dei fascisti*) for information-gathering. But this ploy did not last long, for the Danas were transferred directly from their home to San Vittore prison, where, in addition to being detained indefinitely, their money was seized.⁵⁶⁶

That day, the entire Dana family was arrested: Salomone, his wife Malcunna (Boton), and their three children, Mosè, Samuele, and Stella. In the roundup, Italian police also apprehended Isacco Dana, Salomone's brother. In February of that year, Isacco's wife, Rachele Luna Gallico, and their three children, Stella (b. 1926), Salvatore (1930), and Ester (1936), had been captured in the still-unsafe Ballabio, their refuge from bombed-out Milan.⁵⁶⁷ All five members of the family, Isacco included, would be deported to Auschwitz and killed there. Perhaps their collective fate confounds the characterization of the Turks as a 'protected people', a conventional notion that Samuele's interviewer, Liliana Picciotto, describes as "banal" (*banale*).⁵⁶⁸ At the very least, it shows that protection had its limits, and the European part of Turkey, with its 55,000 Jews, did feature in the Wannsee Conference Minutes.⁵⁶⁹

Born to a Jewish father and a Catholic-Aryan mother, Fausta Finzi and her brother, Carlo, we recall, had been deemed "not part of the Jewish race" by the Fascist state, a ruling that the occupying Nazis appear to have upheld. It was her father's arrest, however, that led to her own.

would not have been the case; see Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996; and "Dana Samuele," *ibid.* For the "Muti" reference, see "Dana Salomone e Mosè," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*. For a brief account of the Muti Legion, see Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 524-525. Bosworth describes the Muti Legion as a bloodthirsty, though not expressly antisemitic, paramilitary unit.

⁵⁶⁶ "Dana Salomone e Mosè," *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ When Salomone and Samuele say that Isacco's wife and three children were in Lecco at the time of their arrest, they presumably mean Lecco province, where Ballabio is located, not the city of Lecco; see *ibid.* and "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*. See also: Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996; Dana, Isacco," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1845/dana-isacco.html>; "Gallico, Rachele Luna," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-3037/gallico-rachele-luna.html>; "Dana, Stella," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1849/dana-stella.html>; "Dana, Salvatore," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1847/dana-salvatore.html>; and "Dana, Ester," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1844/dana-ester.html>.

⁵⁶⁸ Dana, Interview, *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ "Minutes of the Wannsee Conference about the 'final solution', 20 January 1942," in *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Steve Hochstadt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 134.

While Milan was being bombarded by the Allies, Fausta and her parents, Edgardo and Giulia (Robiati), decided to stay, and not even the arrival of the Germans in September 1943 drove them away. Perhaps, since Edgardo had received an exemption from the Fascist state (on Fausta's word), the Finzis believed that both RSI officials and their German overlords would honor his *discriminato* status. It was only in December of that year, when they learned that all Jews in German-occupied Italy (Salò included) would be rounded up and sent to concentration camps, that the Finzis made the decision to abandon their home on Via Mario Pagano. (Here, given the timing, Fausta might in fact be referring to the consequences of Police Order no. 5, but mis-ascribing responsibility to the Germans.) In light of this persecutory upswing, Fausta relates how she and her parents found shelter with her brother, who had already fled the family home and sought refuge in a house not far away, though she does not say where. In any case, it was a brief retreat, for Finzi and her parents returned to their home only a few months later, in early 1944, when it seemed like things had calmed down.⁵⁷⁰

In reality, German and Italian police were gearing up for another spate of arrests. Although, in 1944 and 1945, the number of arrests dropped off precipitously from the months prior, the majority of arrests that did occur during this second, longer wave took place from January through May 1944. Within this five-month span, the arrests peaked from February to April, when just over 400 Jews were apprehended per month, and it was during this period that the Nazi-Fascist net ensnared Fausta and her father.⁵⁷¹ On a Saturday in late April, while the two were at work, a couple of plainclothes (*in borghese*) officers showed up at Edgardo's chemical business. It wasn't long before they revealed themselves to be "the famous Koch of the Gestapo" (*il famoso Koch della Gestapo*), as Fausta describes him, accompanied by a translator.⁵⁷² Edgardo, confirmed as Jewish by Italian racial

⁵⁷⁰ Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁵⁷¹ Giordano and Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews,'" 64-66.

⁵⁷² Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996. Whether Karl-Otto Koch personally appeared as often as survivors remember may never be known. In the Italian context, Koch has a prominence somewhat akin to Josef Mengele in the remembrances of Auschwitz-Birkenau survivors.

records, was arrested immediately. Not wanting to abandon her father, and likely concerned about his fate, Fausta submitted to arrest as well, and both were taken to Hotel Regina.⁵⁷³ The other half of the Finzi family avoided persecution throughout the occupation. Giulia's Catholic-Aryan identity rendered her immune, while of her brother, Fausta simply states, "They never touched him. He was not arrested."⁵⁷⁴

Afterward, while in detainment, Fausta and her father discussed the circumstances that might have led to their arrest. Although Fausta does not sound too committal, both Finzis suspected that they had been denounced to German officials. The day they were arrested, a woman had stopped into Edgardo's store. Since Koch and his toady showed up shortly after she left, they guessed that she had informed on them.⁵⁷⁵ There is a high chance that this was indeed the case, for as Wildvang establishes, denunciation was probably the main cause of arrest for Jews in Italy during the German occupation.⁵⁷⁶

Still living with her family in Fiume at the time of the Armistice, Goti Herskovits suddenly found herself squarely in German territory in late 1943, as her city was absorbed into the *Adriatisches Küstenland*. Already disadvantaged by language and geography, Fiume's Jewish population – with its large foreign contingent – was ill-prepared for the arrival of the Germans. A delayed onset to the persecution may not have helped matters, perhaps lulling the local Jewish community into a false sense of security. It was not until the dawn of the new year that the situation for Fiume's Jews noticeably worsened, symbolized by the January burning of the city synagogue. Only then, when Germans began arresting victims in their own homes, did many Jews start to flee.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, Milan, 25 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000222/fausta-finzi-1.html>. Fausta Finzi, *Questionario/Fragebogen in occasione del processo Boshammer*, 23 gennaio 1971, VdS, Serie I, Busta 8, CDEC.

⁵⁷⁴ "*Non l'hanno mai toccato. Non è stato arrestato*"; Finzi, Interview, *ibid*.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷⁶ Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door," 198.

⁵⁷⁷ Bauer, 25 febbraio 1987. Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945," 252.

(It's worth noting, however, that the number of Jews living along the eastern Adriatic coast had "declined sharply" in the years since the Racial Laws, including in the cities of Fiume and Trieste.)⁵⁷⁸

At first, Luigi Herskovits' frail health had ruled out flight for Goti and her family.⁵⁷⁹ But the roundups that christened the new year forced the Herskovitses to reassess, and in the border town of Fiume, document checks were a constant, which made leaving the city an ever more attractive option.⁵⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Luigi's severely immobilized condition was an undeniable fact, and it seems that the compromise solution, made on the fly, was to find shelter for him in nearby Trieste, while the rest of the family left for the Italian Social Republic. Despite being the capital of the *Adriatisches Küstenland* and overseen by the ruthless Globočnik, Trieste was a common internal-flight destination for Fiume's Jews because it was farther from the border, although according to Goti, few refugees made it there successfully. Her father was one of the few. With help from a non-Jewish neighbor named Angelina Braida, a glowing exception to Fiume's antisemitic rule, the Herskovitses found sanctuary for Luigi at Trieste's *Clinica Igea*. In response to the German occupation, the operator of the facility, a Doctor Ravasini, had begun using his private clinic not only to treat elderly patients, but also to offer refuge to Jews in need of protection. Luigi met both criteria, and he was admitted in February 1944.⁵⁸¹

With Luigi sheltered in Trieste, Goti, her mother, and her brother fled the *Küstenland* for the Italian Social Republic. Joined by some cousins, the Altmanns, they settled in the Emilia-Romagna town of Viserba, just north of Rimini. Goti had been to Viserba not long before, dispatched there to acquire false documents in either January or early February. That mission had

⁵⁷⁸ Villani, *ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁷⁹ In the passage that follows, on the internal flight of Goti and her family members, I have reconstructed events to the best of my ability. Although all testimony documents referenced involve Goti herself, the information they contain does always align.

⁵⁸⁰ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 2.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.* Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, Milan, 1993, pp. 3-5, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 2. Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987.

been a success, for a clerk with the Viserba Municipality issued Goti documents designating her and her family members as refugees from Ortona.⁵⁸² Why Ortona? Because by early 1944, Goti explains, Ortona had been liberated by the Allies, so there was no way for either the Germans or the Salò Italians to verify their status.⁵⁸³ With false documents came false identities, and the Herskovitses became the “Cortesés”, although Goti does not remember their given names, not even her own. While returning from her mission, Goti ran into her parents and brother at the Trieste station, learning that they had fled Fiume the night prior to avoid arrest. It is here that the family’s flight story bifurcates. False documents in hand, the ~~Herskovitses~~ Cortesés dropped Luigi off at Dr. Ravasini’s clinic while continuing onward to the RSI.⁵⁸⁴

The Herskovitses were “strangers” (*estranei*) in Viserba, but according to Goti, this wasn’t out of the ordinary. A seaside town, Viserba was a common vacation spot, and during the war, many Italians escaped to their summer homes to avoid the bombardments in Bologna and other cities nearby.⁵⁸⁵ They did have one close call, though. At a certain point, Margherita Altmann, the matriarch of the Altmann family, fell sick, so they summoned a doctor for a house call. After tending to Signora Altmann, on his way out the door, the doctor happened to ask the families where they were from. When they told him, “Ortona,” with great surprise, he replied, “Me too!” It soon became clear that the Herskovitses were not, in fact, Ortonians, and their jig might well have been up, if not for the doctor’s benevolence. Remarking that she owes this doctor “a huge debt of gratitude” (*un grosso debito di riconoscenza*), she notes that he never denounced them. On the contrary, he advised them to leave Viserba at once because the municipal clerk had been selling too many

⁵⁸² As Stille explains, after the passing of the Racial Laws, “A sordid traffic in ‘Aryanization’ certificates began, to the profit of fascist bureaucrats”; Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal*, 78.

⁵⁸³ In late December 1943, Canadian forces liberated Ortona from German rule in the “Battle of Ortona”. Because of the brutal close-quarters style of combat, those who fought in the Battle of Ortona variously dubbed it “Little Stalingrad”, “Italian Stalingrad”, and “Western Stalingrad”.

⁵⁸⁴ Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, pp. 4-5. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 2-3.

⁵⁸⁵ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 4.

false documents, his act having become “common knowledge” (*risaputa*).⁵⁸⁶ Though they didn’t heed his advice then, within a few months, even the RSI became too unsafe, so the Herskovitses looked northward to Switzerland.

Sometime in the spring, Germans in the Küstenland had ramped up their raids on hospitals, medical clinics, and nursing homes, putting Luigi directly in their tracks.⁵⁸⁷ Their hand forced, the Herskovitses needed to retrieve Luigi from Trieste, and the task fell to nineteen-year-old Goti. Although her voyage there appears to have gone without issue – perhaps, as a young woman, she was able to “pass” – the return trip to Viserba was a harrowing one for the father-and-daughter pair. While waiting to depart from an intermediary station, an air-raid siren startled them, causing Luigi to fall from the train. Surrounded by soldiers attempting to help him, Luigi, stunned and “semi-conscious” (*semisvenuto*), bemoaned himself in Hungarian and called Goti by her real name. Either slip-up could have given them away, and Goti guesses that only “the commotion of the moment” (*il trambusto del momento*) saved them.⁵⁸⁸ Disaster doubly averted, she and her father continued on to Viserba, though they would not stay there for long.

By late April, the situation in Viserba had become “unlivable” (*invivibile*) for the Herskovitses. Luigi required constant medical attention, and Goti’s seventeen-year-old brother, Tibor, was of age for military service, so he could have been mistaken for a draft dodger and reported to the authorities as such.⁵⁸⁹ Naturally, people became suspicious, asking questions like, “Why isn’t this boy serving in the army,” and “What’s up with this sick old man who has an Italian

⁵⁸⁶ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, pp. 2-3. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, pp. 3-5. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 4-5. Agata ‘Goti’ (Herskovits) Bauer, “La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione,” in *Mezzo secolo fa. Guerra e Resistenza in provincia di Varese*, ed. Istituto varesino per la storia dell’Italia contemporanea e del movimento di liberazione (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1995), 296-297.

⁵⁸⁷ These were not the first assaults of their kind, however, for the Germans had conducted an infamous raid on Trieste’s Gentilomo nursing home on January 20, 1944; De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy*, 455.

⁵⁸⁸ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 4. Bauer, “La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione,” 296.

⁵⁸⁹ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, *ibid.*

name but a hard time speaking Italian?”⁵⁹⁰ In a town full of strangers, the Herskovitses were too strange, and with the good doctor’s advice still in the back of their minds, they prepared to leave Italy on the first of May.

Stop one on their flight itinerary was Milan. A young rabbi whom they knew from Fiume, Carlo Zelikovitz, had learned that Milan’s archbishop was overseeing an organization that helped Jews clandestinely cross the border to Switzerland.⁵⁹¹ This would have been Cardinal Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster’s Charity of the Archbishop (*Carità dell’Arcivescovo*) organization, which, among other services rendered to the Milanese, assisted Jews persecuted by Nazi-Fascism. It had likely been Schuster’s longstanding friendships with Milan’s Jewish leaders – including Alessandro Da Fano, whose long tenure as chief rabbi lasted from 1892 until his death in 1935 – that called the archbishop to this vocation.⁵⁹² After Zelikovitz, who had scouted ahead in Milan, sent for the Herskovitses, Goti’s parents and brother left straight for the Lombard capital. Once again taking on extra responsibilities, Goti first ventured to Lugo, in the Emilia-Romagna, to gather a Signora Kugler and her three daughters, who would be accompanying them on their flight.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰ “*cosa sta a fare qui questo che non è militare, o cosa fa quest’uomo anziano malato qui con questo nome italiano e con questa difficoltà a parlare italiano?*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹¹ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁹² Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 101, 181.

⁵⁹³ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, pp. 4-5. The “signora Kugler” whom Goti references is Carlotta Kurtz, wife of Sigismondo Kugler. Although Goti only mentions two of their girls by name, Gisella (b. 1921) and Elena Anna (1928), the Kuglers had a younger daughter named Maddalena (1933). While Gisella and Elena Anna survived the Shoah, Maddalena and her mother, Carlotta, were killed; “Kurtz, Carlotta,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4016/kurtz-carlotta.html>; “Kugler, Gisella,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4271/kugler-gisella.html>; “Kugler, Elena Anna,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4007/kugler-maddalena.html>; and “Kugler, Maddalena,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4007/kugler-maddalena.html>. CDEC’s Digital Library also has a separate entry for a “Sara Kurtz”, who, like Carlotta, is listed as Sigismondo’s wife. I have not been able to determine if Carlotta and Sara are the same person, though I operate under the assumption that they are. The Kuglers also had a son, Artur, and records indicate that both he and his father avoided capture and survived the war; “Kugler, Sigismondo,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-22784/kugler-sigismondo.html>; and “Kugler, Artur,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-cdec201-2146/kugler-artur.html>.

Arriving to Milan with the Kuglers a couple of days later, Goti learned from her mother that her father and brother had already left for the border, departing with another group the day prior. Their own group, which consisted of seven or eight travelers, including Goti, her mother, and the four Kuglers, was set to leave that evening.⁵⁹⁴ With Milan's *Stazione Nord* (North Station, also called Cadorna) as their starting point, the group traveled first by train to Varese, smugglers' den, where they linked up with the two "young lads" (*ragazzotti*) who would guide them to the border. Back in Milan, a grocer named Cucchi and his wife, part of Schuster's *Carità dell'Arcivescovo* network, had orchestrated the flight attempt for Goti and her fellow travelers. Every evening, in exchange for an agreed-upon, albeit expensive sum – in one presentation, Goti marks it at 10,000 lire per person – either Cucchi or his wife would accompany a group of refugees to Varese, where they were handed off to smugglers.⁵⁹⁵ Although Cucchi himself rubbed Goti the wrong way – she describes him as "shady" (*losco*) – their guides in Varese showed themselves to be very kind people, and their disarming demeanor put her mind at ease.⁵⁹⁶ From Varese, Goti and her travel companions, led by the two guides, took a tram to Ghirla, located at the northern end of the eponymous lake. Then, under the cover of darkness, they began their march toward the border. All through the night, their handlers kept their spirits high with words of encouragement, and they helped the elderly among the group traverse the rugged, wooded mountain terrain.⁵⁹⁷

When the group reached the border, the smugglers told them that Switzerland was just across a small bridge, but they were unable to accompany them any farther. The reason, they said, was that because they weren't refugees, they would not be admitted into the country. Wishing Goti and her companions well "in as friendly a manner possible" (*più amichevole possibile*), the guides

⁵⁹⁴ Bauer, *ibid.*, p. 5. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁵ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, *ibid.* Bauer, "La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione," 297. In one testimony, Goti says that Cucchi's wife escorted her party to Varese; see Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 6.

⁵⁹⁷ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 6.

requested that, before they parted ways, the refugees return their half of a picture card (*figurina*) that they had received in Milan.⁵⁹⁸ To build trust with his clients and to give other Jews confidence in the integrity of his operation, Cucchi provided refugees with a “picture card torn in two” (*figurina tagliata in due*). Once the smugglers had delivered the refugees to the border, they would return with one half of the torn picture card to show other potential refugees that everything had gone smoothly.⁵⁹⁹ Completing the transaction, Goti’s group handed over their half of the picture card, and right after doing so, their smugglers unmasked themselves for the “scoundrels” (*mascalzoni*) they were by letting out a piercing whistle and disappearing into the night.⁶⁰⁰ In a split second (*medesimo istante*), the woods were flooded with light, and a squadron of Italian border agents surrounded Goti and her companions, arrested them, and transferred them to a nearby barracks in Cremenaga.⁶⁰¹

Goti’s gut feeling about Cucchi had been right, and looking back, she realizes that he and his co-conspirators had been playing a “double game” (*doppio gioco*), as she calls it. When she and her group set out from Milan, Cucchi had convinced them to travel lightly so that they wouldn’t have to haul their belongings through the mountains or risk having them requisitioned by greedy Swiss border guards. Part of the agreement, the grocer explained, was that his clients could leave their things with him in Milan, where he would hold them in safekeeping until they returned. In reality, they were turning over their possessions to Cucchi and paying him as they did it.⁶⁰² After Goti returned from Auschwitz in August 1945, she and an acquaintance went to Cucchi’s store to reclaim their possessions. “[N]aturally,” she says, “everything that we left there with them had vanished.”⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁸ Bauer, Interview, *ibid.* In some interviews, Goti refers to the item not as a ‘*figurina*’ (picture card), but as a ‘*santino*’ (a holy card or prayer card, usually containing an image of a saint); see Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, *ibid.*; and Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁹ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁰ Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.* Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 6. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, pp. 6-7. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 8.

⁶⁰² Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 5.

⁶⁰³ “*naturalmente era sparito tutto quello che noi avevamo lasciato lì a loro*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 12.

Their smugglers, meanwhile, had actually been greedy, immoral collaborators who delivered Jews straight into the hands of their persecutors. And as for the *figurina tagliata in due*, the symbol of their demise, this was nothing but a ruse meant to establish false trust. As Klein's research shows, this practice actually originated among Jewish refugees themselves, who devised it as an insurance policy to guarantee that their handlers were operating on the level. A network of smugglers and collaborators in Varese, however, along with border guards, turned this method against the refugees, arresting sixty Jews in this way in spring 1944.⁶⁰⁴

In the beginning, Goti reasons that Cucchi and his wife might have been motivated by good intentions, which earned them the trust of Archbishop Schuster. But somewhere along the line, "maybe for too much want of money, or perhaps because he himself had been betrayed," Cucchi devised a cruel *doppio gioco* that spelled disaster for many Jews who entrusted him with their lives.⁶⁰⁵ "Every detail was studied to reassure, to nurture a climate of trust," she explains. "In fact, before our departure, they showed us the half of the picture card that they had given to my father's group the evening before. It fit perfectly."⁶⁰⁶ In May 1946, one year after the war in Europe ended, Cucchi and his co-conspirators were tried for their actions at the Assize Court in Varese. One of Goti's cousins, probably Margherita Altmann's husband, Ferdinando, set the trial in motion, and Goti took the stand as a witness. Although her story left a profound impression on the jurors, it may not have been a lasting one, for she says that all of the defendants were acquitted.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Goti and her family's story appears, in condensed form, in Klein's account; *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism*, 128-129.

⁶⁰⁵ "forse per troppa sete di guadagno, o lui stesso tradito"; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 5.

⁶⁰⁶ "Ogni dettaglio era studiato per rassicurare, per alimentare un clima di fiducia. Infatti prima della partenza ci fecero vedere la parte della cartolina consegnata al gruppo di mio padre la sera prima: combaciava perfettamente"; *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 10-13. This, in fact, may not have been the case. During the trial, the defendants consisted of Cucchi and his wife, six guides, and a captain, a marshal, and a soldier who had been stationed at the Luino border post. Cucchi and his wife, presented as members of an anti-Fascist Catholic organization (Cardinal Schuster's, presumably), were indeed acquitted, and the three-year prison sentence handed down to the military personnel was immediately pardoned, although they did have to pay fines of 20,000 lire. The heaviest punishments seem to have come down on the guides; three were condemned to twenty years in prison, while two received eighteen-year sentences, although in each case, one-third of their prison lengths was commuted. The account is unclear, however, because the volume editor writes, "The other defendants were absolved due to insufficient evidence" (*Gli altri imputati*

Conclusion

Until September 8, 1943, Jews had lived in a state of relative security in Italy, whether they were Italian, foreign, or stateless. Their circumstances had certainly declined since the onset of the Racial Laws, and citizenship became meaningless for those still in possession of it, but their situation was incomparably favorable to that of most Jews in Europe. With the Armistice of Cassibile, however, the overwhelmingly majority of Italy's Jews suddenly found themselves trapped in Hitler's empire and sucked into the vortex of the Shoah. How Jews responded to this novel, lethal threat was dictated by a multitude of factors, including means, familial considerations, and even at this late hour, perceived threat.

For Jews who failed to secure safe hideouts right away, the longer they remained 'out in the open', the more precarious their lives became. (Not that life in hiding guaranteed survival, of course, given the threat of raids, the risk of denunciation, and the vagaries of human nature that might impel their protectors to change their minds one day and give them up.) In Rome, with the southern front approaching and the Nazis more intent on quickly catching their prey, the window to hide or flee was brief; the raid on the old ghetto, the signature moment of the Shoah in Italy, occurred only a month after the occupation began. In Milan and Fiume, as the respective cases of Fausta Finzi and Goti Herskovits suggest, the pace of anti-Jewish operations proceeded more slowly (despite the occasional uptick), and this may have lulled the local Jewish populations into a sense of complacency. Timing could also influence the success or failure of a flight attempt in other, less predictable ways. If Goti's family had left for Switzerland in February 1944 instead of May, they would not have been caught in the collaboration ring operating out of Varese that spring. The same

furono assolti per insufficienza di prove). Who those other defendants are isn't evident, since of the eleven defendants involved in the trial, only one person, a guide, is unaccounted for; Bauer, "La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione," 297-298n.2.

would have been true if they left in July, after the racket shut down. Their own unique circumstances led them to flee at precisely the wrong time.

Between September 1943 and April 1945, at least 8,479 Jews (7,579 whose identities have been verified) found themselves imprisoned in Italian- or German-run detainment centers in Italy.⁶⁰⁸ They were just as likely to have been arrested by an Italian as a German. In large-scale urban raids, like the blitz on Genoa that ensnared Giuseppe Di Porto, the arresters were typically Germans. Italians, on the other hand, patrolled the countryside, as evinced by the raid on the Gabbro farmhouse where Isacco Bayona was sheltering. At the border, would-be refugees and their waiting captors bottlenecked near lakes Como and Lugano, forming a ring of arrests around the Sottoceneri, the southern peninsula of Switzerland's Ticino canton dipping enticingly into Italian territory. Though local guards held sway in this zone too, as Liliana Segre and Goti Herskovits discovered, Germans secured their fair share of arrests along the border as well, having established a barracks at Ponte Tresa and an SS command post in Como. Luciana Sacerdote, in all likelihood, was arrested at or near one of these two locations. Once in enemy hands, the fates of Italy's Jewish prisoners depended on their date of arrest, the level of cooperation between Italian and German authorities, and, ultimately, how fast the Allies could force their way up the peninsula.

⁶⁰⁸ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 28.

Chapter IV

Detainment and Deportation: San Vittore, Milano Centrale, and the Climax of the Shoah in Milan

How do we look at ourselves in those moments? What do you say? What frightening silence paralyzes you? What inadequate words get caught in your throat, when suddenly you are catapulted into a reality that you've never even imagined, not even in your most agitated nights? Bright lights in the dark, whistles, commands, violence, beatings ... and as this astonished human mass filled each wagon, they were bolted from outside.

Liliana Segre, 2013

Introduction

On January 30, 1944, the Nazis and their Italian allies deported Liliana Segre, along with her father and perhaps 500 other Jews, from Milan's central railway station.⁶⁰⁹ It was the largest deportation from Milan during the Shoah. Earlier that morning, the victims had been loaded onto lorries at the city's San Vittore prison, where racial and political enemies of the German occupying regime awaited deportation (and later, transport). From there, they were conveyed across the city to Milano Centrale station, where they were unloaded in a concealed location beneath the main tracks. Thrust into a brief but intense maelstrom of violence, Segre recalls being bombarded by beatings and blows, punches and kicks, shouts from guards, snarls from hounds, and bright lights that pierced through the dark as the SS loaded their victims onto railcars as rapidly as possible. All the while, their Italian allies looked on approvingly; some may have joined in. Once the victims had been crammed into cattle cars bolted shut, they were elevated from the hidden bowels of the station and expelled from Milan. A week later, on 6 February, they arrived at their destination: Auschwitz-Birkenau. Of the hundreds of Jews deported from the station that fateful, frigid morning, only twenty would return. Liliana Segre was among the twenty. Her father, Alberto, was not.

⁶⁰⁹ “Come ci si guarda, in quei momenti? Cosa si dice? Che silenzio spaventoso ti paralizza? Quali parole inadeguate ti si fermano in gola, quando di colpo sei catapultato in una realtà che non hai immaginato neanche nelle tue notti più agitate? Fari potentissimi nel buio, fischi, comandi, violenza, bastonate ... e man mano che ogni vagone si riempiva di questa umanità attonita, veniva sprangato da fuori”; Emanuela Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre: Una delle ultime testimoni della Shoah* (Milan: San Paolo, 2013), 35.

* * *

When Segre was loaded onto her cattle car at Milan's central station, she passed into the deviant, incomprehensible violence of the Shoah. At the same time, the experience might have completed her devolution from demonized person to dehumanized Jew, a mutation already underway in the camps and prisons of occupied Italy. If not, then witnessing the pail, the improvised toilet at the center of the wagon, accomplished that goal. By the time Jewish victims found themselves in the detainment centers of central and northern Italy, they had already been deemed spies, traitors, and fundamentally un-Italian by the Fascist regime, and oppressed for it. With the *Manifesto of Verona*, the Republic of Salò silenced any remaining doubts by legislating all Jews out of the Italian race and declaring them, during war, members of an enemy nationality. The next step in the process of debasement, the assault on Jewish bodies, began in the detainment centers of the Italian Social Republic, the Alpenvorland, and the Adriatisches Küstenland, where Jews were held before being deported to the Nazi camps of central Europe. Although physical violence seems to have been more sporadic than systematic in these facilities, with the crucial exception of German-conducted interrogations, Jewish prisoners were routinely separated from family members, fed a subsistence diet, exposed to extreme heat and coldness, and caged in cells that they were forced to share with insects, including lice. Nor, by any means, was physical violence absent, as survivor records and secondary sources attest, and for women, this violence could take the form of sexual assault.

The line between demonization and dehumanization can be a fine one – and one made fuzzy by the subjective ways that victims perceive and process their experiences – but what can be gleaned from survivor testimonies is that the transition from the demonization to the dehumanization of Italy's Jews began in the prisons and camps of the Salò Republic and the German Operation Zones. From living in cells overrun with vermin, to being subjected to physical and sexual violence, to, in some cases, being reduced to numbers, the prison experience continued a downward collective

trajectory for Italy's Jews toward the state of subhumanity. In Italy itself, this process usually came to a head at the moment of deportation, when Jewish victims were initiated into the stupefying, seemingly senseless violence of the Shoah, all while being forced onto railcars built for livestock. While it was Germans who offended the most, they in no way cornered the market on prison brutality, and this was especially true in the RSI, where many prisons were Italian-run facilities. And though deportation was a German enterprise in Italy, local accomplices, be they guards or railroaders, were often present, sometimes accompanying convoys right up to the Italian border.

Detainment

"From one prison to another": The Prison Odyssey before San Vittore

For Shoah victims apprehended in northern and northwestern Italy, Milan served as a common transportation hub as they were moved eastward and upward toward their eventual points of expulsion.⁶¹⁰ At San Vittore, the city's main prison, victims were collated who had been detained in major cities like Turin, Florence, Genoa, and Milan itself, along the Italy-Switzerland border (especially in the provinces of Como and Varese), and throughout the northern Italian countryside. As a result, by the time they reached San Vittore, many prisoners had already been shuffled to and fro across the Italian north. Though the horror of their treatment paled in comparison to what awaited them across the border – as survivors frequently attest – it was in these spaces that Italy's Jewish victims began to process and digest the gravity of their situation. Even if outright physical violence was rare, going virtually unmentioned in the testimonies surveyed here, it was in these provincial jails and prisons that victims first experienced material deprivation, a lack of basic sanitary

⁶¹⁰ In one memoir, Segre titles her chapter on her incarcerations, "One prison after another" (*Un carcere dopo l'altro*), while Goti Bauer discusses how the Germans transferred her "from one prison to another" (*ci trasferirono da un carcere all'altro*); see Liliana Segre with Daniela Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà* (Milan: Piemme, 2015), 113-118; and Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, Milan, 1993, p. 7, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

services, and life among insects. It was also here that families were first torn apart, if only temporarily, as many of these facilities observed strict gender segregation.

The Segre, Sacerdote, and Herskovits families, along with their travel partners, were all arrested at the Italy-Switzerland border, and their prison itineraries share many similarities. Upon being detained, they would have been taken to a police or guard barracks on or near the border, where they were held, at most, overnight.⁶¹¹ The next morning, an escort guard (usually German, but not always) would have come to transport them first to Varese prison, where they probably remained for a little less than a week, and then to San Donnino prison in Como, where they were held for about the same amount of time. On average, prisoners probably spent one to two weeks in these northern provincial jails before being sent to San Vittore.⁶¹²

When Liliana Segre was eight years of age, she became a Jew. At age thirteen, she became a prisoner. Arrested by Italian border guards (*finanzieri*) with her father, Alberto, and their cousins, Giulio and Rino Ravenna, the foursome was held overnight in nearby Saltrio. The next day, 9 December 1943, a squad of Germans, possibly SS, came to transfer them to Varese prison, and Liliana recalls her father being handcuffed as they loaded him into the transport vehicle.⁶¹³ What

⁶¹¹ I use the past-subjunctive mood here because Luciana Sacerdote's testimony is not as complete as the others', thus requiring some deductive hole-filling.

⁶¹² Although, as part of their task-sharing agreement, Germans handled deportations, transfers between Italian locations seem to have been conducted by either Italians, Germans, or both. In Segre's example, as we will see, she and her relatives were conveyed from Saltrio to Varese by Germans. In Venice, on the other hand, prisoner transports (and arrests) were "carried out by independent initiative and under the exclusive surveillance of the Italian police," as Simon Levis Sullam writes. In one notable prisoner transport, which took place on New Year's Eve 1943, the Venetian *carabinieri* oversaw the transfer, via water taxi, of ninety Jewish patients from a nursing home in the old ghetto to the city's main railway station, from which they were sent to Fossoli concentration camp. It was the *carabinieri* who had ordered that both legs of the transport (the first, from the nursing home to the railway station, and the second, from the railway station to Fossoli) be carried out under the cover of night to avoid eyewitnesses; see Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Interviste alla Storia* – 1995-1996, Milan, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000092/liliana-segre.html>; and Simon Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners: revisiting the role of Italians in the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 19:1 (2017), 31-32.

⁶¹³ Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 75. Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 30. Liliana Segre, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah* – 1982-2002. Milan, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000348/liliana-segre-2.html>. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

stands out most in her testimony of her time in Varese, where they were again under Italian guard, is the separation of women from men. For her, this meant being apart from her father for the first time in her life. The two would stay separated for two weeks, being reunited only when they were transferred to San Vittore.⁶¹⁴ Instead of enduring incarceration at Varese together with her father, Liliana shared a cell with roughly twenty other Jewish women, all of whom, like her, had been detained at the border. Every evening, she recalls, the guards checked on them to make sure that they weren't sawing away at their prison bars, a paranoid preoccupation that nearly made her and her cellmates laugh: "We were helpless bourgeois women, unsuited to the task. To think that we, of all people, would saw through prison bars".⁶¹⁵

One of her cellmates was a young woman named Violetta Silvera, nineteen years old and named for her violet eyes. Born in Milan like Liliana, Violetta had been arrested with her mother, Bahia Laniado of Aleppo, at Porto Ceresio, a town located at the southernmost tip of Lake Lugano. It was Violetta, most of all, who consoled Liliana while she was away from her father, and on one occasion, she offered her junior cellmate a bit of parmesan cheese. "[D]uring my life as a prisoner," Liliana recounts, "these small gifts of food were always a sign of kindness."⁶¹⁶ Neither Violetta nor

⁶¹⁴ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 115.

⁶¹⁵ "Ci veniva quasi da ridere: noi, inermi, donne borghesi, inadatte, segare le sbarre"; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 29-30. By relaying this quote, I do not want to give the impression that I endorse Segre's viewpoint on the matter, nor do I wish to do a disservice to bourgeois Jewish women, in Italy and elsewhere, who did risk escape by means other than money or connections. Liliana's self- and group assessment, in my view, reflects the norms and expectations for bourgeois women in a patriarchal society in early-twentieth-century Europe. To an adolescent girl steeped in middle-class notions of etiquette and femininity, the fact that a man, an Italian man, would even entertain the idea that a group of bourgeois women would try to escape in such a coarse manner was beyond the scope of possibility. From another angle, looking less at the 'bourgeois' dimension and more at the 'Jewish' one, Liliana's statement also calls to mind the troubling and flawed idea that Jews accepted their fate "like sheep led to slaughter" during the Shoah (even if, at the time, she was not aware of the slaughter). This is a phrase with Biblical origins (Isaiah 53:7), and in the context of the Final Solution, its use can be traced to a Jew, the Resistance fighter from the Vilna ghetto, Abba Kovner; see "Call for resistance in the Vilna ghetto, January 1942," in *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Steve Hochstadt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 186.

⁶¹⁶ "questi piccoli regali fatti di cibo sono stati nella mia vita di prigioniera sempre una specie di segnale di bontà"; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. See also: Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 29.

her mother would survive the Shoah, both perishing at Auschwitz. Violetta's father, Lelio, also from Aleppo, would be killed there, too.⁶¹⁷

On 13 December, four days after arriving to Varese, Liliana was loaded onto an uncovered lorry (*camion scoperto*) and moved to San Donnino prison. Located in Como, only a province away, she arrived that same day.⁶¹⁸ As the site of the local command center for the Security Police and SS Security Service, Como served as a way station for numerous prisoners who had been arrested near the border.⁶¹⁹ At San Donnino, Liliana shared a cell with about five other people. Gender segregation was enforced, so she was once again without her father, but Violetta wasn't there to comfort her this time, either.⁶²⁰ No doubt the lack of familiars made an already trying situation worse, and Liliana confirms that Como was "much more difficult" (*molto più duro*) than Varese. Adding to her distress, any hygienic services available to them were primitive, and their cell was more like an attic, cold and wet, dark and dingy, above and apart from the rest of the inmate

⁶¹⁷ *Viaggio nella memoria. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2013), 91-92. "Silvera, Lelio," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-7312/silvera-lelio.html>. "Laniado, Bahia," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-4275/laniado-bahia.html>. "Silvera, Violetta," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-7313/silvera-violetta.html>. Violetta also had two brothers, one older (Salomone, born in 1922) and one younger (Renato, b. 1926), who survived. In 1992, Salomone interviewed Renato, and though the session lasted all of five minutes, Renato explains how he survived. When the RSI issued Police Order no. 5, calling for the arrest and detainment of all Jews, Renato fled that very night, linking up with some partisans in a small hotel in Porto Ceresio (located on Lake Lugano and the Italy-Switzerland frontier) who were going to escort him to the border. His plan, however, was thwarted because the Germans (and Italians) beefed up their border patrols in accordance with the police order, and when the proprietor of the hotel threatened to turn Renato over to the Italian police, he slipped out the back door and caught a train back to Milan. Afterward, he lived in hiding between Milan and Varesotto (in Varese province) until March 1944, when the National Liberation Committee (*Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*, CLN) and a group of smugglers shuttled him and a group of Jews to Switzerland, where they were accepted as refugees. He returned to Milan at the very end of Italy's war, in April 1945, where he learned from the local Jewish Community that his parents and sister had been deported to Auschwitz, where they were killed. As for his interviewer, Salomone had moved to Egypt in 1937, and he remained there until 1949, when he returned to Italy amidst the furor in the Middle East that accompanied the founding of Israel. In fact, CDEC records that he was expelled from Egypt; see Renato Silvera, Interview by Salomone Rivera, Gran Canaria, 1 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000272/renato-silvera.html>; and "Silvera, Salomone," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-it-cdec-eaccpf0001-009662/silvera-salomone.html>.

⁶¹⁸ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶¹⁹ Klaus Voigt, "The Children of Villa Emma at Nonantola," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 193. It's unclear, however, if the SS command center were stationed in San Donnino prison.

⁶²⁰ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 114.

population.⁶²¹ After eight miserable days in Como, Liliana was finally reunited with her father when the two were put on a transport lorry to Milan. Five months earlier, when Mussolini fell, Alberto had rejoiced that the Segres would soon reenter Milan as free and equal citizens. Instead, they returned to their native city as prisoners.⁶²²

After German authorities arrested the Sacerdotes at the border in mid-December 1943, Luciana recounts that she and her family were marched on foot directly to Varese prison, where they were held for an indeterminate amount of time.⁶²³ Varese prison, she says, was an “awful” (*brutto*) place, and although she does not recall any physical violence taking place there, the experience nevertheless scared her to death. Especially frightening were the interrogations, and although it isn’t clear if she were subjected to any, they left a lasting impression on her all the same.⁶²⁴ From Varese, Luciana says that she and her family were transferred straight to San Vittore, though they were likely held in Como for some time in between. My guess is that, in Luciana’s testimony, “Varese” stands in for multiple detainment centers that came before San Vittore, including an unremarkable border prison, Varese itself, and finally, Como.

Luciana, like Liliana, also discusses being separated from her dad (*papà*) at Varese. Curiously, however, she makes no mention of her fiancé, Mario Fubini.⁶²⁵ In fact, Mario drops out of Luciana’s

⁶²¹ Segre with Palumbo, *ibid.* Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶²² Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 78. Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶²³ In her oral testimony, Luciana says that she and her family were detained in Varese for a month, but she also identifies that month as October. This could not have been the case, because the Sacerdotes were arrested in December. Since the Sacerdote family formed part of the 30 January 1944 deportation from Milano Centrale station, this means that they were held prisoner in Italy from 18 December 1943 until 30 January 1944. My suspicion is that they were detained in Varese for a brief amount of time, maybe a week, before spending about a month at San Vittore prison. Also, it is more likely that the Sacerdotes were first marched on foot to a border barracks before being transported by automobile to Varese prison, as was the case with other victims arrested at the Italy-Switzerland border, like Segre and Bauer; see Luciana Sacerdote, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Quinto, 2 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000078/luciana-sacerdote.html>; and “Sacerdote, Luciana,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/person/detail/person-7639/sacerdote-luciana.html>.

⁶²⁴ She says that these interviews were conducted mostly “to find out ... why we tried to flee” (*per sapere ... perché andavamo via*); Sacerdote, *ibid.*

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

testimony from the moment the group flees Nervi for Switzerland, only briefly reappearing when the two were separated for the final time at the unloading platform at Birkenau. Though more research on this topic is needed, what this suggests to me, especially when considered alongside Segre's testimony (and others still to come), is just how devastating Italy's Jews experienced the rupture of the nuclear family, and how much of a comfort family provided while members were able to stay together.⁶²⁶

Although Agata Herskovits and her family filtered through the northern RSI's prison network much later than the Segres and the Sacerdotes, their circuit was similar. Detained in early May 1944 with her mother, Rebecca (Amster), and the ladies of the Kugler family, Goti was taken into Italian custody at the Cremenaga border barracks, the site of their arrest, and held there for one night. The next morning, either 2 or 3 May, a German unit came and marched them to their own border post at Ponte Tresa, situated an hour downriver.⁶²⁷ There, Goti says, the Germans had sequestered a hotel and transformed it into a jail and interrogation center (à la Hotel Regina in Milan). When her group arrived, the Germans shouted at them and thrashed them for reasons she does not say – it's possible that this was just part of the intake procedure – and under pain of death,

⁶²⁶ Credit to Goren Hutinec for suggesting this as a possibility during a 2019 conference in Vienna; Goren Hutinec, "Different Railroads, Same Destination. Croatian Deportees to the Auschwitz Death Camp," paper presented at *Deportiert. Vergleichende Perspektiven auf die Organisation des Wegs in die Vernichtung*, Vienna Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien (VWI), Vienna, June 2019. Another complicating factor is that the date of arrest for Mario (and his mother, Enrichetta Rimini) is 15 December 1943, not 18 December. Still, given the discrepancy of only three days, it is more likely than not that Luciana and Mario overlapped at Varese prison; see "Fubini, Mario," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2650/fubini-mario.html>; and "Rimini, Enrichetta," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-6513/rimini-enrichetta.html>.

⁶²⁷ Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 9, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. Agata "Goti" Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Interviste alla Storia* – 1995-1996, Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>. In one interview, Goti says that the Germans who transported them from Cremenaga to Ponte Tresa were Wehrmacht soldiers. It is highly unlikely that this was the case, since the Germans who guarded the border were members of the border police (*Zollgrenzschutz*), a branch of the Finance Ministry. Their Italian counterparts, called "*finanziari*," held an analogous position in the institutional architecture of the Italian Social Republic; see Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 21; and Voigt, "The Children of Villa Emma at Nonantola," 193.

they were forced to hand over their valuables.⁶²⁸ When the Ponte Tresa jail filled up a few days later, Goti and her fellow inmates were transferred first to Varese, by lorry, and then to Como, by covered truck (*camion coperto*). Of these transit prisons Goti says little, other than that she spent two to four days total in them.⁶²⁹

The day after Goti was taken to Ponte Tresa, a family called the Bergers, whom she knew from Viserba, arrived there, too. At the start of her ill-fated trek toward the border, while she was in the Emilia-Romagna gathering the Kuglers, Goti had made a pit stop in the town of Massa Lombarda to alert the Bergers to her family's departure. She doesn't specify, but she was probably letting them know that the coast was clear for them to start their own disastrous flight toward Switzerland. When Goti learned that her new cellmates had been duped in the same manner as she had, with the picture card torn in two, both parties realized that the grocer, Cucchi, and his gang of scoundrels had tricked the Bergers, too.⁶³⁰

Isacco Bayona had been apprehended not near the northern border but along the Tyrrhenian coast, in the Tuscan village of Gabbro. Even so, his trip through the RSI's prison web proved just as byzantine as those of prisoners detained near the frontier. After Italians raided the farmhouse where

⁶²⁸ Agata 'Goti' (Herskovits) Bauer, "La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione," in *Mezzo secolo fa. Guerra e Resistenza in provincia di Varese*, ed. Istituto varesino per la storia dell'Italia contemporanea e del movimento di liberazione (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1995), 299. Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁶²⁹ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 7. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 9-10, 16. Bauer, "La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione," *ibid.*

⁶³⁰ Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, pp. 5-6, dicembre 1982. VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. It's quite possible that Goti actually knew the Bergers from Fiume. Goti mentions entering Auschwitz with a young woman named Erna Berger, who was born in Fiume in 1921 and arrested at Cremenaga on 4 May 1944. It is safe to assume that Erna was part of the Berger family that had lived in Massa Lombarda, was arrested at Cremenaga, and arrived at Ponte Tresa the day after Goti did. However, the Berger family does not enter Goti's testimony until she begins recounting her flight attempt, and Goti does not mention Erna by name until her point of arrival at Auschwitz, where Erna and her entire family – her father, mother, and two brothers – were eliminated; see Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 25 febbraio 1987, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000211/goti-herskovits-bauer.html>; "Berger, Alberto," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-841/berger-alberto.html>; "Rappaport, Regina," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-6399/rappaport-regina.html>; "Berger, Carlo," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-844/berger-carlo.html>; "Berger, Erna," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-847/berger-erna.html>; and "Berger, Giuseppe," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-845/berger-giuseppe.html>.

the Bayonas, along with the Baruchs and Modianos, had sought shelter from the bombing of Livorno, all three families were taken to the *carabinieri* barracks in Gabbro. The men were brought first; the women followed shortly thereafter, perhaps on the same day. Isacco notes that the *carabinieri* post, like all prisons he would pass through, was staffed with Italians, though not always exclusively so.⁶³¹ After spending two to three days in Gabbro, Isacco was transported, by military truck (*camion militare*), to Livorno's Via Nazionale police station (*caserma di via Nazionale*). Depending on the interview, Isacco stayed there anywhere from one week to fifteen days.⁶³² Via Nazionale, which he describes as a "fascist police station" (*una caserma fascista*), was in the hands of RSI fascists and Blackshirts, and of the prison, he simply says that it was "bad" (*male*).⁶³³

Sometime later, around the new year, Isacco was loaded onto a lorry (*camion*) and shipped to Florence.⁶³⁴ Though Isacco recalls a German military presence in Livorno, it was in Florence that he had his first real run-in with the occupiers. Italians were there too, once again, but he says that the occupying Germans had transformed the Tuscan capital into a command center. It was also in Florence that he was first separated from his mother and sisters. When their transport arrived, the men were sent to Le Murate (formerly a monastery, then a men's prison, these days a socializing spot), while the women went to a separate facility. Always laconic, Isacco says little of Le Murate, other than that he was detained there for twenty days before being sent to Milan.⁶³⁵

⁶³¹ Isacco Bayona, Interview by Gigliola Colombo/Lopez, *Ricerca sulla Deportazione*, Livorno, 1987, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000182/isacco-bayona.html>. Isacco Bayona, Interview by Andrea Devoto, Livorno, 1 marzo 1989, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000215/isacco-bayona-1.html>. Isacco Bayona (Bajona), Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, *"Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996*, Livorno, 1 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000011/isacco-bajona.html>.

⁶³² In his 1987 interview, Bayona says that he stayed in Livorno for one week; in his 1989 interview, fifteen days; and in his 1996 interview, ten days; see previous note.

⁶³³ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁶³⁴ In his 1996 interview, Bayona says that his Livorno-Florence transport took place on 20 December, though according to CDEC's digital resources, this was the date of his arrest; see *ibid.*; and "Bayona, Isacco," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-975/bayona-isacco.html?persona=%22Bayona%2C+Isacco%22>.

⁶³⁵ Bayona, Interview, *ibid.* Bayona, Interview, 1987.

Although Giuseppe Di Porto was also arrested along the Tyrrhenian coast, in Genoa, his incarceration route was less convoluted than Bayona's, presumably because he had been detained in a major city with a pipeline to Milan. Giuseppe Di Porto and his cousin, Amedeo, had been arrested on 3 November 1943, the day of Genoa's great raid – a raid highlighted, like those of most cities, by an assault on the city synagogue. Apprehended by Germans (perhaps Theodor Dannecker's men) while trying to flee their safehouse, the Di Portos were immediately taken to Genoa's Marassi prison (*Carcere Marassi*), where they were detained for the remainder of the month. Under Italian command, Giuseppe recalls Marassi being a "nasty" (*brutto*) place, and Jews were kept apart from other prisoners, setting a trend that would repeat at every stop until they were expelled from Italian territory. For as bad as conditions were, however, Giuseppe says that he and Amedeo could have improved their circumstances if only they had something "to trade or to offer" (*da scambiare o da offrire*), likely a commentary on the bribability of the Italian warders. After spending almost an entire month in Marassi, Giuseppe, Amedeo, and the rest of Genoa's Jewish prisoners were transferred to San Vittore, probably on the last day of November.⁶³⁶

San Vittore Prison: A Transit Camp in Milan

Opened in 1879 and inspired by Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, San Vittore prison is a three-story, asterisk-shaped penitentiary located just west of center-city Milan. In fact, it's only a few blocks south one of the city's main Jewish neighborhoods – or, more accurately, neighborhoods where many Jews live, since Milan lacks a true Jewish district (probably a product of the city never

⁶³⁶ Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, 16 novembre 1986, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000178/giuseppe-porto.html>. Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *"Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996*, Rome, 28 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000031/di-porto-giuseppe.html>. Giuseppe Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene. Una testimonianza inedita di un sopravvissuto ad Auschwitz* (Rome: Quaderni, 2009), 19-20. It is unclear if Di Porto was transferred from Genoa to Milan by truck (*La rivincita del bene*) or by train (Interviews, 1986 and 1995).

featuring a ghetto). On the same day that the Germans occupied the Lombard capital, 10 September 1943, they requisitioned three of San Vittore's six wings (or certain floors thereof), using one for Jews (wing IV), one for political prisoners, and one for court-martialed German soldiers. In April 1944, with the number of Jewish prisoners dwindling, prison officials began interning them in wing V, where the holding spaces were less like cells and more like dormitories. When Karl-Otto Koch was through with his prisoners at Hotel Regina, the "Jew-cooker" sent them for detainment at San Vittore, where they were placed under the supervision of SS *Hauptscharführer* Helmut Klemm.⁶³⁷ There, they were joined by Jews from across northern Italy. Together, the two wings reserved for Jews and political prisoners functioned as a collection center and transit camp in the Nazis' vast, European-wide network of detainment. The three additional wings, used for common criminals, remained under the direction of Milan's questor.⁶³⁸

During the twenty months of Nazi-Fascist tyranny in Milan, many high-profile and historically significant personalities passed through San Vittore prison, typically figures who had been arrested for political reasons. Before he was deported to Mauthausen-Gusen, Manhattan-born Resistance fighter Mike Bongiorno had been detained at San Vittore. He would survive the Nazi camp system and go on to have a storied career as an Italian gameshow host. On the other end of the political spectrum, since it wasn't just communists, socialists, and anarchists who were imprisoned for ideological incorrectness and partisan activity, was Indro Montanelli, the decidedly

⁶³⁷ That is, until February or March 1944, when Klemm was transferred from San Vittore prison to Gestapo department IV-B4, where he participated in Jew-hunts and interrogations. He was replaced as commander by his former vice director, Leander Klimsa; see Luigi Borgomaneri, *Hitler a Milano. I criminali di Theodor Saevecke capo della Gestapo* (Rome: Datanews Editrice, 1997), 52-53, 70.

⁶³⁸ Liliana Picciotto, *Gli ebrei in provincia di Milano: 1943/1945. Persecuzione e deportazione* (Milan: Proedi, 2004), 28-34, 37, 39, 43; Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 2002), 887-889. See also: Rony Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 175-176; Stefania Consenti, *Luoghi della memoria a Milano. Itinerari nella città Medaglia d'Oro della Resistenza* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2015), 30-31; Francesca Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica a Milano* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 61-62; and *Viaggio nella memoria*, 14, 26.

non-leftist Italian journalist.⁶³⁹ Renowned for his contributions to such papers as *Corriere della Sera* and, later in life, *il Giornale*, Montanelli spent time at San Vittore before he was sprung loose and shuttled to Switzerland. After the war, he returned to Italy, resumed his historic career, and remained a racist and colonial apologist until his dying day. Perhaps San Vittore's most well-known prisoners, however, are the "Fifteen Martyrs" (*Quindici Martiri*). On August 10, 1944, in reprisal for an ambush on German soldiers (which, it should be noted, claimed no lives), fifteen antifascist partisans were taken from San Vittore prison and executed in Milan's Piazzale Loreto. Although an SS commando gave the execution order, it was Italian Fascists, as Sergio Luzzatto notes, who carried it out.⁶⁴⁰

Regarding Jewish inmates at San Vittore, it is admittedly difficult to reconstruct the typical prisoner's experience (if such a task is even possible). For a node in the Nazis' (and Fascists') network of terror, survivor recollections of the prison are surprisingly mixed. On one hand, as we'd expect, former inmates have depicted San Vittore as hell on Earth. Liliana Picciotto, who is as fluent as anyone with Italian survivor testimony, provides an upsetting list of anecdotes recounted by former Jewish inmates. During interrogations, prison guards sexually assaulted women inmates by conducting invasive personal searches of their bodies. A child was forced to beat his father. Or, in another telling of this story, Commander Klemm ordered a father and a son to beat each other, whipping them if they hit each other lightly.⁶⁴¹ Sometimes, in the middle of the night, Klemm and

⁶³⁹ Hamaui, *ibid.* Consenti, *ibid.*, 55-58.

⁶⁴⁰ Sergio Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy*, trans. Frederika Randall (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 57-59. See also: Consenti, *ibid.*, 59-60. Consenti writes that, in addition to the "Fifteen Martyrs", eleven other reprisal victims were deported to German concentration camps, where roughly half were killed. Piazzale Loreto was the same city square where, on 29 April 1945, the bodies of Mussolini and members of his coterie were publicly displayed for public viewing and desecration. Scholars disagree, however, whether this was intentional or not. By displaying 'the body of Il Duce', Luzzatto claims that Resistance fighters were merely obeying the "first rule of partisan vendetta", which is to mete out justice "where injustice had been done". Mirco Dondi, on the other hand, writes that Piazzale Loreto came to acquire near-sacral significance for antifascist partisans following the events of 10 August 1944, and so they thought that exposing Mussolini's corpse in that location would constitute sacrilege and desecration of a holy place. The intoxicating environment of liberation following a grisly war, however, and the concomitant desire for revenge, forced their hand; see Luzzatto, *ibid.*, 62; and Mirco Dondi, "Piazzale Loreto," in *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Rome-Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1996), 490, 492-494, 496-497.

