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Resisting the ‘final solution’?
Ordinary fascists and Jewish policy in Italian-
occupied southeastern France, 1942-1943

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I hereby declare that this work submitted is my own,
that all references have been indicated and that no part of this
thesis in its present form has been submitted for any other
degree or professional qualification.

Abstract

This thesis investigates fascist Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southeastern France between November 1942 and August 1943. The fascist government repeatedly refused to hand over to its Nazi ally or to its French enemy foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone. This decision, which was tantamount to a refusal to collaborate in the extermination of the Jews, was partially overturned in mid-July 1943. This thesis seeks to explain the rationale for the fascist government's decisions concerning the fates of foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France. Current scholarship justifies the fascist government's decisions as a manifestation either of humanitarianism or political expediency. This thesis argues instead that the Italian refusal to partake in the extermination of the Jews was ideological. As the fascist and Nazi leaderships attributed different relevance to the 'Jewish question', they consequently prescribed different methods to 'solve' it, in the context of their common military effort to win the war. Through the in-depth reconstruction of fascist Jewish policy in southern France, this thesis argues that although the fascist rulers acknowledged the existence of a 'Jewish problem', they never considered its solution as vital to their effort to win the war. Unlike the Nazis who considered their war against *the Jew* as the pivotal issue, thus rendering the physical eradication of all Jews as a conceivable action in the context of a total war, the Italians considered Jews as a secondary threat compared to communists or enemy aliens residing in their occupation zone. In turn, by analysing fascist Jewish policy in the broader geopolitical, diplomatic and military context of the occupation of southeastern France, this thesis demonstrates how, and to what extent, other ethical and practical considerations interacted with the larger ideology in operation. The overall result was a policy in which the murder of Jews was considered politically inexpedient and morally unacceptable, but which was, nevertheless, still persecutory (the Italian authorities interned foreign Jewish refugees in southern France and took measures to prevent their arrival in the Italian occupation zone). At the same time, this thesis reveals that, although the Jewish policy was consistent with the regime's declared goal to 'discriminate, but not persecute' the Jews, it was not a necessary consequence

of that goal. Instead, this policy could be negotiated and adjusted should the political need arise, as proved by the decision (ultimately without consequences) to surrender German Jews in mid-July 1943.

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Abbreviations

AN	Archives Nationales (French National Archives)
ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Italian Central State Archive)
ACSCF	Alto commissariato per le sanzioni contro il fascismo (High Commissariat for sanctions against fascism)
ADAM	Archives départemental des Alpes-Maritimes (Alpes-Maritimes Departmental Archives)
ADHS	Archives départemental de Haute-Savoie (Haute-Savoie Departmental Archives)
ADS	Archives départemental de la Savoie (Savoie Departmental Archives)
AISRC	Archivio dell'Istituto Storico della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea in Provincia di Cuneo
AP	Affari politici (Political affairs)
ASFLE	Archivio storico Fondazione Luigi Einaudi (Luigi Einaudi Foundation Archive)
ASMAE	Archivio storico diplomatico del Ministero degli affari esteri
AUSSME	Archivio dell'Ufficio storico dello Stato maggiore dell'Esercito (Army's Historical Archive Office)
b.	busta (file)
CDJC	Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (Centre for Modern Jewish Documentation)
CGQJ	Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives
CIAF	Commissione Italiana di Armistizio con la Francia (Italian Armistice Commission with France)
d.	dossier
DAGR	Divisione affari generali e riservati
DDI	Documenti diplomatici italiani (Italian Diplomatic Papers)
DGPS	Direzione generale Pubblica sicurezza (Head Police Branch)
doc.	document

DPP	Divisione Polizia politica (Political Police Division)
DPPS	Divisione personale di Pubblica sicurezza
f.	fasciolo (dossier)
Gab.	Gabinetto
MAE	Ministero degli affari esteri (Italian Foreign Ministry)
MI	Ministero dell'interno (Italian Interior Ministry)
PCM	Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (Cabinet office)
Sez.	Sezione (Section)
SIM	Servizio Informazioni Militare (Military Intelligence Service)
SiPo-SD	Sicherheitspolizei – Sicherheitsdienst (Security Police – Security Service)
SPD	Segreteria particolare del duce (Duce's secretariat)
tit.	titolo (Title)
USHMMA	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
USSME	Ufficio storico dello stato maggiore dell'esercito (Historical Office of the Army General Staff)
UC	Ufficio del telegrafo e della cifra (Telegraph and cipher office)
vers.	versamento (filing)
vol.	volume
YV	Yad Vashem