⁶⁴¹ Borgomaneri, *Hitler a Milano*, 104.

his subordinates would rouse Jewish inmates from their sleep and torture them with so-called gymnastics, “exercises” that served only to inflict pain and humiliation. Forced onto their hands and knees for hours on end, not even the ill and the elderly were spared. In early 1944, Franz Staltmeyer, “the wild beast” (*la belva*), joined the prison staff as vice director. A *Rottenführer* in the SS, Staltmeyer was true to his title, known and feared for siccing his wolfdog on prisoners, women and children among them.⁶⁴² To this already disturbing inventory of human rights abuses, local historian Francesca Costantini relates one particularly diabolical episode from December 1943, when guards forced Jewish prisoners to clean latrines with their tongues.⁶⁴³ As a memorial book on the Shoah in Milan puts it, at San Vittore, “Kicks, punches, smacks, and mistreatments of every type were the order of the day,” and the worst punishments were reserved for prisoners who refused to denounce the whereabouts of their relatives, friends, and belongings.⁶⁴⁴

Nor can we assume that it was only Germans who engaged in such sadistic barbarism in Italy, as the story of Ginetta (Moroni) Sagan reveals. Born in Milan to a Catholic father and a Jewish mother, both active antifascists, Ginetta was cut from the parental cloth and, in the war’s later years, joined the Resistance at age seventeen. Starting off as an undercover clerk at City Hall, she used her position to provide Jews in hiding with food and clothing. She then became a courier, helping hundreds of Jews flee across the border to Switzerland. Betrayed by a fascist infiltrator in 1945, she was captured by the Black Brigades (*Brigate nere*) and held in a boarded-up villa in Sondrio, a town

⁶⁴² Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 887-888. For comparative anecdotes of the Germans’ brutality toward Jewish inmates at San Vittore, see Borgomaneri, *ibid.*

⁶⁴³ She does not say, however, whether the guards were German or Italian, though the assumption is that they were German; see Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 64. Segre recites the same story in one of her memoirs; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 79. Walter Grab, the eminent Israeli historian of modern Germany, recounts a similar incident that occurred in Vienna after the *Anschluss*. After Grab was detained in a gymnasium with thirty-five to forty other male Jews, the mob of Nazis who detained them ordered them to clean up their excrement with their hands. This was all a “joke”, however, and they soon brought them proper cleaning materials, all while blaming their prisoners for the mess. Shortly thereafter, Grab fled to Palestine; see “Memoir by Walter Grab about persecution of Jews in Vienna after the *Anschluss* of March 1938,” in *Sources of the Holocaust*, ed. Hochstadt, 58-60.

⁶⁴⁴ “*Calci, pugni, schiaffi e maltrattamenti di ogni tipo erano all’ordine del giorno*”; *Viaggio nella memoria*, 26.

close to the border. By that time, the same paramilitary squadron had already executed her father, while her mother had been deported to Auschwitz, where she was killed. For forty-five days, Ginetta was beaten, tortured, and raped, all by members of the Black Brigades – that is, by Italians, not Germans. In fact, it was actually Germans, Nazi defectors working with the Resistance, who liberated her on the eve of her execution. After the war, in 1951, Ginetta relocated to the United States, where she played a formative role in the foundation and expansion of Amnesty International.⁶⁴⁵ It is true that Sagan was never detained in San Vittore, and her torture may have stemmed more from her partisan activity than her half-Jewish racial makeup, but her harrowing story of imprisonment prevents us from making any neat distinctions as to which group of fascists, Germans or Italians, treated their prisoners worse.⁶⁴⁶

Even absent these stories of horrific physical, sexual abuse, the dehumanization process was underway by other means. During intake at San Vittore, Jewish prisoners were eventually recorded only with a number and the letter ‘E’, signifying ‘*ebreo/a*’ (Jewish).⁶⁴⁷ Long before they reached their final destination, be it Auschwitz or some other Nazi camp, many Jewish deportees who passed

⁶⁴⁵ Myrna Oliver, “Ginetta Sagan Dies; Torture Victim Fought for Political Prisoners,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-aug-30-mn-12538-story.html#:~:text=She%20was%2075,cancer%2C%20Amnesty%20International%20officials%20said>. Ginetta Sagan, Interview, December 19, 1994, Bay Area Oral History Project, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn508456>.

⁶⁴⁶ Though his situation paled in comparison to Sagan’s, at least at the time, Auschwitz survivor Emilio Jani ‘confesses’ that the Germans treated him better than their Italian partners at the moment of his first arrest. “When I asked to be allowed to go to the lavatory a moment,” he writes, “the Germans immediately consented. But one of the Blackshirts, the more zealous of the two, insisted on accompanying me and being present at my performance”; Emilio Jani, *My voice saved me. Auschwitz 180046*, trans. Timothy Paterson (Milan: Centauro Editrice, 1961), 16-17. Elsewhere, he relates how when he learned that he was to be deported to Germany “as forced labour,” he asked a German guard at Rome’s Regina Coeli prison for a suitcase to be delivered from his hotel. His wish fulfilled and then some, the guard brought him two (pp. 41-42). Lest the reader have the impression that Jani was a Germanophile, this was not the case. Though a native of Trieste, Jani’s musical career often took him to Milan, and upon the city’s capitulation to the Germans, he lamented that “proud, generous Milan” had been “submerged and humiliated after the Huns had swept through it” (p. 12).

⁶⁴⁷ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 888.

through San Vittore had already been stripped of their names, a key stage in the theft of one's identity and "the demolition of a man", to borrow a phrase from Levi.⁶⁴⁸

It is surprising, then, that survivor memories of San Vittore are not uniformly condemnatory. Outside of interrogations, the survivors profiled here rarely recall violence taking place at the prison, nor do they discuss being reduced to a mere number and letter. In fact, only two, Giuseppe Di Porto and Luciana Sacerdote, have unequivocally negative memories of the place. Instead, former inmates fondly remember being able to move freely throughout their wing from dawn 'til dusk, congregating openly with the other Jewish inmates. Communal isolation and prison bars notwithstanding, social life went on, or at least a simulacrum of it. *L'arte di arrangiarsi*. Because gender segregation was not observed, this also meant that entire families could stay together, and survivors cherish the moments they got to spend with their loved ones, often their last.

On or around December 20, 1943, just under two weeks from her arrest, Segre was loaded onto a lorry at Como's San Donnino prison and transported to San Vittore. With her were fifteen to twenty other prisoners, one of whom was Alberto, father and daughter reunited at last. Located just around the corner from her home on Corso Magenta, Liliana knew San Vittore prison well, although she hadn't given the place a second thought before. "I had passed by that place so many times, riding my bicycle in the area," she says. "To be honest, I had always seen that building from the outside, without ever thinking of the people who were locked within. I was a little girl riding my bike through the gardens; I didn't care about what went on inside of a prison that wasn't part of my life."⁶⁴⁹ Years later, while she was one of those prisoners 'locked within', Liliana would look down

⁶⁴⁸ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Ann Goldstein, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), ch. 2

⁶⁴⁹ "Ero passata tante volte da quel luogo, giravo in bicicletta lì nei dintorni.... Avevo sempre visto quell'edificio da fuori, senza mai pensare alle persone che vi erano rinchiusi, devo dire la verità. Ero una ragazzina che correva in bicicletta per i giardini e non mi importava niente di un carcere estraneo alla mia vita"; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz: Liliana Segre*, 30. See also: Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992; and Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

below at Piazza Aquileia from her top-floor perch, which peeked over the exterior prison walls, and observe how “the people outside continue to live their lives,” as she had done not long before.⁶⁵⁰

When her transport arrived at the prison, Liliana recalls being processed in an intake room staffed with German SS and Italian jailers, and after being booked, she and the other prisoners were taken to their cell in wing IV.⁶⁵¹ Although she shares tender memories of her time at San Vittore, it was far from perfect, and she doesn’t sugarcoat her description of the place. Prisoners were “kept in appalling conditions” (*tenuti in condizioni spaventose*), placed in filthy and unhygienic cells, given a trickle of icy bath water, and made to suffer through the frigid northern Italian winter without heat.⁶⁵² Worst of all, however, were the interrogations. In an effort to find out where friends and family members were hiding, as well as where prisoners had stashed their money and valuables, the Gestapo subjected the Jewish men of the prison to beatings and torture, traumatic experiences that left all of the Jewish prisoners emotionally taxed and psychologically tormented. “We were all terrorized by the SS,” Liliana says.⁶⁵³ Although she herself was never interrogated, she lived in “horror” (*orrore*) of being summoned, and Alberto was “questioned” multiple times. After one such interrogation, Liliana awoke in the middle of the night to find him beside himself, and she did all a thirteen-year-old daughter could do to console him.⁶⁵⁴ All the while, hanging over every prisoner’s head was the dread of what might come afterward. Although they tried to keep each other’s spirits high, telling one another that they would only be sent to Germany to work – and work sets you free – they all feared what would actually happen when Damocles’ sword fell.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁰ “Mi ricordo proprio di averlo visto e di aver pensato che la gente fuori continua alla sua vita”; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*; Segre, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁵² Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁵³ “Noi eravamo tutti terrorizzati dall’SS”; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. See also: Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 31.

⁶⁵⁴ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 80-81. Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 116.

⁶⁵⁵ Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 81-82. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

But despite everything, things weren't terrible. Although Jewish prisoners were in German custody at San Vittore, she remembers no real German presence there – other than the interrogations, of course, the only violence that she recalls. Nor did she come across Italian guards very often either, only encountering them at mealtimes, when prisoners received portions that were modest but sizable enough to stave off real hunger, even for a growing teenage girl.⁶⁵⁶ However, “the absolutely incredible thing” (*la cosa assolutamente incredibile*) about San Vittore, she says, is that men and women weren't separated, which meant that Liliana could once again be with her father, circumstances be damned.⁶⁵⁷ In spite of the prison bars, in spite of the scanty meals, in spite of the frightful interrogations and the looming fear of the future, “it was wonderful to be together again,” and Liliana warmly recalls spending “moments of happiness in San Vittore prison because I was with him.”⁶⁵⁸ During one testimony interview conducted between September and October 1995, while walking the corridors at San Vittore prison where she had been incarcerated a half-century before, Liliana is brought to tears remembering, recounting, and reliving her last moments with her *papà*.⁶⁵⁹ “It was the last time that we spent together,” and although those moments are dear to her, she says that “it's hard for me to remember those days without feeling a little dead inside.”⁶⁶⁰

With mixing of the sexes permitted and their prison wing open to them (during the day), Liliana notes how social life improved for Jewish inmates at San Vittore after the interruptions of Varese and Como, and the reconstruction of community and the spirit of togetherness helped ease their worries. Altogether, Liliana guesses that she shared the fourth wing with about 200 Jews from

⁶⁵⁶ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶⁵⁷ Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 30.

⁶⁵⁸ “*era meraviglioso essere di nuovo insieme*”; Liliana Segre quoted in Ottavia Borella, “Liliana, una sopravvissuta. Nel '43, a tredici anni da Milano a Birkenau,” *la Repubblica*, 4 maggio 1994, p. 7, VdS, Serie 1, Busta 24, CDEC. “*Ho vissuto momenti di felicità nel carcere di San Vittore perché ero con lui*”; Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁵⁹ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁶⁰ “*Fu l'ultimo periodo che passammo insieme, ed è difficile per me ricordare quei giorni senza sentirmi un po' morire dentro*”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 30.

throughout northern Italy, all coed and commingling.⁶⁶¹ Among them were Liliana's Varese prison mentor, Violetta, who was with her parents.⁶⁶² She met Aldo Zargani's Milanese relatives, the Morais family, there as well.⁶⁶³ They had ended up at San Vittore after a botched flight attempt. In his memoir, Aldo tells how the Moraes had fled for Switzerland in early December 1943, only to be betrayed by their handler at the border, who robbed them and abandoned them in the snow. In Aldo's words, his uncle then "thoughtlessly" (*improvvidamente*) presented himself and his family at the Tirano *carabinieri* post, located on the border, where they were promptly and expectedly taken into custody. In fact, Aldo relates that the marshal of the post cut a deal with Carlo's Catholic brother-in-law, Alfredo Di Matteo. The marshal was willing to release the two Morais children into Alfredo's care and to only process Carlo and his wife, Mafalda Ida (Tedeschi). But Carlo refused, insisting that the family stay together. "*O tutti o nessuno*," he protested; all or none. Elaborating, Carlo explained that "The family needs to stay together, and it's ultimately a matter of spending a few months, at most, in a concentration camp in Germany, a civilized country." As a result of Carlo's decision, all four members of the Morais family were deported, together, to Auschwitz.⁶⁶⁴ Liliana met foreign Jews at San Vittore, too (that is, Jews who were actually foreign, not foreign according to RSI law). One Austrian woman, a Signora Balcone, gave Liliana and some other children German lessons, precious currency when she arrived in Auschwitz. "It was a surreal moment," Liliana explains, "because a situation of children at school had been recreated," albeit without most normal things about the school experience.⁶⁶⁵ Then again, by 1943, Liliana had become a veteran of the abnormal school experience.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.* Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁶² Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ "*La famiglia deve restare unita e si tratta in definitiva di passare, tutt'al più, qualche mese in un campo di concentramento in Germania, paese civile*"; quote attributed to Carlo Morais by Aldo Zargani, *Per violino solo. La mia infanzia nell'Aldiqua (1938-1945)* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995), 193-194.

⁶⁶⁵ "*era momento surreale perché si ricreava una situazione di bambini a scuola*"; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. See also: Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Signora Balcone, Liliana's impromptu German teacher,

Segre recounts a number of other interesting, often unexpected events that took place during her time at San Vittore, which altogether lasted about forty days, almost biblically. At the center of the prison, the six radii came together to form an open, circular area (*rotunda*), ringed with Catholic statues. Although gates barred Liliana and the other Jewish prisoners from participating (if they had had the desire), she often watched through the bars as detainees from other wings gathered at this pseudo-chapel to hold weekly mass and to celebrate Feast Days, like Christmas.⁶⁶⁶ (It isn't clear, though, who the celebrants were, or if these were gatherings that only the Italian prison staff permitted or, less likely, the Germans.) On her side of the bars, Liliana remembers that a wedding took place.⁶⁶⁷ The spouses might not have known each other, but with an uncertain fate awaiting them, the parties involved arranged the marriage in an effort to protect the young woman.⁶⁶⁸ She even recalls one person, an expectant mother named Rosa, being released from prison early. Liliana guesses that Rosa's husband, who had not been imprisoned, paid the guards a small fortune to secure his wife's release.⁶⁶⁹ On balance, Liliana's overall impression of San Vittore is that it was an "acceptable" (*accettabile*) prison, though she admits that her perspective is probably skewed in great measure by her later experiences at Auschwitz. While Jewish prisoners remained at San Vittore, they still had some hope.⁶⁷⁰ And while Liliana remained at San Vittore, she still had her father.

Sometime in mid-January 1944, Isacco Bayona, along with his mother, Diamante (Jacob), and his three siblings, Carlo, Lucia, and Dora, were loaded onto a Jewish prisoner transport from

might have been Edvige (Epstein) of Vienna, wife of Angelo Balcone, though it isn't clear if she passed through San Vittore. Arrested in Luino, just across Lake Maggiore from Switzerland, Edvige was detained in Varese and Fossoli before being deported to Auschwitz on August 2, 1944. She survived the Shoah and was liberated on May 9, 1945; "Epstein, Edvige," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persone/detail/person-2473/epstein-edvige.html>.

⁶⁶⁶ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁶⁷ The legal validity of such a marriage, in such a place, under such conditions, is dubious, nor would it have offered the bride the desired protection.

⁶⁶⁸ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁶⁶⁹ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁶⁷⁰ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

Florence to Milan. Piled into sealed cattle cars (*carri piombati*), the Bayonas and the rest of the prisoners were brought to Milan not by truck, like victims apprehended near the Swiss border, but by train. Arriving to the city's central station, Isacco recalls how an elevator lowered each wagon, one by one, from the main platform area used by passengers to a subterranean chamber located below, full of hidden tracks. Fittingly, this station-within-a-station had been built to transport mail and commercial cargo, and to their handlers, Isacco and the other Jewish prisoners would have been considered human cargo, at best. Once the prisoners had been unloaded into the bowels of the station, they were reloaded onto trucks and brought to San Vittore, a transport led by 'the infamous Koch' himself, "*capo*" of Milan.⁶⁷¹ After being processed at San Vittore, Isacco remembers seeing a statue of the Virgin Mary in the prison *rotunda* while being escorted to his cell. Referring to it as "*la Madonnina*", perhaps this was a replica of the golden statue of Mary that sits atop Milan's cathedral, il Duomo.⁶⁷²

Isacco reports no negative memories of his time at San Vittore and, in his customary manner, says little of the place at all, maintaining a straightforward narrative over multiple interviews. Despite being a Jewish male – his seventeenth birthday came and went at San Vittore, though he makes no mention of it – Isacco neither experienced nor witnessed any violence. Perhaps this is because, like Segre, the only guards he remembers seeing were Italians.⁶⁷³ With gender segregation not imposed, he and Carlo could be with their mother and sisters again, after being apart in Florence. And he, too, recalls taking advantage of the surprising freedom of movement that the guards permitted them. "We were free," he explains. "You could move around."⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷¹ Bayona, Interview, 1987. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁶⁷² Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁶⁷³ Segre and Bayona briefly overlapped at San Vittore, though neither one mentions the other.

⁶⁷⁴ "*eravamo liberi. Si poteva circolare*"; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. See also: Bayona, Interview, 1987.

It was early May 1944 when the Herskovits family arrived at San Vittore from their prison in Como. While they were being loaded onto their transport lorry, Goti and her mother, Rebecca, reunited with Goti's father and brother for the first time since their capture. By then, Goti and Rebecca had pieced together that Luigi and Tibor hadn't reached Switzerland, deceived at the border in the same way they had been, but none realized that the entire family had been staying in the same jail. While on the way to their next prison stopover, this time together as a family, Goti learned from Tibor about "all of the beatings" (*tutte le botte*) that the Germans had put him through at Como. Before he and Luigi left for the border, he told her, their mother had apparently put something valuable in his backpack, something that he could exchange in case he ran into trouble in Switzerland or along the way. However, she neglected to tell him it was there, so when the guards repeatedly asked him how this precious item got in his backpack – it might have been a gold bracelet or something made of silver – for every "I don't know" (*Non lo so*) he responded, they gave him a thrashing in reply.⁶⁷⁵

When their transport reached San Vittore, where the number of Jewish inmates was on the decline, the Herskovits family was taken to wing V and placed in a dormitory-like holding space, where they remained for a week.⁶⁷⁶ Acknowledging that it might sound "absurd" (*assurda*), Goti has "a wonderful memory" of her time at San Vittore, likening it to "an oasis of tranquility."⁶⁷⁷ It was a continuation of the relief she had first felt at the moment of her arrest. For someone who had risked everything, time and time again, to save her family, only to have her efforts evaporate at the finish line, being captured had lifted a burdensome weight off her shoulders. On top of living the already

⁶⁷⁵ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, pp. 9-10. See also: Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. In another testimony, Goti merely says that the Germans beat her brother because he could not list the four things that were in his backpack, which their mother had arranged; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 6.

⁶⁷⁶ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 7. Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁷⁷ "*un ricordo meraviglioso, come di un'oasi di tranquillità*"; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, p. 6. Elsewhere, she only slightly tempers her recollection of San Vittore by saying, "Despite everything, I don't have a bad memory of San Vittore" (*Di San Vittore, nonostante tutto non ho un cattivo ricordo*); Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 6.

nerve-wracking life of a fugitive, Goti had taken on countless extra responsibilities in an effort to deliver her family and others to safety. Her father was invalid, her mother's health wasn't great, either, and her brother risked being mistaken for a draft dodger and arrested as such, which would have exposed the entire family's Jewish makeup. Goti also happened to speak the best Italian of the Herskovits bunch, or at any rate the 'least broken', so the task of ensuring the family's safety fell primarily to her. "I felt the weight of the entire family's fate on me," she says, but after she was arrested, "my destiny no longer depended on whether I did this or that thing wrong."⁶⁷⁸ And Goti insists that she was not alone in experiencing capture as an unexpected, twisted form of deliverance. Again granting that it might be hard to believe, she insists that the feeling was common currency within the prisoner community. Unlike the refugee, she explains, the prisoner no longer needed to worry about being on the lam, constantly hiding, fleeing, and making critical life-or-death decisions at every waking moment – and in the most impossible of circumstances, at that. Certainly "a profound bitterness" (*una profonda amarezza*) accompanied these feelings, but capture provided would-be refugees with "a feeling of liberation, of resignation, the sense that we had been liberated from something, the daily anxiety to survive another day."⁶⁷⁹ With arrest, "Our destiny was no longer in our hands; now we only had to passively suffer, and it seemed easier," she says, perhaps out of turn.⁶⁸⁰

Based on her accounts, if Goti suffered at all at San Vittore, it was in a passive sense at most. Even though she remembers both Italian and German guards on duty, she affirms that Jewish

⁶⁷⁸ "mi sentivo addosso il destino di tutta la famiglia"; "il mio destino non dipende più dal fatto che io sbaglio nel fare così o così"; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, *ibid.* See also p. 7.

⁶⁷⁹ "una sensazione di liberazione, di rassegnazione, il senso di qualche cosa da cui ci eravamo liberati, quest'angoscia quotidiana di sopravvivere per un altro giorno"; Bauer, "La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione," 300. See also: Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7. On that same page (7), Bauer says that capture and arrest gave Jews "a sense of liberation" (*un senso di liberazione*), and elsewhere, she similarly compares arrest to "a moment of liberation" (*come un momento di liberazione*); Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, p. 6).

⁶⁸⁰ "Il nostro destino non era più nelle nostre mani; ormai dovevamo solo passivamente subire e sembrava più facile"; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7.

inmates “enjoyed a treatment that, I must say, was quite humane”.⁶⁸¹ Being free to circulate throughout her wing, at least during the day, gave her the opportunity to meet many other inmates, even non-Jews, and although contact with political prisoners was limited, she remembers them bringing news from the world outside to Jewish inmates while offering them comfort and support. “[T]hey tried to make our time there less despairing,” she recalls, guessing that “they probably knew what fate awaited us and took pity.”⁶⁸² While their political counterparts tried to console them, Jewish prisoners also took heart amongst themselves, finding a sense of courage and “camaraderie” (*cameratismo*) in the knowledge that they were all in the same boat, even if they were heading toward unknown shores. Goti especially enjoyed chatting with other young, college-age adults like her. Admitting that they might have been a bit naïve, she remembers how they talked about their studies, their plans, their favorite works of literature, and the like, cozy conversations that made her week at San Vittore a “soothing” (*distensiva*) one.⁶⁸³ Through these conversations, Goti also learned some of the many ways that Jewish prisoners wound up at the prison. Some had been denounced, others had been captured in raids, and still others had turned themselves in. Rather than continuing to live a vagrant’s life, constantly searching for a refuge at night and a meal during the day, Goti says that certain Jewish inmates handed themselves over to the authorities, thereby taking the guesswork out of their daily lives.⁶⁸⁴ Her own arrest having achieved that same end, Goti probably found kindred spirits in these quondam vagabonds.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸¹ “abbiamo goduto di un trattamento devo dire abbastanza umano”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 16. See also p. 21.

⁶⁸² “Vi ho conosciuto gente ... che ha cercato di rendere la nostra permanenza lì dentro meno disperata. Probabilmente conoscevano la sorte che si attendeva ed avevano pietà”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7. See also: Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 16.

⁶⁸³ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato A, p. 7.

⁶⁸⁴ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, pp. 6-7. Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 7. Bauer, “La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione,” 300.

⁶⁸⁵ It is worth comparing Bauer’s words with those of Primo Levi, who writes of Jewish prisoners at Fossoli, “For the most part these were entire families captured by the Fascists or the Nazis because they had been careless or had been informed on. A few had given themselves up of their own accord, reduced to desperation by a vagabond life, or lacking the means to survive, or wishing to avoid separation from a captured relative, or even – absurdly – ‘to be in conformity

On May 8, 1944, immediately after being arrested in their Milan homes, the Jaffè and Dana families were transported to San Vittore. While testifying during the postwar trial of Friedrich Boßhammer, who by spring 1944 was serving as head of the Gestapo in the Italian Social Republic, Salomone Dana (Samuele's father) remembered his family being booked with two or three others when they arrived at the prison.⁶⁸⁶ Though he doesn't mention any of them by name, one of these was probably the Jaffès, since both families had been arrested that morning before dawn.⁶⁸⁷ Eleven days later, on 19 May, they would be deported together to Bergen-Belsen.⁶⁸⁸ Lina Jaffè's memories of San Vittore resonate with those of other former inmates. She recalls being able to move "freely" (*libera*) throughout the Jewish wing – at least when the Germans weren't on patrol, lest they "hit them" (*facevano colpi*) for finding them outside of their cells. Apparently, the Jewish inmates never gave the Germans the satisfaction, for although partisans spoke of violence, she doesn't remember any befalling her and her familiars. Lina also remembers communicating with free civilians from her third-story window.⁶⁸⁹ Though obviously forbidden, we recall that San Vittore was designed in such a way that this was indeed physically possible.

While Jaffè and her family steered clear of the Germans, Salomone Dana approached the prison commander directly, mistaking him for Koch, and asked him what would happen to him, his

with the law"; Levi, *If This Is a Man*, 71-72. Assuredly, Bauer read Levi's work and found commonalities between their experiences.

⁶⁸⁶ Boßhammer reached his post in Verona sometime between late February and early March; see Liliana Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy: Its History and Characteristics," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 219.

⁶⁸⁷ "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze*, 1967, 22 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC.

⁶⁸⁸ Oddly, Lina Jaffè and Samuele Dana both recall spending a month at San Vittore, but they and their families were deported to Bergen-Belsen on 19 May, eleven days after arriving. However, Samuele's father, Salomone, gets this right while testifying during the postwar trial of Friedrich Boßhammer; see Lina Jaffè, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia," 1995-1996, Milan, 20 novembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000053/lina-jaffe.html>; Samuele Dana, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Milan, 27 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000026/samuele-dana.html>; "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze*, 1967, 19 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC; and "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

⁶⁸⁹ Jaffè, *ibid*.

family, and the other Turkish Jewish inmates once they were transferred. The commander, probably Leander Klimsa, replied that they would be transferred to Bergen-Belsen, where they would all be “fine” (*bene*).⁶⁹⁰ This, of course, was far from the truth. Although Salomone and his family (Malcunna, Mosè, Samuele, and Stella) were indeed all deported to Bergen-Belsen and lived to see the end of the war, his brother, Isacco, was deported to Auschwitz, where he and his entire family (Rachele, Stella, Salvatore, and Ester) were killed. Nor is this to undersell Bergen-Belsen’s own torments. In spite of his son Mosè’s insistence that Bergen-Belsen was a camp for “privileged” inmates (“the Dutch diamond workers were there”), Salomone remembers it as a “work camp” (*campo di lavoro*), with all of the attendant hardships.⁶⁹¹ Samuele also recalls the challenges of living as a prisoner at Bergen-Belsen. When they reached the camp in late May, he says, “we arrived in the Inferno ... because it was truly an unpleasant place”.⁶⁹² Having no knowledge or grasp of the German language put camp prisoners at a major disadvantage from the get-go, and like his father, he too remembers the forced labor, although he says that children (like him) were spared. Because they lived on starvation rations, hunger besieged him from their arrival in May until their release the following March (the same month that Margot and Anne Frank perished at the camp), and in Samuele’s experience, the hunger was “the worst thing” (*la cosa peggiore*) about Bergen-Belsen.⁶⁹³ A testament to his memory of deprivation, when British forces liberated the camp in mid-April 1945, they discovered about 60,000 barely alive prisoners, most of them skeletal and suffering from deadly diseases like dysentery, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and worst of all, typhus. To stop the typhus

⁶⁹⁰ Salomone says that he spoke with the prison commander and that he had been led to believe that this was Koch, though both he and his son, Mosè, express some uncertainty over the commander’s actual identity; see “Dana Salomone e Mosè,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*. Though the record indicates that Koch did indeed frequent San Vittore prison, primarily to conduct interrogations, he never served as its commander. In May 1944, San Vittore’s commander would have been Leander Klimsa, who replaced Helmut Klemm sometime between February and March of that year, when the latter was transferred to IV-B4; see Borgomaneri, *Hitler a Milano*, 70.

⁶⁹¹ “No, era privilegiato, era dove c’era [sic] i diamantieri olandesi”; “Dana Salomone e Mosè,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

⁶⁹² “siamo arrivati nell’Inferno ... perché era un luogo veramente brutto”; Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

spread, the British burned the camp to the ground, but by mid-May, a month after liberation, an additional 13,000 to 14,000 prisoners had died, succumbing to illness and starvation.⁶⁹⁴

After they were processed and taken to San Vittore's fifth wing, the Danas found approximately 200 Jewish prisoners detained there, including 99 other Turks, though Salomone says that the number dwindled by the day.⁶⁹⁵ Recalling no violence whatsoever at the prison, Samuele didn't fear the guards, despite their ubiquity, and although Salomone remembers his brother being interrogated, he himself was not.⁶⁹⁶ Far more frightening, at least to the youngest Dana, were the Allied bombings. Throughout the entirety of his week-and-a-half stay at San Vittore, Samuele lived in "terror of bombardments" (*terrore di bombardimenti*), haunted by the thought that a bomb would fall on their heads, killing himself and his family. At the same time, the silver lining to that fear was that the Dana family, like most Jewish families, stayed together during their time at San Vittore, a constant consolation in an otherwise dreary situation.⁶⁹⁷

The comfort of family was a luxury not afforded to Fausta Finzi and her father, Edgardo. After spending an afternoon at the Hotel Regina with the infamous Koch, Fausta and Edgardo were taken together to San Vittore. Whereas most prisoner families remained together at the prison, it was at San Vittore that Fausta and her father were first separated. While Edgardo was assigned to the Jewish *raggio*, wing V, Fausta was detained with the political prisoners. Unable to establish any contact, they remained apart until they were transported to Fossoli about ten days later. In at least one way, however, their experience was similar; both father and daughter, Fausta says, were interrogated during their week and a half at San Vittore. Her separation aside, Fausta says little of

⁶⁹⁴ "Bergen-Belsen," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USHMM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/bergen-belsen>.

⁶⁹⁵ "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

⁶⁹⁶ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996. "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*. "Dana Salomone e Mosé," *ibid*.

⁶⁹⁷ Dana, Interview, *ibid*. Curiously, Samuele says that the Danas remained closed in their "cell" (*cella*) at San Vittore, though perhaps he means "wing"; see "Dana Samuele," *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

her detainment at San Vittore, other than that she met an acquaintance of Indro Montanelli, but not the journalist himself.⁶⁹⁸

Ever our counterpoint, Giuseppe Di Porto reports nothing but misery from his incarceration at San Vittore. Transferred to Milan from Genoa's Marassi prison on the last day of November 1943, Giuseppe and his cousin, Amedeo, were held at San Vittore for six days.⁶⁹⁹ Of his time there, he recalls only dirt (*sporvizia*), cold, privation, and bugs. "I remember Milan well," he affirms, "because we lived among the insects."⁷⁰⁰ San Vittore was also a major downgrade from his previous holding center, which he had described as "nasty". Though Milan's penitentiary was certainly preferable to the killing center in his not-too-distant future, it was filthier than Marassi, and there were more German guards than Italians. This was unfortunate, for the latter were easier to corrupt. That said, despite being "under the surveillance of the SS" in San Vittore's Jewish wing, he doesn't recall any violence taking place, and certainly nothing like what he soon witnessed at Auschwitz.⁷⁰¹ Although Di Porto was long gone by the time Luciana Sacerdote arrived at San Vittore, her memories of the prison most closely approximate his.⁷⁰² Detained there for about a

⁶⁹⁸ Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "*Interviste alla Storia*," 1995-1996, 2 maggio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000042/fausta-finzi.html>.

⁶⁹⁹ Across multiple testimonies, Di Porto reports being transferred from San Vittore on 5 December, but the transport took place the following day; see Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 20; Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986; Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995; "Di Porto, Amedeo," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1780/di-porto-amedeo.html?persone=%22Di+Porto%2C+Amedeo%22>; and "Di Porto, Giuseppe," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2370/di-porto-giuseppe.html?persone=%22Di+Porto%2C+Giuseppe%22>.

⁷⁰⁰ "*Milano mi ricordo bene perché vivavamo in mezza di insetti*"; Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. See also: Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986. Similarly, Jani writes that his prison cell in Rome's Regina Coeli was overrun with lice; Jani, *My voice saved me*, 37, 42.

⁷⁰¹ "*sotto la sorveglianza della SS*"; Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986. See also: Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995.

⁷⁰² Luciana says that when the Sacerdotes reached San Vittore from their previous detainment site, they encountered Italian guards for the first time during intake, though she admits to not fully trusting her memory, given the convulsive, rapidly changing events and her young age at the time. On this point and others, Luciana's unpretentious questioning of her own memory is perhaps well-founded, because she likely would have already crossed paths with Italian guards at Varese prison. Of the main prisons frequented by Jewish victims in northern Lombardy, only Como seems to have been in German hands. Also, Luciana recalls being transferred to Milan in cattle cars (*vagoni bestiame*), though it is more likely that they were transported by truck, like the Segres and the Herskovitses. The cattle cars would come later; see Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

month, Luciana describes San Vittore as “incredibly awful” (*bruttissimo*), and certainly “worse than Varese” (*peggio che Varese*). Pithy with her words, she also remembers San Vittore being “dirty” (*sporco*), and worse still, there was “nothing to eat” (*niente da mangiare*).⁷⁰³

Di Porto and Sacerdote aside, it is likely that survivors’ memories of San Vittore get refracted through a rose-tinted prism in light of later events, at least in part. But at the same time, we can’t deny that survivors might have genuinely decent memories of their time there, perhaps as good as such memories could be. Something approximating community social life continued; families remained together or were reunited after a brief separation; and for survivors who were immediately deported from the prison to Auschwitz-Birkenau, their time at San Vittore often marked their final moments with their family members outside of a cattle car. In an objective sense, San Vittore was an awful place, and based on primary and secondary examples cited above, many victims experienced it as such. But for other survivors, including most of those profiled here, the circumstances that prevailed in their lives, at San Vittore and later, mitigated against the effects of its ugliness.

Deportation

Milano Centrale and the Track of the Unknown Destination

If railway stations and tracks are often associated with death, with the climax of *Anna Karenina* coming to mind, then nowhere must this be truer than at a Shoah deportation center.⁷⁰⁴ For many victims of the Final Solution, not only did the deportation center mark their gateway toward an unknown destination; it also doubled as their portal into the perverse violence of the Shoah. So it was for Primo Levi, who writes in *If This Is a Man*:

With the absurd precision to which we later had to accustom ourselves, the Germans held the roll call. At the end the officer asked “*Wieviel Stück?*” The corporal saluted smartly and

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10-11.

replied that there were six hundred and fifty “pieces,” and all was in order. They then loaded us onto buses [at Fossoli] and took us to the station at Carpi. Here the train was waiting for us, with our escort for the journey. Here we received the first blows: and the thing was so new and senseless that we felt no pain, in either body or spirit. Only a profound amazement: how can one strike a man without anger?

There were twelve freight cars and six hundred and fifty of us; in mine were only forty-five, but it was a small car. Here, then, before our very eyes, under our very feet, was one of those notorious German transport trains, one of those which never return, and of which, shuddering and always a little incredulous, we had so often heard tales. Exactly like this, detail for detail: freight cars closed from the outside, inside men, women, and children packed in without pity, like cheap merchandise, for a journey toward the bottom. This time it is we who are inside.

...The doors had been closed at once, but the train did not move until evening. We had learned of our destination with relief. Auschwitz: a name without significance for us at the time, but at least it implied some place on this earth.

Of the forty-five people who were trapped within Levi’s boxcar, only four returned from ‘the bottom’, which, according to Levi, was “by far the most fortunate” of the twelve wagons in his convoy.⁷⁰⁵

In Milan, the Final Solution culminated in a series of deportations from the city’s central railway station. From 6 December 1943 until 15 January 1945, twenty deportation convoys dispatched from Milano Centrale, fifteen of them carrying Jewish victims, either exclusively or with political prisoners.⁷⁰⁶ The remaining five convoys consisted of political deportees alone. Eleven of the fifteen Jewish convoys were destined for Auschwitz-Birkenau, the first two arriving there directly (after brief stopovers in Verona), the others by way of the Fossoli or Bolzano transit camps. The remaining four Jewish convoys terminated either at Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg, or Bolzano.⁷⁰⁷ Precise numbers remain elusive, but estimates of Jewish deportees range from 900 on

⁷⁰⁵ Levi, *If This Is a Man*, 77.

⁷⁰⁶ “Central” should be understood in terms of the importance of the station in Milan’s railway grid, not its geographical positioning in the urban layout.

⁷⁰⁷ In order, the twenty deportations were as follows (* indicates political prisoner transport): 6 December 1943 (Auschwitz), 30 January 1944 (Auschwitz), 11 February 1944 (Fossoli), 18 February 1944 (Mauthausen)*, 8 March 1944 (Mauthausen)*, 11 March 1944 (Mauthausen)*, 30 March 1944 (Fossoli), 6 April 1944 (Mauthausen)*, 27 April 1944 (Fossoli), 14 May 1944 (Fossoli), 19 May 1944 (Bergen-Belsen), 9 June 1944 (Fossoli), 29 June 1944 (Fossoli)*, 2 August

the lower end to 1,200 on the higher end, with Jews comprising roughly two-thirds of the total number of victims deported from the station.⁷⁰⁸ A microcosm of the Shoah in Italy, the vast majority of these deportees, whether they were Italian or foreign, perished at Auschwitz. It is all too ironic, then, that in 2010, Milano Centrale station was dedicated to Mother Francesca Saverio Cabrini, patron saint of emigrants.⁷⁰⁹

When the Fascists came to power in the early 1920s, they inherited the *Stazione Centrale di Milano* from the outgoing liberal regime. More accurately, they inherited the foundation stone and the overgrown, weed-choked plot of land where the monumental station was supposed to have risen decades prior. Begun in 1906, construction on the station was stalled at the start by bureaucratic inefficiency, a problem later compounded by local politics, war, and civil strife. On the eve of the dictatorship, with Italy's rails in a seemingly permanent state of disarray, Milan's embryonic central station stood as the most glaring symptom of this malady. For the Fascists, who had invested the rails with historic significance, it was an opportunity they couldn't let pass. After all, it had been Camillo di Cavour himself who, in 1846, identified the railways as the thing that could "make Italians", long before Massimo d'Azeglio diagnosed the problem in the wake of unification.⁷¹⁰ By vowing to save and revitalize Italy's broken railway system, the Fascist regime injected itself into the Risorgimento genealogy, soldering a rupture in Italian history that had been introduced by liberal stagnation. Milano Centrale, then, might as well have come into Fascist possession gift-wrapped with a bow. By willing the station to life through uniquely fascist gusto, something that could not be found in a parliamentary chamber, Mussolini's regime could provide tangible evidence for all to see

1944 (Verona), 17 August 1944 (Bolzano), 7 September 1944 (Bolzano), 17 October 1944 (Bolzano), November 1944 (Bolzano, full date unknown), 15 December 1944 (Bolzano), and 15 January 1945 (Bolzano).

⁷⁰⁸ Alessandra Chiappano puts the number of Jewish deportees at 900, with an additional 600 political deportees; see Alessandra Chiappano, "Un convegno a Torino sui memoriali in Europa," *Triangolo Rosso* 24:4-5 (giugno – settembre 2008), p. 42, Fasc. Verbali, CDEC.

⁷⁰⁹ Mauro Novelli, "Nel vortice di Milano. Rappresentazioni letterarie della Stazione Centrale," in *Milano città delle culture*, eds. Maria Vittoria Calvi and Emilia Perassi (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2015), 450.

⁷¹⁰ Camillo Benso, "Des chemins de fer en Italie," *La Revue Nouvelle*, May 1, 1846.

of fascist totalitarianism's supremacy over decadent liberalism. It can thus be no mere coincidence that construction on the station resumed in 1925, the very year that he who made the trains run on time declared sole rule.⁷¹¹

By the later 1930s, Mussolini's regime had begun to espouse a crude, biologically determinist view of race, reducing one's essence and potential to blood. But prior to this, the Fascists had touted their technological bravura as a calling card of *italianità*, renewed and reinvigorated under their rule. For as much as the Fascists longed to return Italy to the glory days of Roman antiquity, they were no less committed to presenting themselves as a thoroughly modern polity, including in the scientific and technological senses. While the reclamation (*bonifica*) of the Pontine Marshes, situated so tantalizingly close to Rome, stole all of the headlines, Milano Centrale also stood as a signature showpiece in this endeavor, intended to convince Italian and foreign travelers alike of Fascism's modern, forward-looking gaze.⁷¹²

Certainly the station's massive reception building, a marble megalith gush with ornamentation, owed more to the past than the present, as did the towering glass canopies hovering over the tracks, the two parts coming together to form an exaggerated take on nineteenth-century railway norms (and lambasted for it by avant-garde, rationalist, and modernist critics). But Milano Centrale's promoters were just as keen to advertise the station's modern, novel amenities, flaunting them as harbingers of the railway industry's future in Italy and abroad. To ensure that food services ran smoothly without sacrificing rigid hygienic standards, for instance, the station's restaurants were outfitted with "the most modern installations", which included a dishwasher, a mechanical vegetable

⁷¹¹ Giovanni Biadene, "La nuova stazione di Milano," *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 5 luglio 1931, p. 19, Per 6, Bob. n. 6, BS.

⁷¹² Even *il Duce* himself had, on at least one occasion, reduced the past to a value that was purely instrumental, remarking, "I do not live in the past; for me the past is nothing more than a platform from which one leaps toward the most superb future" (*Io non vivo del passato; per me il passato non è che una pedana, dalla quale si prende lo slancio verso il più superbo avvenire*). He commanded his citizen-subjects to model themselves accordingly, calling on Italians to "make the glories of the past be overcome by those of the future" (*italiani, fate che le glorie del passato siano superate da quelle dell'avvenire*); Mussolini quoted in Jan Nelis, "Catholicism and the Italian Fascist Myth of Romanità: Between Consciousness and Consent," *Historia Actual Online* 17 (Autumn 2008): 143.

crusher, potato cleaners, egg processors, icemakers, soda and wine dispensers, telephones, and an air conditioner, the latter installation especially necessary in “a city like Milan, which is normally struck by the most suffocating summer heats.”⁷¹³

Across Via Aporti, the façade of the new Postal Palace (*Palazzo delle Poste*), built as part of the station complex, befit the post office’s name, resembling the splendor and ostentation of the neighboring reception building. Much less palatial was the post office’s interior. Crisscrossed with conveyor belts, transportation tubes, and electric wiring, and barren of any artistic adornment, the machines themselves were the attractions inside the Postal Palace.⁷¹⁴ To shuffle mail parcels between their palatial workspace and the station next-door, postal workers used a series of elevators and underground tunnels. Opposite them, on Milano Centrale’s western side, employees moving *Grande Velocità* (Highspeed, GV) merchandise transported their cargo in like manner.⁷¹⁵ Along with standard service elevators (*montacarichi*), postal workers and GV employees had another set of larger elevators at their disposal, called *montavagoni*. As the name implies, these wagon-lifts conveyed entire railway cars, one at a time, between Milano Centrale’s main platform level and an encased chamber below, situated at street level. The *montavagoni* never caught on in the way the Fascists wanted, but they were a novelty in railway engineering all the same. According to the official publication that accompanied the station’s inauguration, Milano Centrale’s four *montavagoni* were the first of their kind anywhere in the world.⁷¹⁶ In Isacco Bayona’s account of his arrival at Milano Centrale as a prisoner, it had been

⁷¹³ “le più moderne installazioni?”; “una città come Milano, che è normalmente colpita dai più soffocanti calori estivi?”; *La stazione centrale di Milano. Inaugurata l’anno IX-E.F. Monografia ufficiale illustrata autorizzata dal Ministero delle Comunicazioni* (Milan: La Associazione Nazionale Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra Sezione di Milano, 1931), p. 281, Fondazione Cesare Pozzo, Milan, Italy. See also p. 280.

⁷¹⁴ Ulisse Stacchini, “Il fabbricato viaggiatori della nuova stazione di Milano,” *Rassegna di Architettura* 10:11 (October 15 – November 15, 1931), 409-411. Biadene, “La nuova stazione di Milano,” p. 38.

⁷¹⁵ Stacchini, *ibid.*, 409-410.

⁷¹⁶ *La stazione centrale di Milano. Inaugurata l’anno IX-E.F.*, p. 125. To witness the *montavagoni* in operation at the time of inauguration, see *Milano. La nuova stazione centrale*, 22 gennaio 1932, directed by Arnaldo Ricotti, *Movietone*, Giornale LUCE B / B0037, codice filmato B003701, Archivio LUCE, https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000010473/2/milano-nuova-stazione-centrale.html?startPage=0&jsonVal=%7b%22jsonVal%22:%7b%22query%22:%5b%22stazione%20centrale%20di%20milano%22%5d,%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20%7d%7d. For a more contemporary

the wagon lifts that stood out most in his memory. He would see them again before his ordeal was through.

At the far edge of the station's majestic, semicircular canopies, beyond the reaches of the passenger platforms, the *montavagoni* descended into a veritable station-within-a-station entombed within a concrete shell. Named for the companies it served, the Highspeed and Postal Service Piazza (*Piazzale della G.V. e delle R.R. Poste*) boasted thirty-eight tracks, fourteen more than the passenger platform area above, the *Piazza dei Binari*. Served by the four *montavagoni* and scores of *montacarichi*, the Highspeed and Postal Service Piazza was "a true supplementary station" (*una vera stazione supplementare*), as noted by an engineer who was professionally uninvolved but emotionally and politically invested in the project.⁷¹⁷

Opening to great fanfare on July 1, 1931 – the immutable date fixed by *il Duce* – Milano Centrale was presented to the world, in the words of architect Ulisse Stacchini, as "an affirmation of the renewed power of Fascist Italy."⁷¹⁸ The illustrated weekly, *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, devoted an entire edition to the new station, and mirroring Stacchini, the headline piece triumphantly concluded by announcing:

With the passengers station of Milan, with its monumental lines of grandeur and its numerous potent installations that represent *the last word in railway technology*, Milan puts itself at the head of the European and American nations in the vast field of communications and transportation. And the name of the *Patria* runs through the streets of the world with ponderous resonance also because of this work, an expression of the power of Italy renewed.⁷¹⁹

demonstration, see CDEC's 1996 interview with Salvatore Vitiello, former technical superintendent at Milan's Central and Lambrate stations. In the interview, conducted on-site, Vitiello explains the elevation and loading mechanisms at his former headquarters; Salvatore Vitiello, Interview, Milan, febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC.

⁷¹⁷ Ettore Lo Cigno, "La nuova stazione viaggiatori di Milano," *Le Vie d'Italia*, 1930, Vol. II, p. 816, BS. Ministero delle Comunicazioni, FS, Servizio Movimento, ed. *Stazione di Milano Centrale. Descrizione degli impianti, Norme di esercizio, Disposizioni di massima*, (Milan: Archetipografia di Milano, 1934), pp. 29, 58, Fondazione Cesaro Pozzo, Milan, Italy. *La stazione centrale di Milano. Inaugurata l'anno IX-E.F.*, p. 125; and Annalisa de Curtis and Guido Morpurgo, "Il Memoriale della Shoah nella Stazione Centrale di Milano: struttura-forma-architettura," in *Le frecce del tempo. Ricerche e progetti di architettura delle infrastrutture*, eds. Cassandra Cozza and Ilaria Valente (Milan-Turin: Pearson Italia, 2014), 68-69.

⁷¹⁸ "un'affermazione della rinnovata potenza dell'Italia Fascista"; Stacchini, "Il fabbricato viaggiatori della nuova stazione di Milano," 423.

⁷¹⁹ "Con la stazione viaggiatori di Milano, che ha linee di grandiosità monumentali, e coi numerosi potenti impianti che rappresentano l'ultima parola nella tecnica ferroviaria, Milano si mette alla testa delle nazioni d'Europa e d'America nel vasto campo delle comunicazioni

Rassegna di Architettura, a leading architectural journal of the day, also commemorated Milano Centrale's inauguration with a special edition. In the defiant tone of a slighted nation in the ascendancy, the introductory article proclaimed that Milan's new station enabled Italians "to reaffirm once again before the world, a world often willfully incredulous, the magnificent traditional qualities of our stock."⁷²⁰ Twelve years later, when the Nazis commandeered the subterranean station and turned it into a deportation center – a sinister articulation of the "dual use" concept – Milano Centrale's novel mechanisms were put in the service of a much different racial project.⁷²¹ Like the breech of a rifle, the *montavagoni* expelled victims from Milano Centrale and from Milan itself during deportation, and of the station's many gears and mechanisms, it is the wagon-lifts that survivors remember and remark upon most of all.

Direct to Auschwitz: The 6 December and 30 January Deportations

The first deportation convoy to dispatch from Milano Centrale left the station on 6 December 1943 and headed straight for the selection ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, stopping only in Verona along the way to gather more victims. Probably organized by Theodor Dannecker, whose raiding party had reached Milan in late November, the 6 December deportation – the fifth such action in Italy – marked Dannecker's Italian swan song before he was reassigned to Hungary. For the Milan contingent, prisoners from Turin, Genoa, the Ligurian coast, the Italy-Switzerland border, and Milan itself had been assembled at San Vittore prison and then transported to the central station. When

e dei trasporti. E il nome della Patria corre per le vie del mondo con ponderosa risonanza anche per merito di quest'opera, espressione di potenza dell'Italia rinnovata" [emphasis added]; Biadene, "La nuova stazione di Milano," 40.

⁷²⁰ "di riaffermare ancor una volta di fronte al mondo, spesso volutamente incredulo, le magnifiche qualità tradizionali della nostra stirpe"; Introduction to *Rassegna di Architettura*, "La nuova stazione centrale viaggiatori di Milano," *Rassegna di Architettura* 10:11 (15 ottobre – 15 novembre 1931), unnumbered.

⁷²¹ Later assessments take it as a given that the Nazis used the subterranean area of the station in order to hide their deportation operations, but since they entrusted so much of the persecutory process to their Italian allies, this does not seem to jibe. I have been unable to confirm one way or the other.

their convoy reached Verona, they were joined by additional Jewish victims from Bologna, Livorno, and Florence, bringing the total number of deportees to 246. Five would return after the war.⁷²²

Among the victims who comprised this first deportation were the Di Porto cousins, Giuseppe and Amedeo. An RSHA convoy, Giuseppe remembers that from San Vittore, the Germans carried out the transport to the station themselves, without any Italian help.⁷²³ During assembly, these same guards recited to them the infamous warning that any prisoners who attempted to escape would be killed, and in the event any were successful, ten others would be shot in their place. This was enough to deter Giuseppe from even considering the idea.⁷²⁴ Shuttled to Milano Centrale in a closed lorry (*camion chiuso*), Di Porto recalls being unable to see anything along the way.⁷²⁵ Nor could he see much when they arrived, for they were unloaded from their transport vehicles in an area “beneath the station” (*sotto la stazione*) and then promptly reloaded and sealed into cattle cars.⁷²⁶ Crammed into a wagon with about fifty other victims, Giuseppe remembers that his fellow deportees, women, children, and the elderly among them, hailed from Milan and Genoa (like him and Amedeo). Together, “in the underground” (*nel sottosuolo*) beneath the station, they waited for two or three hours in the dark before departing for Verona.⁷²⁷ Five days later, on 11 December, they reached Birkenau’s gates.⁷²⁸

Toward the end of the war, the Di Porto cousins changed their minds and did stage a flight attempt. While death-marching westward toward Germany, their guards invited a group of prisoners, Giuseppe and Amedeo included, into a forest clearing, allegedly “to rest” (*riposarvi*).

⁷²² Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 46, 889.

⁷²³ Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986. Picciotto, *ibid.*, 46.

⁷²⁴ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 20.

⁷²⁵ Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁷ Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. See also: Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986; and Di Porto, *La rivincita del Bene*, 20.

⁷²⁸ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 46. Di Porto, *La rivincita del Bene*, *ibid.* According to Giuseppe, their convoy actually arrived on 10 December, but they were not processed until the next morning.

Divining that their escorts meant to massacre them, Giuseppe urged the group to scatter, and before the guards could ready themselves, he and Amedeo broke for the woods. With gunshots ringing out behind him, Giuseppe reached the safety of the forest, but when he turned around to look for his cousin, he didn't see him, and he never would again.⁷²⁹

On January 30, 1944, the second deportation convoy left Milano Centrale station for Auschwitz-Birkenau, arriving at its destination one week later, on 6 February. Following the 6 December action in sequence, it was the sixth overall deportation from Italy. Comprising 605 deportees collated in Milan and Verona – by some estimates, more than half of all the Jewish victims deported from Milano Centrale station – the 30 January deportation was the largest such action from Milan during the Shoah. This was the convoy that brought Dora Finzi Contini, the real-life Finzi Contini who had been arrested in Milan, to the same death that awaited so many of her quasi-fictive relatives. Assembled at San Vittore prison on a blustery winter morning, two main groups of prisoners formed the Milanese contingent; one consisted of prisoners who had been apprehended at the Italy-Switzerland border (like Segre and Sacerdote), and the other contained prisoners who previously had been interned in a provincial concentration camp established by Police Order no. 5, either Forlì, Tonezza del Cimone (in Vicenza), Bagno a Ripoli (in Florence), or Calvari di Chiavari (in Genoa). Details of the Verona deportees are unknown, save that they had all probably been arrested in central Italy. At the end of the war, only twenty of the 605 deportees returned.⁷³⁰

Liliana Segre provides the fullest, most vivid firsthand account of the deportation experience from Milano Centrale's netherworld. Sometime on January 29, either in the afternoon or the evening, a German official arrived at San Vittore and announced that a major, all-Jewish transport would depart from the prison the following day. He then proceeded to read aloud, one by one, the

⁷²⁹ Di Porto, *ibid.*, 29.

⁷³⁰ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 46-47. "Finzi Contini, Dora," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-2597/finzi-contini-dora.html>.

names of the hundreds of inmates who would form this convoy.⁷³¹ Its destination, he didn't say. As the doomsday messenger read off the contents of his list, the inmates assembled in *raggio* IV listened for their names and, like participants in a lottery that no one wants to win, hoped to never hear them. With great perturbation, Alberto and Liliana Segre learned that they were "winners". The Silvera family had their names called, too – awful news for them, but perhaps a small comfort for Liliana, for she and her father would at least have some familiar company on their trip toward the unknown. The Silveras ended up staying with Liliana and Alberto until they reached Auschwitz, even sharing the same suffocating cattle car.⁷³² By late morning on the 30th, only one-sixth of the Jewish prisoner population from the previous day remained at San Vittore. According to Liliana, these were mostly children of mixed marriages and, perhaps, some foreigners.⁷³³

Feelings of disbelief and desperation immediately overtook the unlucky hundreds whose names had been called. Liliana remembers the inmates telling themselves that "It isn't possible. Certainly, they'll send us to a labor camp in Italy. It's inconceivable that Mussolini would expel Italians from the country, even if we're Italians of the last rank by now."⁷³⁴ Even at such a late hour, it was still possible for Italy's Jews to kindle a small flame of hope. But by that time, as dictated by the *Manifesto of Verona*, the state no longer considered them Italians, not even of the last rank. Indeed, Jewish prisoners at San Vittore had already been expelled from Italy to their deaths, and in any event, as things stood, they were no longer in Italian hands anyway. Perhaps more attuned to

⁷³¹ There is some discrepancy as to the number of Jews assembled in San Vittore prison, and hence deported from Milano Centrale station, the morning of January 30, 1944. The number 605 has become canon – and it appears, for instance, in at least one of Segre's own memoirs – but according to Liliana Picciotto's research, 605 is the total number of 30 January deportees from both Milan and Verona; see Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 119; and Picciotto, *ibid.*, 46.

⁷³² *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2008), 12. Borella, "Liliana, una sopravvissuta," p. 7. *Viaggio nella memoria*, 91-92.

⁷³³ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, 12.

⁷³⁴ "Non è possibile, di certo ci manderanno in Italia in un campo di lavoro, non è pensabile che Mussolini espella dal Paese degli italiani, seppure ormai di serie Z"; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre*, 33.

their fate than the others, Rino Ravenna, the elderly cousin captured with Liliana at the border, launched himself to his death off the highest floor of the prison.⁷³⁵

The next morning, January 30, the prisoners selected for transport gathered the rations they had received the day before – a portion of cheese, some biscuits or crackers, condensed milk, a bit of mortadella – and were filed through the prison to wing VI.⁷³⁶ Along the way, something amazing happened. Milan's common criminals, the so-called 'dregs' of society – Italy's asocials, in a word – rose up in support of the Jewish inmates as they filed past, stirring their spirits with uplifting words, tossing them extra rations if the moment allowed. As Liliana recalls:

We passed through another wing holding common criminals. These prisoners leaned out over the balconies and tossed us oranges, apples, and cookies, but above all, they shouted words of encouragement, solidarity, and benediction to us! They were extraordinary; they were people who, seeing others go to the slaughterhouse for the sin of being born from one womb instead of another, took pity on us. It was our last contact with human beings.⁷³⁷

Far from the low-lives of conventional lore – and perhaps here it's worth noting that it was an Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, who first biologized criminality – Segre remembers the common criminals of San Vittore prison, often written off as degenerates, as the essence of humanity. Because of this, during her many school visits, she makes sure to tell her student audiences that “these prisoners could have been thieves and murderers, but foremost, they were humans.”⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Rino's older brother, Giulio, not part of the 30 January transport, would later die at an Italian concentration camp. Liliana claims that he perished at Fossoli, and while this is possible, CDEC's records on the matter are inconclusive; see Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 32; and “Ravenna, Giulio,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-8869/ravenna-giulio.html?persona=%22Ravenna%2C+Giulio%22>. Also, Rino's was not the only suicide to take place at San Vittore. At least two other Jewish prisoners had taken their lives at the prison that very month; see Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica a Milano*, 64.

⁷³⁶ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 89. Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, 14.

⁷³⁷ “Attraversammo un altro raggio di detenuti comuni. Essi si sporgevano dai ballatoi e ci buttavano arance, mele, biscotti, ma, soprattutto, ci urlavano parole di incoraggiamento, di solidarietà e di benedizione! Furono straordinari; furono uomini che, vedendo altri uomini andare al macello solo per la colpa di essere nati da un grembo e non da un altro, ne avevano pietà. Fu l'ultimo contatto con esseri umani?”; *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, 14.

⁷³⁸ “Non c'è volta in cui non abbia parlato agli studenti di quegli uomini che potevano essere ladri e assassini, ma prima di tutto erano uomini”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre*, 34.

Once they had assembled their victims in *raggio* VI, the SS, aided by *repubblichini*, pummeled them with kicks, punches, and other types of beatings as they loaded them into transport vehicles, cramming thirty to forty prisoners into each, before conveying them across the city to Milano Centrale station.⁷³⁹ Pointing to the prison walls from outside during her 1995 on-site interview, Liliana mentions seeing gun turrets guarding the prison the morning of her deportation. These turrets, she says, were manned by Italians, not Germans.⁷⁴⁰ Although their lorries had been covered with tarpaulins, the backs of the vehicle beds remained open, allowing Liliana, who had secured a seat on the end, to watch her city pass her by. Given the proximity of the prison to her home, the convoy passed through her neighborhood *en route* to the station, traversing the same streets she had run through thousands of times in her young life. At a certain point, she even caught a glimpse of her house on Corso Magenta.⁷⁴¹ Will I ever see home again, she must have wondered.

Just as prisoners seated toward the backs of their lorries could see Milan, Liliana notes that they, too, could be seen, if the Milanese had only chosen to look. Compared with the inmates at San Vittore, the ordinary citizens of Milan couldn't have conducted themselves in a more contradictory manner, a contrast not lost on Segre. He could have been a bandit or a killer, but the ordinary inmate at Milan's penitentiary "was so much better than those Milanese people who barricaded themselves inside their homes and, watching us pass by, didn't open their windows to offer us a word of comfort."⁷⁴² The real *brava gente*, then, were Milan's common criminals, not its law-abiding citizens. Acknowledging that war conditions had likely driven most civilians from the city, Segre, with pain in her eyes, remembers how the few remaining residents showed no signs of sympathy for

⁷³⁹ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Milan, 20 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000094/liliana-segre-1.html>. Zuccalà, *ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁴⁰ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.* Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁴² "...sarà stato un ladro o forse anche un assassino, ma fu tanto meglio q̃i quei milanesi asserragliati dentro casa che non aprirono le finestre, vedendoci passare, per dirci una parola di conforto"; Borella, "Liliana, una sopravvissuta," p. 7. See also: Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 35; and Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

the victims.⁷⁴³ Like the protagonist of Wolfgang Staudte's 1949 East German film, *Rotation*, who closes his curtains at the moment his Jewish neighbors are deported, the citizens of Milan drew their blinds and stayed silent behind their windows as Segre's convoy roared through the city. Historian Frank Stern explains that by placing their Jewish neighbors "out of sight, out of mind," ordinary Germans removed them from "their personal moral or social frame of reference". But he also adds that their actions hinted at "the acquiescence of the average citizen," who by then would have understood what deportation meant.⁷⁴⁴ Though farther removed from the scene of the crime, the ordinary Italian could have determined, without much mental strain, that deportation was meant to be permanent. Perhaps imagining this as the uchronic moment in her life, when the Milanese, despite living under occupation, could have restored her faith in humanity, Liliana's eyes well up with tears as she confronts the reality of that morning. Overcome with grief, she turns away from the camera.⁷⁴⁵ That day, all was not as it should have been. The Milanese did not show compassion. Instead, Milan remained "very silent. Clearly, no one was interested in us."⁷⁴⁶ Fear, cowardice, hostility, and indifference had led the Milanese people, her people, to look the other way.

Upon arriving at the station, Liliana was surprised to find herself in an unfamiliar – and unwelcoming – part of the station. Countless times before, Liliana had *departed* from the station with her family, always traveling "first class" (*primo classe*) on the way to their next vacation.⁷⁴⁷ But on the

⁷⁴³ Segre, *ibid.* Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁷⁴⁴ Frank Stern, "Film in the 1950s: Passing Images of Guilt and Responsibility," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 271.

⁷⁴⁵ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995. Alessandro Portelli defines "uchronia" as a "nowhen" event, occurring when a remembering individual emphasizes what could or should have happened at a particular point in time, rather than what actually did happen. The "uchronic turn", he says, tends to intersect with the climax of the narrator's personal life. Similarly, Daniel James writes that individuals turn to uchronia to counter tragedies that have occurred during their lives, often disrupting their personal endeavors. "Uchronia" depicts an "imaginative utopia" where all is as it should be, or an "ideal state" where things occurred as they 'should' have; see Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 99-100, 108; and Daniel James, *Doña Maria's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 209-210.

⁷⁴⁶ "molto silenziosa. Certamente non interessavamo nessuno"; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁷⁴⁷ Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

morning of January 30, 1944, Liliana was not dropped off at the majestic Carriage Gallery (*Galleria delle Carrozze*), the functional automobile portico – and another of Milano Centrale’s railway novelties – that had already been dubbed Milan’s “antechamber” (*anticamera*) on the day of its inauguration. No, on this day, Liliana was driven past the Carriage Gallery to a dark, narrow side-street, more akin to a back alley than a roadway in appearance and effect. And while Segre would eventually depart via the Piazza dei Binari, she didn’t get there by passing through the regal Ticket Vestibule (*Atrio Biglietti*), truly Milano Centrale’s crown jewel, and the Head Gallery (*Galleria di Testa*), with its five prominent maiolica panels depicting Rome, Turin, Florence, and Milan, old and new.⁷⁴⁸ Rather, on the day of her deportation, Liliana’s transport vehicle passed beneath the station and into a dark, subterranean realm, “a world unknown” (*un mondo sconosciuto*) to all but those who worked there. “Not one of us knew about that underground area, that black belly of the central station,” Liliana maintains.⁷⁴⁹

Waiting for the victims inside the station’s black belly was a long line of railcars – “very long” (*lunguissimo*), in fact – assembled in convoy formation atop a “dead-end track” (*un binario morto*), a fitting idiom, in both English and Italian. As an RSHA operation, the SS was in charge of transferring the prisoners from truck to train, but throughout the process, they were aided by two trusty sidekicks, their wolfhounds (*cani lupo*) and the *repubblichini*, their Italian allies who assisted without interfering, “almost pleased by what they saw.”⁷⁵⁰ And that morning, what they saw was unsightly. In one swift, brutal instant, Liliana and her hundreds of fellow victims were unloaded from their transport trucks and reloaded onto railcars. If Jewish victims had been initiated into the violence, *en masse*, earlier that morning at San Vittore, its intensity became transcendent in the bowels

⁷⁴⁸ Biadene, “La nuova stazione di Milano,” 20. *La stazione centrale di Milano. Inaugurata l’anno IX-E.F.*, 96.

⁷⁴⁹ “Nessuno di noi conosceva quei sotterranei, quel ventre nero della stazione centrale”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre*, 35. See also: Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995; and Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁵⁰ “quasi compiaciuti della visione che avevano”; Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

of Milano Centrale, the darkness of the station's core heightening the surreality, its black pitch interrupted only by piercing spotlights. Reading Segre's words, one is reminded of Primo Levi's. Two lines of soldiers, she relates, were posted at each wagon – one to the left, one to the right – and with “unheard-of violence” (*violenza inaudita*), they forced the Jewish prisoners to run the gauntlet between them, pummeling them with blows as they funneled them from their lorries onto the waiting wagons.⁷⁵¹

Amidst all the chaos marking the moment, from the orgiastic displays of violence, to the blinding spotlights probing the dark, to the cacophony produced by German vulgarities and weaponized snarls, what impressed upon Segre the most was the celerity at which the whole affair took place. “The transition was incredibly fast,” she explains. “The SS and *repubblicini* wasted no time: in a hurry, they loaded us onto cattle cars with kicks, punches, and beatings. As soon as a wagon was full, it was bolted shut and lifted by elevator to the departure platform.”⁷⁵² Elsewhere, she similarly writes, “The Nazis made us descend quickly, by dint of kicks and punches. They made their dogs bark to rush and frighten us. We found ourselves in the belly of the station. There, cattle cars were waiting for us, and we were loaded onto them violently.”⁷⁵³ While such treatment, such pain and duress, would have been punishing for all, Liliana especially wondered how the old, the frail, and the sick were able to move as quickly as the guards required.⁷⁵⁴

After Liliana's turn through the gauntlet, she was packed tightly into her cattle car with a mass of other prisoners. Without giving a number or an estimate, she effectively notes in one

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² “*Il passaggio fu velocissimo. SS e repubblicini non persero tempo: in fretta, a calci, pugni e bastonate, ci caricarono sui vagoni bestiame. Non appena un vagone era pieno, veniva sprangato e portato con un elevatore alla banchina di partenza*”; *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, 14. For the same passage reproduced, almost word for word, see: Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 91-92.

⁷⁵³ “*I nazisti ci fecero scendere velocemente, a forza di calci e pugni. I latrati dei cani li usavano per metterci fretta e spaventarci. Ci trovavamo nel ventre della stazione. Ci attendevano dei vagoni bestiame dove fummo caricati con violenza*”; Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 120. For comparative passages, see: Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre* 35-36; Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995; and Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁵⁴ Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

memoir that there were “so many, too many of us.”⁷⁵⁵ Assessing her surroundings, at least as much as conditions would allow, Liliana saw that “there was neither light nor water” inside the wagon, “only a bit of straw on the floor, a pail for human waste, and barren walls.”⁷⁵⁶ Also missing was any hope of escape. Locked in from outside, their only remaining connection to their former world was a small, caged window in the wagon’s upper corner that allowed some precious air to pass in, but certainly not enough.

Inside the wagon, it was the pail, more than anything, that symbolized the debasement of the deportation experience, while forecasting the degradation still to come. The pail, Liliana says, “was the initial symbol of the abasement to which we had been consigned”.⁷⁵⁷ For Jewish prisoners, the pail and its purpose functioned as their initiatory rite into the world of torture and humiliation that the Nazis had created for them. As they used the pail, they passed into this macabre realm, and as the bucket overflowed with human waste, polluting their crowded quarters, all wagon occupants were made to participate in the revolting ritual; all underwent a key phase in their devolution into the subhuman objects of Nazi caricature. Perhaps it is for this reason that, in one interview, Liliana says that she doesn’t remember her wagon-mates making much use of the pail. The lack of both privacy and food acted as deterrents, and she didn’t use it at all.⁷⁵⁸ By depicting only a mild use of the pail or an avoidance of it altogether, Liliana recaptures a pristine image of the Jewish people that depicts

⁷⁵⁵ “eravamo tanti, troppi”; Segre with Palumbo, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*, 120. The number was probably somewhere between fifty and seventy. Vitiello estimates that fifty to sixty people could be packed into a wagon, which had been built to hold eight horses; see Vitiello, Interview, febbraio 1996; and *Viaggio nella memoria*, 30-31. *Viaggio nella memoria*’s contention that each wagon was filled with about 100 people is probably too high.

⁷⁵⁶ “Dentro non c’era luce né acqua, solo un po’ di paglia per terra, un secchio per gli escrementi, le pareti nude”; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*. Liliana Segre, 35-36. See also: Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992; and Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁵⁷ “era proprio simbolo iniziale dell’abbrutimento a cui eravamo costretti”; Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁵⁸ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

them in a civilized light, and not as the primitive, bloodthirsty savages found in the pages of *Der Stürmer* – or *La difesa della razza*, for that matter.⁷⁵⁹

But on a weeklong journey, and devoid of other options, the wretched pail was assuredly used, and Liliana's other testimonies make this clear. In one, she says, "The wagon was fetid and cold, it smelled like urine, people's faces were grey and their legs were stiff; we didn't have space to move."⁷⁶⁰ "Unimaginably small for all of the people who needed to use it," it wasn't long before the pail "filled up and started to overflow," flooding the wagon and defiling its occupants.⁷⁶¹ By distancing herself from the pail, verbally if not physically, while admitting that it was used, Liliana intimates that she experienced the pail at one remove. In her testimony, usage of the pail becomes a torment that directly afflicted other victims, a common way for survivors to address delicate, taboo topics concerning the human body.

Whether Italians participated in acts of physical violence that morning, to say nothing of the more lurid, sadistic forms of cruelty, I have not been able to determine. Segre's testimonial documents are inconclusive on the point, and other survivors make no mention of them. However, insisting that Italians were indeed present, Segre asserts that "at the station, there were certainly Italians among the lower-rank personnel." Moreover, she makes clear that the Italian accomplices made no attempt to frustrate or impede the Nazi effort. Much to the contrary, the looks on their faces signaled tacit consent. Along with these guards, her testimony reveals that another group of Italians was present that morning, as well: railway workers. "Certainly the railroaders were Italians," she relates, adding that they escorted the deportees "up to the border," after which Austrians or

⁷⁵⁹ Seeing the "improvised toilets" on his transport from Rome to Fossoli led Jani to shout to another prisoner, "This is where civilization ends!"; Jani, *My voice saved me*, 51. For a full account of this transport, see 49-51.

⁷⁶⁰ "Il vagone era fetido e freddo, odore di urina, visi grigi, gambe anchilosate; non avevamo spazio per muoverci"; *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, 15.

⁷⁶¹ "inimmaginabilmente piccolo per tutta la gente che si ne doveva servire"; Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996. "che ben presto si riempì debordando"; Segre quoted in Borella, "Liliana, una sopravvissuta."

Germans took over.⁷⁶² If so, this means that it was Italians, not Germans, who elevated the victims from the dead-end track, *binario* 21, to the open air above and then expelled them from the city. With these railroaders (among others) in mind, Liliana remarks, “[I]t stupefies me whenever I hear someone say, ‘Nobody knew about the grand secret of the deportation’ ... They didn’t want to know.”⁷⁶³

The Sacerdote and Bayona families also had their cards pulled on January 29, though their paths hadn’t yet crossed, with each other or with Segre. Luciana Sacerdote, along with her mother and sister, would meet Liliana at the quarantine area during intake at Birkenau.⁷⁶⁴ Admitting that she lacks Liliana’s “memory of iron” (*memoria di ferro*), Luciana offers her own, abridged version of the deportation experience, before recommending Segre’s interview for the fuller picture: “We found ourselves on a separated train, without seeing anyone, without anyone seeing us; I knew this much. But how we arrived at the train ... I didn’t know ... but she [Liliana] has explained it.”⁷⁶⁵ That said, Luciana does recall being taken “underground” (*sottosuolo*) when they arrived at the station, and she observed how each wagon, including her own, was “propelled up” (*tutti spinti su*) to the main level before their convoy departed. When asked to describe the feeling of being trapped inside of a cattle

⁷⁶² “Certo gli italiani si è ferroviari. So che furono italiani fino al confine ... Sì, il personale di bassa forza alla stazione ... c’erano sicuramente anche gli italiani”; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. See also: Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁶³ “Sembra una cosa che mi stupisce quando sento dire ‘Nessuno sapeva il grande segreto di questa deportazione’ ... Non volevano sapere”; Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996. Citing Picciotto, Shira Klein records that in at least four cases, Italian police helped the Germans escort Auschwitz-bound convoys to the border. Perhaps referencing the interview with Vitiello, she notes that both the train conductor and the steam-engine operator were usually Italians. Given their immediate proximity to the victims, these men could have easily determined that “the sealed train cars themselves were a death sentence, regardless of their destination”; Shira Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 120. Vitiello himself insists that the brakemen “definitely” (*senz’altro*) would have known what or whom was being transported; Vitiello, Interview, febbraio 1996. For a comparison elsewhere in Italy, Alexis Herr notes that on the day of Primo Levi’s deportation from Fossoli, it had been Italians who drove the buses that transported his convoy from the camp to Carpi railway station; Alexis Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy: Fossoli di Carpi, 1942-1952* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 46, 137. Herr’s monograph documents the complicity of Carpi businesses, including public-transportation services, in the construction and operation of the Fossoli complex.

⁷⁶⁴ Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 20 febbraio 1996. There isn’t anything on record about Bayona meeting Segre or Sacerdote, either then or later in life.

⁷⁶⁵ “Ci siamo trovati su un treno separò senza vedere nessuno, senza che nessuno ci vidisse: questo, sì, lo sapevo. Però, in quel modo eravamo arrivati al treno ... non sapevo ... ma l’ha spiegato lei”; Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

car, she replies, “I can say that it was the end of all illusions ... of all of ... our plans, of everything ... It was really ... the collapse of all our dreams.”⁷⁶⁶ When asked where prisoners took care of their needs, unlike Segre, Sacerdote simply responds, “There, in the wagons.”⁷⁶⁷

Isacco Bayona, together with his mother and three siblings, was deported from Milano Centrale on January 30, as well. That morning, he encountered Germans at San Vittore prison for the first time, and without mentioning any Italian helpers, he states that German guards conducted the entire transport, from San Vittore straight through to Auschwitz.⁷⁶⁸ Before loading at the prison, while the Germans were assembling the convoy, Bayona relates that he attempted to escape, but a Nazi guard caught him and gave him a whack on the hand. Such a scenario sounds unbelievable, given the Nazis’ severe punishments for such actions, but it is not without precedent. Another Shoah survivor, Emilio Jani, describes how during a transport near Modena, he attempted to jump out of his prisoner lorry, but as soon as he got one leg out of the vehicle, an SS guard grabbed him by the neck, muttering, “This Jew wants to die right here,” before pulling him back in.⁷⁶⁹

After their “military trucks” (*camion militari*) arrived at Milano Centrale, Bayona, unlike Segre and the others, found himself in a familiar location. Reliving his prior experience at the station, only this time in reverse, he says that when the Germans transferred him and the other prisoners from their lorries onto the railcars, “they loaded us below, not above.”⁷⁷⁰ Once inside, Isacco estimates that he shared his cattle car with thirty to fifty other deportees. It was a tight fit, so the higher

⁷⁶⁶ “*posso dire la fine di tutte le illusioni ... di tutti ... dei progetti, di tutto ... È stato proprio ... il crollo di tutti nostri sogni*”; *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ “*Lì, sui vagoni*”; *ibid.*

⁷⁶⁸ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. Curiously, Isacco relates that a German guard was stationed on the roof of his deportation wagon (“*sul tetto del vagone*”), something that I have not been able to corroborate elsewhere. A German guard sitting atop a railcar, especially in the middle of the European winter, does not seem likely. Perhaps the make of his railcar was like that of the railcar on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which features an elevated guardpost at the rear of the unit; see “German Railways and the Holocaust,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USMM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-railways-and-the-holocaust>.

⁷⁶⁹ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. Jani, *My voice saved me*, 51-52.

⁷⁷⁰ “*ci hanno caricati sotto, non sopra*”; Bayona, Interview, *ibid.* See also: Bayona, Interview, 1987.

number is probably closer to the reality. “We were all herded together like beasts,” he remembers, adding that there was “little” (*poco*) to eat.⁷⁷¹

Other Destinations

Although over two-thirds of the deportations from Milano Centrale were fated for Auschwitz-Birkenau, arriving there either directly or indirectly, the remaining four transports terminated at different final destinations, either the Bergen-Belsen, Flossenbürg, or Ravensbrück concentration camps in Germany, or the Bolzano-Gries police-and-transit camp in the Alpenvorland.⁷⁷² One such transport, the twelfth overall from Italy, dispatched from the station on May 19, 1944, and arrived at Bergen-Belsen four days later, on the 23rd.⁷⁷³ Carrying non-Italian Jews, the majority of the deportees were Turks, including the Jaffè and Dana families, but some Hungarians and South Americans accompanied them, as well. There were thirty-seven victims in all, thirty-three of whom lived to see the end of the war.⁷⁷⁴

After being transported from San Vittore prison to Milano Centrale station, Samuele Dana notes that he and the other prisoners were unloaded from their lorry “below” (*sotto*) the station, in the “underground” (*sotterraneo*).⁷⁷⁵ Waiting for them was a single cattle car (*carro bestiame*), which carried all thirty-seven victims to their shared destination. The impression left on its passengers, however, was that of a much greater number. Salomone Dana, Samuele’s father, reports the precise

⁷⁷¹ “Eravamo tutti ammassati come le bestie”; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. See also: Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. ‘*Ammassati*’ can also mean ‘huddled together’, and to combat the cold, Isacco and the other prisoners in his wagon likely did just that. However, to capture the spirit of Nazi intentions, I have translated ‘*ammassati*’ as ‘herded’ instead.

⁷⁷² We must also note that, within the eleven Auschwitz transports, the original convoy from Milan sometimes splintered into multiple transports, taking different groups of victims to various locations. An example of this will be seen below.

⁷⁷³ The Shoah memorial book for Milano Centrale station, *Viaggio nella memoria*, does not list this date, but Picciotto’s *Il libro della memoria*, CDEC’s digital library, and the design of the memorial itself all indicate a 19 May 1944 transport destined for Bergen-Belsen. The memorial book does, however, list a 19 April 1944 transport. Given that no such deportation transport from Milan, or anywhere else in Italy, occurred on that date, this presumably is an editing error; see *Viaggio nella memoria*, 31.

⁷⁷⁴ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 52.

⁷⁷⁵ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996. See also: “Dana Salomone e Mosé,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

number of ninety-three passengers sharing the wagon (presumably a number that held meaning from some other aspect of his persecution experience).⁷⁷⁶ Samuele, meanwhile, remembers the more rounded sum of an even hundred, though he admits that “I could be wrong, because I was a young boy then.”⁷⁷⁷ Both overestimates are off by a multiple of three, but thirty-seven people being crammed into a single railcar produced a suffocating environment, made worse by their subsistence rations of bread and cheese.⁷⁷⁸ The cheese, one guesses, spoiled well before their train reached its northern German destination. Overall, it was a “very ugly” (*molto brutto*) trip, Samuele says.⁷⁷⁹ More crisply than Samuele, but still capturing the emotional toll of the experience, Lina Jaffè limits her account of her deportation to the episode at the central station. After arriving in the Milano Centrale underground (*nei sotterranei*), “There, in the dark, there were open cattle cars ... [The guards] led us inside. It was terrible there in the dark. How long we remained there, I don’t remember ... And then I know that the wagon started to go”.⁷⁸⁰

Fossoli First

After the 6 December and 30 January deportations, Milanese transports slated for Auschwitz began stopping at other destinations in Italy first before continuing onward to central Europe. Some of these stays lasted months; others lasted a day. The most common stopover was at Fossoli, the largest camp in the Italian Social Republic. Located in the Emilia-Romagna *comune* of Carpi, the

⁷⁷⁶ “Dana Salomone e Mosé,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

⁷⁷⁷ “*potrei anche sbagliarmi, ero ragazzino, allora*”; “Dana Samuele,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*.

⁷⁷⁸ It was not quite ‘all of Turkish Jewish Milan’, however, as Samuele attests. One Turkish Jew who was not put on this transport was Samuele’s uncle, Isacco Dana. Salomone remembers that his brother was left behind at San Vittore, though he would eventually be sent to Fossoli and, from there, to Auschwitz; see “Dana Salomone e Mosé,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino*; and “Dana, Isacco,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-1845/dana-isacco.html>

⁷⁷⁹ Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

⁷⁸⁰ “*Lì, nel buoi, c’era [sic] dei vagoni bestiame aperti ... Ci hanno portato dentro. Al buoi, lì è stato terribile. Quanto tempo siamo rimasti non mi ricordo ... E poi so che il vagone ha cominciato camminare*”; Jaffè, Interview, 20 novembre 1995. Despite the chronological synchronicity of Samuele’s and Lina’s stories, neither one ever mentions the other, despite assuredly being in each other’s company many a time.

Fossoli di Carpi camp underwent numerous changes before passing into Allied hands in August 1944. The Kingdom of Italy first built the camp in May 1942, on the grounds of a farmers' colony, to serve as a prisoner-of-war facility for Allied soldiers captured in North Africa, and Fossoli operated in this capacity until September 1943. Coinciding with the Armistice of Cassibile, after the Savoy monarchy abandoned northern and central Italy to the Germans, the new occupiers deported the remaining POWs before temporarily shutting down the camp. Following a few months of disuse, Fossoli reopened on 5 December 1943 as a Jewish concentration camp, a mere three days after Italian authorities ordered the mayor of Carpi to prepare the facility. Set up as part of Police Order no. 5, itself announced only on 30 November, Fossoli featured an all-Italian administration during this period, led by commander Giuseppe Laudani. Coincidentally, the first Jewish convoy to arrive in Fossoli, carrying ninety-seven prisoners, also originated in North Africa. Along with some Italian Jews, this convoy contained a group of Maltese Jews with British passports who had been detained in Africa's war-torn northern region.

Over the course of late February and early March 1944, Fossoli entered its final phase as an Axis facility. Although German and Italian administrators jointly ran the camp during this period, by all accounts, the Germans had the upper hand. As early as January, they had begun making inroads at Fossoli and signaling their intentions. On 20 January, Dannecker visited the camp before leaving for Hungary, certainly an ominous sign, and by February, the German presence at Fossoli had become more or less constant. On the ides of March, another portentous omen, the SS assumed formal control of the Fossoli complex, taking up official residence at the camp and dividing its administration between itself and the RSI. While the displaced Italian guard remained on hand to oversee the Old Camp (*Campo Vecchio*), the so-called "civilian camp", SS officials took over Fossoli's New Camp (*Campo Nuovo*), where they presided over the fates of its Jews and political prisoners,

mostly partisans.⁷⁸¹ In a corresponding move, toward the end of January, Friedrich Boßhammer had been transferred to Italy in coordination with Fossoli's administrative restructuring. Hoping to replace Dannecker's increasingly ineffective raids with a more systematic approach, Adolf Eichmann established an IV-B4 command center in Italy and installed Boßhammer at its head, where he worked under the high direction of Wilhelm Harster, chief of the Reich Security Main Office in the RSI. From his Verona headquarters, Boßhammer directed the Nazis' entire anti-Jewish campaign in the Italian Social Republic, aided by the men of his predecessor's disbanded flying squad. Thenceforth, placed under the jurisdiction of Boßhammer and IV-B4, it was the Germans who answered the Jewish Question at Fossoli.⁷⁸²

As intended, Boßhammer's installment triggered the second major phase of deportations from Italy, most of which left from Fossoli. With its New Camp reclassified as a police-and-transit camp (*Polizei-und-Durchgangslager*), Fossoli became "the nerve centre for deportations from Italy" for half a year, until Anglo-American forces drove the Germans and the *repubblichini* northward in August.⁷⁸³ On 26 January, the first Jewish deportation, consisting of eighty-three Anglo-Libyan Jews,

⁷⁸¹ Fossoli's prisoner groups were not always so neatly divided, however. A telegram from Old-Camp director, Mario Tagliatela, indicates that as of early May 1944, his facility was holding 661 Jews and 163 political prisoners; see Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy*, 75.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 3, 50-51, 74. Picciotto, "The Shoah in Italy," 215, 217, 219. Carlo Gentile, "The Police Transit Camps in Fossoli and Bolzano," Historical report in connection with the trial of Michael SEIFERT, 2005, 16, 19-20. Frauke Wildvang, "The Enemy Next Door: Italian Collaboration in Deporting Jews during the German Occupation of Rome," *Modern Italy* 12:2 (June 2007), 192.

⁷⁸³ Herr, *ibid.*, 51. Gentile, *ibid.*, 21. Evacuated on the first of the month, Fossoli was rapidly replaced by Bolzano-Gries, located in the Alpenvorland, as Italy's premier police-and-transit camp. Bolzano was meant to be a continuation of Fossoli, and in most respects, it was. Sometimes called "Fossoli 2", Bolzano served an identical purpose as the former camp – to feed the concentration camps and killing centers of central Europe – and even the German staff was virtually the same. However, while Jewish inmates kept their personal civilian clothing at Fossoli, albeit with distinguishing badges, they were forced to wear prison uniforms at Bolzano. The yellow rectangle at Fossoli merely transformed into a triangle at Bolzano; see Herr, *ibid.*; Cinzia Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945: Operationszone Alpenvorland and Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Zimmerman, 246-247; and Gentile, *ibid.*, 23-24. In all, over 200 Jews were deported from Bolzano, ending up either at Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, or Flossenbürg; see Villani, "The Persecution of Jews in Two Regions of German-Occupied Northern Italy, 1943–1945," 247. At the end of the war, the Allies liberated the camp and its prisoners, but today, while a memorial has been established at Fossoli, only a plaque marks the former Bolzano camp. Also, though the last six Jewish convoys to dispatch from Milano Centrale station either passed through Bolzano or terminated there, none of the survivors profiled in the present study was ever detained at the camp.

left for Bergen-Belsen, followed by Primo Levi's convoy, the first transport of Italian Jews, on 22 February. This Jewish transport, like most that departed from Fossoli, terminated at Auschwitz. Meanwhile, the Germans deported non-Jewish prisoners primarily to Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, and Dachau.⁷⁸⁴ In all, 2,844 Jewish victims passed through Fossoli before being sent to their final destinations, over one-third of all Jews deported from Italy (and slightly more than the 2,500 to 2,700 political prisoners interned there).⁷⁸⁵

By the time Jewish deportees from Milan began arriving at Fossoli, the Germans were already staging their soft coup of the camp. None of their stays, therefore, was meant to be permanent. Case in point, the members of the first convoy, which reached Fossoli on 11 February, were among the 517 Jews deported to Auschwitz eleven days later. Before the Allies overran the camp, four more transports from Milano Centrale would follow, the last on 9 June.⁷⁸⁶ After an unremarkable weeklong confinement at San Vittore prison, Goti Herskovits was put on the second-to-last Jewish transport from Milan to Fossoli on 14 May, arriving at its destination the following day. Loaded onto sealed lorries at the prison with her family and most of the remaining Jews – all but the Hungarians, according to one testimony – Goti was then shuttled across the city to Milano Centrale. There, in the depths of the station, she encountered the notorious cattle cars for the first time, infernal contraptions that lived up to their reputation. Inside the dark (*buio*) wagon, the heat joined forces with the crowdedness to create a stifling environment, and although the prisoners had

⁷⁸⁴ Gentile, *ibid.*, 21. Herr, *ibid.*, 45-46.

⁷⁸⁵ Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), ch. 7. Alberto Giordano and Anna Holian, "Retracing the 'Hunt for Jews': A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Arrests during the Holocaust in Italy," in *Geographies of the Holocaust*, eds. Anne Kelly Knowles, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), 64.

⁷⁸⁶ *Viaggio nella memoria*, 31. Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy*, 46. Using CDEC records, Picciotto documents 489 Jews being deported from Fossoli on 22 February 1944. I have privileged Herr's number, 517, because her study is more recent and because this is the number cited by the Fossoli di Carpi memorial foundation; see Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 48; and "Convogli partiti dal Campo di Fossoli nel 1944," Foundation Ex-Campo Fossoli, <http://www.centrostudifossoli.org/PDF1/convogli.pdf>. Primo Levi's given total of 650 deportees, cited at the beginning of this section, is an overestimate. The largest deportation to dispatch from Fossoli, as evinced by the memorial foundation's records, left on 16 May 1944 and numbered 582 victims. Levi's 22 February convoy was fourth largest.

been given a bit of food, they lacked water, and so “we died of thirst.”⁷⁸⁷ The contemptible bucket also reared its ugly, uncovered head, and for Goti and the other deportees, it was the first time since being arrested that they were made to take care of their needs without any privacy. “[F]or me it is difficult, it is impossible to describe how mortifying that was,” she relates, in words that echo Segre’s.⁷⁸⁸ Sweating, suffocating, and drouthy, their privacy denied and their dignity along with it, the prisoners endured “a horrible trip” (*un orribile viaggio*) to Fossoli, giving them their “first taste of what would come later.”⁷⁸⁹ Specifically, it was “a taste of the great deportation to Auschwitz,” which would come sooner than they thought.⁷⁹⁰

When their train stopped at Carpi station, Goti and the other members of her transport were placed on Italian-driven buses and taken the short distance to Fossoli camp, less than ten kilometers away. Although they spent their brief time at Fossoli in agonizing hunger, “it would have been nice to have stayed there,” she says, wistfully. “We couldn’t have asked for anything more.”⁷⁹¹ Alas, the SS had been preparing another deportation to Auschwitz, and Goti’s convoy was the last piece of the puzzle. The day after her arrival, 16 May – and two weeks to the day after her initial arrest – Goti Herskovits was expelled from Italy along with her family and 560 other Jews, and their convoy reached Birkenau’s ramp one week later, on 23 May.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁷ “*si moriva di sete*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7. See also p. 6; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 17; and Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987.

⁷⁸⁸ “*mi è difficile, mi è impossibile descrivere quale mortificazione rappresenti*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 8. For a parallel, near-verbatim account, see Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7.

⁷⁸⁹ “*il primo assaggio di quanto sarebbe avvenuto dopo*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, *ibid.*

⁷⁹⁰ “*un assaggio della grande deportazione fino ad Auschwitz*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 18.

⁷⁹¹ “*Sarebbe stato bello potervi restare, non avremmo chiesto niente di meglio*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 8. Again, for a parallel account, see Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 7. See also: Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987. Jani’s remembrances of Fossoli suggest that hunger was a defining trait of the camp, though he largely attributed it to the Balkan internee in charge of soup distribution, who watered down the rations. To stave off malnutrition, prisoners relied on the goodwill of contacts from outside the camp. Like Bauer and others, Jani remained optimistic during his detainment there. That families were permitted to stay together at Fossoli gave prisoners hope, and mail from the outside world uplifted their spirits; Jani, *My voice saved me*, 58-59, 70.

⁷⁹² “Herskovits, Agata,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personae/detail/person-3910/herskovits-agata.html>. Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 50-51.

Goti's deportation experience from Fossoli di Carpi couldn't have been more different from Primo Levi's (or, for that matter, Liliana Segre's from Milano Centrale). Namely, she recalls absolutely no violence, which she attributes to Nazi crowd-management techniques. "Everything was calm," she relates, "because it was one of their precise methods to avoid creating a panic."⁷⁹³ Across multiple testimonies, her story doesn't change. The guards never lay their hands on Goti or the other prisoners – unless they were offering to help them. There was no sudden outbreak of spontaneous, nonsensical violence. Much to the contrary, in Bauer's rendering, the Germans who escorted them from Fossoli to Auschwitz truly did escort them. "Tranquilizing" (*tranquillizzanti*) in their words and deeds, the guards never pummeled the deportees while loading them onto the wagons. Instead, they lent them a hand to help them up. They also reassured their victims that families would not be separated, and those who were unable to work – since they were being sent to a labor camp, they were told – would be permitted to remain in their barracks. On its face, such news would have been well-received by a family like the Herskovitses, with two elderly, ailing parents, and Goti indeed says that the oppressed believed their oppressors, if only out of desperation. The straws may have been slippery, but victims had no other choice but to suppress doubt and grasp. "In the end," Goti explains, "we had to believe what they told us, because we didn't have an alternative. There were no alternatives."⁷⁹⁴

Not that the Germans' improbable guarantees didn't sow seeds of doubt among the deportees. They did, as the previous passage implies. But according to Goti, it would have made little sense to voice them. "They told us that we were going straight to a labor camp," she relates.

⁷⁹³ "Tutto tranquillo, perché era uno dei loro precisi metodi quelli di non creare un panico"; Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁷⁹⁴ "Alla fine, deve credere a quello che li viene detto perché non ha alternativa. Non ci sono alternative"; *ibid.* Teodoro ("Teo") Ducci, an Auschwitz survivor who was deported from Fossoli on April 5, 1944, recalls a similar experience as Bauer. There was no violence during loading, he says, only commands given in German to move quickly, and before being loaded himself, he remained on the ground and helped load the elderly into their wagons; Teodoro Ducci, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Milan, 16 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000039/teo-ducci.html>.

“But how could we have believed that toddlers, newborns, or sick people could serve this purpose? We didn’t receive plausible answers to our questions. It wasn’t important to convince us; it was important to keep us calm so that we didn’t explode into panic.”⁷⁹⁵ Whether or not the victims were convinced, the strategy appears to have worked, for Goti does not recall a single flight attempt. Although “it wouldn’t have been difficult,” leading more than one prisoner to plot escape, no one tried in the end.⁷⁹⁶ Weighing the same deliberation they had while still living “freely”, would-be escapees dreaded the thought of abandoning their families and friends. Goti herself had the “insane” temptation to flee when, just before reaching the Brenner Pass, all prisoners were forced to briefly detain in Ora. But “I didn’t dare,” she says, fearing the consequences of her actions. “What would have happened to the others if I had succeeded,” she asks, knowing the answer:

According to the Nazi code, for every infraction, not only did the culprit pay the price, but so, too, did those around him. And beyond the impossibility of leaving behind one’s loved ones, heading toward who knows where, who would have been able to take on such a burden?⁷⁹⁷

Fausta Finzi and her father, Edgardo, arrived at Fossoli on April 27, 1944, the third such convoy from Milan to detour in Carpi before proceeding onward to central Europe. That day, they had been transported with a group of prisoners from San Vittore to Milano Centrale, where the Germans “brought us below, into the subterranean part of the station,” she indicates, making the downward hand gesture.⁷⁹⁸ After being loaded onto cattle cars (*vagoni bestiame, carri bestiame*), about thirty people per wagon, they were taken to Carpi and then transported by automobile the rest of the

⁷⁹⁵ “Dicevano che eravamo diretti ad un campo di lavoro; ma come avremmo potuto credere che dei bimbeti, dei neonati, dei malati servissero a questo scopo? Alle nostre domande non venivano date risposte plausibili; non era importante convincerci, era importante tenerci tranquilli perché non esplodesse il panico”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁶ “...non sarebbe stato difficile”; Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁷⁹⁷ “Ricordo la folle tentazione di fuggire che mi prese ad Ora, prima del Brennero, dove ci fecero scendere per qualche momento. Non osai. Cosa sarebbe successo agli altri, ammesso che vi fossi riuscita? Sì, perché secondo il codice nazista per ogni infrazione non pagava soltanto il colpevole ma quanti gli stavano intorno. E chi allora se la sarebbe sentita, al di là dell’impossibilità di lasciare i propri cari, diretti chissà dove, di assumersi una simile responsabilità?”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, p. 8.

⁷⁹⁸ “Ci hanno portato sotto nei sotterranei della stazione”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

way to Fossoli. Following an interrogation with the SS upon arrival, Fausta and Edgardo were admitted into the camp.⁷⁹⁹

Although the Finzis arrived at Fossoli before the Herskovits family, they did not depart with Goti's convoy on 16 May. As a political prisoner and a Jewish man in a mixed marriage, respectively, neither Fausta nor her father was fast-tracked to the slaughterhouse. While "full Jews" could be held at Fossoli anywhere from five weeks to less than a day (like the Herskovitses), "mixed Jews" (*ebrei misti*) might remain there for months before being deported, as Alexis Herr has documented.⁸⁰⁰ Fausta and Edgardo Finzi, despite their different prisoner designations, were not deported until 1 August, over three months after arriving at the camp.⁸⁰¹ Fausta's account of Fossoli resembles that of Primo Levi, who once said, "The Fascists didn't treat us badly, they let us write, they let us receive packages from home, they swore to us on their 'Fascist faith' that they would keep us there until the end of the war."⁸⁰² In fact, setting aside her interrogation, Fausta's remembrances of Fossoli might be even cheerier than Levi's, untinged by any hint of bitter sarcasm. Although Fausta was classified as a political prisoner, Herr notes that the "day-to-day existence" of political prisoners was similar to that of "mixed Jews", and within the confines of the Fossoli complex, "mixed Jews", along with children of mixed marriages and Jews married to non-Jews (like Edgardo), were afforded special privileges. For example, they received positions of responsibility, and while their own deportations were delayed, they were tasked with organizing those of other prisoners. Together, these three groups of Jews were what Primo Levi might have called the Jewish "Prominents" of the Fossoli

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy*, 54.

⁸⁰¹ Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, Milan, 25 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000222/fausta-finzi-1.html>. "Finzi, Edgardo," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/person/detail/person-2571/finzi-edgardo.html>; and "Finzi, Fausta," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/person/detail/person-2931/finzi-fausta.html>.

⁸⁰² Levi quoted in Ernesto Ferrero, "Chronology," in *The Complete Works*, ed. Goldstein, 32-33.

camp.⁸⁰³ As explained by one “mixed Jew”, Franco Schönheit, “Mixed Jews, Jews married to non-Jews, and the children of mixed marriages all remained behind to organize the departure of the others and to maintain the structure of the camp. Month in, month out, we would watch as these people streamed in and headed out for Auschwitz.”⁸⁰⁴ Fausta, who worked as a nurse at the camp, also remembers watching convoy after convoy leave for parts unknown, but as long as she remained in Fossoli, together with her father, she stayed optimistic about their chances of survival.⁸⁰⁵

Indeed, when Fausta and Edgardo first arrived at Fossoli, they were permitted to stay together, a welcome change after their forced separation at San Vittore. Though this had not always been the case, by late April, women political prisoners were being interned with Jewish women and children. Although camp administrators began enforcing gender segregation among Jewish prisoners the following month, men and women were permitted one half-hour visit each Sunday. Even after gender segregation was imposed, then, Fausta would have still had weekly access to her father, if only briefly. Given that Edgardo was a “privileged” Jewish prisoner, the Finzis most likely were able to rendezvous even more frequently, though Fausta doesn’t say.⁸⁰⁶ All in all, Fausta notes that Fossoli would have been a decent-enough place to wait out the war. “We didn’t go hungry, we had contacts, my dad was there,” she explains. “You could work, which allowed us to pass the time together. There was a sense of camaraderie. Therefore, at bottom, we said of Fossoli, ‘If we have to stay here until the end of the war, alright. Be patient.’”⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰³ Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy*, 58. Levi discusses privileged Lager inmates, the so-called and sometimes Jewish “Prominents”, in one of the better-known chapters of *If This Is a Man*, “The Drowned and the Saved” (chapter 9).

⁸⁰⁴ Franco Schönheit quoted in Herr, *ibid.*, 54.

⁸⁰⁵ Finzi, Interview, 25 marzo 1992. Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996. Fausta also recalls a patient at Fossoli’s hospital, a woman recovering from appendicitis, successfully escaping from the camp; see Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁸⁰⁶ At first, women political prisoners were quartered separately, in their own barracks; see Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy*, 52. See also: Finzi, Interview, 25 marzo 1992.

⁸⁰⁷ “Mangiare non mancava; i contatti li avevamo; mio papà era lì. Si poteva lavorare nel senso di passare insomma il tempo. C’era una certa fratellanza e così. Quindi, in fondo, a Fossoli noi dicevamo, ‘Vabbè se dobbiamo stare qui fino alla fine della guerra. Pazienza’”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996. Readers should not draw from Fausta’s account the conclusion that political prisoners (or Jews, or other prisoners) were lucky to end up at Fossoli. Though Finzi does not discuss the process, intake for Fossoli’s political prisoners has been described, by its victims, as its own form of “torture”. Political inmates were stripped naked,

But it was not to be. On 1 August, with Allied forces on the horizon and bringing the warfront with them, the Axis powers abandoned Fossoli's New Camp and deported its remaining prisoners.⁸⁰⁸ As Finzi remembers, "Only when the Gothic Line started to approach, only at that moment did we all leave."⁸⁰⁹ Until then, "mixed Jews", children of mixed marriages, and Jews married to non-Jews had been spared deportation. But with the total evacuation of the camp, all of Fossoli's remaining prisoners – "full Jews", Prominents, politicals, and all the rest – were expelled northward and beyond Italy's borders.⁸¹⁰ For the trip, they were given some parmesan cheese, which didn't hold up well in the midsummer heat, and a bit of bread or something of that nature.⁸¹¹ While the cold of the Shoah, a killer unto itself, has received most of the attention, the blistering summer heat could be a bastard, too.

Before leaving Italy, their convoy overnighted in Verona, a common way station for convoys heading for central Europe. Fausta recalls sleeping in a school with the other deportees, including Edgardo. The next day, 2 August, the deportees learned that their convoy would be divided. When Fausta discovered that she and her father would be put on separate transports, she requested to be deported with him. While the Germans had willingly granted her wish to be arrested alongside Edgardo, this time her request was denied. Her convoy left for Ravensbrück, reaching its destination

had their heads shaved, and were shoved into group showers, after which they were given prison garb marked with a number and a red triangle. (By contrast, Edgardo Finzi would have been permitted to keep his civilian clothing, albeit with a yellow rectangle patched on.) Moreover, given their often-spurious ties to the Resistance, political prisoners were first in line to be executed in reprisal massacres following partisan attacks. Following one such incident in Genoa that allegedly killed seven soldiers (the actual number was six), the order was given to execute seventy of Fossoli's political prisoners in response. Sixty-seven of the executions were carried out. (Incidentally, eight Jewish prisoners dug the mass grave after they volunteered to go on a 'work assignment' in Carpi.) Given that the partisan attack and German reprisal took place between June and July 1944, Fausta could have easily found herself selected for elimination; see Herr, *ibid.*, 58-61, and 172n.81.

⁸⁰⁸ The Italian-run Old Camp had closed in mid-July; see Herr, *ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁰⁹ "Solo quando la Linea Gotica ha cominciato accedere, allora a quel momento siamo partiti tutti"; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁸¹⁰ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 53. Finzi, *ibid.* Jani, also part of the 5 April 1944 transport, remembers how Fossoli's half-Jewish, half-Aryan prisoners – "cross-breeds", as he calls them – believed that they would be spared. Confident that the Vatican would intercede on their behalf, even thinking that Himmler might go easy on them, these prisoners eventually had their hopes dashed like all the rest; Jani *My voice saved me*, 60, 63.

⁸¹¹ Finzi, *ibid.*

on 5 August, while Edgardo's went somewhere else. She later learned that her father's transport had been sent to Auschwitz, arriving there on 6 August.⁸¹² As Picciotto documents, the Auschwitz transport, the only RSHA convoy of the four, consisted of "full Jews", while the Ravensbrück offshoot, presumably a *Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst* (SiPo-SD) transport, carried female children of mixed marriages. A third transport, carrying male children of mixed marriages, reached Buchenwald on 4 August, while the fourth line, consisting of mixed-marriage spouses, arrived at Bergen-Belsen on 5 August. Edgardo Finzi qualified for this final transport, but he was nevertheless deported to Auschwitz instead. Given the hasty, somewhat haphazard organization of Fossoli's evacuation, Picciotto admits that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the 1-2 August deportation.⁸¹³ The ad hoc nature of the evacuation might also help explain why Fausta, arrested as a political prisoner and detained as such, was put on the transport with female children of mixed marriages, which she technically was. Another possibility is that sometime during her incarceration, her prisoner status changed, although the point is speculative. In any event, Fausta recalls traveling to Ravensbrück with about forty other prisoners, "all women, all young" (*tutte donne, tutte giovani*). Fitting the profile, she herself was twenty-four years old at the time. Although the majority of her wagon-mates were political prisoners, some were Jews, and there were six children of mixed marriages, herself included. Regardless of state labels, she self-identified with this group – we recall how from a young age, Fausta had been nurturing her Jewish identity, despite her family's Catholic and agnostic leanings – and the small band of mixed-marriage children helped each other survive. "We were always able to stay together," she says. "We entered that labor camp together," and at the end of the war, all six left that labor camp together and returned to Italy, as survivors.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

⁸¹³ Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria*, 53-54. Like the Ravensbrück convoy, the Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald transports were also probably SiPo-SD operations.

⁸¹⁴ "Noi siamo riuscite rimanere sempre insieme. Siamo andate insieme in questo campo di lavoro"; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

Conclusion

After Jewish victims were expelled from Italy, their circumstances invariably worsened, whether they were delivered to death's doorstep at Birkenau or they were taken to some other less lethal, but still deadly, Nazi facility. This categorical difference in persecutory experiences would profoundly influence survivor memories deep into the postwar period, an effect that can still be observed today. But while dehumanization would have to await the arrival of the Germans and the Shoah, the Fascist regime had begun demonizing Italy's Jews well before their Nordic tormentors set foot on Italian soil.

Since the onset of the antisemitic press campaign in 1937, a crusade that endured throughout the Fascist era, Italy's Jews had been subjected to a daily torrent of abuse that smeared them as evil, perfidious, and essentially un-Italian in both biological composition and national orientation. When the state seized the baton and passed racial legislation in waves, making antisemitism a pillar of Italian Fascism, the cumulative effect of the laws, measures, and royal decrees divorced Jews from a national community that had become fundamentally racial in nature. Given the frequency with which interpersonal relationships remained intact – and, later, the considerable number of rescuers who sheltered Jews from harm – the concept of social death does not seem to accurately capture the collective status of Italy's Jewish population. Nevertheless, their circumstances progressively deteriorated from 1937-38 onward, with the war itself as arguably the most pivotal, precipitating factor. As the state cracked down even harder on this suspicious minority group, conscripting some Italian Jews into forced labor and confining foreigners in concentration camps, most members of the general population retreated inward in search of safety and self-preservation, thus isolating the Jews even more and driving them further toward pariah status. The Fascist regime's antisemitic measures, as we have seen, had provided the Germans with roadmaps to follow when they arrived, helping them to locate and arrest thousands of Jews living in Italy. These same measures nurtured a

climate that facilitated the Jews' collective descent toward a subhuman condition, and while it was the Nazis who took that fateful extra step into the abyss, as they so often did, they received plenty of help from local Italians. Rather than yielding obsequiously to the demands of their German overlords, the central government of the Italian Social Republic competed with them over anti-Jewish policy while enshrining antisemitism into their new state's constitution. At the local level, ordinary Italians denounced Jews to the authorities, police and paramilitaries arrested them, wardens and guards oversaw their detainment, and railroaders and conductors made the trains run on time that carried them to their deaths. Though few Italians got blood on their hands during the Shoah, many played key roles in that process, knowing full well the fates that awaited Jewish deportees.