Introduction

Scope and methodology

In 1938, fascist Italy officially became an anti-Semitic State. From the outset, the long-term goal of fascist Jewish policy was to expel both Italian and foreign Jews residing in Italy from the Italian peninsula. To that end, the fascist government launched a comprehensive anti-Jewish persecution. In the case of Italian Jews, this initially aimed to isolate them from the rest of Italian society through measures that made them second class citizens, in preparation for their eventual expulsion from the country; in the case of the vast majority of foreign Jews living in Italy, fascism pursued their immediate emigration¹.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 and Mussolini's decision to declare war on France and Britain in June 1940, the fascist government was forced to put its long-term goal of an Italy 'free of Jews' on hold. While waiting for what Mussolini considered to be a speedy joint victory with National Socialist Germany, foreign Jews and Italian Jews deemed dangerous were to be interned, along with other categories of civilians, in concentration camps scattered across Italy². However, as the Nazi *Blitzkrieg* transformed into an extensive and total war by the end 1942, and the Italian and German Armies were fighting on multiple fronts in Africa and Europe, Mussolini and fascist Italy became entangled in burdensome military occupations in the Balkans and France. It was precisely in those contexts that, from the summer of 1942 onwards, Mussolini and the fascist rulers were eventually forced to deal with their Nazi ally's policy of outright extermination of the Jews. This occurred particularly in the territories of western Croatia, southern Greece and southeastern France occupied by the Italian Army between 1941 and 1942. Despite being occupied by the Italians, the Nazi government aimed to have all foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jewish refugees in these zones surrendered. However, in spite of Mussolini's oscillations between accepting and refusing the German requests

¹ M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 95 ff.

² Ibid.

to hand over the Jews, none had been surrendered by the beginning of the summer of 1943. This policy changed abruptly in the five weeks between 15 July and 18 August 1943, when arrangements were negotiated between the Italian racial Police in Nice and the Gestapo unit in Marseilles for the handover of German and former Austrian Jewish refugees in southeastern France – although, as investigated in chapter 7, the handover did not actually take place.

Since the immediate post-war period, the behaviour of fascist Italy has intrigued and puzzled historians. A number of explanations have been invoked to clarify the rationale for the fascist government's changing responses to the Nazi authorities' requests for collaboration in the 'final solution of the Jewish question' and, more specifically, the protection of foreign Jewish refugees in the European territories occupied by the Italian Army until 8 September 1943. Generally, the debate can be summarised thus: initially, and for a long period, the Italian refusal to hand over Jews was explained as the result of Italian 'humanity', or humaneness; however, in recent years, scholars have reinterpreted these actions as merely pragmatic and opportunistic choices devoid of any humanitarian motive.

This thesis contributes a case study to this debate through comprehensively analysing a cross-section of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. By focusing upon the oft-neglected ten-month period of Italian occupation of southeastern France between 11 November 1942 and 8 September 1943³, this study seeks to answer two key questions: (a) Why did the fascist government repeatedly refuse to hand over (or permit the French authorities to hand over) foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France to its Nazi ally? (b) Why, in the days immediately preceding Mussolini's overthrow on 25 July 1943, did the fascist Chief of Police, Renzo Chierici, partially reverse that refusal? Both these questions are, in turn, interrelated with the larger question that gives title to this thesis: Was fascist Italy resisting the 'final solution' in southeastern France?

³ The only books specifically devoted to fascist Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southeastern France are Léon Poliakov's, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du centre, 1946) and Daniel Carpi's *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994). Poliakov's and Carpi's arguments are analysed at length in this thesis.

To establish my case study, I adopt a twofold approach, which begins with the accurate reconstruction of *how* things happened and, subsequently, analyses *why* they happened. In recent years, scholarship on this topic has tended to predominantly focus on the issue of *why*. Although this approach has allowed a better contextualisation of the fascist government's refusal to hand over to the Nazis foreign Jews within its surrounding political, military and diplomatic contexts, this has often been at the expense of the accuracy in the reconstruction of the measures that Fascist Italy adopted to deal with the 'Jewish problem' in Italian-occupied territories. As a result, the ongoing discussion about the motivations behind the fascist government's refusal to collaborate in the Nazi deportation plans has rarely been predicated upon a thorough investigation of the decision-making processes, and of the implementation of those decisions, concerning the treatment of Jews beyond the sole refusal to hand them over⁴. This thesis intends to redress the balance, in the process debunking some of the persisting 'myths' about the treatment of foreign Jews in Italian-occupied southeastern France. Thus, this study reveals that the refusal to hand over the Jews to the Nazis was but one element of a larger Jewish policy that the fascist government enacted in southeastern France between December 1942 and the summer of 1943.