Survivors do not even remember their time as prisoners in Italy. Far from it. But the experiences of detainment and deportation primed Italy's Jews for the horrors awaiting them in central Europe, regardless of their destination. Isolated from other inmates and often separated from their family members, Jewish prisoners inhabited filthy cells that they shared with lice and other pests. Surviving on minimal rations, their bodies had to fight off the winter cold and withstand the summer heat. At least at San Vittore prison, Jewish inmates eventually lost their names at intake, being reduced to a number and the letter 'E'. And though physical violence did not run rampant through these facilities, it wasn't unheard of, and it featured prominently in the terrifying interrogations. When prisoners were women, the violence they experienced could be invasive and sexual in nature.

For victims spared bodily assault in prison, their comparatively good fortune usually came to an end during deportation, as they were forcibly loaded onto cattle cars amidst a frenzied scene that Picasso himself would struggle to convincingly portray. Whether they perished in the Lager or lived to see liberation, it is likely that most of Italy's Jewish victims looked upon their deportation as the moment they entered the twisted world of the Shoah. Yet even the calm and orderly deportations,

like that of Goti Bauer, served the same purpose. As the names of their laws and the signage at their camps indicates, deception was one of the many items in the Nazi toolbox. Even the phrase “final solution” was meant as a euphemism, though it has come to acquire precisely the opposite connotation. And no matter how pacifically Jews were loaded onto cattle cars, they were still being loaded onto cattle cars, and they were still brought face to face with the humiliating pail.

Chapter V

The Good Italian, the Bad German, and the Survivor: *Brava Gente* Finds Unlikely Support

Let us tell tales so as not to allow the executioner to have the last word. The last word belongs to the victim. It is up to the witness to capture it, shape it, transmit it and still keep it as a secret, and then communicate that secret to others.

Elie Wiesel, 1977

By means of words, whether written or spoken, and reliable testimony, we survivors of Fossoli, Auschwitz and Mauthausen are entrusted with the sacred mission of keeping the bloodstained page alive, so that nothing whatever in this world might destroy it.

Emilio Jani, 1960

Introduction

Emilio Jani was something of an interesting character.⁸¹⁵ A gifted tenor from Trieste, his voice (and a false name) had kept him safe during the years of antisemitic persecution while drawing him ever closer to danger, like the time he and some friends sang at a hotel in Milan that was billeting SS troops. Delighted by his performance, one of them invited Emilio *Giannini* to attend an upcoming concert with him and some other officers. Emilio agreed, but the following morning he fled for Rome, where his luck finally ran out when one of his colleagues, an actress with whom he had shared the stage, denounced him to Italian and German authorities. Deported to Auschwitz with a convoy of mostly elderly men, Jani, fifty-four years old at the time, avoided the gas chambers by declaring “opera singer” as his profession, and the selecting official assigned him to forced labor. While imprisoned, his voice continued to be his salvation, and on one occasion he performed the romance from Ruggero Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci* for his German guards, much to their enjoyment. Camp Commandant Rudolf Höss, in an “unexpected gesture” that left his subordinates “dumbfounded”, even shook Jani’s hand after the performance and, in order to spare his voice,

⁸¹⁵ Elie Wiesel quoted in Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 147-148. Emilio Jani, *My voice saved me. Auschwitz 180046*, trans. Timothy Paterson (Milan: Centauro Editrice, 1961), 4.

reassigned him to a lighter work detail. “Here was a man of pure Aryan blood,” Jani writes, “the murderer authorized by Hitler to torture and kill, and one of his most loyal henchman [*sì*], shaking the hand of one who belonged to the hated race which was to be uprooted and totally destroyed like so many weeds. Open-mouthed, they stared on, unable to believe their eyes.” Ironically, Jani credits his life-saving performance to “bad food, or rather the lack of it,” which made his voice “lighter in timbre and clear as a bell” for the occasion. Hence, the title of his memoir, *Mi ha salvato la voce* (My voice saved me).

Jani had also been a Fascist, claiming that his staunch monarchism attracted him to Mussolini’s ultra-nationalist movement. In itself, this was no strange occurrence for an Italian Jew, though he only mentions the detail in his memoir’s epilogue, as if it were an embarrassing autobiographical admission that he tacked onto the end.⁸¹⁶ Fittingly, he dedicated the epilogue to Princess Malfalda of Savoy, the daughter of King Vittorio Emanuele III who was deported to Buchenwald, where, Jani alleges, she served in the camp brothel before she was killed.⁸¹⁷

Fifteen years after returning from Auschwitz, three factors came together and convinced Jani to write his memoir. (Had it not been for his “poor financial circumstances” in the immediate postwar era, he says, he would have written sooner.) First, he discovered personal letters from the Fascist and Nazi years, source material that he presumed had been lost forever. Second, the audience’s ‘incredulous’ reaction to a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in Milan left him disheartened, for it was clear to him that those in attendance “were under the impression that the

⁸¹⁶ Jani became close acquaintances with Teodoro (“Teo”) Ducci, briefly referenced in chapter four, during their imprisonment – both were part of the same transport from Fossoli to Auschwitz – and he credits his “dear friend” with saving his life during a death march by convincing him to keep going when he was on the verge of giving up; Emilio Jani, *My voice saved me*, 113-114. One wonders if the feeling were mutually shared, since later in Ducci’s life, their supposed friendship did not prevent him from “outing” Jani as a former Fascist in a testimony interview; Teodoro Ducci, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 16 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000039/teo-ducci.html>.

⁸¹⁷ It should be noted that she died during surgery after an Allied bombardment of the camp.

unfortunate Dutch girl was nothing but an ingenious instrument of propaganda”. Third, he became convinced that “it is the duty of all those who survived the concentration camps to prevent with all possible means – bloodless, of course – the malefactors from raging again and attempting to repeat their infamous deeds out of sheer wickedness and fanaticism.” While learned individuals had adequately documented the history of the camps, only firsthand witnesses, survivors, could relate their reality, and it was incumbent upon them to do so.⁸¹⁸

* * *

For all of the close calls and unlikely encounters, what is most fascinating about Jani’s memoir is the speed at which it was published, first appearing in 1960 before receiving an English translation the following year. Apart from Primo Levi, it was highly unusual for an Italian Jew to release a memoir before the 1980s, and even Levi struggled to find a publisher for *Se questo è un uomo* (If this is a man), the most well-known Shoah memoir. Until then, numerous factors had conspired to keep Italy’s Jewish survivors silent. Some were understandable, like the Jewish community’s desire to reintegrate in the postwar era and the mental disorders that afflicted survivors, including the guilt of having survived. Others were reprehensible, like the suppression of Jews’ experiences or the denial of them outright. All were regrettable. But over time, an equally vast number of motivations compelled or convinced Jewish survivors to testify, from mounting Shoah denial in Italian society and a parallel increase in survivor deaths, to pleas of “never again” and the desire to teach and instruct the younger generations, to a new type of guilt, the guilt of having abnegated one’s inherent duty as a survivor. In galvanizing and organizing these efforts, Milan’s Jewish Contemporary Documentation Center (*Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*, CDEC), the leading archive for Jewish history in Italy, played a prominent role.

⁸¹⁸ Jani, *My voice saved me*, especially 4-6, 40-41, 71-73, 75-76, 113-114, 118-119, 145-148. See also: “Jani, Emilio Gustavo,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-4253/jani-emilio-gustavo.html>.

When survivors finally did speak, a curious thing happened: they invoked the character tropes of the ‘good Italian’ (*bravo italiano*) and the ‘bad German’ (*cattivo tedesco*) in their testimonies, giving late-hour legitimacy to the *brava gente* myth. On closer inspection, however, this development is not so surprising. For one, Italy’s leading Jewish intellectuals and institutions had been endorsing *brava gente* since the early postwar era. Yet, many of them had never experienced the Nazi camps. From survivors’ own perspectives, for as awfully as the Fascist state and their Italian persecutors had treated them, it paled in comparison to the torture and abuse they suffered in the hands of the Nazis, who were actively trying to kill them while dehumanizing them every step of the way. The Germans, then, with few exceptions, presented an image of a people evil to its core in the minds of survivors, and they portrayed their ‘malefactors’ as such. When describing Italians, however, almost the exact opposite held true. The Italian majority had acted commendably, survivors recalled, even if they themselves had never run across a ‘good Italian’ during the years of Fascist and Nazi tyranny. Italians who had persecuted them, meanwhile, on their own or in league with the Germans, had cut themselves off from the true national community, a community to which Italian Jews felt they belonged. No matter what the Racial Laws or the *Manifesto of Verona* had decreed, Italian Jews never stopped identifying as Italian, while foreign Jews continued to feel welcomed and accepted by the majority. This differentiation in representation becomes especially evident when survivors, whether Italian or foreign, identify their persecutors, typically referring to Italians as ‘fascists’ and ‘*repubblicini*’ (supporters of Salò), while German persecutors remain, simply, ‘Germans’.

Coming Home, Taking Stock

With a population so greatly in flux during the 1930s and early 1940s, precise numbers are hard to come by, but Italy’s Jewish population was reduced by roughly one-third from the beginning of the Racial Laws until the end of the war, dropping from about 45,000 to 30,000. In addition to the 6,000

Jews who emigrated and the 6-8,000 more who were killed at Auschwitz or other camps, thousands converted and hundreds more died on Italian soil, some in Nazi-Fascist massacres, some in battle, and some by their own hand.⁸¹⁹ Milan, which had counted just over 10,000 “racially-defined Jews” at the time of the 1938 Jewish census, saw its population reduced by more than 800, all of whom are commemorated on a plaque outside the city’s rebuilt Via Guastalla synagogue.⁸²⁰

Liliana Segre returned to Italy at the end of August 1945, accompanied by a Jewish girl from Rome named Graziella Coen, one age her senior, whom she had met at Auschwitz. They were the only two Italian girls on their convoy home. Repatriated by the Red Cross in Bolzano, it was there that she became “Liliana Segre” again. Despite the permanent nametag on her arm, she would no longer be “75190”. When she and Graziella reached Milan’s *Stazione Nord*, a gentleman, unsolicited, gave her two lire, suspecting that the pair was “homeless, without anything” (*senza casa, senza niente*). It turned out to be a tragically accurate assumption. Arriving at her former residence on Corso Magenta, just around the corner from the station, Liliana was at first barred from entering. Failing to recognize her, Antonio, the doorman, shooed her and Graziella away, shouting at them, “Get out! Get out! Gypsies are not welcome here!”⁸²¹ After Liliana reintroduced herself, the two embraced and rejoiced over seeing each other again. Unfortunately, however, she could not stay, for her vacant home had been occupied by new tenants, who would not leave and were not forced to. With “the windows to her room forever barred,” Liliana went to live with her uncle Amedeo and aunt Enrica (Fumagalli) in the Marche. Amedeo had survived in hiding, aided in part by Enrica’s Catholicism, and Liliana’s maternal grandparents, the Folignos, had also avoided capture. Immediately after their

⁸¹⁹ Rony Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 185-187.

⁸²⁰ Francesca Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 71.

⁸²¹ “Fuori! Fuori! Le zingare non entrano qui?”; Liliana Segre, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000348/liliana-segre-2.html>. See also: Liliana Segre, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000092/liliana-segre.html>.

July 1943 vacation in Bormio with Liliana and her father, the Folignos had fled southward for Rome, where they were sequestered in a convent during the occupation.⁸²² Her paternal grandparents, however, Giuseppe and Olga (Loewy), perished in the Shoah. “By a twist of fate,” Liliana says, “relatives who remained faithful to Judaism were saved, while those who didn’t died at Auschwitz.”⁸²³ This ironic rule did not spare her agnostic father, either. Upon arrival at Auschwitz, Alberto was pressed into forced labor at Monowitz (Auschwitz III), where he died, age forty-four, on April 27, 1944.⁸²⁴ Her friend Graziella, meanwhile, lost her entire family at Auschwitz, her parents and three brothers.

After her liberation, Fausta Finzi briefly worked as a typist in Lubeck, Germany, at a matriculation center for Italian POWs before taking a circuitous route back home, traveling through Hamburg, Tyrol, and Verona before arriving in Milan. Reaching the city on October 31, 1945, she hailed a taxi from her arrival station, and although she had no money, the driver seemed to sense her situation. Taking pity on her, he drove her home free of cost, where she was reunited with her mother, Giulia (Robiati), whose Catholicism had spared her persecution. (Never captured, her brother, Carlo, also survived, but he goes unmentioned.) Eventually, Fausta learned that her father, Edgardo, had been killed as soon as he reached Auschwitz. Although Fausta says that, at fifty-five years of age, he was not elderly at the time of his deportation, she adds that he was “bald” (*calvo*),

⁸²² Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁸²³ “*Per ironia del destino, i parenti che rimasero fedeli alla religione ebraica si salvarono e quelli che non lo fecero morirono ad Auschwitz*”; Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 214. Liliana’s story of how she learned her paternal grandparents’ fate has changed over the years. In earlier testimonies, she says that officials of the Italian Social Republic, who had guaranteed her grandparents’ safety, went against their word and arrested them. After Italians turned them over to the Germans, her grandparents were deported to Auschwitz and killed upon arrival; see interviews in previous note. In a later testimony, however, she relates a different story. While speaking in Inverigo, the town where she, her father, and his parents had evacuated to avoid Allied bombardment, some sixty years after the war – and after her earlier interviews – some longtime locals told her that in exchange for 5,000 lire per victim, a fascist informer had denounced her grandparents to the Germans, who promptly arrested them and deported them to Auschwitz, where they were immediately killed; see Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 223. Although Italian arresters dominated the countryside in the RSI, there was indeed German activity around Inverigo, so this latter, more recent story is plausible.

⁸²⁴ “Segre, Alberto,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-7100/segre-alberto.html>.

which made him look older than he really was. She speculates that this is why he was “immediately eliminated” (*eliminato subito*) when he arrived.⁸²⁵ (Though she may be right, in general, male Jewish deportees aged fifty and older did not fare well at Auschwitz.)

The families of Samuele Dana and Lina (Ventura) Jaffè, like all Turkish Jews in Bergen-Belsen, were liberated by the Red Cross on March 4, 1945.⁸²⁶ After spending a year in Turkey after the war, as required by law, both the Danas and the Jaffès returned to Milan. Samuele’s paternal grandparents also survived, taking refuge in Italy with a family of Turkish Muslims. His uncle, Isacco, however, along with his wife and three children, died at Auschwitz.⁸²⁷ As the Jaffès took a ferry from Denmark to Sweden on their way home after liberation, Lina and her husband, Isaac, remarked how they had gone from being treated like beasts by the Germans during their last journey to enjoying all-you-can-eat buffets and a cabin to themselves on their current voyage. After spending the requisite year in Istanbul, where they stayed with Isaac’s family, they returned to their home in Milan, which Lina’s mother, Regina (Assael), had already secured. They found the place barren, however, and “we slept on the floor for a long time, my husband and I did.”⁸²⁸ Soon afterward, they were reunited, at long last, with their son, Solli, who had lived in hiding during the German occupation, but while Solli immediately recognized his father, he did not at first recognize his mother.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁵ Fausta Finzi, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996, 2 maggio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000042/fausta-finzi.html>.

⁸²⁶ Liliana Picciotto, *Il libro della memoria. Gli Ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)* (Milan: Mursia, 2002), 52. “Dana, Samuele,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-2342/dana-samuele.html?personone=%22Dana%2C+Samuele%22>. “Ventura, Lina,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personone/detail/person-8232/ventura-lina.html?personone=%22Ventura%2C+Lina%22>.

⁸²⁷ Samuele Dana, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Milan, 27 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000026/samuele-dana.html>.

⁸²⁸ “*Noi abbiamo dormito per terra qui quanto tempo mio marito ed io*”; Lina Jaffè, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*,” 1995-1996. Milan, 20 novembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC. <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000053/lina-jaffe.html>.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*

Outside of Milan, Giuseppe Di Porto, the first of our deported survivors, lost his father to Auschwitz, along with his cousin, Amedeo, who was presumably gunned down while trying to flee their death march. While Giuseppe, a native of Rome, was in Genoa in October 1943, his entire family evaded capture during the raid on the Roman ghetto, though some relatives and many friends were taken. His mother and seven siblings survived for the remainder of the occupation in hiding, but his father was ultimately tracked down. Deported from Fossoli to Auschwitz in March 1944, fifty-seven-year-old Sabatino Di Porto was selected for the gas chambers immediately upon arrival.⁸³⁰ In 1949, Giuseppe married Marisa Di Porto (no relation), who, together with her sister, Giuditta, had also survived Auschwitz, where they worked in a munitions factory. Their mother and younger brother, however, were gassed as soon as they arrived, and their father was among the 75 Jews (of 335 total victims) executed in the Fosse Ardeatine massacre of March 24, 1944.⁸³¹

Luciana Sacerdote lost her entire family to the Shoah. Her father, Claudio, was killed as soon as their convoy arrived at Birkenau, while her mother, Ernestina (Borgetti), died a month later from an illness. Laura, her sister, lived to see liberation, but she had grown gravely ill during their death march from Auschwitz. “All swollen, inflated” (*tutta gonfia, gonfiata*), she had contracted a terrible case of dysentery, “that thing that came ... for everyone,” and she died in a German hospital in July 1945.⁸³² Though Luciana does not mention them, her fiancé, Mario Fubini, and his mother,

⁸³⁰ Giuseppe Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene. Una testimonianza inedita di un sopravvissuto ad Auschwitz* (Rome: Quaderni, 2009), 29, 35. Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Rome, 28 giugno 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000031/di-porto-giuseppe.html>.

⁸³¹ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 34. Giuseppe Di Porto, Interview, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, 16 novembre 1986, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000178/giuseppe-porto.html>. Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. “Guiditta e Marisa Di Porto,” Massimo Adolfo Vitale, Busta 3, Fasc. 93, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/storico/detail/IT-CDEC-ST0026-000153/34-giuditta-e-marisa-porto-34.html>.

⁸³² “*quella cosa che venivano ... a tutti*”; Luciana Sacerdote, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Quinto, 2 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000078/luciana-sacerdote.html>. See also: *Viaggio nella memoria. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2013), 83.

Enrichetta Rimini, were killed, too.⁸³³ When she arrived in Italy, Luciana detrained, ironically, at Milano Centrale station, where she spent a night sleeping on a bench beside other refugees before resuming her journey home. When she reached Genoa, she discovered that her house had been converted into offices, so she was forced to find a new place to live. Her father's old textile business, however, remained intact and available, although it had been stripped bare. Restocking its shelves, she revived the business and kept it going until it finally went under in 1964 or '65, in the twilight of Italy's postwar economic miracle.⁸³⁴ As we might expect, Luciana's case was the exception, for as Ruth Ben-Ghiat notes, returning Jews faced enormous difficulties in trying to recover "their former jobs, assets, and influence". Many were forced to watch, helplessly, as prominent former Fascists remained in their vacated posts, failing to ever recover them for themselves.⁸³⁵

Isacco Bayona, along with the last of Auschwitz's surviving remnant, was liberated from the camp when the Red Army arrived on January 27, 1945, his nineteenth birthday. After spending time in Kraków, Lublin, and a refugee camp in Minsk, Isacco returned to Italy, not his Greek homeland, where he resettled in Livorno and rejoined its Jewish Community. Throughout the war, his father, Raffaele, had survived in hiding, convalescing at a sanatorium in Livorno where the staff proved uncooperative with local authorities. The rest of Isacco's family, however, was killed. His mother, Diamante (Jacob), and his younger sisters, Lucia and Dora, were sent to the gas chambers as soon as they arrived at Birkenau (February 6, 1944), while his older brother, Carlo, died closer to the end of the war. The circumstances surrounding Carlo's death are unclear, but Isacco reports that after returning to Italy, he went to an office in Milan where survivors could inquire about the

⁸³³ "Fubini, Mario," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-2650/fubini-mario.html>. "Rimini, Enrichetta," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-6513/rimini-enrichetta.html>.

⁸³⁴ Sacerdote, Interview, 2 marzo 1996.

⁸³⁵ Such a problem was rampant, for instance, in the Italian academy; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 341.

whereabouts of missing Jews (Via Unione 5, discussed below). There, he learned that Carlo had been shot in the chest while trying to flee Buchenwald for the American line, and he succumbed to his wounds in a US-run hospital on March 17, 1945.⁸³⁶

Agata Herskovits lost virtually everyone she knew and loved to the Shoah, “entire families” that “disappeared into the Lager”.⁸³⁷ Along with over fifty relatives from Hungary, Romania, and her country of origin, Czechoslovakia, Goti’s entire immediate family was eliminated. Her father, Luigi, and her mother, Rebecca (Amster), were killed as soon as they reached Auschwitz on 23 May 1944, while her brother, Tibor, died later, on the last of March 1945. A half-sister, Lili, who had been living in Romania before the war, was also killed.⁸³⁸ Unlike most survivors – and all others profiled here – Goti emerged from Auschwitz sharing her story far and wide. Shortly after returning to Italy, she abandoned Fiume, whose future was up in the air anyway, and traveled instead to places like Milan and Rome, where she hoped to reach wider audiences. “I recounted my experience often, everywhere, for everyone,” she says.⁸³⁹ But it did not last long, and she soon stopped testifying altogether when she began to detect a tiredness, a fatigue (*stanchezza*), in her increasingly begrudging audience. By July 1946, she had married and moved to Africa.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁶ Isacco Bayona, Interview by Andrea Devoto, Livorno, 1 marzo 1989, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000215/isacco-bayona-1.html>. Isacco Bayona, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Livorno, 1 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000011/isacco-bayona.html>. *Viaggio nella memoria*, 41.

⁸³⁷ “*intere famiglie*”; “*scomparse nel Lager*”; Agata “Goti” Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996. Milan, 8 – 18 settembre 1995, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000010/agata-34-goti-34-bauer.html>.

⁸³⁸ “Herskovits, Luigi,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persone/detail/person-3518/herskovits-luigi.html?persone=%22Herskovits%2C+Luigi%22>. “Amster, Rebecca,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persone/detail/person-646/amster-rebecca.html>. “Herskovits, Tibor,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persone/detail/person-3531/herskovits-tibor.html>. Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 1, dicembre 1982, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

⁸³⁹ “*Io ho raccontato molto la mia esperienza, dappertutto, per tutti*”; Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, *Testimonianze sulla Shoah – 1982-2002*, Milan, 25 febbraio 1987, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000211/goti-herskovits-bauer.html>.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 13, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC. Goti (Herskovits) Bauer, Interview, 4 marzo 1992, Lato A, pp. 12-14, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

Aldo Zargani and his immediate family survived the war in hiding, but all of his relatives, friends, and acquaintances who were deported died. One of whom, his cousin Lidia (“Pucci”), survived Auschwitz only to die of dysentery, like Laura Sacerdote, after liberation. His uncle Carlo Morais and his entire family, as we know, were also killed, deported to Auschwitz on 30 January 1944 in the largest convoy to depart from Milan. While Carlo’s wife, Mafalda Ida (Tedeschi), and their children, Graziella and Alberto, were gassed immediately upon arrival (February 6), there are conflicting reports about Carlo’s own death (not to be confused with the vague circumstances surrounding Carlo *Bayona*’s death). One account indicates that he was shot during a death march, but another claims he was left behind at Auschwitz, where he died shortly after the Red Army arrived.⁸⁴¹ The official record marks his date of death as 18 January 1945, but although the last of the major death marches left Auschwitz on that very date, we cannot say for sure that this was how he ended.⁸⁴²

Rebuilding

Though not to the same degree as belligerents like Germany and Japan, Italy was in a state of ruin after World War II. Not only had the country been riven and split by five years of war and twenty months of civil war and occupation; its cities had suffered extensive damage from Allied bombardment. No Italian metropolis was hit as badly as Naples, but Milan (like Rome) was not far behind. According to one city billboard, angrily titled “Milan wounded by the Anglo-Saxon ‘liberators’” (*Milano ferita dai “liberatori” anglosassoni*), 10,770 Milanese homes had been destroyed,

⁸⁴¹ Aldo Zargani, *Per violino solo. La mia infanzia nell’Aldiqua (1938-1945)* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995), 53n.1, 136, 194-195.

⁸⁴² “Morais, Carlo,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-5540/morais-carlo.html>. “Death Marches,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USHMM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/death-marches>. Aldo himself passed away only a couple weeks prior to the time of writing, on October 19, 2020; “Zargani, Aldo,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/personne/detail/person-it-cdec-eaccpf0001-017736/zargani-aldo.html>.

along with 144 schools, 145 hospitals and cultural centers, and sixty-three churches. Whether or not these totals are accurate, the rate at which the city recovered in the early postwar period was still incredible. By 1946, La Scala Theatre, whose roof had collapsed during the war, reducing its grand hall to a heap of rubble, was already celebrating its grand reopening. A decade later, Milan was piloting Italy through its economic miracle, “one of the most intense and concentrated periods of economic development the world has ever seen”.⁸⁴³ In the spirit of reconstruction, Italy’s Jewish community rebuilt itself, too. Appropriately, these efforts began in Milan.

The rebirth of Milan’s, and Italy’s, Jewish communities can be traced to the building at Via Unione 5, located in a nook around the corner from il Duomo. As a memorial plaque affixed to the building reads, at Via Unione 5, Milan’s Jewish community “returned to life” (*tornò a vita*) after the war. Requisitioned from the Allies by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint), the center opened in May 1945. Along with Italian Jews who were either emerging from hiding or returning from the Nazi camps, Via Unione 5 catered to Jewish Displaced Persons from across the Continent, and the center featured a small hospital, a cafeteria (*mensa*), a dormitory, and a provisional synagogue, since Via Guastalla lay in ruins. For many Jews who had evaded capture by going underground, it was only when they visited Via Unione that they learned the extent of the German occupation, including the confiscation of their possessions and the deportation and extermination of their fellow Jews. Alongside the Joint, roughly fifteen other major Jewish and international organizations established offices at center, including ADEI-WIZO, ORT, and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Approximately 10,000 Jews from all over Europe passed through Via Unione, either *en route* to Palestine or, since the center acquired lists of

⁸⁴³ John Foot, “Mass cultures, popular cultures, and the working class in Milan, 1950-70,” *Social History* 24.2 (1999), 134-135. See also: John Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 105-109; “Milano. Storia di una rinascita: 1943-1953, Dai bombardamenti alla ricostruzione” (Milan: Comune di Milano, 2016); and Francesco Ogliari, *25 aprile 1945. Milano prima e dopo: I bombardamenti aerie 1940 – 1945*, Vol. 1-2 (Pavia: Edizioni Selecta, 2011).

survivors and missing persons, in search of information about their loved ones. As Primo Levi's narrator observes in *Se non ora, quando?* (If not now, when?), "The Aid Office was teeming with refugees: Poles, Russians, Czechs, Hungarians, nearly all of them speaking Yiddish."⁸⁴⁴ Milan, thus, was a common first stop for Jews who were abandoning Europe, and while most Italian Jews remained in the patria after returning, their foreign counterparts typically continued onward to Palestine, the United States, or some other place less touched by the "horrors of the war".⁸⁴⁵ Nevertheless, they took with them fond memories of Italy, expressing their "gratitude for having found in Italy their salvation".⁸⁴⁶

Milan's own Jewish population recovered in piecemeal fashion. The return of survivors, joined by a small portion of European refugees who stayed, helped a bit, and the economic miracle of the 1950s and '60s spurred the Jewish birthrate. But the greatest factor contributing to the local population's rebound came from outside Europe. In the geopolitical fallout from the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, thousands of Jews from North Africa and the Levant either fled to Italy or migrated there after being expelled from their countries of origin, introducing Sephardi elements to the local population's Ashkenazi and indigenous ethnic makeup. Immigration especially surged after the Suez Crisis of 1956, with Egyptian Jews leading the way, followed first by Jews from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Morocco, and later by their coreligionists from Iran and Libya. By 1975, Milan's Jewish Community reached its postwar peak of 9,500 members. Reflecting the new demographics, a plurality of Milan's Jews came from North Africa and the Levant, thirty-seven percent, one-third

⁸⁴⁴ Primo Levi, *If Not Now, When?*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Ann Goldstein, trans. Antony Shugaar (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015). See also: Stefania Consenti, *Luoghi della memoria a Milano. Itinerari nella città Medaglia d'Oro della Resistenza* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2015), 89-90; Francesca Constantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano* (Milan and Udine: Mimesis, 2016), 93-101; and Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 26.

⁸⁴⁵ "orrori della guerra"; Hamaui, *ibid.*, 166. See also: Consenti, *ibid.*, 84; and Alexander Stille, "The Double Bind of Italian Jews: Acceptance and Assimilation," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 30.

⁸⁴⁶ "la gratitudine per aver trovato in Italia la salvezza"; Klaus Voigt quoted in Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 166. See also: Iael Nidam-Orvieto, "The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943," in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 158 and 176n.2; and Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

came from elsewhere in Italy or Europe, and less than a third had been born in Milan itself. Since the early 1980s, however, the population has once again been on the decline, dropping to 6,000 by 2012. Along with a declining birthrate, emblematic of Italian and European trends but also the result of interfaith children not adopting Judaism, many young adults abandoned Italy during the global financial crisis and Great Recession, an outflux that has both reduced and aged Milan's current Jewish population.⁸⁴⁷

Elsewhere in Milan, the Central Synagogue on Via Guastalla, the first true beating heart of Milan's Jewish Community, lay lifeless, reduced to nothing more than its frontal façade and its red and white marble floor. Thanks to contributions from the Italian state and notable benefactors, including Sally (not Saly) Mayer, wealthy businessman and president of the local Community, the Central Synagogue reopened in 1953, though Mayer, sadly, died in an automobile accident that same year. One of the architects who designed the rebuilt synagogue, Eugenio Gentili-Tedeschi, had fought with the partisans in the Valle d'Aosta and, in the twenty-first century, helped design the Shoah Memorial of Milan (*Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*), though he was not involved in the synagogue's 1997 restructuring.⁸⁴⁸ The Via Eupili school, the temporary center of Jewish life in Milan after the synagogue's ruin, already resumed learning activities in October 1945, and in 1964, the learning center relocated, fittingly, to Via Sally Mayer, named for the local Jewish icon who had watched over the school's reopening and the Community's rebirth. A two-building structure, the building at Via Eupili 8, renamed the Jacob Malki House of Culture (Casa di cultura Jacob Malki), became the seat of CDEC, officially commencing activities and opening to researchers in 1986.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁷ Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano*, 27-29.

⁸⁴⁸ Hamaui, *ibid.*, 96-97. Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 70-71, 74-77. Consenti, *Luoghi della memoria a Milano*, 83-84. "Sally Mayer, President of Milan Jewish Community, Dies," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 6, 1953, <https://www.jta.org/1953/08/06/archive/sally-mayer-president-of-milan-jewish-community-dies>. "Eugenio Gentili-Tedeschi," Partisans & Countries, *Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation*, <http://www.jewishpartisans.org/partisans/eugenio-gentili-tedeschi>.

⁸⁴⁹ Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 23. "La Fondazione," Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea, <https://www.cdec.it/fondazione/>.

Lastly, in 1947, a memorial was erected in the Jewish wing of Milan's Monumental Cemetery. Dedicated to Jews who died in Italy during the years of Nazi-Fascist tyranny, the commemorative mausoleum holds the bodies of eleven Jews, five of whom fell in the Resistance, four who died in German-run camps and prisons, and one apiece killed in massacres and raids. (A twelfth vault holds the body of an Italian Jew who died that same year, 1947, while fighting in Eretz Israel.) The bodies of the eleven Jews who had died on Italian soil, killed in a variety of ways, were meant to collectively symbolize the martyrdom of Jews in Italy from 1943 to 1945.⁸⁵⁰

This Jewish-focused memorial was not, however, a sign of things to come. More representative of the future of memorialization in Italy was the cemetery's Monument to the Victims of the Concentration Camps (*Monumento ai caduti nei campi di concentramento*). Displayed prominently at the cemetery's entrance, not tucked away in some secluded corner, the Monument was designed by Milan's BBPR architectural firm, named for architects Gian Luigi Banfi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peresutti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Anti-Fascist in disposition, BBPR suffered directly under Fascism and National Socialism; Rogers, a Jew, was compelled to flee to Switzerland, while Belgiojoso and Banfi were deported to Mauthausen, where the latter was killed. At the center of the memorial, Rationalist in style and featuring a square, tubular frame, a glass urn holds soil from Mauthausen. Unlike the commemorative tomb in the Jewish wing, the Monument to the Victims of the Concentration Camps bespeaks a suffering and victimhood that take on Italian-wide, and perhaps universal, proportions. Containing passages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the memorial also betrays a bit of Catholic influence, hegemonic in Italian culture.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁵⁰ Costantini, *I luoghi della memoria ebraica di Milano*, 82-87.

⁸⁵¹ Paolo Brambilla, "Monumento ai caduti nei campi di concentramento: 1946-1946, BBPR," *Ordine e fondazione degli architetti, pianificatori, paesaggisti e conservatori della provincia di Milano*, <https://www.ordinearchitetti.mi.it/it/mappe/itinerari/edificio/562-monumento-ai-caduti-nei-campi-di-concentramento/28-lo-studio-bbpr-e-milano>.

The Long Silence

In his novel, *Dead Beat* (2005), one of Jim Butcher's characters remarks, "Time after time, history demonstrates that when people don't want to believe something, they have enormous skills of ignoring it altogether."⁸⁵² For Italians, this impulse might as well have been written into their cultural genetic code, dating from the practice of *damnatio memoriae* in Roman times.⁸⁵³ Despite a brief but bloody period of street-level score-settling toward the war's end, a collective catharsis punctuated by the public desecration of Benito Mussolini's corpse (and those of some members of his inner circle) in Milan's Piazzale Loreto, official justice quickly replaced and suppressed wildcat *epurazione*, and reconciliation and reconstruction won out over reckoning.⁸⁵⁴

If de-Nazification ended up being inadequate, de-Fascistization bordered on the nonexistent. In Germany, practical obstacles encountered by the occupying powers, coupled with their own ideological prejudices, hampered de-Nazification efforts. In Italy, where Italians were permitted to conduct their own trials and purges from the beginning, de-Fascistization was undone by a lack of will and a desire to deflect. Most judges and lawyers involved with the proceedings were themselves former Fascists, so a thorough de-Fascistization would have mandated self-incrimination. Further constraining the scope of postwar justice was its fixation on the collaborationist Italian Social Republic, and not the sovereign Fascist regime that had ruled Italy until 1943. As Tony Judt observes, in de-Fascistization proceedings, a fine distinction was made between "Salò and non-Salò Fascists."⁸⁵⁵ As a result, the antisemitic crimes committed in the name of the Kingdom of Italy went overlooked. With all in agreement (in Italy and elsewhere) that the Germans alone bore

⁸⁵² Jim Butcher, *Dead Beat* (New York: Roc, 2005), 68.

⁸⁵³ Harriet I. Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace and Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁸⁵⁴ Tony Judt relates that in the last months of the war, Italian partisans summarily executed nearly 15,000 "real or imagined" collaborators in reprisal actions; Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London and New York: Penguin, 2005), 42.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

responsibility for the worst of the crimes, the logic of postwar justice held that only Italians who had directly implicated themselves in Nazi criminality should face punishment. In the end, very few did. Of the 394,000 government employees who had been investigated by February 1946, only 1,580 were dismissed, and purged prefects, mayors, and mid-level bureaucrats almost always got their jobs back, or at least had their fines canceled.⁸⁵⁶ Overseeing the process, British and US officials judged Italian Fascism to be less objectionable than German National Socialism, and they desired above all to stabilize the weakened Italian state and prevent the Communists from turning the chaos to their own advantage. Along those lines, with eyes cast across the Ionian, they feared that the fractious Italian north might go the way of Greece and break out into civil war (which, really, would have been a continuation of a civil war already in progress).⁸⁵⁷ Sharing the Anglo-Americans' concerns, Palmiro Togliatti, Minister of Justice and leader of the Communist Party(!), issued a general amnesty in June 1946 that put the matter to rest. In the interest of political and social détente, the Togliatti Amnesty pardoned all military and political crimes that carried a sentence of less than five years' imprisonment, releasing 10,000 of the 13,000 prisoners who, in summer 1946, had either been sentenced or were on trial for crimes that included plunder, destruction, massacres, and collaborationism.⁸⁵⁸

As at Nuremberg, throughout the whole de-Fascistization affair, the Jewish dimension of Nazi and Fascist criminality was a virtual non-issue. According to Enzo Collotti, Guido Buffarini-Guidi, the Interior Minister of the Italian Social Republic who was executed on 10 July 1945, might have been the only Italian official whose postwar trial underlined his role in the deportation and

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 47-48. Simon Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners: revisiting the role of Italians in the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 19:1 (2017), 32.

⁸⁵⁷ Judt, *ibid.*, 46-47. Claudio Pavone, *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance*, ed. Stanislao G. Pugliese, trans. Peter Levy and David Broder (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2013). Roy Palmer Domenico, *Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1991.

⁸⁵⁸ Levis Sullam, "The Italian executioners," 32.

murder of Italy's Jews.⁸⁵⁹ Simon Levis Sullam goes one step further, contending that Italy's postwar proceedings neglected to take the Jewish Question into consideration at all.⁸⁶⁰ With Italy's answers to that question minimized or elided, the truth and extent of Italians' antisemitic crimes under Fascism, before and after September 1943, were swept under the rug and repressed in collective memory.

With the sins of the former regime forgiven, forgotten, and foisted upon the shoulders of a few prominent Fascist thugs, sanitizing master narratives of the Second World War – and all its attendant horrors – quickly dominated public and political discourse, overpowering what was in fact a highly nuanced historical reality. Above all, two interrelated myths came to define the Italian national experience of World War II; the first held that Germans were entirely to blame for the conflict; and the second accentuated the Italians' naturally benevolent character, a juxtaposition to German barbarism that, allegedly, had manifested itself in a movement of national Resistance to the occupation. Whether actively or passively, with guns or with prayers, all Italians had opposed German tyranny and domination, so the story went. But although such myths took root in Italy as easily as they did elsewhere on the Continent, Italians encountered a dilemma unfaced by other Europeans.⁸⁶¹ Because Fascist Italy had been Nazi Germany's foremost ally, dating from before the war, Italy occupied a problematically unique position in history with respect to the Third Reich. Such a history, Filippo Focardi contends, required a unique memory, and this took shape around the nationally idiosyncratic myth of "*italiani brava gente*", the idea that Italians are innately good people.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁹ Enzo Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei. Le leggi razziali in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), ch. 8.

⁸⁶⁰ Though three Jewish survivors did testify at Nuremberg, they were called to the stand not as Jews, but as "Allied nationals" (2 Poles and 1 Soviet); Laura Jockusch, "Justice at Nuremberg? Jewish Responses to Nazi War-Crime Trials in Allied-Occupied Germany" *Jewish Social Studies* 19:1 (Fall 2012), 123-124, 129. By contrast, no Roma or Sinti whatsoever testified.

⁸⁶¹ For the European-wide expanse of these myths, see Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 121: 4 (Fall 1992), 83-118. The Germans had their own variation on this theme, in which they blamed the Nazis, while (former) Nazis blamed Hitler; Richard Ned Lebow, "The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe," in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 21.

⁸⁶² Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Rome-Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli S.p.A., 2013), vii-viii. Interestingly, Frank Stern explains how in the 1950s, film in West Germany attempted to fashion an image of the Germans as "a nation of decent people", but this notion does not appear to have

Underpinned by an inherited tradition of Latinness and Catholicism, Italians presented themselves as a people immune to murder and violence, much less genocide and war.⁸⁶³ It was not by accident that the *bravo italiano* was the antithesis of the Fascist *Uomo nuovo* (New Man).⁸⁶⁴

‘Good Italians’ (or, Italians) contrasted themselves even more diametrically with Germans. As the title of Focardi’s book implies, the myth of the ‘good Italian’ (*bravo italiano*) necessitated the counter-myth of the ‘bad German’ (*cattivo tedesco*); one could not exist without the other, and when conceptualized together, they constituted the “hegemonic narrative” of Italy’s World War II experience.⁸⁶⁵ In *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, it is the professor of German, “a real dyed in the wool Nazi”, who denies Micòl high honors on her thesis, much to the chagrin of her Italian evaluators. As if to reinforce the point of German domination, the lone Nazi instructor’s verdict wins out over the others’.⁸⁶⁶

Of all the myths and their offshoots to emerge in Italy after the war and the Shoah, *italiani brava gente*, which by nature encompasses all Italians, has proved to be the most resilient. Even as the Resistance vulgate has faded from prominence in the Berlusconi era of Italian politics, *italiana brava gente* continues to hold strong. However, throughout the fifty-year history of the so-called First Italian Republic, it was the Resistance narrative and its protagonist, the partisan-martyr, that stole all of the commemorative attention. With urban topographies reflecting the Resistance hegemon in street names, memorials, and placards, with notable saturation in Milan, little space was made for racial victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution, metaphorically or literally. It was not that partisans

caught on in any way comparable to that of the *brava gente* in Italy; see Frank Stern, “Film in the 1950s: Passing Images of Guilt and Responsibility,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1969*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁸⁶³ As remarked in a 1990s interview by a non-Jewish woman who had hidden Jews during the war, “it was enough to have been Christian, to have had a bit of humanity”; quoted in Ben-Ghiat, “The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni’s *Life Is Beautiful*,” 340.

⁸⁶⁴ Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano*, x-xi, 110, 180-182, 186.

⁸⁶⁵ “racconto egemonico”; *ibid.*, xiii. See also ix-x, 182-183.

⁸⁶⁶ Giorgio Bassani, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, trans. Isabel Quigly. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 159.

were universally popular in Italy after the war, or that the myth received unanimous support; Resistance fighters had acquired their fair share of detractors during the occupation, and as John Foot shows, they were remembered with scorn and contempt in villages where townsfolk suffered severe Nazi reprisals. But as Ben-Ghiat notes, partisans “posed fewer moral anxieties than returned Fascist soldier prisoners or Jews, both of whom, for different reasons, evoked unwanted memories of Italy’s former status as a Nazi ally.”⁸⁶⁷ Considerations of a more practical nature also sustained the Resistance myth deep into the postwar years. In a political setting premised on antifascism, a history of Resistance activity, real or imaginary, proved essential to one’s political fortunes.

With so much attention paid to the Resistance and the partisan victim, and so correspondingly little devoted to the Shoah and the plight of Jews under Fascism, it comes as no surprise that the postwar government took its time removing the remaining antisemitic laws from the legal code. Instead of abolishing them all at once in a public display of atonement, the government simply no longer enforced them, abrogating them gradually and quietly. “Everything possible was done to avoid acknowledging the Jews their rights as a persecuted people,” Fabio Levi notes, and “the world of politics and institutions ... required that the Jews go back into the shadows.”⁸⁶⁸ It was not until 1987, occasioned by the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Racial Laws, that the Senate finally rescinded the last of the state’s antisemitic legislation. Shockingly, the senator behind this effort, a history professor named Giovanni Spadolini, announced that with the abrogation of the Racial Laws, “the Italian Republic had now paid its debt to the Jews in full,” as if to slam shut a painful chapter of Italian history that he, as a formerly open antisemite and *repubblicino*, had helped write.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁷ Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory*. Ben-Ghiat, “The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni’s *Life Is Beautiful*,” 341.

⁸⁶⁸ Fabio Levi, “Anti-Jewish Persecution and Italian Society,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 204.

⁸⁶⁹ Giovanni Spadolini quoted in Claudio Fogu, “*Italiani brava gente*: The Legend of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio

There is some evidence that, in the immediate aftermath of the war, ordinary Italians were willing to listen to the stories of their persecuted Jewish neighbors. Goti Bauer, for instance, found her audiences to be receptive at first, but as her case shows, the mood quickly turned, and ears soon went deaf. As meta-narratives took root, and non-Jewish Italians took stock of their own losses, sympathy was replaced with indifference, comparative victimhood, and a first round of Shoah fatigue. Zargani, in his characteristically caustic manner, remembers that within a matter of weeks, the same “Empire of Indifference” (*Impero dell’Indifferenza*) returned to Italy that had established its dominion over the country in the wake of the Racial Laws. “At first,” he writes, “when we spoke of the horrors we had seen, we encountered sympathetic reactions, but soon the responses changed in tone: ‘Well, you know, my son broke his foot in ’44, and we had to set it with a piece of wood from the carpenter’s shop, imagine!’ We were seen as petulant whiners in a world of courageous, stoic folk full of Christian forgiveness.”⁸⁷⁰ Giuliana Tedeschi, a survivor who, unlike Zargani, had seen the inside of Auschwitz, recalls a similar popular reception: “I encountered people who didn’t want to know anything, because the Italians, too, had suffered, after all, even those who didn’t go to the camps ... They used to say, ‘For heaven’s sake, it’s all over,’ and so I remained quiet for a long time.”⁸⁷¹ Perhaps the inevitable result was that the general population, as Segre remembers, came to regard Shoah survivors as a social nuisance, and silence soon triumphed over any early expressions of pity or compassion.⁸⁷² Nor was it “a solemn silence of the wagon, of the deportation,” she elaborates. “It was a terrible silence, a cowardly silence. It was a silence agreed upon by political counterparts. It was a silence made because, let’s be honest, no one was interested in the Jews. No

Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 170. The quote also appears in Ben-Ghiat, “The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni’s *Life Is Beautiful*,” 342.

⁸⁷⁰ Aldo Zargani, *For Solo Violin: A Jewish Childhood in Fascist Italy*, trans. Marina Harss (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2002), 74. See also 42-43.

⁸⁷¹ Giuliana Tedeschi quoted in Judt, *Postwar*, 807.

⁸⁷² Emanuele Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre: Una delle ultime testimoni della Shoah* (Milan: San Paolo, 201), 310.

one was interested in us.”⁸⁷³ The Jewish genocide, it turned out, was just one of the war’s many troubles, and since all Italians had been victimized, more pressing matters required their attention, like rebuilding their cities.⁸⁷⁴

While Jewish survivors were pressured into silence by public and political forces, as well as by the non-Jewish populace, they were also discouraged from speaking by the greater Jewish community and even, at times, by their own families. In the postwar era, Italy’s Jews gave powerful legitimacy to the prevailing narratives of Fascism, World War II, and the Shoah, often putting their own spin on the myths in the process. Until 1938, thousands of Italian Jews had supported Fascism and joined the Party. “[T]he allegiance of Italian Jews to Fascism and belief in Mussolini,” Iael Nidam-Orvieto writes, “were natural outcomes of their total integration into early twentieth century Italian society.” In the wake of the war, however, with Fascism roundly discredited, Italian Jews who had once backed Mussolini experienced “collective guilt feelings”, considering their past allegiances “sins that needed to be covered up and even denied.”⁸⁷⁵ One way of achieving this goal was by overemphasizing Jewish resistance to Fascism. Roughly 1,000 Italian Jews joined Resistance movements during the war, the paradigmatic example being, of course, Primo Levi, who only began resisting during the German occupation in late 1943.⁸⁷⁶ Until then, either before the Racial Laws or after, whether in peacetime or in wartime, Italy’s Jews mounted no organized threat to the Italian Fascist regime. In the postwar period, in an act of communal revisionism, Italy’s Jews magnified the role and dimensions of the little Jewish resistance that had existed during the Fascist years. “In a sort of self-application of the *brava gente* narrative,” Shira Klein explains, “the postwar Jewish community

⁸⁷³ “E non era un silenzio solenne del vagone, della deportazione. Era un silenzio terribile. Era un silenzio vigliacco. Era un silenzio fatto di contropartite politiche. Era un silenzio fatto perché non interessavamo nessuno gli ebrei, diciamo la verità. Non interessavamo a nessuno”; Segre, Interview, 1995 set-ott.

⁸⁷⁴ Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 23. Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

⁸⁷⁵ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 158.

⁸⁷⁶ Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Fascism to Emancipation*, 12-13.

glorified those among themselves who had long resisted Fascism, and minimized the fact that many Jews had tolerated or approved of the regime. They created the impression that most Jews had hated Mussolini long before the racial laws.” Toward this end, the legacy of Carlo and Nello Rosselli, Jewish co-founders of the anti-Fascist Justice and Liberty (*Giustizia e Libertà*) movement, proved especially useful. Active and outspoken in their opposition to Fascism long before 1938, the exiled Rosselli brothers were murdered by French fascists in Normandy in 1937, almost certainly on Mussolini’s orders.⁸⁷⁷ After the war, they became fixtures in communal recollections of Jewish life under Fascism. The memorial tomb at Milan’s Monumental Cemetery, though dedicated to Jews who died during the German occupation, also betrays a Resistance bias by privileging Jews who were killed fighting the Germans and Italian collaborators.

Italy’s Jews left their greatest mark, however, on *brava gente* and the myths of the ‘good Italian’ and ‘bad German’, helping paint the Janus face of fascism’s two most successful examples. Guri Schwarz demonstrates that Jewish intellectuals and organizations were among *brava gente*’s key architects in the early postwar era, while Klein shows how Jews who migrated to Palestine and the United States took the myth of the ‘good Italian’ with them, propagating it in their new locales.⁸⁷⁸ Other scholars have noted a chronological imbalance in survivor testimonies, which are weighted heavily toward the 1943 – 1945 period while diminishing the years from 1938 to 1943. Therein, survivors focus especially on the memory of the Shoah and the aid they received from non-Jewish Italians, marginalizing or omitting their experiences of Fascist antisemitism.⁸⁷⁹ Setting an early

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 12. For an account of the Rossellis’ assassination, see Stanislao G. Pugliese, “Death in Exile: The Assassination of Carlo Rosselli,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 32:3 (July 1997), 305-319. For a biographical account of Carlo Rosselli, see Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Antifascist Exile* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁸⁷⁸ Guri Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy*, trans. Giovanni Noor Mazhar (Edgware and Portland: Vallentine Mitchell Publishers, 2012). Guri Schwarz, “On Myth Making and Nation Building: The Genesis of the ‘Myth of the Good Italian,’ 1943-1947,” *Telos* 164 (2013), 11-43. Klein, *Italy’s Jews from Fascism to Emancipation*.

⁸⁷⁹ Nidam-Orvieto, “The Impact of Anti-Jewish Legislation on Everyday Life and the Response of Italian Jews, 1938–1943,” 158.

testimonial (and historiographical) trend, in Collotti's estimation, was *Storia tragica e farsesca del razzismo fascista* (The Tragic and Farcical History of Fascist Racism), written in 1946 by the Italian Jewish author, Eucardio Momigliano. According to Collotti, instead of providing a sober analysis of Fascist antisemitism, Momigliano, observing "a mechanism common to the memories of many Jews, for whom the cruelty of the events that happened after 8 September 1943 negated the years from 1938 to 1943," attempted to override the years of Fascist-exclusive discrimination by hyper-focusing on the German occupation and the radical nature of Nazi antisemitism.⁸⁸⁰ The testimonies analyzed in the present project bear out this pattern. When asked questions about the Racial Laws, witnesses routinely "skip ahead" to discuss the 8 September Armistice and the onset of the occupation.

Jews who wished to speak might also find themselves stonewalled by their own families. Segre's aunt and uncle, with whom she was living, showed little interest in hearing her story. "They didn't ask me much about my experience," she recalls, "and I soon realized that there was no desire to listen to me":⁸⁸¹

It was very difficult for my relatives to live with a wounded animal like me: a little girl who returned from hell, from whom docility and resignation were demanded. I quickly learned to keep my tragic memories and my profound sadness to myself. Nobody understood me; it was I who had to adapt to a world that wanted to forget the painful events that had just passed, that wanted to start over, eager for amusements and lightheartedness.⁸⁸²

⁸⁸⁰ "Allora anche gli ebrei sembravano volersi costringere a credere di essere usciti solo da un brutto sogno. Frutto e testimonianza, se si vuole anche a livello storiografico, di questa fase fu uno dei primissimi testi sulle leggi razziali, la *Storia tragica e farsesca del razzismo fascista* di Eucardio Momigliano, apparsa nel 1946, testimonianza di un ebreo italiano che anziché storizzare l'esperienza del fascismo crede di potere esorcizzare la persecuzione contro gli ebrei rigettandone tutte le responsabilità sui tedeschi, secondo un meccanismo comune a molte memorie di ebrei per i quali la crudeltà degli accadimenti posteriori all'8 settembre del 1943 aveva cancellato gli anni dal 1938 al 1943, come se prima dell'armistizio non fossero esistite per gli ebrei limitazioni di diritti e di libertà e come se le condizioni create prima dell'8 settembre non avessero predisposto le circostanze che avrebbero consentito e agevolato il passaggio alla fase della «soluzione finale»; Collotti, *Il fascismo e gli ebrei*, ch. 8.

⁸⁸¹ "Non mi chiesero molto della mia esperienza e presto capii che non c'era la volontà di ascoltarmi"; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 165.

⁸⁸² "Era molto difficile per i miei parenti convivere con un animale ferito come ero io: una ragazzina reduce dall'inferno, dalla quale si pretendeva docilità e rassegnazione. Imparai ben presto a tenere per me i miei ricordi tragici e la mia profonda tristezza. Nessuno mi capiva, ero io che dovevo adeguarmi ad un mondo che voleva dimenticare gli eventi dolorosi appena passati, che voleva ricominciare, avido di divertimenti e spensieratezza"; Liliana Segre, "Un'infanzia perduta," in *Voci della Shoah. Testimonianze per non dimenticare*, ed. Associazione donne ebraiche (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 63.

Meanwhile, the day she returned from hell, her grandmother asked her if she were still a virgin – if she were still “intact” (*integra*). More an interrogation than an inquiry, her grandmother’s line of questioning left Liliana, not yet fifteen years old, saddened and confused. “I had suffered a thousand violences, violences psychological and physical – beatings, the cold, hunger,” she relates, “and to learn that the woman whom I had considered an inspiration was only worried about my virginity disappointed me deeply. In accordance with the canons of the time,” she continues, “she was only concerned that I had not been raped, that I was still ‘presentable’ to society. At the time, I was so naïve that I didn’t know what rape was.”⁸⁸³ Liliana’s aunt and uncle, much to her dismay, shared her grandmother’s preoccupation, “wanting only to ascertain that I had not been raped, so that I could present myself as ‘Signorina Segre’. But I no longer was ‘Signorina Segre’! I was another person, not the young lady they had known.”⁸⁸⁴ In the end, reeling from the loss of her father (presumed but not yet confirmed), Liliana longed “to return to normality” too, and she decided to resume her studies.⁸⁸⁵ Her aunt and uncle, unsurprisingly, opposed the idea, telling her to “stay home, learn how to do chores and become a good wife. It’s too late for school, what with all the years that you’ve lost,” but Liliana persisted and enrolled in language classes at the Marcelline school, “the only institute that I knew”.⁸⁸⁶

When Fausta Finzi returned home, her mother, whose husband had died at Auschwitz, discouraged her from talking about her experiences. Why might Fausta’s own mother have done this? The most likely reason is that she couldn’t bear the thought of listening to her husband’s

⁸⁸³ “Avevo subito mille violenze, psicologiche e fisiche – le botte, il freddo, la fame –, e sapere che la donna che avevo sempre considerato un’ispirazione aveva come unica preoccupazione la mia verginità mi deluse profondamente. Le interessava solo che non fossi stata stuprata, che – per i canoni d’allora – fossi ancora ‘presentabile’ in società. Io, poi, ero talmente ingenua da non sapere neanche cosa fosse uno stupro”; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 165-166.

⁸⁸⁴ “a loro interessava soltanto accertarsi che non fossi stata stuprata, perché così avrei potuto presentarmi come la ‘signorina Segre’. Ma io non ero più la ‘signorina Segre’! Ero un’altra persona, non quella che avevano conosciuto loro”; *ibid.*, 66.

⁸⁸⁵ “Anche io volevo tornare alla normalità”; *ibid.*, 174.

⁸⁸⁶ “Resta in casa, impara a fare le faccende e diventa una buona moglie. È troppo tardi per la scuola, con tutti gli anni che hai perso,” Amedeo Segre and Enrica Fumagalli quoted in *ibid.* “l’unico istituto che conoscevo”; *ibid.*

demise. But beyond this explanation, other possibilities abound. Perhaps, as a Gentile, she felt that she could have done more to help him. Maybe, having been spared by her Catholic-Aryan racial status, she felt a sense of survivor's guilt. Listening to Fausta's story also might have caused her too much pain and anguish, feelings that intensified when she imagined her husband's end. (More research on the topic is needed, but given the samplings provided by the cases of Segre and Finzi, the postwar dynamics of "racially" mixed families suggests itself as a fruitful line of study.) Whatever the case may be, Giulia's reluctance to listen to her daughter's story played a key role in stifling Fausta's ability, and willingness, to communicate her experiences. At the time, however, this was all the better for Fausta, who "didn't want to tell her too much" anyway, probably for fear of disheartening her.⁸⁸⁷ Fausta had also emerged from Ravensbrück, in her words, "a bit aggressive" and "combative", although she credits this disposition with helping her survive.⁸⁸⁸

As Finzi's and Segre's cases reveal, Jews also self-silenced for a number of reasons. Among the inhibiting factors that Ben-Ghiat lists are the effects of trauma (perhaps, for many, post-traumatic stress disorder); the fear of ongoing victimization (suggesting a lingering antisemitism among the general population, or at least a perception thereof); survivor's guilt; and the desire to peacefully reintegrate into Italian society and their communities.⁸⁸⁹ To these can be added the aforementioned sense of shame for past political loyalties and the fear of not being believed. This latter worry, Segre says, acted as a major personal deterrent, and it was an anxiety she shared with many other survivors.⁸⁹⁰ But it was only one factor among many that kept Segre quiet for a full forty-five years. From the earliest days of the Racial Laws, when her former classmates teased her for being Jewish and expelled from their school, Liliana began to cultivate a personality marked by

⁸⁸⁷ "*non volevo raccontarle troppo*"; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁸⁸⁸ "*un po' aggressiva*"; "*combattiva*"; *ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹ Ben-Ghiat, "The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful*," 341.

⁸⁹⁰ Ottavia Borella, "Liliana, una sopravvissuta. Nel '43, a tredici anni da Milano a Birkenau," *la Repubblica*, 4 maggio 1994, p. 7, VdS, Serie I, Busta 24, CDEC.

silence, a trait she would not let go of until she started testifying in the early 1990s.⁸⁹¹ She also suffered from depression in the postwar era, the first peak coinciding with her return home in August 1945 and lasting, mercifully, only until that October or November, when she returned to school. During those “terrible” few months, she says, she wanted to die, and even afterward, she remained “tormented by suicidal ideation”.⁸⁹² The thought subsided a bit after she met her future husband, Alfredo, in 1948, an Italian soldier who had also spent time in the Nazi camps, but over thirty years passed before she received a proper evaluation. Eventually, a psychiatrist, “a very competent Jewish doctor”, diagnosed her with clinical depression and comorbid panic attacks, and she credits the psychopharmaceuticals he prescribed with helping her surface from her depressive state.⁸⁹³ In 1981, she announced her emergence by starting her first job, at age fifty-one, with her uncle Amedeo at the family business, Segre & Schieppati. Work provided her with a profound sense of independence, but she would not begin testifying for another ten years.⁸⁹⁴ Her three children often asked her about the tattoo on her arm, her “mark” (*marchio*), and each time, she responded, “I’ll tell you when you’re older.” “So many times, too many times, I cut off my children’s questions with that phrase. And, naturally,” she admits, “I never kept that promise.”⁸⁹⁵

Segre never felt disinclined to speak because of survivor’s guilt, however, explaining that she survived the Shoah “by chance” (*per caso*), not by causing hardship or misfortune to other prisoners.⁸⁹⁶ Taking the matter a step further, Goti Bauer thinks that the prevalence of survivor’s guilt among Shoah victims has been overstated. In any case, it does not apply to her situation. “Who

⁸⁹¹ Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Lilitana Segre, 19-20.

⁸⁹² “*terribile*”; “*Volevo morire*”; Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992. “*tormentata dall’idea del suicidio*”; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 182.

⁸⁹³ “*un medico ebreo molto competente*”; Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 192. See also 181-182, 193; and Segre, Interview, 8 ottobre 1991 – 23 marzo 1992.

⁸⁹⁴ Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 194-195.

⁸⁹⁵ “*Te lo racconterò quando sarai più grande*”. ¶ *Tante, troppe volte ho liquidato con quella frase le domande dei miei figli. E naturalmente non ho mai tenuto fede a quella promessa*; Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 205.

⁸⁹⁶ Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 210. Segre’s explanation might subtly critique Primo Levi’s assessment of surviving Auschwitz, or at least demonstrate that his conclusions do not apply to her.

would feel guilty for being a victim,” she rhetorically asks.⁸⁹⁷ On the other hand, in words that approach Elie Wiesel’s, she did fear that by testifying, indeed by merely talking about her and others’ experiences, she was “profaning sacred memories.”⁸⁹⁸ Nevertheless, at age ninety-six, Bauer continues to bear witness to this day.

Like Segre, Giuseppe Di Porto was plagued by psychological disturbances when he returned from Auschwitz. In 1946, “on the verge of going crazy and ending up in a madhouse”, he spent two months under evaluation in a hospital (perhaps in a psychiatric ward). Suicidal thoughts crossed his mind “a hundred times” (*cento volte*), but he never followed through because he did not want to cause his mother, who lost her husband to Auschwitz, any more mental anguish.⁸⁹⁹ Though Giuseppe ultimately cleared his mental hurdles, or at least managed to cope with them enough to testify, his wife, Marisa, never did, discussing her Shoah experiences with Giuseppe alone and avoiding anything that hearkened back to that era (such as films).⁹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, their life together remained indelibly marked by their shared experience of the Lager, and in a heart-wrenching letter that Giuseppe penned to Marisa after her death in 2009, he addressed her by her name and number, signing the letter by doing the same.⁹⁰¹ Although they had recovered their true names when they returned to Italy, they never dis-identified with the names branded on them at Auschwitz.

In the early postwar years, Isacco Bayona did not discuss his experiences with anyone, and it remained a touchy subject at least until the later 1980s, when he began testifying. “I don’t like telling my story,” he says in a 1989 interview.⁹⁰² Shortly after returning to Italy, while on a trip to Rome,

⁸⁹⁷ “*Quale colpa potrebbe sentire chi è stato vittima*”; Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, Milan, 1993, p. 26, VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

⁸⁹⁸ “*mi sembra ... di profanare delle memorie sacre*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Herskovits Bauer*, p. 1.

⁸⁹⁹ “*rischiando di impazzire e di finire in un manicomio*”; Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 35.

⁹⁰⁰ Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. Rory Cappelli, “Marisa Di Porto la memoria dell’Olocausto,” *la Repubblica*, 23 marzo 2009, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2009/03/23/marisa-di-porto-la-memoria-dell-olocausto.html>.

⁹⁰¹ Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 11.

⁹⁰² “*Non mi piace raccontare la storia mia*”; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989. Perhaps this explains why, before his 1996 interview, Isacco takes one last drag on his cigarette before he begins; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

Isacco met a young woman named Lina Astrologo, sixteen years old at the time, and the two quickly married.⁹⁰³ Lina, who joins in on Isacco's 1996 interview, explains how her husband was habitually sad during the early years of their relationship. He had suffered so much, she relates, and the experience of Auschwitz left him "very marked" (*molto segnato*). When the interviewer, following up, asks her if their family life had been conditioned at all by the camp, she replies, "Yes."⁹⁰⁴

Samuele Dana, busy at work during his 1996 interview, wastes no words explaining why it took him years to testify, but his son, Joseph, provides an inkling. Even as adults, his father told him and his brother, Salomone, "little" (*poco*) about his history, "because he doesn't like to talk about the past so much."⁹⁰⁵ Evidently, this was in keeping with his father's character, for at one point, Samuele says, "I don't like anything." Except work.⁹⁰⁶

Perhaps Segre summarizes the reasons for self-imposed silence best. "The reasons behind my silence were simple enough," she explains, "with some people, you don't speak because you know they'll never understand; with others, you don't speak because you know that they already understand everything (or because they shared your fate); with others still, you don't speak because the past suffocates you and you would like to think only about the future. Thinking it over, it's easier to find reasons to keep quiet than to speak."⁹⁰⁷

⁹⁰³ A fortuitous encounter, Lina was in the capital visiting her cousin, Costanza, a Shoah survivor like Isacco; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996. Presumably, this was Costanza Astrologo, a Roman Jew who also survived Auschwitz; "Astrologo, Costanza," CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/persona/detail/person-181/astrologo-costanza.html>.

⁹⁰⁴ "E poi la vita familiare: è stata un po' condizionata dal campo, o no?"; "Sì"; Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁹⁰⁵ "perché non gli piace parlare tanto del passato"; Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

⁹⁰⁶ "Non mi piace niente"; *ibid.*

⁹⁰⁷ "Le ragioni dietro al mio silenzio erano abbastanza semplice: con certe persone non parli perché sai che non potranno mai capirti, con altri non parli perché sai che hanno già capito tutto (o perché hanno condiviso la tua stessa sorte), con altri ancora non parli perché il passato ti soffoca e vorresti pensare solo al futuro. A pensarci bene, è più semplice trovare ragioni per tacere piuttosto che per parlare"; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 203.

Ending the Long Silence

Ultimately, however, survivors found reasons to speak, and none was more important than the compunction they felt for having abnegated their duty as survivors. “[E]very so often,” Bauer relates, “many of us became gripped by the guilt that we hadn’t spoken enough, that we hadn’t filled the world with our stories. Because we’ve always said that we returned so that we could recount, so that we could tell everyone”.⁹⁰⁸ Personalizing this sentiment, Finzi expresses both regret and resignation for not having spoken earlier in life. “Let’s be honest,” she says, “from the beginning, no one was interested in what happened, unfortunately. It hurts to admit it, but at least forty years passed before someone finally took an interest in the matter ... I was wrong [not to speak sooner], but ... that’s how it went.”⁹⁰⁹

Another survivor to belatedly answer the call of duty was Segre, who, after almost a half-century of silence and depression, came to the common realization that “*I had not done my duty*”:

During the years of depression, the awareness that I had not done what a survivor *must* do broke over me like a great wave. I said to myself: “There is a world that speaks of things that *I saw with my own eyes*, and I don’t have the courage to have my say? I am a witness; I have a direct responsibility to pass on my story.”⁹¹⁰

Since then, Liliana has continued paying her eternal debt to the deceased, speaking far and wide so that no one forgets the Shoah.⁹¹¹ After all, she notes, they had tried to forget once before. Soon after the war, there came “a long silence; the annoyance of listening to our stories. It took years before the publishing houses, the schools, and the newspapers confronted the topic of the Shoah, and so

⁹⁰⁸ “ogni tanto a molti di noi vengono come dei complessi di colpa di non aver parlato abbastanza, di non aver riempito il mondo delle nostre storie. Perché noi abbiamo sempre detto che siamo ritornati perché dovevamo raccontare, perché dovevamo far sapere a tutti”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 14.

⁹⁰⁹ “Poi diciamo la verità; tutte queste faccende sono venuti fuori ... da principio nessuno si è interessato, purtroppo. È doloroso dirlo ma sono passati almeno quarant’anni quando finalmente qualcuno ha cominciato interessarsi della faccenda. Allora oggi, come oggi infatti io ho detto ho sbagliato in quello, però ... è andata così”; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁹¹⁰ “non avevo fatto il mio dovere ... Ma durante gli anni della depressione, la consapevolezza di non aver fatto tutto quello che una sopravvissuta doveva fare si infranse su di me come un’onda altissima. ¶ Mi dicevo: ‘C’è un mondo che parla di cose che io ho visto con i miei occhi, e io non ho il coraggio di dire la mia? Ma io sono una testimone, ho una responsabilità diretta nel tramandare la mia storia’”; emphases in original; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 197-198.

⁹¹¹ Borella, “Liliana, una sopravvissuta,” p. 7.

much so that today some people say, ‘what a bore.’” Resigning to never make the same mistake again, she avers, “But we survivors will continue to speak as long as we have breath in our lungs.”⁹¹²

Had it not been for the organizational efforts of CDEC, survivors might never have had the opportunity to testify in the first place, at least in such great number and with such wide publicity. In the 1980s, the *Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*, which had been founded in Venice in 1955, witnessed a burst of institutional activity, marked by the center’s 1986 relocation to Via Eupili in Milan.⁹¹³ Around this time, researchers affiliated with the center, Liliana Picciotto above all, began recruiting survivors to share their stories, catalyzing the production of witness testimony in Italy. To date, two interview collections, featuring over 100 testimonies each, have resulted from these efforts: *Testimonianze sulla Shoah* (Shoah Testimonies), spanning from 1982 to 2002; and *Interviste alla storia* (Interviews with History), recorded from 1995 to 1996.⁹¹⁴

Bauer and Segre, arguably Italy’s two most prodigious witnesses not named Primo Levi, owe much of their success producing and publicizing their testimonies to CDEC. After her disappointing early foray into testifying, Bauer might have never shared her experiences with the public again if not for an invitation from Picciotto, who was recruiting survivors to speak with schoolchildren.⁹¹⁵ In the later 1970s, Segre began recounting her story, for the first time in her life, to a researcher at CDEC, Giuliana Donati. During her first in-person meeting with Donati, she and Bauer were introduced to one another. Not only did the two become close friends, but it was Bauer who pushed Segre to

⁹¹² “E poi un lungo silenzio; il fastidio di ascoltare le nostre storie. Ci sono voluti anni prima che le case editrici, le scuole e i giornali affrontassero il tema della Shoah, tanto che addirittura oggi qualcuno dice che barba. Ma noi sopravvissuti continueremo a parlare finché avremo fiato in gola”; Liliana Segre quoted in Marina Gersony, “Il Museo della Shoah. Quel binario per Auschwitz,” September 27, 2008, p. 55, Fasc. Verbale, CDEC.

⁹¹³ “La Fondazione.”

⁹¹⁴ Gigliola Colombo Lopez, wife of famous local author, Guido, helped Picciotto compile the interviews for *Testimonianze sulla Shoah*, while Picciotto carried out the interviews for *Interviste alla storia* with fellow researcher, Marcello Pezzetti; see “Testimonianze sulla Shoah,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000137/testimonianze-sulla-shoah.html>; and “Interviste alla storia,” CDEC Digital Library, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000005/interviste-alla-storia.html>.

⁹¹⁵ Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 15.

testify publicly. In 1990, forty-five years removed from Auschwitz, Segre began her storied vocation as a Shoah witness when she spoke before an audience of, coincidentally, forty-five nuns at the Marcelline Institute, and their positive reception gave her the courage and confidence to go forward.⁹¹⁶

As the above passage suggests, reaching children and youth has been a core objective for witnesses and Shoah-oriented organizations. Emilio Jani stressed as much in his 1960 memoir, when he wrote that children must learn about the Shoah to “make them fully aware of all that has happened in the past and which must not happen again”:

By allowing a meagre group of men [*sic*] to live on, God willed that they should be the living proof of the crimes that were committed, and it is implicit that this ghostly company be entrusted with the symbolic task of ascertaining that the tutelage of moral values be passed from father to son...⁹¹⁷

Though not all witnesses believe in the Divine nature of the mandate that Jani communicates, his words nevertheless evoke commonly shared beliefs within the witness community about the necessity of survivor testimony: as survivors, “living proof” of the crime of the Shoah, it is their inherent duty to share with the world what they saw and experienced, speaking largely for the millions who can’t and never could. Above all, they must communicate this knowledge to the younger generations, the generations of the future, so that they do not repeat the errors made by members of their and their parents’ generations. Never again.

Segre’s second audience, appropriately, consisted of 150 students at the Marcelline Institute, where she recounted to them what she went through at their age, and schoolchildren remained her primary and preferred audience until she retired to private life in October 2020, but not before giving one last talk to a tent full of students in Rondine’s fittingly named Citadel of Peace (*Cittadella*

⁹¹⁶ Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 198-202. Segre also helped Picciotto compile data for her monumental *Libro della memoria*, recounting to her everyone she knew in the Lager.

⁹¹⁷ Jani, *My voice saved me*, 5.

della Pace).⁹¹⁸ Bauer also routinely speaks to student audiences, and her main reason for committing her testimony to text, which she has done multiple times, is to bear witness to those she can't speak with in person, especially youth. It's "impossible to go everywhere," such as to the many schools that invite her, but as she says at the beginning of one written testimony, she hopes that "these pages can give young people some idea" of what she and millions of others suffered.⁹¹⁹

In recent decades, two factors have made the need for survivor testimony ever more urgent. As if an inverse ratio has obtained, Shoah denial has increased in Italy (and throughout the West) as more and more survivors pass away. "Every one of us knows that we don't have much time left," Bauer wrote, twenty-seven years ago, "and we feel the duty to use our own painful testimonies to counter the all-too-easy diffusion of false preachings that minimize what happened, when they don't deny it outright."⁹²⁰ Pessimistically, with the Balkans erupting into war at the time of her writing and the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge still fresh in mind, Bauer feared that the lessons of the Shoah had not been learned.⁹²¹

The Good Italian, the Bad German, and the Survivor

Witness testimony reveals that when Italy's survivors began publicly sharing their stories in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, they, too, invoked the dyadic myth of the 'good Italian' and the 'bad German', demonstrating the dissemination and durability of "*brava gente*" even among the most unlikely of communities. Though Jani's memoir appeared earlier than most testimonies

⁹¹⁸ Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 201-202, 205. Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 8. "Liliana Segre, l'ultima testimonianza pubblica per i giovani: 'Non ho mai perdonato i nazisti'. Mattarella: 'Costituzione argine a totalitarismi,'" *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 9 ottobre 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/10/09/liliana-segre-lultima-testimonianza-pubblica-destinata-ai-giovani-non-ho-mai-perdonato-i-nazisti-so-cosa-vuol-dire-essere-respinti/5960179/>.

⁹¹⁹ "*l'impossibilità di arrivare dappertutto*"; "*spero che queste pagine possano dare una prima informazione a molti giovani*"; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goty Bauer*, p. 2.

⁹²⁰ "*Ognuno sa di avere poco tempo davanti a sé, e sente il dovere di contrastare con la propria sofferta testimonianza la troppo facile diffusione di menzognere prediche che minimizzano, quando addirittura non negano quanto è successo*"; *ibid.*

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

analyzed here, he provides evidence aplenty of good Italians during his period of capture and imprisonment in Italy. During his transport from the Regina Coeli prison in Rome to Fossoli camp, the benevolent, uplifting behavior of ordinary Italians astonished him. “[T]he solidarity of the people of the cities through which we passed was marvellous,” he recalls, and their support extended from the moral to the material. “Many of them, defying the wrath of the Germans, tore off their scarves and gloves and thrust them at the benumbed prisoners in the lorries.”⁹²² On his next transport, his deportation to Auschwitz, this scenario repeated itself on a more personal level. While stopped at a small station in Nogara, a town south of Verona, “a little man with a rustic, peasant air” stood on the platform, staring at the train-full of prisoners “with eyes full of emotion, almost incredulous of what he saw.” When Jani tried to give the gentleman some money so that he could buy him some smokes, the man worriedly responded that there was no tobacconist’s booth (*tabacchi*) at the station, but when the guard blew his whistle, signaling that the train was set to depart, the man hurriedly loaded his pipe and gave it to Jani. “And when the train began to pull out,” Jani continues, “he ran up and gave me some matches, earning for himself a brutal shove from the SS guard who thus woke him from that noble, humane dream.”⁹²³

Jani fingered *bravi italiani* among the clergy, as well. During his imprisonment at Regina Coeli, he remembers being comforted by the encouraging words of the prison confessor, a Monsignor Bonaldi, and likewise at Fossoli, he recalls the parish priest, Don Francesco Venturelli, and the Bishop of Carpi, Monsignor Vigilio Federico Dalla Zuanna, making numerous entreaties on behalf of the internees.⁹²⁴ While many clergy members, acting on an individual basis, indeed offered succor and support to persecuted Jews in Italy, Jani’s glowing remarks for the papacy come across as

⁹²² Jani, *My voice saved me*, 51.

⁹²³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 67. Alexis Herr’s monograph on Fossoli supports Jani’s recollections of Venturelli and, to a somewhat lesser degree, of Zuanna; see Alexis Herr, *The Holocaust and Compensated Compliance in Italy: Fossoli di Carpi, 1942-1952* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 61, 87.

one-sided and hyperbolic, bordering on the untrue. Though he recalls “the noble, generous intervention of the Vatican” in paying a large, but ultimately ineffectual, ransom on behalf of Rome’s Jews, it was actually the poor inhabitants of the former ghetto who marshaled the requisite funds, selling off their valuables at the main synagogue. The Vatican had extended a loan to Rome’s Jewish Community, but it turned out to be unnecessary. More damningly, Pope Pius XII never openly expressed opposition to the Nazi genocide.⁹²⁵

Since Jani’s memoir appeared, the passage of time has done little to alter survivor recollections. During the postwar trial of Friedrich Boßhammer, one of the figures most responsible for the Shoah in Italy, Samuele Dana stood as a witness, as did his father and brother. When asked if he could identify any key Nazi officials from his time at San Vittore prison, he replied that he could not. At San Vittore, he explained, he and the other Jewish detainees “were in the hands of the [Italian] warders, who were *brava gente*.”⁹²⁶ Segre, who has been at the forefront of *brava gente* reevaluations,⁹²⁷ has occasionally invoked the myth herself, often by depicting her Italian persecutors in too subservient of a position to the Germans. She has referred to the German occupiers as “masters” (*padroni*) of the prison system in the Italian Social Republic, though such a statement requires important qualifications.⁹²⁸ It is true that the RSI only existed with the Germans’ blessing, and the Nazis did requisition and establish some facilities for themselves, but Italians maintained their own administrations over many northern Italian prisons, and they rarely put up a fuss when the Germans came for their inmates. Segre has also painted a sympathetic, even apologetic image of her

⁹²⁵ Jani, *My voice saved me*, 12-13. Robert Katz, “The Möllhausen Telegram, the Kappler Decodes, and the Deportation of the Jews of Rome: The New CIA-OSS Documents, 2000–2002,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule*, ed. Zimmerman, 229-230. Jani’s warm evaluation of the Church extends to Polish clergy as well, a sharp contrast with the general Polish population at Auschwitz, who are remembered with scorn by many Jewish inmates from Italy. But that is a topic for another study; Jani, *ibid.*, 86.

⁹²⁶ “*noi eravamo in mano ai secondini, che era brava gente*”; “Dana Samuele,” *Tribunale di Dortmund-Berlino, Testimonianze*, 1967, 19 maggio 1967, Processo Bosshammer, Busta 5, Fasc. 52, CDEC.

⁹²⁷ Discussed in later chapters.

⁹²⁸ Segre, Interview, 21 settembre – 2 ottobre 1995.

captors, the two Italian border agents who arrested her, her father, and her cousins after they were cast out of Switzerland. In one account, she simply says, “They were the servants of those others.”⁹²⁹

In another, more recent testimony, she gives a fuller picture. Hearing the border alarm sound, two blackshirt-wearing guards immediately appeared and, approaching Liliana’s group, told them that they could either remain in the no-man’s land between the two states or enter into Italy. If they chose to return, however, the guards would have to take them to the German barracks nearby.

“They were very humane,” Segre recalls, “and it was clear that they were sorry.” But, “We are family men,” she cites them as saying, establishing their humanity, “and if you reenter Italy, we have to hand you over to them.” The gate opened before them, Liliana, Alberto, and the Ravenna brothers passed into Italy and, as promised, were taken into custody and escorted to the German garrison.⁹³⁰

Survivors often draw distinctions in character and behavior among their Italian captors, a courtesy rarely extended to their German counterparts, and Bauer provides one of the most striking juxtapositions. After cursing the Italian “scoundrels” (*mascalzoni*) who betrayed her and her family at the Italy-Switzerland border, she immediately pivots to comment on the kind demeanor of the marshal in charge of the border barracks where they were held overnight. Referring to him as “*una bravissima persona*” – that is, “a very good person” – she remembers him saying that he would have released them if only he could have.⁹³¹ Although she pleaded with him to set them free so that she and her mother could reunite with her father and brother, who, she believed, were already in Switzerland, the marshal replied that he couldn’t “because we are being controlled, too.”⁹³² Even when Bauer tempers her effusion, she still ends her evaluation on a positive note, as if conforming

⁹²⁹ “Erano i servi di quegli altri”; *ibid.*

⁹³⁰ “Arrivarono subito due finanzieri italiani in camicia nera, del comando di frontiera, che intuendo la nostra situazione ci dissero con molta franchezza: ‘O rimanete di là o entrate. Qui sopra c’è la casermetta dei tedeschi. Siamo padri di famiglia, e se rientrate in Italia vi dobbiamo consegnare a loro’. ¶ Furono molto umani, si capiva che erano dispiaciuti. Spalancarono il cancello a ci fecero passare”; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 69.

⁹³¹ Bauer, Interview, 25 febbraio 1987.

⁹³² “*ma non è possibile perché siamo controllati anche noi*”; Italian officer quoted in *ibid.*

the marshal to the ‘*bravo italiano*’ trope. Believing that he was being sincere, she reasons that “he would have paid with his life ... He was head of a family. He couldn’t risk helping people escape ... And he was a small man; he was no hero.”⁹³³ Indeed, in one account, *brava gente* holds firm despite the marshal’s outright mendacity. “We begged him to let us go,” Bauer recounts. “I told him, ‘My father, my brother, what will they think?’ But he didn’t have the courage to tell us that he had arrested them the day before,” responding to her entreaties by saying, “‘No, you’ll see, remain calm. Nothing will happen; you’ll be detained here, and the war is going to end.’ He tried to console us as best he could. I must say, I remember him as an extremely humane, extremely decent person. What could he have done? Nothing, his hands were tied.”⁹³⁴ This ordinary Italian officer might not have been the heroic figure of lore, who stopped at nothing to help others in need, but in Bauer’s estimation, he was still a good-intentioned fellow.

While the contrast that Bauer draws between her Italian persecutors is illuminating, it’s also worth noting that she does not make the same excuses for the Germans at Carpi station, who told her a similar lie, as she does for the Italian border marshal. While loading Bauer and the other prisoners onto cattle cars, to ease their worries, the German guards told them that they were being sent to a labor camp, and any prisoners who could not work would be able to stay in their barracks. In reality, they were being deported to Auschwitz, where Jewish prisoners unable to work were immediately sent to their deaths, which is exactly what happened to Goti’s parents. While the ‘good

⁹³³ “avrei [sic] pagato con la vita lui ... Era un padrefamiglia. Lui non poteva far fuggire della gente ... E lui era un piccolo uomo; non è un eroe”; Bauer, Interview, 8 – 18 settembre 1995.

⁹³⁴ “Lo abbiamo implorato di lasciarsi uscire, di lasciarsi passare, io ho detto: c’è mio padre, c’è mio fratello, cosa penseranno? E lui non ha avuto il coraggio di dire che il giorno prima aveva arrestato loro. No, vedrete, state tranquilli, non succederà niente, avrete un internamento qui, la guerra sta per finire’, ha cercato di consolarci come poteva. Devo dire che ora ho un ricordo di lui estremamente umano, estremamente di persona perbene. Cosa poteva fare anche lui? Non poteva, aveva le mani legate”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 9. For a comparative account, see Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 6. On one occasion, in an edited-volume chapter, Bauer deals with the marshal more curtly, only saying that “He didn’t want to, he couldn’t help us” (*non voleva, non poteva aiutarci*); Agata ‘Goti’ Herskovits Bauer, “La fuga, il carcere e la deportazione,” in *Mezzo secolo fa. Guerra e Resistenza in provincia di Varese*, ed. Istituto varesino per la storia dell’Italia contemporanea e del movimento di liberazione (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1995), 299.

Italian' comes in many shapes and sizes in survivor testimony – and because Italians are inherently kind folk, even the servile pencil-pusher becomes salvageable – no such nuance is afforded to Germans, who are depicted as fundamentally 'bad' almost to a person. In this, Primo Levi set the pattern early on, writing in *If This Is a Man*:

They construct shelters and trenches, they repair the damage, they build, they fight, they command, they organize, and they kill. What else could they do? They are Germans. This behavior is not considered and deliberate but follows from their nature and from the destiny they have chosen. They could not act differently...⁹³⁵

Forty years later, Finzi offered a similar appraisal, providing a rudimentary application of the 'authoritarian personality' type: "On the Germans, I maintain the same judgment: I say that if they were to have another dictatorship, they would do the same thing all over again." When asked if she thinks that the Germans suffer from a "character problem" (*problema di carattere*), she replies in the affirmative: "Yes, definitely. Definitely. Germans are made to obey, to be commanded, to command others, to enslave everyone under their heel. Therefore, I have no faith in German repentance."⁹³⁶

Even Giuseppe Di Porto, who is more censorious of Italians than most survivors, reserves his harshest critiques for the Germans, viewing them through the same characterological lens. Perhaps with the so-called Rape of Belgium in mind, his father, Sabatino, who fought in the Great War, told Giuseppe at a young age that "when the Germans wage war, they don't see anyone; they don't respect women, they don't respect children, they don't respect anyone."⁹³⁷ Living through

⁹³⁵ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Ann Goldstein, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), ch. 15.

⁹³⁶ "Su tedeschi mantengo la stessa giudizio: io dico che se avessero un'altra dittatura le farebbero quello che hanno fatto." Then when asked if she thinks it is a "problema di carattere," she replies, "Sì, senz'altro. Senz'altro. I tedeschi sono fatti per obbedire, per essere comandati, per comandare gli altri, per schiacciare tutti sotto un certo tallone. Quindi io non ho nessuna fiducia nel ravvedimento dei tedeschi"; Finzi, Interview, 2 maggio 1996.

⁹³⁷ "Quando i tedeschi fanno la guerra non vedono nessuno. Non rispettano donna, non rispettano bambino, non rispettano nessuno"; Di Porto, Interview, 28 giugno 1995. See also: Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 16. Incidentally, the "Rape of Belgium" had a direct impact on the Nuremberg Trials and the muting of survivor voices. Eyewitness accounts of Germany's occupation of Belgium, it turned out, were full of hyperbole and prevarication, and this was one of the main factors that led Nuremberg prosecutors to favor written documents over eyewitness testimony, including that of Jewish victims. This, in turn, influenced the early historiography of the Shoah, since Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), the forerunner of Shoah studies, used prosecutor files from Nuremberg; Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of*

Auschwitz, which claimed Sabatino, gave Giuseppe no reason to alter his view, only reinforcing his late father's wisdom.

While most Italian survivors and many of their foreign counterparts yearned to reintegrate into Italy in the postwar era, and succeeded in doing so, many have maintained a longstanding aversion toward Germans, their language, and their country. As of 1996, Isacco Bayona had never returned to Germany, but the sound of trains and the German language always mentally transported him back to Auschwitz, another place he has avoided.⁹³⁸ Segre goes even further, expressing outright antipathy. "I am unable to make peace with Germany," she recently admitted, "and I harbor horrible thoughts toward the Germans, even though they have done very sincere memory work." The German language produces much the same revulsion in her. "I don't speak German. I have removed it, and I still can't stand to hear it spoken," she says.⁹³⁹ For Bauer's part, she doesn't nurture the same Germanophobia, but the celerity with which the younger German generations adopted "the old ideologies" (*le vecchie ideologie*) of their parents and grandparents left her "disconcerted" (*sconcertata*).⁹⁴⁰

Survivors' uniform sketches of their German persecutors, then, lack the idiosyncratic depictions of their Italian persecutors, and nowhere is this clearer than in the language they use to identify their oppressors. Italian perpetrators, commonly referred to by their political and ideological affiliations or by their occupations, are presented as 'fascists' and '*repubblicini*', 'militia members' and 'border agents' (*finanziari*). German perpetrators, on the other hand, remain 'Germans' (*tedeschi*). Lina Jaffè presents the dichotomy clearly. While discussing her arrest in Milan, she says that her captors

Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 2, 16-18.

⁹³⁸ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1996.

⁹³⁹ "Il tedesco non lo parlo, l'ho rimosso e tuttora non sopporto di sentirlo parlare. ¶ Con la Germania non sono riuscita a riappacificarmi e nutro sentimenti orribili verso i tedeschi, nonostante abbiano fatto un lavoro sulla memoria molto sentito"; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 221. She has also never returned to Auschwitz and has no intention of doing so. "Everyone has their limits," she says, "Those who suffer vertigo can't go up a skyscraper, and maybe Auschwitz is my vertigo" (*Ognuno ha i suoi limiti. Chi soffre di vertigini non può salire su un grattacielo, e forse la mia vertigine è Auschwitz*); Mentana and Segre, *ibid.*, 220-221. See also: Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*; Liliana Segre, 11.

⁹⁴⁰ Bauer, *Testimonianza di Gofy Bauer*, p. 24.

“were fascists. They were not Germans.”⁹⁴¹ Bauer similarly talks about “the fascist militants and the Germans,” and it is in these scenarios, when the Italian and the German are depicted side-by-side – sometimes literally – that the mythic pairing of the ‘good Italian’ and the ‘bad German’ comes to the fore.⁹⁴² On one occasion, when the interviewer asks Bauer if the guards at San Vittore were “Germans and Italians”, she responds by saying they were “*repubblichini* and Germans”.⁹⁴³ As this example indicates, although interviewers favor the pairings of “Italians and Germans” or “Fascists/*repubblichini* and Nazis”, depending on the level of generality, the preferred pairing among witnesses is “Fascists/*repubblichini* and Germans”. Di Porto, for instance, frequently mentions his “German” and “Fascist” oppressors, although he does state that he was captured by the “Nazi-fascist militia” (*milizja nazi-fascista*).⁹⁴⁴ Zargani also invokes the asymmetrical pairing numerous times, in one instance writing, “Not even God, if he had wanted to interfere, could have saved the old and the sick, prey of the Germans and the Fascists, once they had embarked on the journey, whose sole purpose was death on arrival at Auschwitz, instead of in their own beds.”⁹⁴⁵ Even apparent exceptions to the rule, the exceedingly rare cases of the ‘good German’ and the ‘bad Italian’, can be weakened by this nomenclatural trap. As we saw in chapter four, although Jani’s German guards treated him much more decently than his Italian handlers at the time of his first arrest, he refers to his captors as “Germans” and “Blackshirts”.⁹⁴⁶

⁹⁴¹ “*Ma erano fascisti. Non erano tedeschi*”; Jaffè, Interview, 20 novembre 1995.

⁹⁴² “*i fascisti ed i tedeschi*”; Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Herskovits Bauer*, p. 3. See also: Bauer, *Testimonianza di Goti Bauer*, p. 3.

⁹⁴³ “*Le volevo chiedere se erano tedeschi e italiani insieme a San Vittore. ¶ Qui a Milano c'erano repubblicini e tedeschi nel carcere*”; Bauer, Interview, 12 febbraio 1992, Lato B, p. 21.

⁹⁴⁴ Di Porto, Interview, 16 novembre 1986. Di Porto, *La rivincita del bene*, 19.

⁹⁴⁵ Zargani, *For Solo Violin*, 148. For comparison with the original, see Zargani, *Per violino solo*, 106. Survivors, it should be noted, are by no means alone in framing German and Italian persecutors in this way. The following passage, on betrayal during flights to Switzerland, appears in *Viaggio nella memoria*, a memorial book on the Shoah in Milan: “Many became victims of these same ‘smugglers’, who handed them over without pity to the Germans or to the *repubblichini* militias, one step from salvation” (*Molti rimasero vittime degli stessi ‘passatori’, che li consegnarono senza pietà ai tedeschi o alle milizie repubblicane, a un passo dalla salvezza*); *Viaggio nella memoria*, 25.

⁹⁴⁶ Jani, *My voice saved me*, 16-17.

Nevertheless, there are some deviations from the pattern, though they are few and far between. Despite lumping all Germans together into one immutable category of people, Levi tends to acknowledge differentiations within the whole. Recalling his detainment at Fossoli, he mentions that shortly after his arrival in January 1944, the camp received an influx of entire families who had been arrested “by the Fascists or the Nazis”. Elsewhere, he writes of “neither Italian nor German” guards.⁹⁴⁷ Ginetta Sagan, briefly introduced in chapter four, recalls being taught by her parents that there were distinctions between ‘Nazis’ and ‘Germans’.⁹⁴⁸ And Bayona tried to hunt down a ‘bad Italian’ shortly after returning to Italy after the war. Upon learning that almost his entire family had perished in the Shoah, “The only thought that came to me,” he relates, “was revenge, to take revenge on the marshal” who had arrested his and the other families at the farmhouse in Gabbro.⁹⁴⁹ Undeterred by any potential consequences, Isacco went to the Gabbro *carabinieri* station, pistol concealed, to kill the marshal, but when he arrived, he learned that the officer had already taken his own life, denying him the satisfaction.⁹⁵⁰

Conclusion

When Jewish survivors returned to Italy after the war, they found a country in ruin and a citizenry unsympathetic to their peculiar stories of victimhood. Viennese survivor Ruth Kluger, who remembers ordinary Germans conducting themselves with a “We have our own troubles, kindly spare us yours” air in the waning days of the war, would have understood.⁹⁵¹ Hushed by an avalanche of forces in the early postwar period, from the reconciliatory imperatives of the fragile

⁹⁴⁷ Levi, *If This Is a Man*, ch. 1.

⁹⁴⁸ Ginetta Sagan, Interview by Joan Ringelheim, Atherton, September 23 – 24, 1999, pp. 2-3, USHMM, Washington, DC, USA, https://collections.ushmm.org/oh_findingaids/RG-50.030.0458_trs_en.pdf.

⁹⁴⁹ “*Io ho l'unico pensiero mi era la vendetta, di vendicarmi di questo maresciallo*”; Bayona, Interview, 1987.

⁹⁵⁰ Bayona, Interview, 1 marzo 1989.

⁹⁵¹ Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2001), 146.

new republic, to the privileging of reconstruction over redress, to their own communities' desires to reintegrate, most Jewish survivors chose not to talk about their experiences, either with the greater Italian public or within the walls of their own homes. Leaders of the Jewish community, after all, were helping author the grand master narratives of Italian history during the Second World War, and when survivors did try to share their stories, they often found their families just as unresponsive as the general population. Meanwhile, battling the mental demons that accompanied them home from the Lager, countless survivors stayed silent for their own personal reasons (although it should be noted that the phenomenon of survivor's guilt has been challenged, or at least questioned, by some of the most authoritative figures in Italy's witness community). Forty years passed before Italy's Jewish survivors came forth with their stories of persecution in any appreciable number.

When witnesses finally began testifying in earnest in the 1980s, thanks in large part to the efforts of CDEC, their memoirs and interviews reproduced the *brava gente* narrative, a myth of the Italian national (and natural) character that, ironically, had done so much to keep Jewish victims silent. Though an unexpected research discovery, their reasons for doing so, I believe, are quite clear. Italy's Jewish survivors endorsed and echoed the *brava gente* myth because they, too, believed themselves to be *brava gente*. In 1938, on the eve of the Racial Laws, the concept of the 'good Italian' had not yet emerged, but Italy's Jews, a small but well-integrated part of the national community, had every reason to consider themselves good Italians. Stripped of their rights in 1938 and then of their citizenship in 1943, Italy's Jews had not been stripped of their Italianness, something they felt, and something they had earned. That the Italian community, their own community, had turned their backs on them was inconceivable. Hence why survivors go to great lengths to rationalize the detrimental actions of their Italian persecutors, offering justifications that verge on forgiveness. As the *brava gente* myth affirms, only a handful of truly heinous individuals, the worst of the collaborators and the most notorious of the Fascists, had ostracized themselves from the national

community, and survivor testimonies uphold this ratio. For every *carabinieri* commander who had a bullet with his name on it, there were a hundred ‘good Italians’ staffing Salò’s prisons and handing Jews over to Nazis – or should I say, to ‘Germans’. By referring to their Italian persecutors not as ‘Italians’ but as ‘*fascisti*’ and ‘*repubblicini*’, Jewish survivors verbally separate them from the greater national body of ‘*(bravi) italiani*’, to which they themselves still belong. If anyone had lost their Italianness, it was these figures, who had renounced it when they chose to tyrannize other Italians just like them. It was not until the turn of the twenty-first century that a counter-narrative emerged from within Italy’s Jewish community, one which called into question the essential goodness of the ordinary, non-Jewish Italian during the years of Fascist antisemitism and the Shoah.

Chapter VI

Derailing Memory: Remembering Indifference at the Shoah Memorial of Milan

*And I – my head oppressed by horror – said:
“Master, what is it that I hear? Who are
those people so defeated by their pain?”*

*And he to me: “This miserable way
is taken by the sorry souls of those
who lived without disgrace and without praise.*

*They now commingle with the coward angels,
the company of those who were not rebels
nor faithful to God, but stood apart.*

*The heavens, that their beauty not be lessened,
have cast them out, nor will deep Hell receive them –
even the wicked cannot glory in them.”*

Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 1321

Introduction

The indifferent, says Dante, stand forever before the gates of Hell, trapped in the vestibule of the Inferno.⁹⁵² For failing to choose a side in times of crisis, even if it were the wrong side, the neutral ones consigned themselves to a state of limbo for all eternity. Barred forever from the Kingdom of Heaven, the indifferent, in the eyes of the Supreme Poet, were not even worthy of the abode of the damned. More honor could be found among heretics, traitors, murderers, and thieves, people who, though their actions had doomed them to fire and brimstone until the end of days, at least had the fortitude to act with conviction at the moment of truth. The same could not be said for the neutral ones, the cowards who refused to stand for anything as the battles in their lives raged. Through their

⁹⁵² Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980 – 1984), *Digital Dante* (New York: Columbia University), <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/>. See also: Teodolinda Barolini, “Crossings and Commitments,” *Digital Dante*, (New York: Columbia University), <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/>.

indifference, they dishonored themselves for all time in the judgments of God, Satan, and perhaps most important of all, Dante.

To an Italian, being labeled ‘indifferent’ must cut just a little bit deeper than it does for other people, since the father of their language, and arguably their most cherished cultural inheritance, found the indifferent ones to be unworthy even of eternal damnation, much less Life Everlasting. At the Shoah Memorial of Milan, situated within the former deportation center at Milano Centrale station, it is ‘indifference’ that tells the story of antisemitism and the Shoah in Italy. Included at Liliana Segre’s behest, a remembrance narrative of indifference, though not without its limitations, disputes the predominant national myths of Fascism, World War II, and the Shoah, self-exonerating tales of national Resistance and collective victimhood, *brava gente* and German domination. But ‘indifference’ also challenges the collective memories of Italy’s greater Jewish community, which on levels official and unofficial, public and personal, has not only endorsed Italy’s hegemonic master narratives, but helped write them as well, especially *brava gente* and the myths of the ‘good Italian’ and the ‘bad German’.

To articulate the remembrance narrative of indifference, told within a space of Nazi and Fascist violence, architects Guido Morpurgo and Annalisa de Curtis applied the ‘experience design’ concept to Milan’s memorial, a technique which appeals to visitors’ sensory perceptions in an effort to heighten the message and, in this context, transform visitors into witnesses themselves. Creating a Shoah memorial (or museum), as discussed below, is a notoriously difficult undertaking, requiring designers to balance a number of delicate, often conflicting and irreconcilable interests – not least those of survivors themselves, who are not of one mind. To address and overcome these thorny challenges, Morpurgo and de Curtis designed Milan’s Shoah Memorial in two parts: one, a commemorative space, invites visitors to walk in the footsteps of the deported, right up to the cattle

cars that carried them away; the other, an educational area, provides visitors with a space where they can apply the lessons they've learned to fighting against present and future injustices.

Milano Centrale after the War

For decades after the war, little to nothing was said about Milano Centrale's role as a Shoah deportation center, and even the station's historical tie to Fascism was dealt with only in a haphazard, perfunctory manner. The Highspeed and Postal Service Piazza (*Piazzale della G.V. e delle R.R. Poste*), the internal, subterranean station that had served as the deportation center, quietly resumed its function as a hub for the transportation of mail and commercial cargo. The mere act of resuming operations, it has been argued, in a part of the station that remained unknown to travelers, helped facilitate collective memory loss. "After the end of the war," writes architect Stefano Suriano, in a review of the memorial, "this event, incredibly, was removed from memory: the Station's large maneuvering area for the loading and unloading of goods remained in operation until 1991, and afterward, following the evolution of transport systems, all these spaces were gradually abandoned."⁹⁵³ Only in 1997, through the combined efforts of Jewish and Catholic organizations in Milan, were the deportations brought to public light.⁹⁵⁴

Postwar literature on the station has been similarly mute on Milano Centrale's connection to the Shoah. Two of the most well-known books on the station, Gianfranco Angeleri and Cesare Columba's *Milano Centrale. Storia di una stazione* (1985) and M. Finazzer Flory's *La Stazione Centrale di Milano. Il viaggio e l'immagine* (2005), both artistic in scope, have nothing to say on the matter.⁹⁵⁵ One

⁹⁵³ "Dopo la fine della guerra questa vicenda venne incredibilmente rimossa dalla memoria: la grande macchina dell'area di manovra della Stazione rimase in attività fino al 1991 per il carico e lo scarico delle merci, poi, in seguito all'evoluzione dei sistemi di trasporto, tutti quegli spazi vennero gradualmente abbandonati"; Stefano Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile. Il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano." *Engramma* 123 (gennaio 2015), http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=2122.

⁹⁵⁴ A fuller background on the Shoah Memorial of Milan's history is provided in chapter seven.

⁹⁵⁵ Gianfranco Angeleri and Cesare Columba. *Milano Centrale. Storia di una stazione* (Rome: Edizioni Abete, 1985). M. Finazzer Flory, *La Stazione Centrale di Milano. Il viaggio e l'immagine* (Milan: Skira, 2005).

author who does address the link, Claudio Pedrazzini, only does so to deny it outright, rejecting as the “fruit of fantasy” (*frutto di fantasia*) any allegations that Milano Centrale served as a deportation center. His contention stems not, however, from a negation of the Shoah, but from a weird love affair with the station itself, as can be gleaned from his subtitle: *Portrait of a Lady of High Lineage* (*Ritratto di una Dama di alto lignaggio*). Plenty of deportation trains left from Milan, he acknowledges, though he insists that they departed from a different station.⁹⁵⁶ It isn’t beyond the realm of possibility that other local rail facilities were integrated into the Final Solution, but the fact remains that Milano Centrale served as the city’s only deportation center. It’s also worth noting that Pedrazzini was writing in 2003, after the Shoah memorial project was off the ground and knowledge of the deportations was becoming more diffuse. Though he may not have denied the Shoah, he was denying survivors’ experiences and memories of it.

Outdoors and aboveground, efforts to disassociate the station from its Fascist past demonstrate a stunning nonchalance. Although fasces and other related insignia have been chiseled from the walls of Milan’s government and administrative buildings, at Milano Centrale, they remain. (Pedrazzini, incidentally and unsurprisingly, agrees with their preservation, arguing for the integrity of original art and contending that removing images does not erase the past.)⁹⁵⁷ And while most written links with Fascism (and the monarchy) have been effaced, the removals appear to have gone unreported in the press, and the work itself was shoddy, leaving behind literal palimpsests. During the Fascist years, the following inscription, dedicated to Vittorio Emanuele III and Benito Mussolini, appeared on the station’s main façade:

⁹⁵⁶ Claudio Pedrazzini, *Milano Centrale allo specchio. Ritratto di una Dama di alto lignaggio* (Cremona: Arti Grafiche Persico S.p.a., 2003), 355.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

REIGN OF VITTORIO EMANUELE III
DUCE OF FASCISM BENITO MUSSOLINI
IN THE YEAR MCMXXXI OF THE ERA OF CHRIST
IX OF THE FASCIST ERA⁹⁵⁸

Though all that remains today is line three, “ASC” from the original inscription of “FASCIST” in line four is still perfectly visible (at least as of June 2017). In another hack job, the neighboring Postal Palace (*Palazzo delle Poste*), inaugurated in 1931 as part of the station complex, remains plastered with reminders of Fascism and the monarchy. On the frontal façade, looking over Piazza Luigi di Savoia, the outline of “ROYAL” (*REGIE*) is clear as day above the “POST” (*POSTE*) that was added in the Republican era. On the Via Aporti side, facing Milano Centrale station, tracings of “ROYAL POST” (*REGIE POSTE*) remain visible on the wall behind a newer, smaller “POST” (*POSTE*), nowhere near large enough to hide the old markings. And the façade on the post office’s far, Via Soperga side reveals that the Postal Palace still acknowledges its dedication in year nine of the Fascist era (*NONO FASCIIUM ANNO*). Postwar Italians vociferously denounced Fascism in word, but in deed, their attempts to disassociate themselves from Mussolini’s dictatorship often betrayed a dumbfounding lack of commitment. Meanwhile, in the 1980s and ’90s, even as survivors were starting to share their stories with wider, more public audiences, mum stayed the word connecting the station to the Shoah. Instead, in keeping with the city’s transition to a post-industrial, fashion- and consumer-oriented economy, plans were made to outfit Milano Centrale with shopping centers, allowing the station to double as “a sort of mall”.⁹⁵⁹

⁹⁵⁸ “REGNANDO VITTORIO EMANUELE III / DUCE DEL FASCISMO BENITO MUSSOLINI / NELL’ANNO MCMXXXI DELL’ERA DI CRISTO / IX DELL’ERA DEI FASCI”; Giovanni Biadene, “La nuova stazione di Milano,” *L’Illustrazione Italiana*, 5 luglio 1931, p. 19, Per 6, Bob. n. 6, BS.

⁹⁵⁹ “una sorta di centro commerciale”; Edoardo Stucchi, “La Centrale diventerà una cittadella,” *Corriere della Sera*, 7 marzo 1987, p. 36, Bob. n. 500, BS. See also: Edoardo Stucchi, “La Centrale sarà il ‘salotto’ di Milano,” *Corriere della Sera*, 5 giugno 1984, p. 25, Per 1, Bob. n. 467, BS; “Ecco la nuova Centrale. Necci presenta il piano,” *Corriere della Sera*, 7 dicembre 1994, p. 44, Bob. n. 617, BS; and Franco Tinelli, “Una Centrale ad Alta velocità,” *Il Giorno*, 7 dicembre 1994, p. 37, Bob. n. 329, BS.

Indifference as Counter-Narrative

On September 26, 2008, in a ceremony held in Milano Centrale's Royal Pavilion (*Padiglione Reale*) – a questionable location, given that its designated former occupant had countersigned the Racial Laws – architects Guido Morpurgo and Annalisa de Curtis officially unveiled their design for the Shoah Memorial of Milan. Among the features they introduced was the Wall of Indifference, an imposing structure, fashioned from reinforced concrete and bearing the word '*INDIFFERENZA*', that would be placed in the entryway atrium, 'greeting' visitors as soon as they entered the memorial. The Wall of Indifference also reinforced the words spoken by Liliana Segre on the occasion, putting a concrete accent on the theme that she prioritized in her address that day. Indifference, she told those gathered, had enabled the Milanese "to turn the other way" (*voltarsi dall'altra parte*) as thousands of their Jewish neighbors were deported to their deaths. And despite the passage of time, she noted that the tendency toward indifference remained a blight on the Italian character, as evinced by a recent tragedy in the Neapolitan town of Torregavata, where Italian beachgoers had "continued to swim in the sea while two young Roma girls drowned" right next to them.⁹⁶⁰ When the memorial was inaugurated five years later, she once again stressed this theme. "The violence was terrible," she told the crowd, "but the indifference was, and still is, worse."⁹⁶¹ Indifference, she insists, kills more than violence.⁹⁶²

⁹⁶⁰ "*continuare a fare il bagno mentre due bambine rom annegano*"; Segre quoted in Paolo Foschini, "Binario 21, Memoriale della Shoah. Segre: no al rischio indifferenza," *Corriere della Sera*, 27 settembre 2008, p. 5, Fasc. Verbale, CDEC. See also: Maria Pirro, "Annegano due bimbe nomadi tra l'indifferenza dei bagnanti," *la Repubblica*, 19 luglio 2008, https://napoli.repubblica.it/dettaglio/annegano-due-bimbe-nomadi-tra-lindifferenza-dei-bagnanti/1490454?refresh_ce. As the title of the article indicates, Segre was not the only one to interpret the nearby beachgoers' failure to help as a sign of their indifference.