With regards to the actual events, the thesis provides a "vertical" analysis⁵ of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. This approach reflects my effort to analyse not only the principles that informed the fascist leaders' decisions, and the decisions themselves, but also how those principles were translated into concrete policy and the way those decisions were enforced. Accordingly, this thesis attempts to combine a 'top-down' approach with a 'bottom-up' approach. In particular, the 'top-down' approach is used to retrace the Italian decision-making processes behind fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. This approach is used in chapters 2, 3, 5, 6 and in the last three sections of chapter 7.

⁴ Two notable exceptions are M. Sarfatti, 'Tra uccisione e protezione. I rifugiati ebrei in Kosovo nel marzo 1942 e le autorità tedesche, italiane e albanesi', *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* LXXVII:3 (2010), 223-42; Ibid., 'L'evacuazione nel 1943 da Salonicco degli ultimi ebrei italiani 'provvisori': contesto, questioni e numeri', in P.C. Ioly Zorattini, M. Luzzati and M. Sarfatti (eds), *Studi sul mondo sefardita in memoria di Aron Leoni* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2012), 251-76.

⁵ D. Bloxham, 'Organized Mass Murder: Structure, Participation, and Motivation in Comparative Perspective', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22:2 (2008), 207.

Additionally, the ‘bottom-up’ approach permits exploration into the connections between the fascist central decision-makers and those officers on the ground who were directly responsible for the enforcement of the measures targeting Jewish refugees in southeastern France. This approach is used in sections of chapter 3, chapter 4 and most of chapter 7. By carefully examining the implementation of those measures, this study identifies not only the situational components influencing the actions of the Italian authorities within the local context, but it also offers a privileged angle to better understand the goals of the Italian-fascist leadership vis-à-vis the ‘Jewish problem’ reflected within the actions of those who implemented Jewish policy. Furthermore, the ‘bottom-up’ approach takes into account the often-overlooked voices of the several thousand Jewish refugees in southeastern France under Italian rule⁶. It should be noted, however, that this thesis explores the Jewish ‘side’ only insofar as that helps to illuminate the rationale and dynamic of fascist Jewish policy. The complex and, at times, tragic story of the multi-coloured Jewish ‘community’ in southeastern France before, during and after the Italian occupation deserves exclusive attention in another future study.

The detailed reconstruction of Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southeastern France is not the only original contribution of this thesis towards the understanding of Fascist Italy’s refusal to hand over the Jews (and the partial reversal of that decision in July 1943). Indeed, by linking the explanation of those decisions to the careful reconstruction of how and when they came into being, the thesis challenges the two opposing narratives that have hitherto prevailed in the scholarship, whereby fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was either the story of a humanitarian rescue or the result of political calculations. Both interpretations reflect, in turn, the tensions in the historiography of fascist racial persecution in the last thirty years.

Since the late 1980s, scholarship on the anti-Jewish persecution enforced by fascist Italy from 1938 has undergone significant revision. The (false) image of the 1938 racial laws as nothing but an empty shell has given way to a deeper understanding of their dire consequences for Italian and foreign Jews. Numerous studies have shown that, until the crisis of 25 July 1943, the 1938 racial laws were

⁶ In so doing, I follow the example set by Saul Friedländer in his classic study *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The years of Persecution 1933-1939* vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 1-2.

thoroughly enforced domestically⁷. Moreover, new research has begun delving into the cultural, religious and political roots of fascist anti-Semitism and racism, showing that racist and anti-Semitic discourses were present in some Italian intellectual and political milieux well before the advent of fascism⁸. In parallel to the reassessment of fascist anti-Jewish persecution, new research into the Italian (Liberal and fascist) colonial past has shed light on the imperial projects and aspirations of the fascist leadership, thereby shedding further light on Italian war crimes both before and during the Second World War⁹. These two important strands of research have found, in turn, common ground in their firm criticism of the image of *Italiani brava gente*, or Italians as decent folks, whereby they were considerate colonisers, immune from anti-Semitism and racism, and incapable of the atrocities committed by the Nazis. By throwing light on what David Roberts has labelled ‘the dark side’¹⁰ of Italian fascism, this new scholarship has therefore brought a vital corrective to the facile opposition between the *bad* Germans and the *good* Italians¹¹. At the same time, however, some historians have fallen in the analytical trap of simply reversing that equation and replacing it with the equally flawed equation of the bad Nazis and the

⁷ See ch. 1.