⁹⁶¹ "*La violenza fu terribile, ma l'indifferenza è stata, ed è, tuttora, ancora peggiore*"; Segre quoted in "Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: inaugurato il 'cuore' del progetto," alla presenza delle massime Autorità Istituzionali e Religiose," *Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane*, 27 gennaio 2013, http://www.fsnews.it/cms/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=95d822225ba7c310VgnVCM1000008916f90aRCRD&cid=rss_FEE_D_Doc_FSNews,

⁹⁶² Paolo D'Amico, "Segre, memoria di Shoah: 'I nomi ebrei sulle pietre per le strade di Milano'," *Corriere della Sera*, 6 gennaio 2018, http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_gennaio_06/segre-memoria-shoa-nomi-ebrei-pietre-le-strade-milano-16738078-f31e-11e7-a586-43e3ef84081a.shtml.

Segre herself was the driving force behind centering the Shoah Memorial on the theme of indifference. In words that call to mind Elie Wiesel, who once attested that “indifference ... is the epitome of all evil,” Segre has maintained that indifference is the *sine qua non* enabling a catastrophe like the Shoah to occur.⁹⁶³ As a Shoah hermeneutic, indifference has a stout pedigree. In addition to survivors like Wiesel, no less of scholars than Ian Kershaw and Christopher Browning have lent credence to the interpretation. Sir Ian famously wrote that “the road to Auschwitz was built by hatred, but paved with indifference,” while Browning argued that ‘indifference’ aptly characterizes the disposition of Germany’s domestic population during the war, away from the pressures, opportunities, and temptations of Poland and the eastern front.⁹⁶⁴ Dante, of course, also would have approved. But others have taken issue with the term, and not without merit. The most vocal critic has probably been Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, who claims that ‘indifference’ lacks moral weight and disregards ideological conviction. Though he pushed the argument too far in the opposite direction, contending that the Germans, and they alone, were a bloodthirsty nation of rabid, frothy-mouthed antisemites, chomping at the bit for a Führer figure to give them the greenlight for genocide, he was nevertheless right to emphasize the role of ideology – specifically, antisemitism – in enabling the Shoah.⁹⁶⁵

A cursory glance at the *repubblichini* reveals a number of reasons why, beyond mere indifference, ordinary Italians supported the Italian Social Republic (RSI), an antisemitic racial state that collaborated with the Nazis in the Final Solution. While some factors, no doubt, involved devotion to Mussolini and the need for material security, another motivation, as indicated by

⁹⁶³ Elie Wiesel quoted in *US News and World Report*, October 27, 1986.

⁹⁶⁴ Ian Kershaw quoted in Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998), 201. Browning provides a brief historiographical overview of the ‘indifference’ question on pp. 200-202.

⁹⁶⁵ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

fascism's postwar history, is antisemitism. When the neofascist Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI) emerged from the rubble of the RSI shortly after the war, it counted many former *repubblicani* among its members, and it upheld the RSI's political programme, the *Manifesto of Verona*, as an "ideal type of social fascist-republican politics", the type of politics that the movement championed.⁹⁶⁶ Not only did the MSI espouse traditional fascist values, then, such as ultra-nationalism, anti-communism, anti-liberalism, and anti-democracy, but it also promoted antisemitism, for article seven of the manifesto had identified Jews as an alien race and a wartime enemy. Underscoring the point, the MSI's founder and leader, Giorgio Almirante, was the former editorial secretary of *La difesa della razza* (The Defense of the Race), whose bread-and-butter theme had been antisemitism.

For many members of the Italian Social Movement, something other than indifference had led them to arrest, detain, and deport Italy's Jews. Yet, when 'indifference' is invoked as a catchall to explain the Shoah, as it frequently is, such nuances are lost, and the term comes to function as a stand-in for a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of the tragedy. Indifference becomes a verbal analog to "iconic images", ubiquitous snapshots of the Shoah that "may come to act," as Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich argues, "as tropes for Holocaust remembrance itself." Often meant to elicit strong emotional reactions from viewers, iconic images, such as an *Arbeit macht frei* gate, the view toward Birkenau, or the inside of a gas chamber, "have come to stand in for the Holocaust as a whole and act as shortcuts to memory." Rather than spurring viewers to learn more about the tragedy, iconic images "are often 'accepted as straightforward and unambiguous reality' or as a 'moral claim' to be accepted without questioning." The inevitable result is that these images lose their referential quality and themselves become the things remembered, at which point "iconic

⁹⁶⁶ "*tipo ideale di una politica sociale fascista-repubblicana*"; Petra Rosenbaum, *Il nuovo fascismo. Da Salò ad Almirante, Storia del MSI* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1974), 29.

images” graduate (or devolve) to “idols”, which hinder remembrance “by usurping it and thereby helping to erase the ‘voice of the past.’”⁹⁶⁷ ‘Indifference’ threatens to distort the Shoah in much the same way. If one understands indifference, the reasoning goes, then one understands how the Shoah happened. Immediately and universally understood, mere utterance of the word obviates further analysis, eschewing all context, complexity, and nuance. While, in truth, indifference (like its cousin, apathy) certainly has its place among the many factors that enabled the Shoah, and maybe that place is indeed paramount, when the word is reflexively invoked as the sole determinant, it threatens to be reduced to yet another Shoah trope with no true explanatory or revelatory power beyond itself.

At the Shoah Memorial of Milan, however, the application of the ‘indifference’ narrative fits. Although the active Italian perpetrators, the ‘fascists’, *repubblichini*, and ‘Blackshirts’ of witness testimony, are unfortunately left out of the story (and let off the hook), as a narrative of the Shoah grounded in survivors’ attempts to process their own trauma, ‘indifference’ is a powerful counter to the self-acquitting national memories of World War II and the Shoah. The ‘indifference’ narrative also does right by survivors themselves, taking seriously their memories, their pain, their conceptual struggles, and their words.

Thus, in an era of museum design in which “the idea is to tell a specific story,” the Shoah Memorial of Milan tells a powerful one, and by centering on ‘indifference’, the memorial bucks the trend of articulating a narrative that reflects national values or political concerns, instead taking aim squarely at them.⁹⁶⁸ As Morpurgo explains, his and de Curtis’ objective was “to create through the Shoah Memorial of Milan a demystifying architectural narrative form, based on the truth of the

⁹⁶⁷ Vicki Goldberg quoted in Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 105. See also 106.

⁹⁶⁸ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1992), 206. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), viii.

place's history, documented by historical research and witnessed by survivors."⁹⁶⁹ In their effort to "change the way that the past is remembered," Morpurgo and de Curtis were creating, what Hansen-Glucklich calls, a "countermonument" (though to preserve terminological specificity, perhaps we should call the Shoah Memorial of Milan a 'counter-memorial').⁹⁷⁰ Michel de Certeau once stressed the importance of filling a space with a story, because "stories 'go in a procession' ahead of social practices in order to open a field for them"; they "open a legitimate *theater* for practical *actions*."⁹⁷¹ Segre's remembrance narrative of indifference, a memory 'from below' to replace the inferior and inaccurate ones of old, provided the memory material for the architects' counter-memorial. It also provided the message to help visitors detect and counter indifference to suffering in their own lives.

As "editor[s] of the material", the architects were responsible for curating the survivors' memories, no easy task.⁹⁷² To better conceive the memorial space and how it could be fashioned to tell a more truthful story, Morpurgo and de Curtis routinely visited the former deportation center, the maneuvering area, with its former deportees, listening to their stories, exchanging ideas, and learning how the station was used during the Final Solution.⁹⁷³ Segre was but one of many survivors involved with the project. In turn, survivors came to the project with their own personal objectives, hoping that concrete expressions of their memories could help them process their own traumatic experiences.⁹⁷⁴ While Segre's request was realized, this was not always possible, for as Isabelle Engelhardt notes, representation "cannot be total."⁹⁷⁵ Agata Bauer, who had long been troubled by

⁹⁶⁹ "di realizzare attraverso il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano una forma architettonica narrativa demitizzante, basata sulla verità della Storia del luogo, documentata dalle ricerche storiche e testimoniata dai sopravvissuti"; Guido Morpurgo, "Architettura e narrazione nel progetto del Memoriale della Shoah: uno 'scavo archeologico' nella Stazione Centrale di Milano," *ArchHistor* III 5 (2016), 151n.20.

⁹⁷⁰ Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 212.

⁹⁷¹ [emphases in original]; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1988), 125.

⁹⁷² Graeme Brooker, *Adaptation Strategies for Interior Architecture and Design* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 142.

⁹⁷³ Guido Morpurgo, Personal communication with author, August 8, 2018. Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile."

⁹⁷⁴ "interrogazione"; Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018.

⁹⁷⁵ Isabelle Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald in Comparison with Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and Washington, DC* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), 34.

the mental image of children being marched toward the gas chambers, hoped that a memorialized depiction of this phenomenon would help her make sense of it. But Morpurgo and de Curtis refrained, favoring an interpretation that was more comprehensive in nature. “Of course the children have a special importance,” Morpurgo says, “but at the same time, we have to step back from the special importance,” because other groups of innocents had suffered and died, too. By magnifying one particular victim group, the architects feared they might come too close to ‘answering’ that part of the Shoah. Choosing instead to keep some things in the dark, Morpurgo and de Curtis left the genocide of Jewish children ‘unresolved’.⁹⁷⁶

The Challenges of Representation

In 2007, the Shoah Memorial of Milan Foundation (*Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*), which was formed that year, came into possession of the memorial space at the station, which occupies the first five bays of the former postal service facility. Access notwithstanding, a tall task lay before the architects, for designing a successful Shoah memorial requires balancing a number of delicate, even incompatible factors, from style and purpose to audience and personal interest. As Goti Bauer’s unfulfilled request shows, not everyone can be satisfied.

“Holocaust museums,” Tim Cole bluntly states, “are difficult to design.” What makes them so tricky, he explains, is that “they seek to provide a narrative of a horrific historical event, and to engage in an act of memory.”⁹⁷⁷ Elaborating, Hansen-Glucklich argues that in addition to trying to “simultaneously provide witness, facilitate remembrance, and educate their visitors,” already a colossal undertaking, Shoah museums (and memorials) face a fourth challenge, arguably more difficult than the first three combined. Because they are tasked with representing “what is so often

⁹⁷⁶ Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018.

⁹⁷⁷ Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the ‘Shoah Business’* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, 1999), 170.

considered to be a unique and unparalleled event in history, Holocaust museums and exhibits face the singular challenge of enabling visitors to perceive the sacred.”⁹⁷⁸ Led by the late Elie Wiesel, the staunchest advocate of this position, survivors of this mindset contend that the Shoah defies representation because they believe it to be a sacred event.⁹⁷⁹ For them, square one is already a step too far. Yet even when stripped of its sacrality, many survivors (and others) maintain that the Shoah remains inherently unknowable and unimaginable, inexplicable and beyond representation. “[A]ny representation of the Holocaust,” writes Engelhardt, “gives meaning and aesthetic form to something which arguably did not make sense at all – at least not from the victim’s viewpoint.”⁹⁸⁰ In less absolute terms, Saul Friedländer, a historian who, as a child, survived the Shoah in hiding, similarly placed the tragedy “at the limits of representation.”⁹⁸¹

On the other hand, there is the equally strong impulse that the Shoah must be remembered and witnessed, even if every such attempt is doomed to inadequacy. It is the paradox at the heart of Shoah memorialization. For some proponents of this viewpoint, Shoah memorialization means honoring the dead by ‘never forgetting’ the victims. For others, recurring and ritualized acts of commemoration at sites of Shoah violence foster collective identity, community cohesion, and transmission of the event across generations. Still others insist on memorializing the Shoah less for its own sake and more for the lessons it can impart in the present and future, as a cautionary tale impelling visitors to remain vigilant against similar injustices in their own lives. Primo Levi found this last imperative especially critical. “If understanding is impossible, recognizing is necessary, because,” he maintained, “what has happened can happen again, consciences can again be seduced

⁹⁷⁸ Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 19-20.

⁹⁷⁹ Harold Marcuse, “Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre,” *The American Historical Review* 115:1 (February 2010), 53 and note 2. Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 15.

⁹⁸⁰ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 34.

⁹⁸¹ Saul Friedländer quoted in Marcuse, 53n.2. See also: Engelhardt, *ibid.*, 17.

and obscured: even our own.”⁹⁸² Even Wiesel, despite his reservations, acknowledged the value of commemoration, accepting Jimmy Carter’s invitation to chair the President’s Commission on the Holocaust, which culminated in the founding of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).⁹⁸³ For Wiesel, USHMM would function primarily as an “initiator center”, inducting visitors into “the sacred mystery that was the Holocaust” and kindling in them “a renewed appreciation for its mystery.”⁹⁸⁴ When the Shoah Memorial of Milan came into being, its design bore the intellectual and ethical imprints of both Levi and Wiesel, different though they were.

Wiesel’s injunction suggests another difficulty that memorial designers face, which is to strike a balance between appealing to the collective and the individual experience. As sites of mourning, Shoah memorials provide survivors with spaces where they can gather and commemorate their shared losses. Spaces where individual and communal grief coincides, Shoah memorials also allow survivors to communicate those losses, and their collective experience, to future generations of the remembering community. Nevertheless, despite the wholesale, all-encompassing reach of the Shoah’s destruction, each victim experienced the tragedy differently, as Ruth Kluger noted in *Still Alive*, and as Levi’s biographical vignettes illustrate in *If This Is a Man*.⁹⁸⁵ Moreover, to achieve their objective of influencing future behavior, Shoah memorials must also reach individuals untouched by the tragedy. For the ‘uninitiated’, personal experience, reflection, connection, and investment are crucial in order for them to form a bond with the memorial space – and thus with the Shoah itself.

Designing the actual memorial poses similar challenges, with architects often finding themselves operating on a spectrum between two competing poles, both mutually exclusive, neither

⁹⁸² Appendix to Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Ann Goldstein, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015).

⁹⁸³ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 185.

⁹⁸⁴ Edward Linenthal quoted in Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 122. See also: “Report to the President,” *President’s Commission on the Holocaust*, September 27, 1979, <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20050707-presidents-commission-holocaust.pdf>.

⁹⁸⁵ Ruth Kluger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, 66. For Levi, see, especially, ch. 9, “The Drowned and the Saved.”

entirely satisfactory on its own. At one end, Engelhardt locates the abstract (or modern) style, an approach that has found success. Daniel Libeskind's 2001 additions to the Jewish Museum Berlin, whose signature feature is his "Void", have been widely praised. Built to represent the broken histories of Jews in Germany and of Germany itself, whose history involves that of the local Jewish community, The Void is a traversable but inaccessible space of the museum, signifying that the Shoah provoked a rupture in German and Jewish history that cannot be overcome. As Libeskind's Void conveys, the conspicuous absence of Germany's Jews who disappeared in the Shoah is, in his view, the most powerful trace of the Shoah in Germany. By linking, via walking bridges, one section of the museum on the general history of Berlin with another dedicated to local Jewish history, the architecture of the Void "forecloses the possibility of re-harmonizing German-Jewish history along the discredited models of symbiosis or assimilation. But it also forecloses the opposite view that sees the Holocaust as the inevitable telos of German history."⁹⁸⁶ The Void, then, refrains from trying to solve the Shoah.

Survivors, however, tend to reject abstract representations, insisting that "the reality of their suffering requires as naturalistic an expression as possible."⁹⁸⁷ Otherwise, a memorial cannot be a true witness to the events they lived.⁹⁸⁸ Their preferred naturalistic style presents its own problems, though. Developers would be hard-pressed to successfully found a memorial on a site where the Shoah did not take place, for any installation would be alien and unnatural. Yad Vashem and USHMM, the standard bearers for Shoah memorialization, would have been rejected out of hand. But even memorials built on sites of Shoah violence, like Milan's, encounter difficulties, because *any*

⁹⁸⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 68-69.

⁹⁸⁷ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 37.

⁹⁸⁸ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 9, 11.

attempt to literally, or naturally, portray the Shoah carries with it a denial of representation.

Literalization presupposes the event itself, not a simulacrum of it.⁹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, building a memorial on a site of Shoah violence seems to have genuine benefits. As Pierre Nora explains, marginalized communities often create “dominated” sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) in order to commemorate past events that would otherwise be obliterated by history. As “places of refuge, sanctuaries of instinctive devotion and hushed pilgrimages, where the living heart of memory still beats,” dominated sites of memory are actively sought out and created by remembering victim communities. “One does not visit such places,” Nora explains, “one is summoned to them.”⁹⁹⁰ Arguing that “past violence is remembered *in* the places of destruction because it is remembered *through* them,” anthropologist Paola Filippucci, a researcher of World War I sites of memory, locates place at the intersection of memory and violence.⁹⁹¹ The Shoah Memorial of Milan can be understood as a dominated site of memory.

Although, as a memory mediator, space can be modified to regulate how prominent or concealed a given memory is, de Certeau contended that “There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can ‘invoke’ or not.”⁹⁹² To invoke the spirits entombed within Milano Centrale station, Morpurgo and de Curtis conceived of their project as an excavation, literally and figuratively. The buried space beneath the tracks served as the perfect metaphor for the burying of the deportations in the Italian collective unconscious. After the war, the subterranean chambers had quickly resumed their original function, and when the postal services

⁹⁸⁹ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 37.

⁹⁹⁰ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Volume I: Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 7, 19.

⁹⁹¹ Emphases in original; Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm, introduction to *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*, eds. Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 26. For Filippucci’s chapter, see “In a Ruined Country: Place and the Memory of War Destruction in Argonne (France),” 165-189.

⁹⁹² De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108. See also: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 27-29; and Michela Bassanelli, “Portare alla luce l’invisibile: il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” *Op. cit., selezione della critica dell’arte contemporanea* 149 (January 2014), 70.

relocated in the 1990s, the space was abandoned with nary a word being said about the deportations. Everything left behind, the platforms, the tracks, the wagon lifts, and all the rest remained walled into the bowels of the station, invisible to the world outside. These “remains”, however, and the space containing them, constitute a modern ruin implanting Milano Centrale “in the complex geography of the Shoah,” and the suppression of that history, Morpurgo charges, was a foundational pillar of the anti-Fascist, postwar republic. In order to find stable footing in the fragile postwar era, the fledgling state’s leaders, he contends, had omitted Italy’s participation in the genocide from the national record, first by distorting the reality of the Racial Laws, which the Fascist state had passed on its own, and then by suppressing knowledge of Italian collaboration in the arrests, detainments, massacres, and deportations.⁹⁹³ Other developers have echoed Morpurgo’s indictment, none more sharply than Ferruccio de Bortoli, first president of the Shoah Memorial Foundation. Diagnosing collective amnesia as a national epidemic, de Bortoli maintains that “A shameful page of national history was written” beneath the tracks at Milano Centrale, a page that was “quickly forgotten and removed.”⁹⁹⁴ By unearthing this buried space beneath the station, the architects could reveal the memory trapped within.

For Morpurgo and de Curtis, having the site available to them was an invaluable asset. A witness to the very history that it preserves, the subterranean space at Milano Centrale station was itself the object to display, enabling the architects to appeal to its emotional, evocative power. “The historical-documentary significance and the status of these spaces, that is, the testimonial value and the substantial physical integrity of these original spaces,” they write, “have guided the architectural decisions, which are based on the idea that form and content coincide in a place that congeals in

⁹⁹³ “*alla complessiva geografia della Shoah*”; Morpurgo, “Architettura e narrazione nel progetto del Memoriale della Shoah,” 150. See also 139-140.

⁹⁹⁴ “*Lì venne scritta una pagina vergognosa della storia nazionale, presto dimenticata e rimossa*”; Ferruccio de Bortoli, “Perché un memoriale,” in *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano* (Milan: Memoriale della Shoah di Milano, 2015), 3.

itself an indissoluble weaving of emotional charge and of representations of a unique historical event.”⁹⁹⁵ Although, since the end of the war, the space’s history had been muted and manipulated through mythmaking and oblivion, Morpurgo and de Curtis tasked themselves with narrating a more truthful (hi)story of the space than had been previously told, or rather, not told at all.

To properly understand the Shoah Memorial of Milan’s purpose, its name is a helpful place to start. In 2003, as the developers were setting their sights on the former deportation center at the station, the name for their future center changed from the “Shoah *Museum* of Milan” to the “Shoah *Memorial* of Milan”. It was a matter of semantics, but a substantial one. As Michela Bassanelli has noted, after the Second World War, ‘memorial’ (*memoriale*) came to replace ‘monument’ (*monumento*) in common Italian parlance, a rhetorical shift that mirrored a corresponding change in architectural language taking place both within Italy and abroad.⁹⁹⁶ In prewar eras, memorials (or ‘monuments’) had consisted, in the main, of large stone structures that viewers observed in a mostly passive manner. Afterward, however, memorials started to acquire spatial complexity, often inviting visitors to enter and pass through them, all while spurring them to remember and reflect.⁹⁹⁷ The postwar memorial, unlike its generations of predecessors, was meant to provide visitors with a transformative experience. In the context of the Nazi genocide, one such example can be seen at Majdanek. Designed by Wiktor Tolkin and dedicated in 1969, the Majdanek memorial features a massive, carved stone block elevated high enough off the ground to allow visitors to pass beneath. The point of the design, as Harold Marcuse illustrates, is to enable visitors “to experience the massive weight of the sculpture from below,” and, perhaps, to convey a sense of the suffocating inescapability of

⁹⁹⁵ “Il significato storico-documentale e lo stato dei luoghi, ovvero il valore testimonial e la sostanziale integrità fisica di questi spazi originali, hanno orientate le scelte architettoniche. Esse sono basate sull’idea che forma e contenuto coincidano in un luogo che raprende in sé un indissolubile intreccio di carica emotive e di rappresentazione di un evento storico unico”; Guido Morpurgo and Annalisa de Curtis, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: documento e progetto,” in *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano* (Milan: Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS, 2015), 21-22.

⁹⁹⁶ Bassanelli, “Portare alla luce l’invisibile,” 70-71.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

the victims' own destruction.⁹⁹⁸ Postwar Italians, however, did not have to travel to Poland or wait until 1969 to find such a memorial. Dedicated in 1949, the Fosse Ardeatine Mausoleum in Rome offered an even earlier take on the "experience design". Visitors to the memorial, which is situated in the Ardeatine Caves, enter a tomb-like structure that contains 336 individual coffins: 335 representing the political prisoners, Jews, and other victims killed in the massacre, and one devoted to all Italians murdered under National Socialism and Fascism.⁹⁹⁹

Along with connoting a linguistic change, the word '*memoriale*' also signifies memory, and the purpose of a memorial is to stimulate remembering. "[M]emorials provide the sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves," James E. Young explains, "places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their 'shared' stories of the past." These groups "become communities," he continues, "precisely by having shared (if only vicariously) the experiences of their neighbors. At some point, it may even be the activity of remembering together that becomes the shared memory; once ritualized, remembering together becomes an event in itself that is to be shared and remembered."¹⁰⁰⁰ When remembering groups gather at sites that hold valence *for them*, those spaces require active input *from them* in order to have meaning. Such necessary interaction between people and place suggests that the events being commemorated *in situ* are still very much alive to the remembering communities. For them, the events have not, as Nora might have put it, passed into history, and so they cannot be resolved and placed in a glass box for passive observation.¹⁰⁰¹ In a word, they cannot be 'museified'.¹⁰⁰²

⁹⁹⁸ Marcuse, "Holocaust Memorials," 87-88.

⁹⁹⁹ "I sacelli," *Mausoleo Fosse Ardeatine*, <http://www.mausoleofosseardeatine.it/mausoleo/sacelli/?portfolioCats=42>.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁰¹ Nora, *Realms of Memory, Volume I*.

¹⁰⁰² Libeskind avoided 'museifying' the Shoah at the Jewish Museum Berlin, for example, by not trying to portray the concepts of loss and absence with matter.

To declare that the Shoah has been “(re)solved” eerily hearkens back to the purpose, and name, of the genocide itself. But even lacking the sinister association, to museificate the Shoah implies closing the case on the matter. With no need for further investigation, analysis, and interpretation, the tragedy can be understood and explained, including by those who lived and survived it. This, Morpurgo and de Curtis insisted, was incompatible with Levi’s maxim that “to explain is almost to justify,” a line of reasoning which holds that interpreting the Shoah is a task fraught with danger, for it tiptoes along the edges of excusing or exonerating the perpetrators.¹⁰⁰³ Milan’s Shoah center, Morpurgo explains, “was not thought of as a museum, because we believe that the Shoah is an event that should not be ‘museified’, catalogued, and archived”.¹⁰⁰⁴ Elsewhere, putting the matter more tersely, he says, “You can’t put the Shoah in a museum under glass. It’s impossible.”¹⁰⁰⁵ The decision to call the center a ‘memorial’, then, was a deliberate rejection of ‘museum’, and in his review piece, Suriano captures the designers’ intent perfectly. “The architects’ decision is not to create a museum, a place where the Shoah is archived,” he writes, “but, on the contrary, a space in which, reworking the past, one can acquire a personal and collective conscience; the conservation of that which exists is not intended as musealization but as a recovery of an architectural condition helpful for explaining, through the new design, a specific event of the place itself”:

The Memorial is therefore a monument not only for the evocative power of its spaces, but for the commitment to remember and transmit what was: *monimentum* and *mnemeion*, therefore, an admonishment and at the same time a stimulus to make known.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰³ “*spiegare è quasi giustificare*”; Levi quoted in Morpurgo and de Curtis, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” 21.

¹⁰⁰⁴ “*Non è stato pensato come un museo, in quanto la Shoah è un evento che si ritiene non debba essere ‘museificato’, catalogato e archiviato*”; *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁵ Morpurgo quoted in Jill Goldsmith, “Memory in the Making,” *New York Times*, September 8, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/arts/design/slowly-building-a-memorial-of-the-shoah-in-milan.html>. Bassanelli’s point notwithstanding, the ways that the Italian language distinguishes ‘memorial’ from both ‘monument’ and ‘museum’ may not exist in other languages, such as English. Take, for instance, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Also, Young defines a ‘memorial’ as anything that prompts people to remember, while a ‘monument’ is merely a physical memorial; Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 4.

¹⁰⁰⁶ “*La scelta degli architetti è quella di non realizzare un museo, un luogo dove la Shoah venga archiviata, ma al contrario uno spazio in cui rielaborando il passato si possa acquisire una coscienza personale e collettiva; la conservazione dell’esistente non è intesa come*

Other project organizers shared the architects' perspective. De Bortoli dubbed the center a 'memorial' because the Shoah, he contends, is still very much alive, an "*enigma*" that has not ossified and closed itself off to future interpretations.¹⁰⁰⁷ De Bortoli's vice president and successor, Roberto Jarach, wrote similarly that "The Memorial is not a museum; it has no intention of vestigial recollecting or documentation." Rather, the Shoah Memorial "wants to bring to light a place and the events that occurred there, but giving greater emphasis to the realization of a center of cultural exchange."¹⁰⁰⁸ While giving the memorial his endorsement, Alfonso Arbib, chief rabbi of Milan, likewise explained that "to combat indifference, the Shoah cannot be closed in a museum but must remain a living lesson, translated daily into the contemporary world."¹⁰⁰⁹ Whereas a museum is a depository, or a container, for things known and catalogued, a memorial – a place of memory – is a place to commemorate events that must be actively and consistently remembered and re-elaborated. The Shoah Memorial of Milan was designed according to this principle.

Narrating Indifference at the Shoah Memorial of Milan

To overcome the myriad complexities in Shoah memorialization, the architects designed a memorial in two parts, one commemorative, the other educational. The first space, the memorial proper, was modeled on the 'experience design', a technique that appeals to sight, sound, and bodily sensation in order to immerse visitors in their surroundings, thereby enhancing the impact of the story being

musealizzazione ma come recupero di una condizione architettonica utile a spiegare, attraverso la progettazione del nuovo, una vicenda specifica del luogo stesso. Il Memoriale è quindi monumento non solo per la forza evocativa dei suoi spazi, ma per l'impegno a ricordare e trasmettere ciò che è stato: monimentum e mnemeion, dunque, un ammonimento e allo stesso tempo uno stimolo a far conoscere"; Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile."

¹⁰⁰⁷ De Bortoli quoted in Paolo Bricco, "Memoriale della Shoah, la forza del ricordo," *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 27 settembre 2008, p. 12, Fasc. Verbale, CDEC.

¹⁰⁰⁸ "Il Memoriale non è un museo, non ha nessun intento di raccogliere vestigiale o documentazione. Vuole riportare alla luce un luogo e i fatti che lì si sono verificati, dando però maggior enfasi alla realizzazione di un centro di scambi culturali"; Roberto Jarach, "Non degli ebrei ma di tutti i milanesi," *Il Giorno*, 6 settembre 2010, p. 1, Fasc. Verballi Cortellinne, CDEC.

¹⁰⁰⁹ "Perché per combattere l'indifferenza la Shoah non può essere chiusa in un museo ma deve restare insegnamento vivo e quotidianamente tradotto nel mondo contemporaneo"; Alfonso Arbib quoted in Foschini, "Binario 21, Memoriale della Shoah," 5.

told.¹⁰¹⁰ In a different, though adaptable context, John Brinckerhoff Jackson has noted that sensory perception “gives a very emotional dimension to landscape and thus to the memory of it.”¹⁰¹¹

Applied to Shoah memorial design, such an approach helps take visitors “beyond the limits of mere spectatorship and engage them as witnesses,” producing in them changes in consciousness, behavior, and activity.¹⁰¹²

At a 2008 convention in Turin, on the memorialization of sites of Nazi violence, Morpurgo revealed that this was precisely his and the other developers’ intent. The Shoah Memorial of Milan, he explained, would be designed in such a way that the visitor “loses the status of passive observer, becoming a witness in their own right.”¹⁰¹³ The upshot would be a new narrative of the Shoah created “through the experiences of visitors.”¹⁰¹⁴ Upon coming into possession of the former deportation center the year before, the Memorial Foundation itself indicated, “We indeed maintain that the visitor can, through the emotional experience of the events that pass around them, lose the status of passive observer to become a witness capable of transmitting their own experience”.¹⁰¹⁵ De Bortoli expressed this sentiment too, when, years before the memorial opened, he instructed future visitors that they should be prepared to show “an active participation”.¹⁰¹⁶ Memorialization scholar Irit Dekel has argued that Shoah memorials demand of their visitors “engagement with memory as a

¹⁰¹⁰ Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 103.

¹⁰¹¹ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 47.

¹⁰¹² Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 11. See also 2-3.

¹⁰¹³ “*perde così il suo statuto di osservatore passivo diventando esso stesso testimone*”; Guido Morpurgo, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” Intervento al Convegno di Torino, maggio 2008, Fasc. Verbali, CDEC. The trick, however, as Dominick LaCapra explains, is to not collapse the visitor into the victim. Memorial designers, he cautions, should avoid creating environments that promote “vicarious victimhood”. Instead of “full identification” with the victims, designers should aim to achieve “empathic unsettlement”, the “desirable amount of empathy”, because it “allows viewers to become emotionally involved with the past and to feel implicated in the past so that they may develop feelings of responsibility in terms of preventing another genocide in the future”; Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 142, 226n.21.

¹⁰¹⁴ Morpurgo, “Architettura e narrazione nel progetto del Memoriale della Shoah,” abstract.

¹⁰¹⁵ “*Si ritiene infatti che il visitatore possa, attraverso l’esperienza emozionale degli eventi che gli scorrono intorno, perdere lo statuto di osservatore passivo per diventare testimone in grado di trasmettere la propria esperienza*”; “Il percorso progettuale,” Memoriale della Shoah, Notevole Costello Stampa Inaugurata 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC.

¹⁰¹⁶ “*una partecipazione attiva*”; de Bortoli quoted in Foschini, “Binario 21, Memoriale della Shoah,” 5.

field of social action and participation.”¹⁰¹⁷ To mold visitors into witnesses, Milan’s Shoah Memorial was conceived of as just such a place, one of active participation.

And so, in mimesis of the experiences of Italy’s deported Jews, when visitors enter the commemorative space, they are immediately confronted with a literal wall of indifference, making an abrupt first impression that sets the narrative tone, and sticks with them, for the remainder of the tour. Morpurgo and de Curtis’ intention for the Wall of Indifference (*Muro dell’Indifferenza*), they explained, was for it to serve as “an initial warning that accompanies visitors along the path that begins at that point”.¹⁰¹⁸ After the initial, and initiatory, confrontation with indifference, the next thing visitors might notice is the rumbling of trains passing by overhead, creating tremors that reverberate throughout the station’s hollow core, drowning out all other sounds. In order to foster interactivity between people and place, the architects appealed to bridges of experience that spanned the gap between victim and visitor without filling it. “The coincidence between time, matter, and memory,” they write, “springs from the interaction between the ‘archaeological’ condition of the structures, the evocative intensity of the noise and the vibrations produced by the passing of trains on the platforms above, as well as from the gradual passage from the natural light that passes into the first bay to the darkness of the internal area.”¹⁰¹⁹

Along with availing themselves of the space’s sights, sounds, and aura, Morpurgo and de Curtis further bolstered the memorial’s experience design by employing original materials. The Wall of Indifference, for example, fashioned from reinforced concrete like the structure surrounding it, is

¹⁰¹⁷ Irit Dekel, *Mediation at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18.

¹⁰¹⁸ “un ammonimento iniziale che accompagna i visitatori attraverso il percorso che inizia in quel punto”; Morpurgo and de Curtis, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” 23.

¹⁰¹⁹ “La coincidenza tra tempo, materia e memoria scaturisce dall’interazione tra condizione ‘archeologiche’ delle strutture, intensità evocativa del rumore e delle vibrazioni prodotte dallo scorrimento dei convogli sul soprastante piazzale dei binari, oltre che dal graduale passaggio dalla luce naturale che attraversa la prima campata, all’oscurità dell’area interna”; Annalisa de Curtis and Guido Morpurgo, “Il Memoriale della Shoah nella Stazione Centrale di Milano: struttura-forma-architettura,” in *Le frecce del tempo. Ricerche e progetti di architettura delle infrastrutture*, eds. Cassandra Cozza and Ilaria Valente (Milan and Turin: Pearson Italia, 2014), 69–70.

an “architectural coincidence between form and content.”¹⁰²⁰ Dating from the very first Shoah memorials, small makeshift arrangements that were created on-site during the tragedy, it has been common practice to incorporate symbolic materials representative of victims’ environments and experiences.¹⁰²¹ These symbolic materials, Milan’s Shoah Memorial reveals, can be used structurally, too. In addition to commencing the narrative, the Wall of Indifference also serves a functional purpose, forming part of the ramp that guides visitors into the memorial. Corresponding to the height of the still-visible platform once used by postal trucks – and prisoner lorries – the ramp connects the street-level entryway atrium to the commemorative space’s slightly elevated main deck. By “disappearing” visitors into the memorial’s internal space, the ramp acts as the “essential” boundary separating “the ordinary, profane space from the sacred space (as the wholly other).”¹⁰²² In this way, it operates in a manner similar to the tunnel at Yad Vashem that ushers visitors into the Children’s Memorial. Yad Vashem’s tunnel, Hansen-Glucklich writes, “ritually symbolizes passage from one realm into another as visitors enter the sacred space of memorialization.”¹⁰²³

Sacred though the space might be, to some if not all visitors, Morpurgo has disclosed that “it was not possible to embrace” the abandoned space beneath the station.¹⁰²⁴ To the architects, like to many victims, the Final Solution represented the apex of unreason, so they deemed it inappropriate to try imposing their own order on the place. As a result, all new installations (like the entry ramp) obey the “principle of distancing” (*principio del distanziamento*), a building technique devised by Morpurgo and de Curtis that seeks to mediate, physically and temporally, between the original structure (and the past to which it bears witness) and their interventions.¹⁰²⁵ Unlike the ‘remains’,

¹⁰²⁰ “*coincidenza architettonica tra forma e contenuto*”; *ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰²¹ Marcuse, “Holocaust Memorials,” 56-57.

¹⁰²² “*scomparire*”; Morpurgo and de Curtis, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” 23. See also: Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 18.

¹⁰²³ Hansen-Glucklich, *ibid.*

¹⁰²⁴ Guido Morpurgo, Personal communication with author, October 4, 2018.

¹⁰²⁵ Morpurgo, “Architettura e narrazione nel progetto del Memoriale della Shoah,” abstract.

new additions only touch the original structure by way of connecting materials, though the connecting materials themselves are fashioned from the “original materials” of reinforced concrete and steel.

Once the visitor has ascended the ramp and entered the memorial’s commemorative space, there is no compulsory route to take, an obvious deviation from the experience of the deported Jew (or other victim). Nevertheless, a particular route suggests itself, beginning at the Observatory (*Osservatorio*). A steel, conical structure extending over the Track of the Unknown Destination, the Observatory, as a new installation, obeys the distancing principle. Although visible through the cone’s vertex, a screen (also hanging over the track) displays film reels of Milano Centrale’s construction produced by *LUCE*, the Fascist regime’s cinematic propaganda institute, the Observatory’s true purpose is to further the transformation of visitors into witnesses by working on their sensations and sensibilities. The exhibit’s shape, a funnel, is meant to produce a suffocating effect as one walks inward, and as the space constricts around them, visitors should feel a psychosomatic sensation akin to that of the “psychological and centripetal compression narrated by survivors, experienced in the moment of the traumatic and overwhelming passage from the entryway atrium to the freight cars.”¹⁰²⁶ A series of refractive lenses and mirrors, located at the cone’s inner circle, distorts visitors’ appearances with each step forward, with the result that their individuality ultimately vanishes (and not in a trivializing, funhouse-mirror type of way). At first, visitors can see themselves, but only as silhouettes. By the time they reach the vertex, those silhouettes have become deformed and disfigured, no longer reflecting humans, much less individuals. The real thing for visitors to ‘observe’, then, is themselves, and how they are robbed of their humanity and individuality as they get closer to the Track of the Unknown Destination. The

¹⁰²⁶ “*compressione psicologia e centripeta narrata dai sopravvissuti, vissuta nel momento del passaggio traumatico e travolgente dall’atrio d’ingresso ai vagoni merci*”; *ibid.*, 161, 165.

purpose of the Observatory, in my reading, is to dehumanize the visitor, much like the deportation experience did to the victim.

Though the mutilation and elimination of the person is a compelling process, some modifications could enhance the Observatory's effect. Currently, the *LUCE* clips occupy most of the viewer's attention, while the refractive lenses and mirrors are sidelined. By removing the projection screen and, if possible, enlarging and centering the lenses and mirrors, the focus would remain on the individual visitor, who could trace the obliteration of their individuality with each step forward. This, in turn, might heighten the feeling of constriction. (On the other hand, the location of the Track of the Unknown Destination in the viewer's periphery, and not straight ahead, seems appropriate.) At present, the Observatory introduces visitors to the station itself, rather than to the tragedy that occurred within, and it inadvertently functions more as a viewing platform for Fascist propaganda than as a mechanism for fashioning visitors into witnesses.¹⁰²⁷

Beneath and around the Observatory, the pavement is covered with a collection of stones. In Judaism, stones play an important role in death and memory. The memory of the deceased, like the stone, should endure.¹⁰²⁸ In addition, stones call to mind *Stolpersteine*, the memorial enterprise launched by German artist, Gunter Demnig. "Stumbling stones", or *pietre d'inciampo* in Italian, are brass memorial plates that have been inserted in sidewalks throughout Europe, marking the last known residences where victims of Nazi violence resided of their own free will.¹⁰²⁹ In this way, the

¹⁰²⁷ I can't help but wonder if the current Observatory is the product of budget constraints (discussed below). As late as 2015, memorial brochures advertised six individual research stations that would accompany the Observatory (including two for persons with disabilities), but as of October 2018, they had yet to be installed; Morpurgo and de Curtis, "Memoriale della Shoah di Milano," 23.

¹⁰²⁸ David Wolpe, "Why Jews Put Stones on Graves," *My Jewish Learning*, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/putting-stones-on-jewish-graves/>.

¹⁰²⁹ Alex Cocotas, "Blow Up the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe," *Tablet*, April 21, 2017, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/230085/memorials-yom-hashoa>. As of 2018, twenty-four *pietre d'inciampo* had been installed in Milan; *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*, M_Y Guides (Milan: Proedi, 2018), inside cover.

stones near the Observatory can be seen as a link between the experiences of the Jews and other victims who were deported from the station, including the hundreds of political prisoners.

From the Observatory, the inferred route leads visitors down Testimony Hall, home to the five Testimony Rooms (*Stanze delle Testimonianze*).¹⁰³⁰ Introduced in 2015, the Testimony Rooms, small theaters that project survivor testimonies onto black walls, are often referred to as the memorial's "heart" (*cuore*), including by survivors and Morpurgo himself.¹⁰³¹ Survivor testimony, given the sacred aura that surrounds it, has become a hallmark of Shoah memorials and museums. "Underlying the presentation of authentic artifacts in Holocaust museums and exhibits," Hansen-Glucklich explains, "is the concept that there is nothing so sacred in Holocaust remembrance as the testimony of a witness."¹⁰³² At the Shoah Memorial of Milan, survivor testimonies, along with the physical remains of the deportation center, constitute the project's foundation. Unlike the rest of the commemorative space, the Testimony Rooms, Morpurgo remarks, are oriented "toward life", and it is there, perhaps more than anywhere else in the memorial, that the shaping of the visitor into a witness is strongest.¹⁰³³ Though Bauer's wish for the memorial to include a representation of child victims went unrealized, she no doubt approves of the Testimony Rooms. As she once wrote, "It is said that whoever listens to a witness becomes, in turn, a witness themselves, because they learn things that they didn't know before and can speak about them."¹⁰³⁴ This, more or less, reflects the

¹⁰³⁰ Memorial blueprints indicated that seven rooms would be installed, but two never advanced beyond that stage. Plans for seven Testimony Rooms can be seen in promotional booklets from at least as early as 2008, and as recently as 2015, the year the current five were installed; see *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2008), 19; and Morpurgo and de Curtis, "Memoriale della Shoah di Milano," 16. See also, Bassanelli, "Portare alla luce l'invisibile," 71-72.

¹⁰³¹ Morpurgo insists, however, that because the Shoah Memorial of Milan is a place of experience, each visitor is free to interpret the memorial's "heart" as they wish; Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018. See also: Roberto de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2013," *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, 15 settembre 2014, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2013.pdf>; and Bassanelli, *ibid*.

¹⁰³² Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 147.

¹⁰³³ "attraverso la vita"; Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018. See also: Suriano; "La testimonianza dell'invisibile"; and Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018.

¹⁰³⁴ "Si dice che chi ascolta a un testimone diventa a sua volta testimone perché è venuto a conoscenza di cose che non sapeva e può farsene portavoce"; Agata (Herskovits) Bauer, *Testimonianza di Gofy Bauer*, p. 26, Milan, 1993. VdS, Serie I, Busta 11, CDEC.

very purpose of the Testimony Rooms, for Suriano explains that their intended effect is to create empathy by making the incomprehensibility of the commemorative space more comprehensible.¹⁰³⁵

Given their ‘orientation toward life’, the Testimony Rooms contain a hidden nod to the liberation of Europe and the camps. Inside the rooms, the projector stations are modeled on the periscope of the Sherman tank, a symbol of Liberation. Only bald-eagle-eyed visitors fluent in US military arcana will detect this (and the present author is not), but this appears to have been Morpurgo and de Curtis’ subtle way of paying homage to the Allies, taking this symbol of Liberation and seamlessly integrating it into the structure of their memorial. (The periscope of a Soviet T-34 might have been more fitting, though, since the Red Army liberated Auschwitz, where most of Italy’s Jewish victims were killed.) What these periscopes project onto, moreover, is a wall. By eliminating the screen, which Morpurgo insists is too much like television, a wall projection prompts a more intimate connection between the viewer and the object being viewed.¹⁰³⁶

Structurally, the Testimony Rooms showcase many of the memorial’s guiding architectural principles. Fashioned from steel, an original material, the boxed theaters are raised ten centimeters off the pavement, abiding by the principle of distancing.¹⁰³⁷ To allude to the irrationality of the tragedy that occurred therein, an irrationality often invoked by witnesses, the designs of the Testimony Rooms consist of slightly deformed cubes. Whether gentle slopes or slits in the walls – slits that permit visual continuities with the world outside, but also with the cattle cars deeper within (orientations toward death?) – these slight distortions inject asymmetry into otherwise perfect geometrical forms.¹⁰³⁸ Drawing on the work of Mieke Bal, Hansen-Glucklich describes how “an asymmetrical space and its hangings may be simultaneously in harmony and disharmony with the

¹⁰³⁵ Suriano, “La testimonianza dell’invisibile.”

¹⁰³⁶ Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018. For more on how screens frustrate representation, see Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 103-104.

¹⁰³⁷ Morpurgo, Personal communication, *ibid.*

¹⁰³⁸ Morpurgo, “Architettura e narrazione nel progetto del Memoriale della Shoah,” 161.

‘grammar’ of their setting. The frame of an exhibit, in other words, may ‘deviat[e] from the rule the building has established’ and create tension.”¹⁰³⁹ Perhaps the slightly asymmetrical Testimony Rooms are also meant to suggest the irrational side of modernity, which claimed to be the apotheosis of reason. When we recall that the Fascists intended for Milano Centrale to usher in a new age of railway engineering, the idea resounds even more strongly.

After passing through the Testimony corridor, visitors advance deeper into the station’s core, arriving at binario 21, the Track of the Unknown Destination (*Binario dell’Ignoto Destinazione*), which holds four cattle cars – two open, two shut – arranged in convoy formation.¹⁰⁴⁰ From viewpoints on the restored Deportation Platform (*Banchina delle Deportazioni*), visitors witness the climax of the narrative of Italian indifference that was introduced at the memorial’s entrance, cattle cars situated on the exact same track where they would have been found and filled during the deportations. The only differences now are the emptiness of the boxcars and the stillness of the surroundings, a far cry from the scene Segre depicts, chilling reminders of how these wagons were once overcrowded with terrified prisoners unsure of the fates that awaited them.¹⁰⁴¹ To enhance the memorial’s experiential nature, visitors who pass through the open cattle cars may, unlike in many Shoah memorials and museums, roam freely throughout them, examining their nooks and crannies as their footwear touches the exposed wooden floors.¹⁰⁴² The only hindrance to their personal investigations might be the darkness, though floor lights accentuate mini-memorials arranged within,

¹⁰³⁹ Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 89.

¹⁰⁴⁰ The Track of the Unknown Destination is sometimes referred to as the Deportation Track (*Binario delle Deportazioni*).

¹⁰⁴¹ The sight of the cattle cars has the power to arrest, and visitors have described being overcome with grief in the presence of such tangible symbols of human depravity. In a review of the memorial, architect Umberto Riva relates the “great sense of sorrow” produced by this space and its contents, adding that he lacked the “courage” to enter the wagons; Umberto Riva, “Né un abbandono, né un commento,” *Abitare* 530 (marzo 2013), 69. To account for such pangs of despair, visitors may cross the Track of the Unknown Destination via a walking bridge instead of passing through the wagons.

¹⁰⁴² At USHMM, railings guide visitors along a designated pathway; at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, visitors are limited to a platform in the center of the boxcar; the Florida Holocaust Museum’s boxcar remains sealed shut; and the boxcar at Yad Vashem is in an inaccessible location.

wreaths and stones placed by sympathetic visitors. The artificial light, however, detracts a bit from the exhibit's experiential dimension.

Given their power, resonance, and universal recognizability, boxcars are mainstays in Shoah museums and memorials. Much like survivor testimonies, the cattle car, arguably the most 'sacred relic' of a sacred event, helps visitors comprehend the incomprehensible.¹⁰⁴³ As Edward Linenthal, biographer of USHMM, has put it, cattle cars permit visitors to "touch the Holocaust."¹⁰⁴⁴ When planning the Dallas Holocaust Museum, Shoah survivor and founding member, Max Glauben, explained the organizers' rationale: "The consensus was that if we could obtain one of those cars it would penetrate [people's consciousness] ... and make people understand how people were manipulated in such a barbarous way."¹⁰⁴⁵ In Shoah museums and memorials, designers and curators appeal to the boxcar's hallowed status to help tell a story and convey a message, furthering the visitor's transformation into a 'vicarious witness'.¹⁰⁴⁶ Placement and presentation, therefore, are key, and at Milan's Shoah Memorial, the proximity of the Track of the Unknown Destination to the Testimony Rooms, oriented as they are toward life, might be meant to represent how close survivors came to death.

Inevitably, the use of cattle cars (and other artifacts) summons the question of authenticity, and because the value of Nazi relics is not just historical and educational, but commercial as well, some skepticism is advised when beholding a purported "Nazi" cattle car. Because the chances are slim of actually determining whether a given railcar was used during the deportations, museum organizers tend to capitalize on any shred of evidence they can find. Unsurprisingly, the histories of the four cattle cars at the Shoah Memorial of Milan are not fully clear; two were discovered in an

¹⁰⁴³ Oren Baruch Stier, "Different Trains: Holocaust Artifacts and the Ideologies of Remembrance," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19:1 (Spring 2005), 83.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Edward Linenthal quoted in Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 121.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Max Glauben quoted in Stier, "Different Trains," 85.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 6.

abandoned freight yard in Milan, two came from ‘somewhere else’, and whether any was used in the deportations is impossible to say.¹⁰⁴⁷ Nevertheless, their model is believed to be accurate, and all four consist of “original materials”. In this sense, Morpurgo affirms, they are genuine artifacts, their own witnesses to the deportations they may or may not have served. They are not “fake”.¹⁰⁴⁸

Once visitors cross the Track of the Unknown Destination, they come to another platform at the innermost reaches of the memorial, where, in the far corner, a hole in the ceiling lets in the only natural light that penetrates the commemorative space. Upon closer inspection, the source of light deceptively reveals itself to be a *montavagone*, a lift that, during the Shoah, had elevated so many wagons – perhaps like the one the visitor just exited – to the surface as their prisoners were expelled from Milan, most for the last time. On the shaft’s wall, bathed in light and perfectly legible, the purpose of the *montavagone* is made clear: *VIETATO TRASPORTO PERSONE* (TRANSPORT OF PERSONS FORBIDDEN).¹⁰⁴⁹ True to form, it remains inaccessible. On the pavement, running the length of the platform, a timeline reveals the departure dates and destinations of the twenty deportation convoys that left from the station. Staggered, the plates closest to the track mark convoys that consisted of Jews alone, those farthest from the track only contained political prisoners, while those situated between the two indicate a mixed-prisoner composition.¹⁰⁵⁰ On the far wall, the memorial’s inner limits, visitors can read the names of the 774 Jews who were deported on 6 December 1943 and 30 January 1944, the earliest and largest of the deportations to leave from the station, both of which went directly to Auschwitz. Names of the twenty-seven survivors, like

¹⁰⁴⁷ Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018. A note on sources: certain files at CDEC, such as copies of documents produced by other organizations, are not made available to researchers. The provenance of the boxcars may be among them, since CDEC was but one of nine organizations involved with the founding of the memorial.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Morpurgo, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁹ To be fair, it is unclear when this sign was installed, and thus, when the order that it enforces was instated. A memorial booklet from 2015 includes a presumably recent image of the *montavagone* shaft without the sign; *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*, 25.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018.

Liliana Segre, are highlighted in yellow, while those of the 747 deceased, like her father, Alberto, appear in white.

Down a spiral ramp that descends from the platform of departures and destinations, the steel, conical Reflection Space (*Luogo di Riflessione*) marks the conclusion of the memorial's commemorative area, the vertical complement to the horizontal Observatory's starting point. Inside this "protected environment", distanced from the original structure and isolated from the rest of the memorial, visitors are invited to take an emotional breather as they process the dialogue with "the past and the tragedy", a dialogue both internal and interactive, that has accompanied them throughout the commemorative tour.¹⁰⁵¹ Like a cocoon, the Reflection Space incubates visitors while they undergo their final transformation into witnesses, one of the memorial's key aims. "The question is not, How are people moved by these memorials?" as Young writes, "but rather, To what end have they been moved, to what historical conclusions, to what understanding and actions in their own lives?"¹⁰⁵² After taking the time to rethink their knowledge and rework their memories of the Shoah, visitors should emerge from the Reflection Space ready to bear witness.

Applying Lessons Learned

The Shoah Memorial of Milan is advertised as "a place to remind you to remember" (*un luogo per ricordarsi di ricordare*), but in fact, this only accounts for half of its mission. The Reflection Space, while concluding the tour of the memorial proper, also functions as the hinge between the commemorative area and its educational counterpart, the Workshop of Memory (*Laboratorio della Memoria*).¹⁰⁵³ The inclusion of educational centers in Shoah memorials is a recent one, necessitated, as

¹⁰⁵¹ "ambiente protetto"; "il passato e la tragedia"; Bassanelli, "Portare alla luce l'invisibile," 71-72.

¹⁰⁵² Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 13.

¹⁰⁵³ "un luogo per ricordarsi di ricordare"; "Chi siamo," *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/chi-siamo/>.

Engelhardt notes, by two related developments. First is the need to make the Shoah more accessible to generations who lack personal memories of the event. “The transition between generations,” she writes, “may be seen as the reason why these sites are moving away from being sites of mourning to places of learning.” Second, these learning centers are to be bulwarks against denial, a cancer that seems to metastasize unchecked as the number of survivors dwindles.¹⁰⁵⁴ Guri Schwarz, a historian involved with memorialization projects in Italy, adds a third inducement to the Italian context. Centers for research and debate, he argues, are essential components of any Shoah museum or memorial in Italy, because mere exposure to the subject has failed to transform Italians into more tolerant, less racist, citizens (especially those on the far right).¹⁰⁵⁵ The same motivations that inspire many witnesses to testify, then, have prompted developers to include educational areas in their Shoah memorials, including in Milan.

From the Shoah Memorial’s earliest origins, Michele Sarfatti, then-activities coordinator at CDEC, announced that Milan’s future Shoah center would be “oriented toward the educational”, a position supported by president of the Children of the Shoah Foundation (*Associazione Figli della Shoah*), Marco Szulc, whose organization was also involved with the project.¹⁰⁵⁶ More Levi than Wiesel, the memorial’s organizers have long stressed the educational import of the Shoah. During the project’s unveiling, they explained how “the Shoah, beyond representing the great tragedy of the Jewish people, must be used as a powerful, universal warning so that all of this never happens

¹⁰⁵⁴ Engelhardt, *A Topography of Memory*, 204, 211, 213.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Guri Schwarz, “Memoria e musei della Shoah: Delegare tutto alle Comunità Ebraiche è sbagliato,” *gli Stati Generali*, 26 gennaio 2015, https://www.glistatigenerali.com/beni-culturali_storia-cultura/memoria-e-musei-della-shoah-perche-la-delega-alle-comunita-ebraiche-e-un-errore/. Schwarz is a member of the scientific committees for CDEC and Fondazione Fossoli.

¹⁰⁵⁶ “*orientato verso la didattica*”; Michele Sarfatti, “Un museo della Shoah a Milano,” Comunicato-stampa, Fasc. Progetti Scientifici Present, CDEC. See also: Simone Spina, “La Shoah avrà un museo a Milano,” *Il Nuovo*, 24 luglio 2001, Fasc. Progetti Scientifici Present, CDEC.

again.”¹⁰⁵⁷ Inside the Workshop of Memory, the developers envisioned new memories of the past and a civic consciousness for the future taking shape, forged through cross-cultural research, discussion, and debate.¹⁰⁵⁸ The memorial’s educational purpose, therefore, also serves a didactic one. While the memorial informs visitors that there was, indeed, a Shoah, and part of it took place right where they’re standing, it also aims to provide them with the tools they need to remain vigilant against other shoahs (or holocausts) that happen during their own lives, tragedies borne of hatred but enabled by indifference.

Accordingly, while the memorial’s commemorative space is devoted to the past, the Workshop of Memory is oriented toward the present and future.¹⁰⁵⁹ Defining their center as “A place of commemoration ... but also a space for building the future and promoting civil coexistence,” the foundation thus writes that “The Memorial, in fact, wants to be a place of study, research, and encounter: a memorial for those who were, for those who are, but most of all for those who will be.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Similarly, early in the memorial’s development phase, Jarach explained that the future Shoah center would be “a living space for those who tomorrow will have the responsibility to improve society and human relations.”¹⁰⁶¹ As such, the Shoah Memorial of Milan, like survivor witnessing, is geared toward youth, and schoolchildren remain one of the few groups of visitors whom the foundation can consistently rely on.

Along with a proposed bookshop and a Memorials Room (*Sala dei Memoriali*), which will digitally link Milan’s Shoah Memorial with other Shoah centers across the globe, the Workshop of

¹⁰⁵⁷ “*la Shoah, oltre a rappresentare la grande tragedia del popolo ebraico, deve valere come potente monito universale perché tutto questo non si ripeta mai più*”; Marina Gersony, “Quel binario per Auschwitz,” *Il Giornale*, 27 settembre 2008, p. 55, Fasc. Verbale, CDEC.

¹⁰⁵⁸ De Curtis and Morpurgo, “Il Memoriale della Shoah nella Stazione Centrale di Milano,” 68.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Morpurgo, Personal communication, August 8, 2018.

¹⁰⁶⁰ “*Un luogo di commemorazione, quindi, ma anche uno spazio per costruire il futuro e favorire la convivenza civile. Il Memoriale vuole essere, infatti, un luogo di studio, ricerca e confronto: un memoriale per chi c’era, per chi c’è ora ma soprattutto per chi verrà*”; “Chi siamo.”

¹⁰⁶¹ “*un luogo vivo per chi avrà domani la responsabilità di migliorare la società e i rapporti umani*”; Roberto Jarach, “Fondazione per il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21,” in *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21* (Milan: Proedi, 2008), p. 3, Fasc. Verbali, CDEC.

Memory contains the Caprotti Exhibition Space (*Spazio Mostre Caprotti*), used to house temporary exhibits, and the 200-seat Joseph and Jeanne Nissim Auditorium, a below-ground theatre that was introduced, in October 2013, during Milan's first-ever international "Jewish and the City" festival, a celebration of Jewish culture. To date, the auditorium, which serves as the main point of encounter between the memorial and visiting schoolchildren, has hosted conferences, debates, book presentations, and theatrical performances.¹⁰⁶² In 2015 alone, the auditorium featured a tutorial for teachers, sponsored by the Children of the Shoah Foundation, in collaboration with Yad Vashem; a theatrical show, titled "That these things never end..." (*Che non abbiano fine mai...*), created and performed by Eyal Lerner; a live witness testimony featuring sisters Andra and Tatiana Bucci who, as young children, survived both Auschwitz and the Risiera di San Sabba in Trieste; and an international conference on Shoah commemoration in Europe, titled "Holocaust Remembrance Days in the European Union: the challenges of commemoration in the XXI century" (*Le Giornate della Memoria della Shoah nell'Unione Europea: le sfide della commemorazione nel XXI secolo*). The purpose of this latter event, held in April on the seventieth anniversary of Liberation, was to secure a seat at the table for the Shoah Memorial of Milan among the "great Memorial centers of research and transmission at the global level."¹⁰⁶³ The following September, to commemorate the disastrous armistice that brought the Shoah to Italy, the Nissim Auditorium held dramatic reenactments of the deportations, in which actors from Milan's Piccolo Teatro recited testimonies from deported Jews, political victims, and workers.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁶² Bassanelli, "Portare alla luce l'invisibile," 71-72. Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile." Morpurgo and de Curtis, "Memoriale della Shoah di Milano," 25.

¹⁰⁶³ "grandi centri di ricerca e trasmissione della Memoriale a livello mondiale"; Ferruccio de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2014," *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, 8 maggio 2014, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2014.pdf>. See also, Ferruccio de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2015," *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2015.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ "Al Memoriale della Shoah 'I luoghi della memoria'," *la Repubblica*, 2000, https://milano.repubblica.it/tempo-libero/teatro/evento/al_memoriale_della_shoah_i_luoghi_della_memoria-123623.html.

The cornerstone of the Workshop of Memory, however, is its library, a tri-level structure fashioned from steel and glass that spans the entire height of the memorial.¹⁰⁶⁵ Distanced from the original structure and detached from the rest of the memorial, the library is a veritable island in the belly of the station, touching neither its floor nor its walls. As architectural reviewer Umberto Riva observes, the library “does not try in any way to integrate itself with the rest of the space.”¹⁰⁶⁶ Sidling, but not grazing, the exterior wall, whose foreboding bars and gates have been replaced with large windows, the library is visible from outside the station, establishing continuity between the memorial and the city.¹⁰⁶⁷ The “library of transparency”, as it could be called, thus helps realize one of the organizers’ founding goals: to create a memorial not just “of the Jews”, but for “the entire civil community”.¹⁰⁶⁸ Peering through the windowpanes into the memorial, peopled with individuals laboring over the Shoah, curious passersby might be compelled to inquire further. More significantly, the Milanese can now see (or be made to see) what remained hidden (or what they hid from themselves) for far too long. “The Memorial is not a work for the Jews,” Jarach insists. “It is a work and a realization for the development and the social improvement of the city of Milan, working toward the integration, the knowledge, and the improvement of relationships between the different cultures.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Dabbling a bit with the local ‘moral capital’ (*capitale morale*) myth, which

¹⁰⁶⁵ Installing the library required the most significant alterations to the original space. Establishing structural continuity between all three levels, including one below ground, required the demolition of the first loading bay. This resulted in the station’s above- and belowground levels being united without interference for the first time in the station’s history; De Curtis and Morpurgo, “Il Memoriale della Shoah nella Stazione Centrale di Milano,” 70; and Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018.

¹⁰⁶⁶ “*non cercasse in alcun modo di integrarsi con il resto dello spazio*”; Riva, “Né un abbandono, né un commento,” 64.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Piazza Edmond J. Safra, inaugurated with the memorial on Holocaust Remembrance Day 2013, was supposed to serve the same purpose. Situated at the entrance to the memorial, Morpurgo and de Curtis removed the gates and bars from the doors and windows to produce a physical and symbolic “continuity” (*continuità*) between the public urban space outside the station and the core within, a core no longer “hidden from the view of passersby” (*nascosta alla vista dei passanti*). The recent addition of a security antechamber, however, has nullified this effect; Morpurgo and de Curtis, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,” 21.

¹⁰⁶⁸ “*degli ebrei*”; “*intera civile comunità*”; “Presentazione dei nuovi spazi alla Stazione Centrale di Milano,” Memoriale della Shoah, Notevole Costello Stampa, Notevole Costello Stampa Inaugurata 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC.

¹⁰⁶⁹ “*Il Memoriale non è un’opera degli ebrei. È un’opera e una realizzazione per lo sviluppo e il miglioramento sociale della città di Milano, lavorando sull’integrazione, sulla conoscenza e sul miglioramento dei rapporti tra le diverse culture*”; Jarach, “Non degli ebrei ma di tutti i milanesi,” 1.

privileges moral and industrious Milan over venal, crooked Rome, de Bortoli entrusts the memorial with a redemptive quality for the city, writing, “The Memorial reconciles Milan with its grand civil and cultural tradition, healing a wound and writing a chapter of civility and humanity.”¹⁰⁷⁰ The memorial and its contents are part of Milan’s history, painful though that history may be, and one of the developers’ goals is to make them part of the city’s memory and identity. As the portal between both worlds, one without and the other within, the library permits visibility between the city and the memorial, promoting Milan’s necessary, and long overdue, moral and civic regeneration.

Mission Semi-Accomplished

Alas, when passersby look into the library, all they will presently see is a hollow shell. Although the Workshop of Memory serves a noble purpose, it also reveals some of the memorial’s more significant practical and conceptual limitations. A non-profit (ONLUS) organization, the Shoah Memorial of Milan Foundation relies heavily on donations, but the memorial has been crippled by a chronic lack of funding since at least the Great Recession, which, inopportunately, struck right after the foundation took possession of the former deportation center. As a result, the memorial’s inauguration and completion deadlines have been delayed, time and again, for nearly fifteen years. While an early estimate, given by Szulc, forecasted the memorial’s inauguration taking place in 2007 or 2008, the ceremonial first stone was not laid until 27 January 2010, Holocaust Remembrance Day. When the memorial was inaugurated three Remembrance Days later, it debuted in an unfinished state and did not start receiving visitors until that November. In more recent years, vague completion dates of 2018 and “late 2019” have been given, but the memorial remains unrealized with each passing deadline, and while a social media post from November 2020 claims that soon,

¹⁰⁷⁰ “*Il Memoriale riconcilia Milano con la propria grande tradizione civile e culturale, sana una ferita e scrive un capitolo di civiltà e di umanità*”; De Bortoli, “Perché un memoriale,” 3.

within a matter of months, the library will be filled with books, it's hard to be optimistic in the midst of a pandemic.¹⁰⁷¹

The library, itself the most glaring symptom of the funding malady, also exposes major conceptual dilemmas over the question of representation. In addition to its symbolic role as the threshold between the Milanese and the memorial, the Workshop of Memory's library serves a more practical purpose, as well; CDEC is slated to move in, bringing its entire patrimony of approximately 45,000 volumes. Morpurgo, the memorial's lead architect, opposes the relocation, feeling that it will distort the research center's essence. CDEC, he reasons, is an institution devoted to preserving and promoting the culture and history of Italy's Jews. The Shoah, on the other hand, was a foreign imposition, not something organic to Jewish culture.¹⁰⁷² By further marking the memorial, against Morpurgo's wishes, as a site of Jewish history and memory, CDEC's relocation will also make it harder to integrate the memory of other victim groups who were deported from the station, a goal that developers have referenced in the past. The Memorial Foundation's charter statute declares that its purpose is to promote "the historical memory of the Jews and of other victims of fascist and Nazi persecution in Italy and in Europe."¹⁰⁷³ Similarly, when Morpurgo and de Curtis revealed their design in 2008, the memorial was promoted as a "symbol of the deportations of the Jews and of

¹⁰⁷¹ De Bortoli and Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2013." De Bortoli and Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2014." Ferruccio de Bortoli, "Nota integrativa al bilancio al 31/12/2015," *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, 17 maggio 2016, p. 1, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Nota-integrativa-FMSM-2015.pdf>. De Bortoli and Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2015." Giuseppina Piano, "Binario 21 ai figli della Shoah," *la Repubblica*, 28 gennaio 2005, Archivio, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2005/01/28/binario-21-ai-figli-della-shoah.html>. "Binario 21. Memoriale Shoah: scelti i consiglieri della Fondazione," *Corriere della Sera*, 11 ottobre 2007, Fasc. Statuto, CDEC. Bassanelli, "Portare alla luce l'invisibile," 69. Massimiliano Mingoia, "Binario 21. Ecco i fondi," *Il Giorno*, 6 settembre 2010, p. 1, Fasc. Verbalì Cortellin, CDEC. Ferruccio de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2017," *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2017.pdf>. Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018. Memoriale della Shoah Milano, 2020, "Proseguono i lavori per completare il Progetto del #MemorialedellaShoah," Facebook, November 20, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/MemorialedellaShoah>.

¹⁰⁷² Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018.

¹⁰⁷³ "memoria storica degli ebrei e delle altre vittime della persecuzione fascista e nazista in Italia e in Europa"; De Bortoli, "Nota integrativa al bilancio al 31/12/2015," p. 1.

others who were persecuted, for political reasons or not, toward the concentration and extermination camps in northeast Europe.”¹⁰⁷⁴ Beyond these two mentions, however, and the plates on the platform of departures and destinations, little else has been said or done to include other victims, including the hundreds of political prisoners deported from the station.

The predicament of victim representation and inclusion might begin with the name of the memorial itself. ‘Memorial’, we have seen, was a weighty decision, but ‘Shoah’, which refers specifically to the Jewish genocide, is no less consequential. If the foundation wished to include political prisoners and other victims, then the more general ‘Holocaust’ (*Olocausto*) might have been the preferable term. This same problem also manifests at the Wall of Names (*Muro dei Nomi*), which only bears the names of Jewish victims (albeit from only two deportations out of fifteen). In fact, the present exhibit was installed as a temporary stand-in, to be replaced, Suriano notes, by a display board running the entire length of the platform and including the names of all the station’s deportees.¹⁰⁷⁵ Later developments, however, or perhaps revelations, have cast doubt on this actually happening. Morpurgo, who hopes to see the Wall of Names completed, explains that two main obstructions have frustrated the exhibit. One, more practical in nature, is that the names of Jewish victims are much better preserved than those of political victims, but the other pertains to the fractured nature of memory politics in Italy, often cleaving along victim-group lines.¹⁰⁷⁶ Despite the developers’ early intimations, it remains unclear, two decades after launch, if the Shoah Memorial of Milan will also be a site of memory for political victims of Nazism and Fascism.

¹⁰⁷⁴ “*simbolo delle deportazioni degli ebrei e degli altri perseguitati, politici o no, verso i campi di concentramento o di sterminio dell’Europa nordorientale*”; Ferrovie dello Stato and Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah, “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano – Binario 21: Un Sistema di spazi integrati per il dialogo e il confronto,” Comunicato Stampa, p. 1, Fasc. Verbali, Sottofasc. Grandi Stazioni, CDEC.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Suriano, “La testimonianza dell’invisibile.”

¹⁰⁷⁶ Morpurgo, Personal communication, October 4, 2018.

Conclusion

Situated within a station whose walls remain adorned with Fascist insignia, the Shoah Memorial of Milan establishes Milano Centrale as a site of memory contestation in Italy, its ‘indifference’ narrative, the product of survivor testimony, signaling a successful incursion on the battleground of Italian memory politics, even if the war is far from won. Elegantly designed, in the present author’s opinion, the memorial adroitly immerses the visitor in the environment, enhancing reception of the story being told. However, problems of representation, endemic to Shoah memorialization, persist, especially over the question of “whose victimhood”. More deleteriously, the memorial remains unfinished nearly a decade after inauguration. Until the center is brought to a state of completion, especially the library at the heart of the Workshop of Memory, the Shoah Memorial of Milan will be unable to fulfill its own mandate.

Chapter VII

Toward an Uncertain Future: The Shoah Memorial in the Second Republic

On January 27, 2013, Italians gathered beneath the rails at Milano Centrale station to observe, like their compatriots and many other Europeans, Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Giorno della Memoria*). On this occasion, along with the usual commemorations, they had something special to celebrate: the inauguration of the Shoah Memorial of Milan (*Memoriale della Shoah di Milano*), Italy's first such memorial.¹⁰⁷⁷ The guests in attendance marked the magnitude of the event. Heading the list of political figures was the prime minister himself, Mario Monti, joined by the respective presidents of the Region of Lombardy and the Province of Milan, Roberto Formigoni and Guido Podestà, as well as local mayor, Giuliano Pisapia, each of whom took turns addressing the crowd. State bureaucrats attended as well, including Mauro Moretti, who, as CEO of the Italian State Railway corporation (*Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane*, FS), had once administered the space where they were gathered. Chief rabbi Alfonso Arbib and archbishop Angelo Scola, representing the two faith communities that had done so much to bring the project to fruition, were also on hand for the event, and president of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev, participated from Israel via video telecast. Ending, perhaps, in the only way it could, the ceremony concluded with a moving talk by Liliana Segre, who spoke poignantly about her own deportation from that space, and those rails, nearly seventy years before.¹⁰⁷⁸

In Monti's address, Italy's leading politician emphasized, without any equivocation, the role that Italy had played in the Final Solution. "Italy," the prime minister averred, "was co-responsible

¹⁰⁷⁷ When James Young's *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* was published in 1993, it set the tone for Shoah memorial analysis at the outset of the memorialization boom. Along with assessing Shoah centers in Germany, Austria, Poland, Israel, and the United States, Young called attention to other memorials across Europe, east to west, and even in places as far-flung as South Africa and South America. Italy, however, is nowhere to be found in his book; James E. Young *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁷⁸ "Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano," *FS*, 27 gennaio 2013, http://www.fsnews.it/cms/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=95d82225ba7c310VgnVCM1000008916f90aRCRD&cid=rss_FEE_D_Doc_FSNews.

for the tragedy of the Shoah”.¹⁰⁷⁹ By the time the ceremony was through, however, another high-profile figure in Italian politics had stolen the headlines with remarks of his own. Silvio Berlusconi had shown up for the event – uninvitedly, according to reports – and, a spectacle unto himself, he was received by a bouquet of microphones. When asked for his thoughts on the events being commemorated, Berlusconi offered a rather different take from that of his successor. “In so many ways, Mussolini did well,” he ominously began. Though he went on to admit that the Racial Laws were Mussolini’s “greatest fault,” the Knight (*il Cavaliere*) absolved the Duce by commenting that “Italy does not have the same responsibilities as Germany because, at the beginning [of their alliance], there was a connivance that Italy was not fully aware of”:

The government of that time, out of fear that German power might lead to complete victory, obviously preferred to be allied with Hitler’s Germany instead of opposed to it, and within the context of this alliance, the struggle against the Jews was imposed.¹⁰⁸⁰

Hearing the most prominent figure in Italian politics since the end of the Cold War flippantly dismiss their message, those involved and invested in the memorial must have felt like they had taken one step forward, only to take two steps back. Making matters worse, he appears to have

¹⁰⁷⁹ “*L’Italia è stata corresponsabile della tragedia della Shoah*”; Mario Monti quoted in Paolo Colonnello, “Giornata della Memoria, Berlusconi: Scoppia la polemica sulle parole,” *La Stampa*, 28 gennaio 2013, <https://www.lastampa.it/2013/01/27/italia/speciali/elezioni-politiche-2013/monti-al-memorale-della-shoah-rischio-dell-antisemitismo-e-presente-jefY5r6dQqp1vzd7JxIXeO/pagina.html>.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Variations of this quote can be found in *ibid.* and Josephine McKenna, “Silvio Berlusconi under fire for defending Benito Mussolini,” *The Telegraph*, January 27, 2013, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/silvio-berlusconi/9830157/Silvio-Berlusconi-under-fire-for-defending-Benito-Mussolini.html>. Citing McKenna, Giacomo Lichtner includes a variation of this quote in his article, “Italian Cinema and the Fascist Past: Tracing Memory Amnesia,” *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 4 (2015), 26-27.

dozed off during the ceremony.¹⁰⁸¹ Evidently, the *stanchezza*, the Shoah fatigue that had cowed Agata Bauer into silence after the war, had never fully dissipated.¹⁰⁸²

* * *

The prime ministers' debate, a snapshot of the imbalanced, polarizing ways that Italians have come to remember Fascism, the Racial Laws, and the Shoah, shows how the Shoah Memorial of Milan has come into existence at an odd, even paradoxical time for memory politics in Italy. Monti's admission of Italian culpability, words that find echoes in the architecture of the memorial itself, demonstrates a small but growing acknowledgement of the role that Italy played in the Final Solution. In his apology for Mussolini, by contrast, isolating *il Duce's* "greatest fault" only to explain it away, Berlusconi drank liberally from the well of Italian myth, assigning blame for the Racial Laws – and, by extension, the Final Solution – squarely on Hitler and the Germans. But there was a twist. Instead of pardoning the general, amorphous Italian populace, Berlusconi was acquitting history's foremost Fascist, demonstrating the rightward shift in memory politics that has taken place ever since Berlusconi himself ushered in the Second Italian Republic. Reporting on the matter for *The Guardian*, journalist Leonardo Clausi rightly noted that Berlusconi's historical revision has become

¹⁰⁸¹ Leonardo Clausi, "Silvio Berlusconi's 'apology of fascism' is criminal but consistent," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/31/silvio-berlusconi-apology-fascism-criminal-consistent>. Condemnation of Berlusconi's words and actions, it should be noted, came quickly and from many corners. Former partisan and leftwing politician, Carlo Smuraglia, accused him of 'premeditation'. Antonio di Pietro, founder of the populist Italy of Values party (*Italia dei Valori*), denounced Berlusconi's remarks as "an insult to the memory and to the victims of the Holocaust" (*un insulto alla memoria e alle vittime dell'Olocausto*). Reminding Berlusconi that the Fascist state had introduced the antisemitic Racial Laws without German goading, Renzo Gattegna, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, claimed that his comments lacked "moral awareness and historical foundation" (*destituite di senso morale e di fondamento storico*). Even Roberto Maroni, leader of the Northern League (*La Lega Nord*), made the politically calculated move of offering no comment. Before the day was through, the embattled prime minister had already begun walking back his comments, insisting that he opposed the Fascist dictatorship (and all dictatorships) and citing his political record as evidence of his pro-democratic values. He even deployed the trusty "friend of Israel" defense to recoup goodwill with Italy's Jewish community; see Roberto Cenati, "Giorno della Memoria 2013 – Inaugurato il Memoriale della Shoah al binario 21 della Stazione Centrale," *Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia (A.N.P.I.)*, 27 gennaio 2013, <http://lombardia.anpi.it/lombardia.php?p=3294&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1>; Colonnello, "Giornata della Memoria,"; and McKenna, "Silvio Berlusconi under fire for defending Benito Mussolini."

¹⁰⁸² See chapter five.

commonplace in Italy.¹⁰⁸³ Despite the broad censure and his own subsequent backpedaling, Berlusconi's assessment of Fascism reflected a new rule, not an atavistic exception.

In recent decades, as chauvinism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment have become standard political discourse in Italy, neofascism, racism, and antisemitism have surfaced anew in Italian culture. This general shift to the right has given rise, in turn, to skewed reevaluations of Italian history, with no period benefiting more than the Fascist era. As the neofascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) and its offspring, National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazione*, AN), became mainstays in Berlusconi's coalition governments during the 1990s and 2000s, even their forebears, the *repubblicani*, found their way under the *brava gente* umbrella. Some of their members might have been misguided by cooperating too closely with the Nazis, but their hearts were in the right place, with the Italian nation, and that's what mattered most.¹⁰⁸⁴ So goes the revision.

In this chapter, I contextualize the planning, development, and contemporary status of the Shoah Memorial of Milan within the political climate of the Second Italian Republic. At a time when known antisemites and collaborationists are being rehabilitated in national memory, the memorial charges the general Italian population with the crime of indifference, contending that their disregard for Italy's Jews during the years of Fascist and Nazi oppression led to the deaths of thousands. While the Shoah Memorial's most serious problems, poor funding and low visitorship, cannot be tied directly to the regnant political climate (though some, including the present author, have their suspicions), I argue that the environment of the Second Republic cannot be overlooked as an aggravating factor, jeopardizing the memorial's fortunes and future prospects. Antisemitism and

¹⁰⁸³ Clausi, "Silvio Berlusconi's 'apology of fascism' is criminal but consistent."

¹⁰⁸⁴ Robert S. C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 191. See also, Rebecca Clifford, "The Limits of National Memory: Anti-Fascism, the Holocaust and the Fosse Ardeatine Memorial in 1990s Italy," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44:2 (April 2008): 132-133.

denial, without question, have become more potent in Italy since the early 1990s, and the memorial has not been immune to racist and antisemitic attacks.

The Politics and Memory of the Right

In theory, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the First Italian Republic in the early 1990s, a twin killing for leftism in Italy, could have freed some memory space for Jews to come forward with their own experiences of persecution, as the Resistance narrative and its heroic protagonist, the partisan-martyr, were pulled down from their pedestals and subjected to serious popular, political, and academic reconsideration. The political vacuum left behind by the dethroned leading parties, however, especially the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, was quickly filled by a savvy media magnate who, conservative in orientation, established the decidedly more rightwing Second Italian Republic, ushering in the most drastic change in Italian politics since the abolition of the monarchy. In the wake of the *Tangentopoli* (“Bribesville”) fiasco and subsequent Clean Hands (*Mani pulite*) investigations, the new right in power, led by Silvio Berlusconi and his center-right *Forza Italia* party, promoted a policy of “national reconciliation” (*pacificazione nazionale*). In reality, reconciliation helped to rehabilitate the radical right in both politics and memory.¹⁰⁸⁵

On the political stage, nowhere was this more evident than when the Italian Social Movement, a neofascist party with roots in the Italian Social Republic, joined the national government. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat notes, in 1994, Italy became the first European state since the Second World War “to elect a party with its historical roots in Fascist to power”.¹⁰⁸⁶ Its successor,

¹⁰⁸⁵ Clifford, *ibid.*, 128-133. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, 190-191. John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13. For a historiographical overview of how Italian academics in the early Second Republic dealt with reevaluations of fascism, anti-fascism, and the Resistance, in both historical and contemporary perspective, see Luigi Ambrosoli, introduction to *Mezzo secolo fa. Guerra e Resistenza in provincia di Varese*, ed. Istituto varesino per la storia dell'Italia contemporanea e del movimento di liberazione (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1995).

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni’s *Life Is Beautiful*,” in *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, ed. Joshua D. Zimmerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 331.

National Alliance, founded the following year, became a fixture in Berlusconi's coalitions. Despite Milan's reputation for cosmopolitanism and integration, the Lombard capital proved unable to resist the surge of rightwing populism. In 1993, the Milanese elected Marco Formentini, a member of the separatist Northern League party (*Lega Nord*, forerunner to today's *La Lega*), as mayor.¹⁰⁸⁷ On the ground, Milan's Jews sensed the winds of change. During a 1996 interview, conducted in the open-air market where he worked, Shoah survivor Samuele Dana whispered to the interviewer, Liliana Picciotto, that they were surrounded by fascists and RSI sympathizers who had lately come out of the woodwork.¹⁰⁸⁸ Liliana Segre remembers much the same from "Leaguist Milan" (*Milano leghista*), as people nostalgically reflected on the days of Mussolini, when "there was order and everything was better."¹⁰⁸⁹

As chauvinism and nativism have become the order of the day, with neofascism more socially acceptable, Italy has witnessed a rise in xenophobic and racist incidents, especially directed toward darker-skinned immigrant groups and refugees from Africa and the Levant. These days, as the national government reifies its own racially informed ideals by turning away one migrant ship from the border after another, vilifying their occupants in the process, everyday acts of racism have become alarmingly common.¹⁰⁹⁰ In the verdict of the United Nations, the two levels, the popular and the political, cannot be separated from one another. Following a 2018 UN Special Rapporteur investigation, which found that 169 racially motivated incidents (including nineteen violent attacks)

¹⁰⁸⁷ This rejection of the political establishment by the Milanese electorate may not be as surprising as it first appears. *Tangentopoli* had begun in Milan; John Foot, *Milan Since the Miracle: City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001), 2, 11.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Samuele Dana, Interview by Liliana Picciotto, "Interviste alla Storia" – 1995-1996, Milan, 27 febbraio 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000026/samuele-dana.html>.

¹⁰⁸⁹ "Ah, quando c'era Mussolini ... C'era ordine e si stava meglio tutti?"; Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah*. Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 222.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Carmelo Lopapa, "Sea Watch, l'accordo scuote il governo. Vertice Salvini-Conte alle 23 a Palazzo Chigi," *la Repubblica*, 9 gennaio 2019, https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/01/09/news/migranti_reazioni_giorgetti_salvini_opposizioni-216172618/.

had occurred in Italy around the March elections, members of the commission condemned certain Italian politicians for fueling “a public discourse unashamedly embracing racist and xenophobic anti-immigrant and anti-foreigner rhetoric.” Noting that Italy’s Decree-Law on Immigration and Security came “as Italy contends with a climate of hatred and discrimination, both against migrants and other minorities and against civil society and private individuals defending migrants’ rights,” the commission urged the national government to reconsider the measure, which endangered not just the humanitarian rights of migrants, but their lives as well.¹⁰⁹¹ In those March 2018 elections, *La Lega*, having successfully disavowed its staunch separatism to take on pan-Italian, national(ist) pretensions, emerged as the victorious party, while the populist, anti-immigrant Five-Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S) secured the most total votes. The centrist liberals, meanwhile, suffered a major defeat, losing 227 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and sixty-five more in the Senate, compelling their leader, Matteo Renzi, to resign his post as Secretary of the Democratic Party. An indication of just how far to the right Italian politics had swung, Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* party, though part of the winning coalition, placed fourth overall, becoming *La Lega*’s junior partner, while *Fratelli d’Italia* (Brothers of Italy), the radical heir to MSI and AN, rose to fifth place.¹⁰⁹²

¹⁰⁹¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Legal changes and climate of hatred threaten migrants’ rights in Italy, say UN experts,” November 21, 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23908&LangID=E>. The UN’s tone had changed considerably from just four years prior, when the international organization praised Italy for its “bold initiatives to address the unprecedented number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving by boat,” this despite the country’s “challenging economic and political climate”; François Crépeau, “Report by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants,” Human Rights Council, *United Nation General Assembly*, Twenty-ninth session, May 1, 2015, p. 1, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session29/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session29/Documents/A_HRC_29_36_Add_2_en.doc&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1. Although, by the time of the Special Rapporteur investigation (December 2014), the program had been discontinued for financial reasons, the UN was commenting on *Mare Nostrum*, a rescue operation conducted by Italy’s Navy. The UN report added that *Mare Nostrum*’s replacement, the European Union-led Operation *Triton*, would be inferior because it was less well-equipped and had “limited reach outside of Italian territorial waters”; Crépeau, “Report by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants,” p. 11. A *New York Times* report in April 2015 confirmed the UN’s prediction, stating that *Triton* suffered from “fewer ships” and “a less well-defined mandate” than its predecessor; Jim Yardley, “Hundreds of Migrants Are Feared Dead as Ship Capsizes Off Libyan Coast,” *The New York Times*, April 19, 2015.

¹⁰⁹² “Italian elections 2018 – full results,” *The Guardian*, March 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/mar/05/italian-elections-2018-full-results-renzi-berlusconi>.

Though Milan withstood the rightwing torrent this time around, remaining in Democratic hands (unlike, literally, everywhere else in the Italian north, most of which embraced *La Lega*), the city has nevertheless seen its fair share of neofascist, racist, and xenophobic disturbances. The “ultras”, for instance, the hardcore soccer fanatics who morphed into bands of neofascist, racist criminals over the years, have been part of Milan’s sports scene since their beginnings. Along with SS Lazio (Rome) and Hellas Verona FC, Inter produced one of the first ultra wings, and their stadium, San Siro, which they share with AC Milan, has been the scene of many ugly incidents. During a match in 2013, ultras from Rome taunted AC Milan’s Mario Balotelli and Kevin-Prince Boateng, both of Ghanaian background (though Balotelli, born in Palermo, is an Italian citizen), and some slurs could still be heard even after the referee halted the contest.¹⁰⁹³ On one day alone in 2018, as SSC Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly was harassed throughout his match, a Varese ultra was slain in the parking lot outside while intimidating a busload of Napoli supporters.¹⁰⁹⁴ In response to the Koulibaly scandal, Pavel Klymenko of Football Against Racism in Europe (Fare), an anti-discrimination organization, warned that Europe’s political climate had fostered an environment making such incidents predictable, specifically mentioning the anti-migrant, anti-minority policies and rhetoric of Matteo Salvini, leader of *La Lega* and Italy’s then-Interior Minister, as enabling factors.¹⁰⁹⁵

¹⁰⁹³ Paolo Bandini, “The racism aimed at Mario Balotelli and Kevin-Prince Boateng shames Italy,” *The Guardian*, May 13, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2013/may/13/racism-mario-balotelli-kevin-prince-boateng-italy>. Though born in Germany, Boateng has Ghanaian citizenship.

¹⁰⁹⁴ As punishment, Inter was forced to play its next two home matches before an empty stadium; see Tobias Jones, “Fascism is thriving again in Italy – and finding its home on the terraces,” *The Guardian*, December 29, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/29/fascism-italy-racist-abuse-kalidou-koulibaly-italian-football>; Paolo Bandini, “One death, alleged racist abuse and a Boxing Day of shame in Serie A,” *The Guardian*, December 27, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2018/dec/27/one-death-alleged-racist-abuse-and-a-boxing-day-of-shame-in-serie-a>; and “Inter penalised after fans’ racist attack against Napoli player,” *Al Jazeera*, December 27, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/inter-milan-penalised-fans-racist-attack-napoli-player-181228025730834.html>. For a full account of the ultras see Tobias Jones’ *Ultra: The Underworld of Italian Football* (London: Apollo, 2019).

¹⁰⁹⁵ “Inter penalised after fans’ racist attack against Napoli player.”

At times, ultras have taken their neofascist pageantry to the streets. During the 2018-19 Coppa Italia, the semi-final match between AC Milan and Lazio fell on 24 April, one day before the Anniversary of the Resistance (also known as Liberation Day). Held at San Siro, the contest brought busloads of Lazio ultras to the Resistance capital, about seventy of whom assembled near Piazzale Loreto, the heart of antifascist Milan, where they Romanly saluted each other, recited Fascist chants, and unfurled a banner reading “Honor to Benito Mussolini Irr” (*Onore a Benito Mussolini Irr*). Though, as the banner indicated, most demonstrators were Lazio supporters from the *Irriducibili* (Indomitable) faction, initial investigations revealed that some *Interisti* were in their midst, implying that the political leanings of these ultras trumped even their rabid team loyalties.¹⁰⁹⁶

As a stopover point for many migrants in transit to central and northern Europe, the Shoah Memorial of Milan’s own nest, Milano Centrale station, has become a flashpoint for anti-immigrant and racial confrontation in recent years. In one widely reported-on incident in October 2018, catching the attention of both *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*, a lady told a younger woman of color that she refused to sit next to a “*negra*”, huffily changing her seat before their train departed.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹⁶ Matteo Pucciarelli, “‘Onore a Mussolini’: a Milano lo striscione-oltraggio degli ultra neofascisti alla vigilia del 25 Aprile,” *la Repubblica*, 24 aprile 2019, https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/04/24/news/neoafascisti_mussolini_25_aprile_milano_corso_buenos_aires-224765233/.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Valentina Ruggiu, “‘Vicino a una nera non ci sto’: il gesto razzista contro una ragazza sul treno Milano-Trieste,” *la Repubblica*, 22 ottobre 2018, https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/10/22/news/_vicino_a_una_nera_non_ci_sto_il_gesto_razzista_contro_una_ragazza_sul_treno_milano-trieste-209649986/. Enrico Galletti, “‘Vicino a una nera non ci sto’: il gesto razzista contro una 23enne sul treno,” *Corriere della Sera*, 22 ottobre 2018, https://www.corriere.it/cronache/18_ottobre_22/vicino-una-nera-non-ci-sto-gesto-razzista-contro-23enne-treno-16456c88-d5fe-11e8-8d40-82f2988440be.shtml. This followed a similar incident four days earlier, when a woman on a bus commute from Trento to Rome told a Senegalese man, in a manner that would have made United States segregationists proud, that he needed to move to the back of the bus because he was “*di colore*” (colored); Giacomo Talignani, “Come ai tempi di Rosa Parks. ‘Sei di colore, vai a sederti in fondo,’” *Huffington Post*, 18 ottobre 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2018/10/18/come-ai-tempi-di-rosa-parks-sei-di-colore-vai-a-sederti-in-fondo_a_23564850/. “Razzismo a Trento: senegalese cacciato in fondo al bus: ‘Vai dietro, sei di un altro colore,’” *la Repubblica*, 18 ottobre 2018, <https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/10/18/news/trento-209268521/>.

In April 2017, police conducted a major action against migrants gathered in Piazzale Duca d'Aosta, the large public square in front of the station where travelers often wait out their layovers. In the operation, which was presented as a crackdown on drugs and illegal peddling, police in riot gear, aided by officers on horseback and a chopper, raided the square and rounded up over fifty migrants, loading them onto buses and transporting them to their immigration agency.¹⁰⁹⁸ Although the detained were not being loaded onto trains and sent to their deaths, obviously a crucial distinction, the optics of marginalized peoples being rounded up at the station and taken away rightly turned some heads. Deeming the operation to have been of “dubious utility”, some left-leaning politicians noted that it was also “evocative of sad historical events”, while local activists condemned the raid as an act of state-sponsored racism.¹⁰⁹⁹ Many others, however, cheered the action, expressing their hope that it was a sign of things to come. Salvini, looking on approvingly from his vantage point amidst the crowd, dog-whistled his base by announcing that the square, having been “*cleansed* of these people who aren’t needed,” could now be returned to the Milanese.¹¹⁰⁰ M5S, Salvini’s soon-to-be partners in government, also endorsed the raid, urging the Municipality of Milan to place a permanent police garrison in the piazza. Longtime *Forza Italia* representative Mariastella Gelmini bade the *Comune* do the same, stating, “I hope that today’s blitz is only the first of a long series of actions taken to counteract the illegality and the insecurity that reign supreme here reign supreme.”¹¹⁰¹ Finally, on behalf of *Fratelli d’Italia*, Viviana Beccalossi recommended that the

¹⁰⁹⁸ “Migranti, maxi blitz in stazione Centrale a Milano: a decine identificati e portati in questura,” *la Repubblica*, 2 maggio 2017, https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/05/02/news/migranti_milano_salvini_stazione_centrale-164448979/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-I0-C8-P5-S1.4-T1#gallery-slider=164459848. “Migranti, Pd: ‘Operazione alla stazione centrale di dubbia utilità,’” *la Repubblica*, 2 maggio 2017, https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/05/02/news/milano_migranti_operazione_stazione_centrale_reazioni-164477501/.

¹⁰⁹⁹ “*dubbia utilità ed evocativa di tristi vicende della storia*”; Onorio Rosati quoted in “Migranti, Pd.”

¹¹⁰⁰ “*pulizia di questa gente non c’è bisogno*”, emphasis added; Matteo Salvini quoted in “Migranti, maxi blitz in stazione Centrale a Milano.”

¹¹⁰¹ “*spero che il blitz di oggi sia solo il primo di una lunga serie al fine di contrastare l’illegalità e l’insicurezza che qui regnano sovrani*”; Mariastella Gelmini quoted in “Migranti, Pd.”

buses leaving the station “head directly to Linate [Airport] and that the passengers be put on a plane with a one-way ticket to their countries of origin. No ‘ifs’, ‘ands’, or ‘buts’.” Permitting no distinction between those guilty of crimes and those guilty simply of being there, she continued, “at best, these people were camping out, creating problems for the Milanese, but more realistically, they were pushing drugs or selling stolen merchandise.”¹¹⁰²

As politics have drifted ever more rightward in Italy, leaving a marked impact on Italian culture and social relations, memory has followed in that direction. Italy’s “highest authorities”, as Michele Sarfatti noted at the dawn of the twenty-first century, had become fond of referring to the RSI’s soldiers as the “boys of Salò”, never mind that the *ragazzi di Salò* had fought of behalf of an Aryan racial state with antisemitism in its constitution.¹¹⁰³ It helped, too, that as antifascism and the Resistance receded into the background, the new right had an Other to contrast the *repubblicini* with, and an ethnically different one, at that: the Communist Yugoslav partisan, who, during and shortly after World War II, had committed the *foibe* massacres against the local Italian population in the Balkans.¹¹⁰⁴ Mussolini has made a comeback as well, as calendars devoted to *il Duce*, for example, along with Fascist memorabilia, have been cropping up in news kiosks and street fairs throughout the country ever since the early 1990s, including in Milan, the city where he launched his movement.¹¹⁰⁵ Even verified historical antisemites have been rehabilitated in recent decades. In his

¹¹⁰² “*dirigersi direttamente a Linate e i passeggeri andrebbero messi su un aereo con biglietto di solo andata per il proprio Paese d’origine. Senza ‘se’ e senza ‘ma’. Perché nella migliore delle ipotesi queste persone bivaccavano creando problemi ai milanesi, più realisticamente spacciavano droga o vendevano merce rubata*”; Viviana Beccalossi quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹⁰³ “*massime autorità ... ‘ragazzi di Salò’ ... una patria ariana e antisemita*”; Michele Sarfatti, “Come è possibile ricordare la Shoah,” *Fasc. Scientifici*, CDEC. See also: Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, 191; and Clifford, “The Limits of National Memory,” 132-133.

¹¹⁰⁴ Claudio Fogu, “*Italiani brava gente*: The Legend of Fascist Historical Culture on Italian Politics of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 151-167. Glenda Sluga, “Italian National Memory, National Identity and Fascism,” in *Italian Fascism: History, Memory and Representation*, eds. R.J.B. Bosworth and Patrizia Dogliani (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), 183-186.

¹¹⁰⁵ Angela Giuffrida, “‘Gifts for fascist friends’: Mussolini’s calendar comeback,” *The Guardian*, December 27, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/27/gifts-for-fascist-friends-mussolinis-calendar-comeback>. To see how the political Right has used the memory of Mussolini in various ways in the Second Republic, see Aram Mattioli, *Viva Mussolini! La guerra della memoria nell’Italia di Berlusconi, Bossi e Fini* (Milan: Garzanti Libri, 2011).

1995 memoir of life in Italy during the years of antisemitic oppression, Aldo Zargani, who survived the Shoah by hiding in the northern Italian mountains, recalls how Giovanni Preziosi, who had devoted his life “first to hatred, and then to the extermination of the Jews,” was often being called a “philosopher” (*filosofo*) in the cultural sections of the daily press.¹¹⁰⁶ If in contemporary Germany, “redemption through memory is the goal,” the same cannot be said of Italy.¹¹⁰⁷

In such a climate, Jews who wished to publicly commemorate and memorialize their experiences of persecution under Fascism and National Socialism faced the possibility of antisemitic backlash. Such concerns weighed heavily on the minds of Jewish leaders in Rome when, in the mid-1990s, the national press began presenting the Fosse Ardeatine massacre as a Shoah tragedy belonging to the Jews, not an Italian tragedy belonging to the whole nation. Not only was such a portrayal historically inaccurate, for the 335 victims represented a cross-section of Italian political, social, religious, ethnic, and “racial” demography, but it also threatened to revive the Fascist-era idea that ‘Jews’ and ‘Italians’ were fundamentally distinct. Although Rome’s Jewish leaders publicly identified the massacre as a national tragedy, they nevertheless feared that the press’ depiction of the event would provoke antisemitic violence and foster the notion that Nazis alone bore responsibility for the Shoah.¹¹⁰⁸ The Shoah Memorial of Milan’s organizers have expressed similar anxieties. (After all, if even the *repubblicani* had been redeemed as ‘good people’, then who could dare criticize the behavior of ordinary Italians – then or now – as the memorial does?) In 2010, amidst the memorial’s long-running funding crisis, the president of Milan’s Jewish Community, Roberto Jarach, also the future president of the Memorial Foundation, expressed his doubt that the government would acknowledge a “historic bond” between Italy and the Shoah. As a result, the foundation was

¹¹⁰⁶ “*Giuseppe [sic] Preziosi e la sua gentile signora, che avevano dedicato la loro vita prima all’odio, e poi allo sterminio degli ebrei?*”; Aldo Zargani, *Per violino solo. La mia infanzia nell’Aldiqua (1938-1945)* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995), 98.

¹¹⁰⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 31.

¹¹⁰⁸ Clifford, “The Limits of National Memory,” 134-35.

pessimistic about the prospect of receiving state funds.¹¹⁰⁹ Such was the environment that the Shoah Memorial of Milan was entering.

Planning the Shoah Memorial

The Shoah Memorial of Milan, despite the regnant political climate, had rather auspicious beginnings. Its origins can be traced to 1997, the same year of Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (*La vita è bella*), a watershed moment in Italy's great Shoah awakening. That year, the Community of Saint Egidio (*Comunità di Sant'Egidio*), a Catholic lay organization, began holding annual ceremonies at Milano Centrale in honor of the 30 January 1944 deportation, the largest to leave from Milan. Along with listening to survivor testimonies, those gathered sang songs and held moments of silence. Years later, when the Memorial Foundation came into possession of the former deportation center, members of Saint Egidio made sure to note how they had "initiated this memory."¹¹¹⁰

In their defense, they were not without reason, and their commemorative efforts may have yielded immediate results. The following Remembrance Day, 27 January 1998, a plaque was affixed to the wall beside binario 21 to honor the victims of the deportations and "all the victims of XX-century genocides".¹¹¹¹ However, not even a line from a Primo Levi poem can salvage the memorial. Its historical merit, for one, ranges from incomplete to omissive. By limiting its temporal scope to the period from December 1943 until May 1944, the memorial fails to include the nine deportations that occurred from June 1944 until January 1945. Nor does the placard acknowledge the active role that Italians played in helping assemble the convoys that it does encompass, fostering, in this way,

¹¹⁰⁹ "*legame storico*"; Roberto Jarach quoted in Giulia Bonezzi, "La vergogna del Binario 21. Il Memoriale si ferma a metà," *Il Giorno*, 4 settembre 2010, p. 7, Fasc. Verbalì Cortellin, CDEC. For its part, *Il Giorno* concluded the article by insisting that the Shoah was part of Italian history, "that of which we should be ashamed" (*quella di cui vergognarsi*).

¹¹¹⁰ "*ha iniziato questa memoria*"; "Dichiarazione della Comunità di Sant'Egidio," *Comunità di Sant'Egidio*, Memoriale della Shoah, Notevole, Costello Stampa Inaugurata, 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC.

¹¹¹¹ "*tutte le vittime dei genocidi del XX secolo*".

the idea that the Nazis alone were responsible for the Shoah. Its location is also misleading and problematic. Bestriding binario 21 aboveground, the memorial is fashioned to the exterior of the Royal Pavilion (*Padiglione Reale*), the chambers of the king who had signed each and every Racial Law. Moreover, the casual passenger, viewing the placard in the open air, fails to appreciate that the convoys had been assembled below the surface, where, after deportees had been locked into cattle cars in the station's black interior, they did not see the light of day again until their wagons were raised to the service. Even then, they would have only been able to catch whatever glimpses of sunlight snuck through the cracks of their mobile wooden prisons. Finally, the memorial, dedicated to victims of genocide, mingles with other placards honoring war and conquest. Especially glaring is its placement beside a plaque the extols Italy's triumph over Ethiopia – an exploit that, it should be noted, Italy's Jews resoundingly supported – paying homage to Italian railroaders who died for “the supreme ideal of the fatherland”.¹¹¹² (A graffiti question mark tagged after ‘fatherland’ shows that at least someone had the good sense to question that ideal.) While the Ethiopia expedition is objectionable in its own right, only a few years later, Italy's Jews were subjected to racial legislation strikingly similar in nature to that of Italy's subjects in their East Africa colony. For all of these considerations, and probably many more, the aboveground memorial is an inadequate testament to the Jews of Italy who were deported and killed during the Shoah.

Fortunately, the idea to establish a proper Shoah center in Milan gained traction shortly thereafter. In 2000, a design competition was held for a Jewish educational museum, which, if built, would have included a permanent Shoah exhibit. Although the project never advanced beyond the contest itself, Guido Morpurgo's proposal was selected as the winning submission, bringing the future architect of Milan's Shoah Memorial into the fold.¹¹¹³ The following July, Sarfatti, CDEC's

¹¹¹² “*il supremo ideale della patria*”.

¹¹¹³ Guido Morpurgo, Personal communication with author, August 8, 2018.

activities coordinator, issued a press release announcing the formation of an exploratory committee tasked with realizing a Shoah “museum” in Milan. Along with CDEC, the Children of the Shoah Association (*Associazione Figli della Shoah*) and Milan’s Jewish Community (*Comunità Ebraica di Milano*) would be leading the effort.¹¹¹⁴ In his bulletin, Sarfatti also called attention to Milan’s prominent historical role during the years of the Nazi occupation and the Republic of Salò, a history that implicated the city in the deportation and destruction of Italy’s Jews. The “absence” of memorial sites in the city devoted to Jewish suffering, therefore, was all the more pronounced, perhaps a subtle dig at memorials to political victims, which saturate the city.¹¹¹⁵ In order to properly honor and remember Jewish victims of Nazi and Fascist violence, they required a space in Milan dedicated to their own experience of persecution.

Sarfatti’s communiqué did not go unnoticed. The next day, *il Nuovo* published an article in which Marco Szulc, founder and president of the Children of the Shoah Association, related how Italy’s Jews and schools had grown tired of traveling elsewhere in Europe to learn about the Shoah. Over a half-century after the tragedy, Italy was well overdue for its own Shoah center.¹¹¹⁶ A day later, an article in *Il Giornale*, among Italy’s most popular dailies, elaborated further on the museum’s conception. The idea to create a Shoah center in Milan, the paper reported, had come on the heels of a successful Shoah exhibit at Milan’s *Palazzo Reale* (Royal Palace). Hosted by Szulc’s organization, the exhibit attracted somewhere between forty and fifty thousand visitors, this, despite Sarfatti’s concern that Italy, unlike “the rest of the world”, showed no “great interest” in the

¹¹¹⁴ Michele Sarfatti, “Un museo della Shoah a Milano,” 23 luglio 2001, Comunicato-stampa, Fasc. Progetti Scientifici, Present, CDEC.

¹¹¹⁵ “*assenza*”; *ibid.* Sarfatti, for what it’s worth, made no mention of the memorial plaque alongside binario 21 aboveground.

¹¹¹⁶ Simone Spina, “La Shoah avrà un museo a Milano,” *Il Nuovo*, 24 luglio 2001, Fasc. Progetti Scientifici, Present, CDEC.

Shoah.¹¹¹⁷ The unexpected success of the Royal Palace exhibit, coupled with repeated requests to CDEC for school events, signaled to the memorial's early organizers a palpable interest in the Shoah among the Italian population.¹¹¹⁸ Indeed, Szulc remarked that the idea for a Shoah center had essentially come from the citizens of Milan.¹¹¹⁹

In 2003, Shoah memorialization in Italy took great strides forward at both national and local levels. That April, the Italian Parliament chartered Ferrara's National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah (*Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah*, MEIS), and in Milan, the memorial's developers decided to establish their Shoah institution in the former deportation center at the central station.¹¹²⁰ In the intervening years, the Community of Saint Egidio and the member organizations of the museum committee had come into each other's orbits, with all signs pointing toward the station's abandoned core. Saint Egidio had continued holding its 30 January commemorations, joined, over time, by the Jewish Community of Milan, and the Children of the Shoah Association had lately begun pressing for the site's preservation.¹¹²¹ Like still-standing Nazi camps, Milano Centrale had "left in place a legacy to deal with", however belatedly.¹¹²² With all four organizations sharing the same concern – the preservation and promotion of Shoah memory in Milan – they agreed to locate their center in the space beneath the tracks at Milan's central station, precisely where the deportations had occurred.

Two years later, Morpurgo and Annalisa de Curtis, the architectural team that would one day design Milan's Shoah Memorial, publicly endorsed this idea, too. In honor of Remembrance Day

¹¹¹⁷ "Ovunque, nel resto del mondo, c'è un grande interesse, ma in Italia non esiste nemmeno un museo interamente dedicato al dramma del popolo ebraico"; Sarfatti quoted in Chiara Campo, "Museo della Shoah: il primo in Italia nascerà a Milano," *il Giornale*, 25 luglio 2001, p. 39, Fasc. Progetti Scientifici, Present, CDEC.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁹ Spina, "La Shoah avrà un museo a Milano."

¹¹²⁰ "Chi siamo," MEIS: *Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah*, https://www.meisweb.it/mostra/chi_siamo.

¹¹²¹ "Presentazione dei nuovi spazi alla Stazione Centrale di Milano," Memoriale della Shoah, Notevole Costello Stampa, Inaugurata 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC.

¹¹²² The phrase is Isabelle Engelhardt's; see *A Topography of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust at Dachau and Buchenwald in Comparison with Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and Washington, DC* (Peter Lang: Bern, 2002), 210.

2005, Morpurgo and de Curtis held a monthlong exhibit at Milan's *Palazzo della Ragione* (Palace of Reason), which, titled "30.01.1944 Convoglio RSHA Milano – Auschwitz", commemorated the best-known of the twenty deportations to leave from the station. Promoting the creation of a Shoah memorial at Milano Centrale in their exhibit, they explained that "From these hidden tracks, the Jews detained at San Vittore between 1943 and 1944 were deported toward the extermination camps. This invisible station is still intact." Articulating their own ideas for such a center, ideas that would be realized in the memorial itself, they continued, "It can become a site of memory, to remember the Shoah, a place of the city":

Remembering the Shoah today, in these spaces, is not a museification of an event, but a contribution toward the encounter between diverse peoples and toward overcoming conflicts between them. A place not only for the Jews, but for everyone.¹¹²³

Over the next two years, Morpurgo submitted three blueprints for the future memorial, all of which ran the entire antisemitic gamut of the Fascist and Nazi eras, with one design featuring a sequential procession from "Persecution" to "Deportation" to "Extermination".¹¹²⁴ The point was to allow visitors "to retrace the fundamental stages of the Shoah of Italian Jews, according to an itinerary based on the testimonial experience of those events."¹¹²⁵

From early on, Morpurgo's designs found support from high places – his 2005 proposal even caught the "sincere interest" of the Italian president, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi – but without the commemorative space, none of these proposals got off the ground.¹¹²⁶ On Remembrance Day 2006,

¹¹²³ "Da questi binari nascosti, gli ebrei detenuti a San Vittore tra il 1943 e il 1944, sono stati deportati nei campi di sterminio. Questa stazione invisibile è ancora integra. Essa può diventare un luogo della memoria, per ricordare la Shoah, un luogo della città. Ricordare la Shoah oggi, in questi spazi, non è museificazione di un evento, ma un contributo all'incontro tra diversità e non più al loro conflitto. Un luogo non solo degli ebrei, ma di tutti"; "Il percorso progettuale," Memoriale della Shoah, Notevole Costello Stampa Inaugurata 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC. For an overview of Morpurgo and de Curtis' exhibit, see: "30.01.1944 Convoglio RSHA Milano-Auschwitz," Morpurgo de Curtis ArchitettiAssociati, 28 gennaio – 28 febbraio 2005, <http://www.morpurgodecurtisarchitetti.it/it-rsha.html>.

¹¹²⁴ "Il percorso progettuale." Stefano Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile. Il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano," *Engramma* 123 (gennaio 2015), http://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=2122.

¹¹²⁵ "di ripercorrere le tappe fondamentali della Shoah degli italiani ebrei, secondo un itinerario basato sull'esperienza testimoniale di quegli avvenimenti"; "Il percorso progettuale."

¹¹²⁶ "sincero interessamento"; Suriano, "La testimonianza dell'invisibile."

however, Ciampi's successor, Giorgio Napolitano, publicly acknowledged that the Fascist state's Racial Laws had helped the Nazis carry out the Shoah in Italy. As a means of coming to terms with this uncomfortable part of Italy's past, he made the decisive move to endorse the reopening of Milano Centrale's subterranean space to the public.¹¹²⁷ This time, presidential backing produced results, and the following January, in a ceremony held at the station, FS handed over the former deportation center to the organizations involved with the memorial's creation, with Napolitano in attendance. According to Ferruccio de Bortoli, soon to be named the Memorial Foundation's inaugural president, Napolitano's presence at the ceremony was "one of the most symbolically important aspects" of the memorial's genesis, signaling the 'go-ahead' to the parties involved.¹¹²⁸

It was the Province of Milan's president, however, Filippo Penati, who delivered the most powerful speech on the occasion. Characterizing the events to be memorialized as a "dark, tragic period of *our* history," Penati spoke scathingly of Italy's role in facilitating the destruction of Italy's Jews and then forgetting about it in the postwar era.¹¹²⁹ His address is worth quoting at length:

From this place of work, transformed into a place of shame, defenseless Jews were sent toward the concentration camps, rounded up by Nazi-Fascist barbarism. Such was the monstrosity of this act that these same ruthless organizers felt the need to conceal it.

Evil in itself is nourished by obscurity and by silence, the opposite of dialogue and of encounter, on the bases of which democracies are born. Revealing this space in its significance, making it become a public place of memory, is the contribution that the Milanese community wants to give to reinvigorate the moral duty of the memory of the extermination and the warning so that this barbarism is never repeated again.

These tracks, invisible, where hundreds [*sì*] of people were loaded onto cattle cars, amidst screams and beatings, to be sent toward annihilation, forever remind us of the tragedy of the Shoah, of what men were capable of doing to other men like them. They remind us of the delirium of pain and hatred that the Fascist regime caused, rendering itself co-responsible with the Nazi regime in the promulgation of the Racial Laws, that took away the dignity of

¹¹²⁷ *Memoriale della Shoah di Milano. Binario 21*, Booklet (Milan: Proedi, 2008), 7. "Il percorso progettuale." Suriano, *ibid.*

¹¹²⁸ "uno degli aspetti simbolici più importanti"; de Bortoli quoted in Ester Moscati, "Contro l'indifferenza: Intervista a Ferruccio de Bortoli, Presidente della Fondazione per il Memoriale della Shoah," *Bollettino*, novembre 2007, p. 11, Fasc. Verbal, CDEC.

¹¹²⁹ "quel tragico buio periodo della nostra storia", emphasis added; Filippo Penati, "Intervento del presidente della Provincia di Milano, Filippo Penati in occasione della presentazione del Memoriale della Shoah *Binario 21 – Milano, 16 gennaio 2007*," Provincia di Milano, Notevole Costello Stampa Inaugurata 16/1/2007, Fasc. Scientifico, CDEC.

Jewish citizens and, in the deportations, caused them to be humiliated, treated like slaves, tortured, and annihilated.

They remind us when indifference, that invisible evil, was an accomplice to pain, indifference of a country pierced only by the shining example of a few righteous people who knew how to make shine in the Italian people the moral imperative of liberty and fraternity.¹¹³⁰

That October, the nine-member Shoah Memorial of Milan Foundation (*Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*) met for the first time.¹¹³¹ In addition to the four original members – the Children of the Shoah Association, CDEC, the Jewish Community of Milan, and the Community of Saint Egidio – five other organizations, representing entities both private and public, joined the non-profit: the Union of Italian Jewish Communities (*Unione delle comunità ebraiche italiane*), FS, the Region of Lombardy, and the Province (*Provincia*) and Municipality (*Comune*) of Milan.¹¹³² De Bortoli, shortly after being appointed to the foundation's presidency, acknowledged how depressingly little the Milanese know about this chapter in their city's history, confessing that he had once shared in their ignorance. "I thought about how many times, over so many years, I took a train to the Central Station," he says, "and no one had ever told me about what happened on that track".¹¹³³ If even de Bortoli, a well-connected local notable, had been in the dark about the deportations, then what did that mean for the local-history IQ of the collective *milanesi*? The Shoah

¹¹³⁰ "Da questo luogo del lavoro, trasformato in luogo della vergogna, si avviavano verso i campi di concentramento gli ebrei inermi, rastrellati dalla barbarie nazi-fascista. Tale era la mostruosità di quest'atto che gli stessi spietati organizzatori sentivano il bisogno di celarlo. ¶ Il male in sé si nutre dell'oscurità e del silenzio, il contrario del dialogo e del confronto, sulla cui base nascono le democrazie. Svelare nel suo significato questo spazio, facendolo diventare luogo pubblico della memoria, è il contributo che la comunità milanese vuole dare per rinvigorire il dovere morale del ricordo dello sterminio e il monito perché questa barbarie non si ripeta mai più. ¶ Questi binari, invisibili, dove centinaia di persone furono caricate su vagoni bestiame tra urla e percosse per essere avviate verso l'annientamento, ci ricordino per sempre la tragedia della Shoah, quello che gli uomini furono capaci di fare contro altri uomini come loro. Ci ricordino il delirio di dolore e odio che il regime fascista provocò rendendosi corresponsabile di quello nazista nella promulgazione delle leggi razziali, che tolsero la dignità ai cittadini ebrei e nelle deportazioni che li portarono ad essere umiliati, tratti in schiavitù, torturati e annientati. ¶ Ci ricordino quando l'indifferenza, male invisibile, fu complice del dolore, indifferenza di un Paese squarciata soltanto dal fulgido esempio dei pochi giusti che seppero far brillare nel popolo italiani l'imperativo morale della libertà e della fratellanza"; *ibid.*

¹¹³¹ Notarial deed would make the foundation official on 17 September 2007.

¹¹³² Along with the state bodies, the involvement of the Community of Saint Egidio remains notable. The amount of humanitarian and civic-oriented work that this organization has done cannot be understated, but one wonders if the Shoah Memorial of Milan would have garnered the attention that it did without the backing of this organization that more accurately reflects hegemonic values of Italian society and culture.

¹¹³³ "Ho pensato a quante volte, in tanti anni, ho preso un treno alla Stazione centrale e nessuno mi aveva mai detto che su quel binario era accaduta una cosa"; de Bortoli quoted in Moscati, "Contro l'indifferenza," 11.

Memorial of Milan needed to be built, he insisted, so that “Milanese society” could take a collective step forward toward curing its memory amnesia.¹¹³⁴

“The Devil that Never Dies”: Antisemitism Returns to Italy

On that same occasion, de Bortoli stressed that a Shoah memorial was necessary because “The problem, at base, is that in recent years, we have seen a resurgence of hatreds, incomprehension, and a creeping neo-Nazism”.¹¹³⁵ Although he noted that, at the time, such tendencies were less common in Milan than, for example, in France and Poland, it would be difficult to maintain that same comparative optimism today. During a Remembrance Day ceremony at the Shoah Memorial in 2016, Giorgio del Zanna, president of the Community of Saint Egidio, noted with concern that antisemitic episodes in Milan had doubled over the past two years, numbers which more or less reflected the national trend. “[A]ntisemitism,” he warned, “has not been defeated.”¹¹³⁶ In his own address that evening, Jarach echoed del Zanna’s fears, stating that “In Europe, we are worried. In Italy, we’re also worried.”¹¹³⁷

According to CDEC’s Antisemitism Observatory (*Osservatorio antisemitismo*, OA), a database that compiles all instances of antisemitism in Italy (from web posts to physical assaults), the number of such incidents in Italy doubled once again from 2015 to 2016, with 130 cases recorded that year, the first time that antisemites broke the century mark. Annual tallies haven’t dropped below 100 since then, and although this year’s numbers, so far, are down from 2019’s all-time high of 251

¹¹³⁴ “*società milanese*”; de Bortoli quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹³⁵ “*Il problema di fondo è che proprio in questi anni abbiamo visto il riaccendersi di odi, di incomprendione e anche di uno strisciante neonazismo*”; de Bortoli quoted in Moscati, “Contro l’indifferenza,” 10. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen uses the expression, “The Devil That Never Dies”, as the title of one of his books; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *The Devil That Never Dies: The Rise and Threat of Global Antisemitism* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013).

¹¹³⁶ “*antisemitismo non è sconfitto*”; Giorgio del Zanna quoted in “Milano, allarme antisemitismo dal Memoriale della Shoah: ‘Episodi in aumento’,” *la Repubblica*, 31 gennaio 2016, <https://video.repubblica.it/edizione/milano/milano-allarme-antisemitismo-dal-memoriale-della-shoah-episodi-in-aumento/226887/226175>.

¹¹³⁷ “*In Europa siamo preoccupati. In Italia anche siamo preoccupati*”; Jarach quoted in *ibid.*

incidents, 2020's current total of 206 (as of 25 November) is already the second-highest tally on record.¹¹³⁸ Ultras, unsurprisingly, are frequent contributors to the OA. Lazio's wing, typically the most violent and radical of the bunch, have in the past invoked death to their archrivals, AS Roma, by depicting Anne Frank as a Roma fan. Meanwhile, ultras of various allegiances frequently taunt their opponents by calling them "Jews", as in April 2019, when a Milanese vandal slandered Inter fans by spray-painting "*Interista Ebreo*" (Jewish *Interista*) on the side of a building.¹¹³⁹

As the Lazio example implies, the idea of Jewish death, whether real or symbolic, provides inspiration for antisemitic activity, and Jewish grave markers are common targets of antisemitic desecration.¹¹⁴⁰ In the absence of proper tombstones for Shoah victims, antisemites have occasionally attacked *Stolpersteine* ("stumbling stones") instead, the brass memorial plates inserted into sidewalks throughout Europe, marking the final residences of Nazi victims. In January 2017, less than two days after Milan's first six stumbling stones were installed, someone smeared the *pietra d'inciampo* of Dante Coen, who died at Buchenwald, by painting it black.¹¹⁴¹ For the same reason,

¹¹³⁸ "Episodi di antisemitismo in Italia," Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/notizie/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/?anno>. For comparison, the number of antisemitic incidents in 2012, the first year on record, was 16, although it's worth bearing in mind that social media had not yet exploded in the way that it has now. Meanwhile, 2019's record high for antisemitic incidents jibed with the general picture; according to a poll that year, more than half of the 1,500 Italians surveyed considered racist acts to either be sometimes (45%) or always (10%) justifiable; Angela Giuffrida, "More than half of Italians in poll say racist acts are justifiable," *The Guardian*, November 12, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/12/more-than-half-of-italians-in-poll-say-racism-is-justifiable>.

¹¹³⁹ Jones, "Fascism is thriving again in Italy." Matteo Monti, "Quando il tifo diventa aberrante. Insultato il dramma di Anna Frank," *la Repubblica*, 5 dicembre 2013, https://www.repubblica.it/sport/calcio/serie-a/roma/2013/12/05/news/roma_lazio_razzismo_anna_frank-72775562/. Matteo Pinci, "Anna Frank per insultare i romanisti, vergogna degli ultra della Lazio," *la Repubblica*, 23 ottobre 2017, https://www.repubblica.it/sport/calcio/serie-a/lazio/2017/10/23/news/tifosi_razzismo_comunita_ebraica_curva_sud-179128194/. "*Interista ebreo*," Scritta antisemita, 2 aprile 2019, Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/scritta-antisemita-8/>.

¹¹⁴⁰ In recent years, France has especially been gripped by Jewish grave defilement. In December 2018, for example, antisemites desecrated thirty-seven gravestones in Herrlisheim, and then two months later, ninety tombstones were vandalized in Quatzenheim. Both towns are located in Alsace, a region with a long history of anti-Jewish agitation; see Ralph Ellis, "Jewish cemetery outside Strasbourg vandalized," *CNN*, December 14, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/14/europe/strasbourg-france-jewish-cemetery-vandalized/index.html>; and "France anti-Semitism: Jewish graves desecrated near Strasbourg," *BBC*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47289129>.

¹¹⁴¹ "Lordata con vernice nera la pietra d'inciampo dedicate a Dante Coen," Vandalizzata una pietra d'inciampo a Milano, 21 gennaio 2017, Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/vandalizzata-una-pietra-dinciampo-a-milano/>. "Atto vandalico contro una 'pietra d'inciampo' a

Holocaust Remembrance Day is a magnet for antisemitic agitation, with one group particularly active in Milan around the *Giorno della Memoria* being the Varese-based *Movimento Nazionale Socialista dei Lavoratori* (National Socialist Workers' Movement, MLNS). In one viciously anti-Black and antisemitic leaflet that they distributed throughout the city on Remembrance Day 2014, titled "White man, protect your family!! Your wife, your daughter, your sister could be next!!", they claimed that when the white and Black races mix, the only ones who benefit from the *mescolamento razziale* are the Jews. Naturally, both Jews and Black persons of color were depicted in racist caricature.¹¹⁴² A bit of graffiti turned up in Milan that day as well, which read "Holocaust: 6 Million Victims' – cit. Pinocchio" (*Olocausto: 6 milioni di vittime – cit. Pinocchio*).¹¹⁴³ MLNS was likely behind this act, too, for three years later, they posted a pamphlet throughout Milan likening the State of Israel to the fibbing Disney character.¹¹⁴⁴

Less overtly, Remembrance Day also triggers Shoah denial and fatigue among much of the Italian population. Tim Cole has claimed that, paradoxically, it is precisely the boom in Shoah memorialization that has prompted a rise in denial. "It was not until the 'Holocaust' emerged as an iconic event," he writes, "that it was perceived to be an event which was deemed to be worth denying."¹¹⁴⁵ Segre has perceived as much, lamenting how "There is always that voice on

Milano: 'È stato un atto di antisemitismo'," *MilanoToday*, 23 gennaio 2017, <http://www.milanotoday.it/cronaca/imbrattata-pietra-inciampo.html>.

¹¹⁴² "Il partito di estrema destra dell'Insubria NSAB – MLNS Movimento Nazionale Socialista e Socialista dei lavoratori ha affisso in molte strade di Milano il volantino pesantemente razzista ed antisemita: 'Uomo bianco proteggi la tua famiglia'," Volantino razzista ed antisemita a Milano, 27 gennaio 2014, Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/volantino-razzista-ed-antisemita-a-milano/>.

¹¹⁴³ "A Milano, su un muro esterno della Motorizzazione Civile, in via Cilea, lunedì 27 gennaio è stata tracciata una scritta negazionista: 'Olocausto 6 milioni di vittime, cit. Pinocchio'," Scritta negazionista a Milano, 27 gennaio 2014, Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/scritta-negazionista-a-milano/>.

¹¹⁴⁴ Alessandro Rovellini, "Volantini contro gli ebrei affissi a Milano nella Giornata della memoria," *MilanoToday*, 27 gennaio 2017, <http://www.milanotoday.it/politica/volantini-contro-ebrei.html>. "Milano. Affissi su muri in vari punti della città volantini antisemiti a cura di 'NSAB-MLNS – Movimento Nazionale Socialista dei Lavoratori', micropartito neonazista del varesotto," Volantini neonazisti, 27 gennaio 2017, Osservatorio antisemitismo, <https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/episodi-di-antisemitismo-in-italia/volantini-neonazisti/>.

¹¹⁴⁵ Tim Cole, *Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the 'Shoah Business'* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, 1999), 187-188.

Remembrance Day that says, ‘enough with these Jews.’” Because denial makes everyone “comfortable”, she fears that when she and the few remaining witnesses pass on, deniers will fully fill the void they leave behind.¹¹⁴⁶ Despite the flurry of commemorative activity on the *Giorno della Memoria* – indeed, it’s the only time of year that Milan’s Shoah Memorial can count on a respectable number of visitors (who aren’t schoolchildren) – Robert S.C. Gordon has argued that by the time Italy celebrated its first Remembrance Day in 2001, Shoah fatigue had already settled in. By then, he notes, one could commonly hear Italians “more or less explicitly tell ‘the Jews’ to stop going on about the Holocaust”.¹¹⁴⁷ Dana, who spoke of the wall of denial that he encountered whenever he tried to discuss the Shoah with other Italians, would agree. “They are so ignorant,” he explained. “They don’t know, they don’t understand, they don’t want to understand.” By the time of his 1996 interview – that is, five years before Italy’s first Remembrance Day – he had basically given up on ever getting through to them.¹¹⁴⁸ In her own interview that same year, Luciana Sacerdote expressed the same sentiment, noting how so many Italians, whenever the Shoah came up in conversation, responded by saying, “But it isn’t possible; I don’t believe it.”¹¹⁴⁹

Fighting Back

The Shoah Memorial of Milan Foundation has not stood idly by as ideologies of hate have resurfaced in Italian politics, culture, and society. From 2015 to 2017, in an initiative called “*Accoglienza Profughi*” (Refugee Reception), the foundation periodically opened the memorial’s doors

¹¹⁴⁶ “C’è sempre qualche voce che nel giorno della Memoria dice ‘e basta con questi ebrei’”; “comodo”; Segre quoted in Paolo D’Amico, “Segre, memoria di Shoah: ‘I nomi ebrei sulle pietre per le strade di Milano’,” *Corriere della Sera*, 6 gennaio 2018, https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_gennaio_06/segre-memoria-shoa-nomi-ebrei-pietre-le-strade-milano-16738078-f31e-11e7-a586-43e3ef84081a.shtml?refresh_ce-cp.

¹¹⁴⁷ Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, 196.

¹¹⁴⁸ “Sono talmente ignoranti. Loro non sanno, non capiscono, non vogliono capire”; Dana, Interview, 27 febbraio 1996.

¹¹⁴⁹ “Ma non è possibile, non ci credo”; Luciana Sacerdote, Interview by Marcello Pezzetti, “*Interviste alla Storia*” – 1995-1996, Quinto, 2 marzo 1996, Audiovisivo, Archivio della Memoria, CDEC, <http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/audiovideo/detail/IT-CDEC-AV0001-000078/luciana-sacerdote.html>.

to refugees from Africa and the Levant, offering them meals, beds, shelter, hygienic services, and – for children – games as they awaited the next leg of their journey to central and northern Europe.

The space was also equipped with Wi-Fi, permitting refugees to stay in touch with their families.¹¹⁵⁰

Coordinated by the Community of Saint Egidio with help from other members of the Memorial Foundation, *Accoglienza Profughi* launched on June 22, 2015, after tightening border policies in Austria and France had stranded refugees in Italy. By November, the program had already aided some 3,700 to 4,500 refugees, hailing from approximately twenty-five different countries, and by early 2017, that number had risen to somewhere between 5,000 and 7,500.¹¹⁵¹ An entirely private undertaking,

Accoglienza Profughi relied on volunteers for staff and provisions, and a religious cross-section of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and nonbelievers answered the call. Coming in groups or as individuals, they offered their time, money, and Arabic skills, and even former beneficiaries signed up to help.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁵⁰ Ferruccio de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, “Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2015,” *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2015.pdf>. “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: l’accoglienza ai profughi è ‘la rivincita della storia,’” *la Repubblica*, 1 novembre 2015,

https://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/profughi/2015/11/01/news/profughi_a_milano_memoriale_della_shoah_di_milano_l_accoglienza_ai_profughi_e_la_rivincita_della_storia_-126384229/. *Accoglienza Profughi* functioned as one node in a citywide “reception network” (*rete di accoglienza*) organized by the Municipality of Milan, which, by November 2015, had assisted nearly 85,000 refugees in just two years of operations; “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: l’accoglienza ai profughi è ‘la rivincita della storia.’” The program was discontinued in 2018 when construction on the memorial resumed; Ferruccio de Bortoli and Roberto Jarach, “Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2017,” *Fondazione Memoriale della Shoah di Milano ONLUS*, <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Relazione-Morale-FMSM-2017.pdf>.

¹¹⁵¹ There are wide numerical discrepancies between sources. The Shoah Memorial of Milan Foundation reports that *Accoglienza Profughi* aided over 4,500 refugees from 26 different countries of origin from June to November 2015. *la Repubblica* puts the total for that time period at 4,700, while *Corriere della Sera* reports that the program had helped over 7,500 refugees (again from 26 different countries) by the end of 2016. The Community of Saint Egidio’s own numbers are more conservative and more specific. They report that *Accoglienza Profughi* aided 3,707 refugees from 23 countries from June to November 2015, and then aided 1,474 more over that same time period in 2016. See De Bortoli and Jarach, “Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2015”; “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: l’accoglienza ai profughi è ‘la rivincita della storia’”; Antonio Ferrari and Alessia Rastelli, “Il Binario 21 dall’indifferenza alla solidarietà,” *Corriere della Sera*, 2017, <https://www.corriere.it/reportage/cultura/2017/shoahmemorialemilano/>; and “Il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano riapre le porte per l’accoglienza ai profughi,” *Comunità di Sant’Egidio*, 17 luglio 2017, <https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30284/langID/it/itemID/21760/Il-Memoriale-della-Shoah-di-Milano-riapre-le-porte-per-l-accoglienza-ai-profughi.html>.

¹¹⁵² “Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: l’accoglienza ai profughi è ‘la rivincita della storia.’” Edoardo Bianchi, “Memoriale della Shoah diventa rifugio per i migranti: ‘Riscatto della storia contro l’indifferenza,’” *la Repubblica*, 12 luglio 2016, <https://video.repubblica.it/edizione/milano/memoriale-della-shoah-diventa-rifugio-per-i-migranti-riscatto-della->

Aware of the humanitarian exigencies of the day and the ethical demands of the memorial, *Accoglienza Profughi*'s organizers allowed the teachings of the space to guide them. Saint Edigio member, Ulderico Maggi, explained, "this place has a very strong historical charge".¹¹⁵³ Added Stefano Pasta, in words that ring true on this side of the Atlantic, "This initiative has allowed us all to situate ourselves in history: Europe today is divided between walls and barbed wire on one side and hospitality on the other. Those who have pledged themselves here," he affirmed, "have decided to stand on the side of solidarity."¹¹⁵⁴ Given its strong cautionary tale, those involved with *Accoglienza Profughi* have cited 'indifference' as their watchword, and their guiding light is simple: to not be indifferent. As Jarach indicated, "The writing at the entrance has guided us."¹¹⁵⁵

The effort, however, ceased after 2017. Nor was it universally accepted by the general population. That July, a vandal scribbled antisemitic and racist proclamations on marble benches just outside the memorial. A twin attack on both the memories and the migrants sheltered within, the graffiti included the expressions "Long Live *il Duce*", accompanied by fascies; "Long Live Hitler", accompanied by a swastika; and a racial slur against Africans.¹¹⁵⁶ Observing how refugees in Italy are treated today, and troubled by what she sees, Segre compares their situation with her own. "Racism and antisemitism never disappeared," she says, "it's just that, in the postwar era of rediscovered democracy, they weren't expressed." Since then, as time has passed and survivors have passed on,

storia-contro-l-indifferenza/246086/246190. Ferrari and Rastelli, "Il Binario 21 dall'indifferenza alla solidarietà." "Il Memoriale della Shoah di Milano riapre le porte per l'accoglienza ai profughi."

¹¹⁵³ "questo luogo ha un carico molto forte"; Ulderico Maggi quoted in Bianchi, "Memoriale della Shoah diventa rifugio per i migranti."

¹¹⁵⁴ "Questa iniziativa ha permesso a tutti noi di collocarci nella storia: l'Europa in questo momento è divisa tra i muri e i fili spinati da una parte e l'accoglienza dall'altra. Chi si è impegnato qui ha deciso di stare dalla parte della solidarietà"; Stefano Pasta quoted in Ferrari and Rastelli, "Il Binario 21 dall'indifferenza alla solidarietà."

¹¹⁵⁵ "La scritta all'ingresso ci ha guidato"; Jarach quoted in *ibid.* The Memorial Foundation has cited *Accoglienza Profughi* as "the best interpretation of the large 'INDIFFERENCE' posted at the Memorial's entrance, as an example of a social intervention to support the city and civil society" (*la miglior interpretazione della grande 'INDIFFERENZA' posta all'ingresso del Memoriale, come esempio di intervento sociale a sostegno della città e della società civile*); De Bortoli and Jarach, "Relazione Morale: Bilancio al 31 dicembre 2015."

¹¹⁵⁶ "W il Duce"; "W Hitler"; "Scritte Naziste davanti al Memoriale della Shoah," *Corriere della Sera*, 26 luglio 2017, http://milano.corriere.it/foto-gallery/cronaca/17_luglio_26/scritte-naziste-memoriale-shoah-profughi-migranti-comunita-sant-egidio-accoglienza-06fb6450-722f-11e7-9029-c4822e477054.shtml.

“racism has returned, and so has a general indifference, the same now as it was then, when we Jews were the nameless ones. Today, I perceive the same indifference being directed toward those hundreds of nameless migrants who are dying in the Mediterranean, and I feel all of its danger.”¹¹⁵⁷ Knowing firsthand where such a road can lead, one ‘built by hate, but paved with indifference’, the current state of affairs leaves Segre feeling “very pessimistic”.¹¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

In January 2018, for her “outstanding merits in the social field,” Liliana Segre was named a Senator for Life in the Italian parliament by president of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella.¹¹⁵⁹ From leper to legislator, it was quite a turnaround for the little girl who, at age eight, had been teased by her former schoolmates for being Jewish, and then, at age thirteen, deported to her intended death for that same reason. By November 2019, however, she required a security detail, due to the number of death threats she was receiving. Eighty years later, Segre still couldn’t live safely in Italy. Her offense this time? Along with being a high-profile Shoah survivor, which was already netting her an average of 200 threats per day (so many that the *Osservatorio antisemitismo* doesn’t even appear to keep track of them), she called for the creation of a parliamentary Extraordinary Committee to investigate hate speech, intolerance, racism, antisemitism, and incitements to hatred and violence. The measure passed, but while no senator was gauche enough to vote against Segre’s proposal, all parties of the

¹¹⁵⁷ “Il razzismo e l’antisemitismo non sono mai sopiti, solo che si preferiva nel dopoguerra della ritrovata democrazia non esprimerlo. Oggi è passato tanto tempo, quasi tutti i testimoni sono morti e il razzismo è tornato fuori così come l’indifferenza generale, uguale oggi come allora quando i senza nome eravamo noi ebrei. Oggi percepisco la stessa indifferenza per quelle centinaia di migranti che muoiono nel Mediterraneo, anche loro senza nome, e ne sento tutto il pericolo”; Segre quoted in “Liliana Segre: ‘Noi ebrei eravamo i “senza nome”’. Oggi percepisco la stessa indifferenza per i migranti. Ne sento tutto il pericolo,” *Huffington Post*, 5 settembre 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2018/09/05/liliana-segre-noi-ebrei-eravamo-i-senza-nome-oggi-percepisco-la-stessa-indifferenza-per-i-migranti-ne-sento-tutto-il-pericolo_a_23517522/.

¹¹⁵⁸ “molto pessimista”; Segre quoted in D’Amico, “Segre, memoria di Shoah.”

¹¹⁵⁹ “altissimi meriti nel sociale campo”; “Il Presidente Mattarella ha nominato Senatrice a vita la dottoressa Liliana Segre,” *Presidenza della Repubblica*, 19 gennaio 2018, Comunicato, <https://www.quirinale.it/elementi/2939>.

right abstained, with Berlusconi claiming that it would limit free speech, and Salvini grandstanding that it would prevent him from saying “Italians First”, *La Lega*’s signature rallying cry.¹¹⁶⁰

In a heartwarming gesture, however, in her defense and in her honor, Italy’s mayors organized an anti-hate rally in Milan titled, “*L’odio non ha futuro*” (Hatred Has No Future). Along with 600 Italian mayors, thousands of ordinary Italians showed up in support of the senator for life.¹¹⁶¹ Perhaps the picture, as a whole, presents as good a sign as any of where things stand in Italy today. Little more than a year ago, Salvini’s League, a rightwing party in itself and an enabler for even more radical movements, seemed to be in the midst of an unstoppable ascent. Today, they’re in the opposition, at least at the national level, along with their grandfather, *Forza Italia*, and their more extreme *fratelli*. At the local and regional levels, however, including in Lombardy, *La Lega* remains a force, Berlusconi’s party has scored recent successes (notably, in Piedmont), and even *Fratelli d’Italia* has claimed the regions of Abruzzo and Marche over the past two years. Still, with the Democratic Party reestablishing itself (though thanks, in large part, to a disconcerting alliance with M5S), Italy seems to have come back a bit from the brink, at least for the time being.

With Italian politics in their current ambiguous state, it is difficult to gauge how this will affect Shoah memorialization in Italy, and thus, the future of the still-unfinished Shoah Memorial of Milan. (Even I will admit that, at the moment, there are more pressing concerns requiring collective social attention.) Nevertheless, a year ago, in a first draft of this chapter, I wrote that that future looks “bleak”. I’m no longer quite so pessimistic, even though when the Memorial Foundation

¹¹⁶⁰ Alberto Custodero, “Antisemitismo e odio razziale, via libera alla ‘commissione Segre’, ma è polemica per l’astensione del centrodestra,” *la Repubblica*, 30 ottobre 2019, https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/10/30/news/antisemitismo_ok_del_senato_alla_mozione-segre_su_commissione_straordinaria-239898481/. Sylvia Poggioli, “Italian Holocaust Survivor Faces Threats After Calling For Investigation Into Hate,” *NPR*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/11/778211815/italian-holocaust-survivor-faces-threats-after-calling-for-investigation-into-ha>. Giuffrida, “More than half of Italians in poll say racist acts are justifiable.”

¹¹⁶¹ Gianluca Mezzofiore, “Thousands of Italians rallied around a Holocaust survivor who received 200 anti-Semitic threats a day,” *CNN*, December 11, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/11/europe/holocaust-survivor-rally-intl-scli/index.html>.

announces, as they did this very month (November 2020), that the end is in sight, one can't help but feel the sensation of having been here before. In any event, the need to stay vigilant against antisemitism, and other ideologies of hate, remains as pertinent as ever, because when COVID leaves and life returns to "normal", old prejudices will remain. After all, Italy is only a year removed from having "Captain" (*Capitano*) Salvini, another authoritarian-leaning, soft-on-fascism political leader with a nickname, serve as Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. Whether Monti or Berlusconi will have the last word remains to be seen.

Conclusion

On September 15, 2019, *La Lega* held an open-air rally in the fields of Pontida, where, according to legend, the city-states of northern Italy had sworn their oath against Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1167, a pact that bore fruit in the decisive Battle of Legnano nine years later. In between cries of “Italians First!” (*Prima gli italiani!*) and the attendant anti-immigrant agitation, the nearly 80,000 rallygoers held a moment of silence for their fallen comrade “militants” (*militanti*), and leader Matteo Salvini, barely a week removed from his Interior Minister post, gave a speech in which he railed against the national government, his political rivals, and the European Union. True to form, ever since the party’s earliest days under founder Umberto Bossi, the annual rally in Pontida, home turf for Leaguists past and present, has served as a reliable barometer for gauging *Lega* sentiment.

On hand for the event was famed Italian journalist Gad Lerner, a native of Beirut but a lifelong resident of Milan. Though there to report on the rally for *la Repubblica*, one of Italy’s leading newspapers, Lerner quickly became the headline story. Well-known for his leftist politics, Lerner was an unwelcome presence, and as the crowd greeted his arrival with a chorus of whistles and jeers, its more belligerent members assailed him with a bevy of insults, calling him a “piece of shit” (*pezzo di merda*) and a “buffoon” (*buffone*), a “communist” (*comunista*) and a “freemason” (*massone*). Taking aim at his background, they also called him a Jew, shouting at him, “You’re not Italian! You’re Jewish!” (*Non sei italiano! Sei ebreo!*) According to these self-appointed interpreters and defenders of Italian nationality, Lerner’s Jewish ancestry invalidated any rights he had to Italianness, citizenship records be damned. Though Lerner took things in stride, bearing the insults with an irrepressible grin and even asking a colleague, “*Come va?*” (How’s it going?), the abuse had to have struck a raw nerve for

someone who has devoted much of his life's work to documenting the place and plight of Jews in the modern world, including in Italy.¹¹⁶² Eighty-one years after the Racial Laws and seventy-four after the Shoah, non-Jewish Italians could still openly proclaim that Jews were not, and could not be, Italian. And they represented one of Italy's most powerful political parties.¹¹⁶³ In a polity that commonly claims to be anti-racist, Italy's Jews continue to live in a state of precariousness.

Identity

Permeating this study has been the theme of identity. Though consisting of two components, one focusing on history and the other on memory, identity is the bridge that connects both parts, bringing them together into a single whole. More specifically, this study has analyzed who can lay claim to being Italian. As Lerner's unfortunate example shows, the matter is still far from settled in the Italian popular mind, at least among the non-Jewish majority.

In post-unification Italy, Jews had come to feel profoundly Italian by the time the Racial Laws were passed, believing they had earned their national stripes through their contributions to, and sacrifices for, the state that had set them free. With an entrepreneurial spirit and leading roles in the economy, key positions at all levels of government, strikingly high rates of interfaith marriage,

¹¹⁶² Though Lerner probably identifies more strongly with his leftist politics than his Jewish background, as his professional history reflects, he authored the preface to Rony Hamaui's *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia fra integrazione e discriminazioni* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2016), 9-15, and his *Scintille: Una storia di anime vagabonde* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 2011) tells his family history between Lebanon and Ukraine, in the two regions of the world that defined the Jewish twentieth century.

¹¹⁶³ For various accounts of the September 2019 Pontida rally, including the insults directed toward Lerner, see: "Pontida, la Lega sovranista fa il pieno. Salvini: 'Siete uno spettacolo,'" *Il Giorno*, 15 settembre 2019, <https://www.ilgiorno.it/bergamo/politica/pontida-lega-1.4783712>; Valerio Berra, "Pontida, il raduno leghista. Salvini: 'Ci riprendiamo il governo con gli interessi,'" *Open*, 15 settembre 2019, <https://www.open.online/2019/09/15/pontida-inizia-il-raduno-leghista-i-militanti-urlo-ebreo-a-gad-lerner/>; Andrea Lattanzi and Antonio Nasso, "Pontida, arriva Gad Lerner: fischi, insulti e urla razzista dai militanti leghisti: 'Vai via, ebreo!'" *la Repubblica*, 15 settembre 2019, <https://video.repubblica.it/politica/pontida-arriva-gad-lerner-fischi-insulti-e-urlo-razziste-dai-militanti-leghisti-vai-via-ebreo/343657/344247>; and Carmelo Camilli, "League leader Salvini promises referendums to counter new Italy government," *Reuters*, September 15, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-politics-league-idUSKBN1W00HE>. For an article on the background of the Pontida rally, see Gabriele Moroni, "Lotta o governo, torna Pontida: sul pratone tutte le svolte del movimento," *Il Giorno*, 13 settembre 2019, <https://www.ilgiorno.it/bergamo/politica/pontida-2019-1.4779797>.

and a lapsing religious practice that, when observed, betrayed considerable Catholic influence, by 1938, Italy's small Jewish minority was firmly integrated into the Italian mainstream. Indeed, most Italian Jews probably felt more Italian than Jewish.

Integration did not, however, amount to evanescence. As discussed in chapter one, Shira Klein disputes the “myth” of Italian Jewish assimilation, and her argument is compelling. Even the most atheist of Italy's Jews kept their ancestral surnames and circumcised their male children.¹¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, that myth shaped Jewish experiences in Italy after emancipation, and it has informed survivor memories of Fascist antisemitism and the Shoah, both personal and shared, ever since. When, in the 1980s, witnesses began recounting in earnest their harrowing tales of suffering and torment, they preserved the *brava gente* myth in their testimonies, framing their persecutors through the stereotypes of the ‘good Italian’ and the ‘bad German’. Most ordinary Italians, they maintained, had acted commendably during the years of antisemitic oppression, and while the Fascist state's own Racial Laws had disrupted Jewish life in Italy, it was 8 September 1943, the date of the armistice that triggered the Nazi occupation, that marked the true rupture in their historical timeline. As bringers of death, the Nazis – or rather, the “Germans” – were the real villains in their story. After the war and the Shoah, in spite of all they had endured, Italy's Jewish survivors continued to hold onto their Italian identity. To borrow Klein's own phrase, Jewish survivors “clung to Italy.”¹¹⁶⁵ As for the most wicked of the Italians, those who had collaborated with the Germans to the greatest extent, they were no Italians at all, but rather, ‘fascists’ and ‘*repubblichini*’, ‘Blackshirts’ and ‘militiamen’. By helping the Germans send other Italians to their deaths, they had severed all ties with the national community, relinquishing their own Italianness in the process.

¹¹⁶⁴ Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 73-80.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

Only in recent years has a counter-memory emerged, from within Italy's Jewish community, that challenges the glowing portrait of ordinary Italian benevolence. Led by Liliana Segre and Jewish and Catholic organizations in Milan, this group contends that, at best, the Italian majority had been indifferent to the fates of Italy's Jews, first as they were stripped of their rights and later when they were shipped to their deaths. Admittedly, a counter-narrative of 'indifference' fails to consider the possibility of genuine antisemitism among the general populace, and it also lets the fascists, *repubblicini*, Blackshirts, and other hands-on perpetrators off the hook by discounting active antisemitic persecution. In these ways, 'indifference' unhelpfully sidesteps the anti-Jewish question entirely. Nevertheless, a collective counter-memory of Italian history grounded in an accusation of indifference – itself, crucially, the product of survivor testimony – undercuts any idea that ordinary Italians had acted honorably as their Jewish neighbors were marginalized, oppressed, and killed. Segre's preeminent stature in Italy, not just in historical culture but in politics as well, is an encouraging sign that this counter-narrative enjoys considerable support, despite its critical nature. The death threats that she has received, on the other hand, rampant and credible enough to warrant a security detail, are troubling indicators that certain segments of Italian society aren't ready to accept such a message.¹¹⁶⁶ Nor does the underperformance of Milan's still-incomplete Shoah memorial, where the counter-narrative of 'indifference' has received fullest expression, bode well for the future, as the center has been plagued by low turnout and poor funding ever since its 2013 inauguration, not to mention the occasional racist and antisemitic attack.

To conclude, although Jewish survivors have clung to their Italian identity since the end of the Second World War, the Fascists' antisemitic campaign, followed and reinforced by that of the

¹¹⁶⁶ Sylvia Poggioli, "Italian Holocaust Survivor Faces Threats After Calling For Investigation Into Hate," *NPR*, November 11, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/11/778211815/italian-holocaust-survivor-faces-threats-after-calling-for-investigation-into-ha>. See also: "Liliana Segre sotto scorta, dopo le minacce assegnata la tutela alla senatrice a vita. Il Centro Wiesenthal: 'Una vergogna per l'Italia,'" *la Repubblica*, 7 novembre 2019, https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/11/07/news/scorta_segre-240463251/.

Nazis, left indelible marks on the collective identity of Italy's Jewish population. As Aldo Zargani pointedly stated, "In 1938, I was required by law to become Jewish," and this forced identification has had lasting effects.¹¹⁶⁷ (Indeed, it's a trap that I've fallen into throughout this study by calling people "Jews" who, if not for the Fascists and Nazis, probably would have never accepted the label.) Even Segre, who didn't know a thing about Judaism or Jewish culture at the time she was declared a Jew, says that she cannot shake the feeling of being Jewish. Or maybe it's that she no longer tries to fight it. As she writes at the end of her most recent memoir, "Through my silence, I tried to forget that I'm Jewish, but today, I know that that's not possible. One can't stop being Jewish."¹¹⁶⁸

Through the Looking Glass: An Epilogue

Throughout the life of this dissertation, I have had one foot planted firmly in my own country, the United States. In 2015, when I first considered doing a memory-based project, the US was embroiled in its own conflict over national memory, stemming from a spate of racial violence afflicting Black Americans. From the killings of unarmed Black civilians by police officers to the ensuing rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the backlash that the movement faced, racial tensions in the US were at a fever pitch. Because of the ideology and symbolism that inspired Dylann Storm Roof, in the midst of everything, to carry out the Charleston church massacre that June, the Confederate flag and its contested place in US history stood at the center of a highly charged political and cultural polemic. Though the prominence of the flag debate would soon be engulfed by the events of the following year, for a time, that symbol of national disunity and racism (or is it states' rights and Southern heritage?) dominated national headlines, exposing the divided nature of our nation's collective memories of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and

¹¹⁶⁷ See ch. 2, note 210.

¹¹⁶⁸ "*Ho provato, col silenzio, a dimenticare di essere ebrea, ma oggi so che non è possibile. Non si può smettere di essere ebrea?*"; Enrico Mentana and Liliana Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015), 226.

the Civil Rights Movement. At the time of the Charleston shooting, I was on my first research trip to Italy, and with an ear tuned in to events back home, it was impossible to not draw depressingly similar comparisons as I walked past Milano Centrale station, its walls still adorned with fasces and other relics of a painful historical era not yet fully dealt with.

As it turns out, my dissertation has been bookended by the two most recent peaks of the Confederate flag debate. Five years later, in the wake of George Floyd's killing in May 2020, passions in the US over the meaning of the Confederacy boiled over once again. (And as it happens, I'm finishing my dissertation from the grounds of a liberal arts college named for a Confederate icon, whose remains are interred in a chapel on campus that also bears his name.)¹¹⁶⁹ Along with convincing the Mississippi legislature to remove the rebel saltire from the state flag, the current wave of Black Lives Matter protests, by some metrics the largest protest movement in US history, has had ripple effects beyond the United States.¹¹⁷⁰ The statue of a British slaver was dumped into a harbor in Bristol (though it was later fished out). Monuments to King Leopold II have been effaced and torn down in Belgium. And in Milan, where a small BLM protest was held on 28 May (three days after Floyd's killing), a statue honoring journalist Indro Montanelli was doused in pink paint, with the tags "racist" (*razzista*) and "rapist" (*stupratore*) spray-painted beneath the effigy of the former Fascist and colonial apologist who had once bought and "married" a twelve-year-old Eritrean girl.¹¹⁷¹

Alas, the park where the statue stands still bears his name. Although the flags are coming down in the United States (the public ones, anyway), the meaning and memory of the Confederacy remain divisive, bitterly contested topics in US politics and culture, with no signs of resolution in the

¹¹⁶⁹ I have no professional affiliation with the institution.

¹¹⁷⁰ Larry Buchanan, Quoc Trung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel, "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History," *New York Times*, July 3, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.

¹¹⁷¹ Margaret Kovick, "Italy reacts to death of George Floyd," *Wanted in Milan*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.wantedinmilan.com/news/italy-reacts-to-death-of-george-floyd.html>. Antonia Mortensen, "Milan statue of Italian war journalist who married 12-year-old in Eritrea targeted by protesters," *CNN*, June 14, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/george-floyd-protests-06-14-20/h_db7a81c5089e78d3c0c2bc2353ded6ce.

forecast. In Italy, where “[n]o law was passed about the removal of fascist symbols,” postwar governments never dealt with them systematically.¹¹⁷² As a result, much of the Italian landscape remains dotted with relics from Mussolini’s dictatorship, from the fasces integrated into the decorative *mélange* of Milano Centrale’s façade to the openly Fascist playground that is Rome’s Foro Italico.¹¹⁷³ As evinced by the obelisk still dedicated to *DVX MVSSOLINI* at the sports complex’s entrance, the facility might as well have never shorn its original name, “Foro Mussolini”. The success and proliferation of recent anti-racist protests, in Italy as much as in the United States, are without question encouraging developments. But the fact that we are still here, having debates based more in prejudice and political interests than in historical reality, demonstrates that neither state has done enough to civically engage with its troubling pasts, much less come to terms with them.

¹¹⁷² John Foot, *Italy’s Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.

¹¹⁷³ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Why are so many Fascist Monuments Still Standing in Italy?” *The New Yorker*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy>.

Abbreviations

ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome, Italy)
ADEI	Associazione Donne Ebreo D'Italia (Association of Jewish Italian Women)
ADEI-WIZO	Associazione Donne Ebreo D'Italia – Women's International Zionist Organization
AN	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
AOI	Africa Orientale Italiana (Italian East Africa)
ASMilano	Archivio di Stato di Milano (Milan, Italy)
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BS	Biblioteca Sormani (Milan, Italy)
CDEC	Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (Milan, Italy)
Comasebit	Comitato di assistenza per gli ebrei in Italia (Aid Committee for Jews in Italy)
Delasem	Delegazione per l'Assistenza agli Emigranti (Aid Committee for Emigrants)
Demorazza	Direzione Generale per la demografia e la razza (Department of Demography and Race)
Fasc.	Fascicolo (File)
FS	Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (Italian State Railway corporation)
GV	Grande Velocità (Highspeed)
Joint	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
MEIS	Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah (National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah)
MI	Ministero del Interno (ACS file)
MLNS	Movimento Nazionale Socialista dei Lavoratori (National Socialist Workers' Movement)
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
OA	Osservatorio antisemitismo (Antisemitism Observatory)

ORT	Obchestvo Remeslenogo Truda (Association for the Promotion of Skilled Trades)
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party)
PS	Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza (MI, ACS file)
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office)
RSI	Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic)
SiPo-SD	Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst
SPD	Segreteria Particolare del Duce (ACS file)
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.)
VdS	Vicissitudini dei Singoli (CDEC file)

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Wolpe, David. "Why Jews Put Stones on Graves." *My Jewish Learning*. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/putting-stones-on-jewish-graves/>.

Young, James E. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Zimmerman, Joshua D. Introduction to *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman, 1-15. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

———, ed. *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Zuccotti, Susan. *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.

———. “Pius XII and the Rescue of Jews in Italy: Evidence of a Papal Directive.” In *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945*, edited by Joshua D. Zimmerman, 287-307. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

JOHN R. BARRUZZA, Ph.D.

(856) 207-6107 | johnbarr37[at]gmail.com

Personal website: <https://jrbarruz.expressions.syr.edu>**EDUCATION**

- 2020 **Ph.D.**, History, Syracuse University
Dissertation: "The Good Italian, the Bad German, and the Survivor: Narratives and Counter-Narratives of the Shoah in Italy"
- 2016 **M.Phil.**, History, Syracuse University
Major Field: Modern Europe | Minor Fields: Modern Germany, Colonial Africa
Exams: *Passed with Distinction*
- 2012 **M.A.**, History, Villanova University
Exam Fields: Modern Europe, Historiography & Methods
- 2010 **B.A.**, History and Psychology, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Distinctions: *Summa Cum Laude*

CERTIFICATIONS

- 2019 Certificate in University Teaching, Syracuse University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE**Northern Arizona University***Instructor of Record*

- 2021 *The Holocaust: Experience, History, Meaning* (HUM 356)
The Americanization of the Holocaust (HUM 382)

Syracuse University*Instructor of Record*

- 2020 *The Holocaust and Antisemitism in Modern Europe* (HST 200)

Teaching Assistant

- 2020 *Europe, 1914-1945* (HST 315)
2019 *Nazi Germany and the Holocaust* (HST 362)
2019, 2018, 2016 *Modern Europe: Napoleon to the Present* (HST 112)
2018, 2017, 2015 *Early Modern Europe: 1350 – 1815* (HST 111)

PUBLICATIONS

- 2021 "Countering Memory with Memorial: Remembering Indifference at the Shoah Memorial of Milan." In *Transit Camps in Europe from the Second World War to Today. History, spaces, memories*, edited by Fondazione Ex-Campo Fossoli. Pieterlen and Bern: Peter Lang. Forthcoming, 2021.
- 2017 Review of *Stormtrooper Families: Homosexuality and Community in the Early Nazi Movement*, by Andrew Wackerfuss. *The HISTORIAN* 79:4 (Winter 2017): 915-916.

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS & DISTINCTIONS

- 2021 Postdoctoral Fellowship, Martin-Springer Institute, Northern Arizona University
- 2019 Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization Fellowship, Holocaust Educational Foundation, Northwestern University
Summer Dissertation Fellowship, Graduate School, Syracuse University

- 2018 European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) Fellowship, European Union, Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea
- 2017-18 Otey and Barbara Scruggs Scholarship, Department of History, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University
- 2016 Dean's Summer Research Grant, Department of History, Syracuse University
Roscoe Martin Fund, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University
- 2015 Summer Research Grant, Department of History, Syracuse University
- 2014-18 Graduate Fellowship, Syracuse University
- 2010-12 Graduate Assistantship, Department of History, Villanova University

CONFERENCES & PRESENTATIONS

Conferences

- 2019 "Experiencing Antisemitisms: The Jews of Italy between Fascist and Nazi Persecution, 1938-1945," Second Convention of the International Association for Comparative Fascist Studies (COMFAS), Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, September 25-27, 2019.
"Genocide and Indifference at *Milano Centrale* Station: A Microhistorical Analysis of the Holocaust in Italy," Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, *Deportations of the Jewish Population in Territories under Nazi Control*, Austrian Federal Railways, Vienna, Austria, June 11-13, 2019.
- 2018 "Derailing Memory: Remembering Genocide and Indifference at *Milano Centrale* Station," Fondazione Ex-Campo Fossoli, *Campi di transito in Europa dalla seconda Guerra mondiale a oggi. Storia, spazi, memorie*, Biblioteca Loria, Carpi, Italy, October 3, 2018.
"Good, Evil, Indifference: The History and Memory of the Holocaust in Italy," HGSA Graduate Conference, *Living History: Understanding the Past Through the Present*, University of California, Irvine, April 27, 2018.
"Countering Memory with Memorial: A Challenge to Italian National Memory at the Shoah Memorial of Milan," Tenth Annual History Graduate Conference, *Memory and Repression*, Syracuse University, March 23, 2018.

Invited Lectures

- 2020 "The Good Italian, the Bad German, and the Survivor: Narratives and Counter-Narratives in Holocaust Survivor Testimony," Utica College Center for Historical Research, Utica College, March 11, 2020.

Panels Chaired

- 2019 "Moving People," Eleventh Annual History Graduate Conference, *Consumption, Exchange & Material Culture*, Syracuse University, March 22, 2019.
- 2018 "Applying to Graduate School," Panel Workshop, Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, October 19, 2018.
- 2017 "Crafting a Winning Dissertation Proposal," Panel Workshop, Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, October 20, 2017.

Campus Talks

- 2019 "Teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences," with Aarti Patel and Shaundel Sanchez, All University Teaching Assistant Orientation Program, Graduate School, Syracuse University, August 16, 2019.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Archival Research

- 2018 *Milan*: Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea
 2016-17 *Milan*: Archivio di Stato di Milano; Biblioteca Sormani; Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea; Fondazione Cesare Pozzo; Fondazione Culturale San Fedele di Milano; Triennale di Milano
Rome: Archivio Centrale dello Stato; Biblioteca Fondazione Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane
 2015 *Milan*: Archivio Storico Civico; Civico Archivio Fotografico; Politecnico di Milano Archivi Storici

Research Assistantships

- 2010-12 Graduate Research Assistantship, Department of History, Villanova University

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- 2019 Teaching Mentor Program, Alternate, Graduate School, Syracuse University
 2018-19 History Graduate Student Organization, Future Professoriate Program Liaison, Department of History, Syracuse University
 2017-19 Future Professoriate Program, Department of History, Syracuse University
 2017-18 Job Search Committee, Historian of Modern Germany, Department of History, Syracuse University
 2015-16 Academic Integrity Office, Department of History Representative, Syracuse University

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Historical Association

LANGUAGES

- English Native
 Italian Fluent
 French Advanced Reading, Basic Writing and Speaking (research capable)
 German Intermediate Reading, Basic Writing and Speaking (research capable)
 Spanish Intermediate Reading, Speaking, and Writing (research capable)

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Archive Curation | Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center,
Seabrook, NJ (2013-14) |
| Oral History Interviews and Analysis | Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial,
Camden, NJ (2009) |