⁸ Many studies have investigated the ideological foundations of fascist anti-Semitism. See, for example, S. Garau, ‘Between ‘Spirit’ and ‘Science’: The Emergence of Italian Fascist Antisemitism through the 1920s and 1930s’, *Holocaust Studies* 15:1-2 (2009), 37-58, and F. Germinario, ‘Razzismo e spinta totalitaria. Aspetti del dibattito fascista sull’antisemitismo’, in M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci and E. Traverso (eds), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. 1 (Turin: UTET, 2010), 256-80.

⁹ Italian war crimes in Europe and Africa have increasingly been at the centre of historians’ interest in recent years. The following are only some of the many publications, which supplement the pioneering studies of Enzo Collotti, Angelo Del Boca, Teodoro Sala and Giorgio Rochat. On Italian war crimes in the Balkans during the Second World War see D. Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire. Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); D. Conti, *L’occupazione italiana dei Balcani. Crimini di guerra e mito della brava gente, 1940-1943* (Rome: Odradek, 2008); E. Gobetti, *Alleati del nemico. L’occupazione italiana in Jugoslavia (1941-1943)* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013). On Italian colonial violence see N. Labanca, ‘Italian Colonial Internment’, and A. Sbacchi, ‘Poison Gas and atrocities in the Italo-Ethiopian War (1935-1936)’, in R. Ben-Ghiat and M. Fuller (eds), *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27-35 and 47-56; M. Dominioni, ‘The Fall of Mussolini’s Empire’, in A. Fleury, F. Knipping, D. Kováč, T. Schramm (eds), *Formation et décomposition des Etats en Europe au 20e siècle* (Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2012), 53-65. See also the special issue of the *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9:3 (2004) devoted entirely to the topic of Italian war crimes in Europe and the African colonies.

¹⁰ D. Roberts, ‘Italian Fascism: New Light on the Dark Side’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 44: 3 (2009), 523-33.

¹¹ To use the definition that gives title to Filippo Focardi’s book, *L’immagine del “cattivo tedesco” e il mito del “bravo italiano”. La costruzione della memoria del fascismo e della seconda guerra mondiale in Italia* (Padua: il Rinoceronte, 2005).

bad Italian-fascists. As discussed in chapter one, the topic at the centre of this thesis is a case in point.

To link the explanation of why the fascist government refused to hand over to the Nazis Jewish refugees in southeastern France with the detailed reconstruction of how Jews were treated in that context serves precisely to overcome the analytical risk of imposing preconceived explanations upon the events under scrutiny. Accordingly, while the thesis builds upon the recognition that not all Italians were *brava gente* – an appraisal that I share entirely – it simultaneously moves beyond that same recognition. Its aim is not to further reiterate the self-vindicating and intrinsically false nature of that image. Rather, by following step-by-step the evolution of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, this thesis seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of the complex ideological, political and military dynamics that underpinned fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories during the Second World War beyond the opposing and schematic narratives of the humane Italians and the ‘pragmatic’ Italians. To put it another way: this thesis deliberately embraces complexity as a way into a deeper understanding of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. In our quest for the *why*, this methodology has three important analytical ramifications. First, fascist Jewish policy is treated in this thesis ‘as an ongoing process rather than as a static picture.’¹² The Italian occupation of southeastern France unfolded during the ten crucial months that witnessed the definitive reversal of fortunes in the war for the Axis powers: from the Allied landings in North Africa on 8 November 1942, the German defeat in Stalingrad and the loss of Tunisia, and until the Allied landings in Sicily and the collapse of fascism on 25 July 1943. During those months, multiple and often contrasting factors surfaced and influenced, to various extents, the Italian rulers’ decisions about Jews’ treatment in southeastern France. More importantly, the very same factors had different impacts at different times, hence making it impossible for the historian to pinpoint the one ‘true’ reason behind the refusal to hand over the Jews. Accordingly, at every stage of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, this thesis will seek to offer a multi-layered analysis of the rationale for the Italian authorities’ decisions.

¹² M. Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy and German Jews in south-eastern France in July 1943’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3:3 (1998), 322. On the understanding of history as a process see D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 330-31.

Second, to overcome the (anti-) *brava gente* rhetoric implies that humanitarianism could have indeed played a role in pushing the Italian government towards refusing to collaborate in the Nazi-led extermination of the Jews. To recognise that not all Italians were *brava gente* cannot lead to the conclusion that they were necessarily as ‘bad’ as the Nazis within the restricted domain of Jewish policy¹³. As Donald Bloxham has pointed out, ‘[t]here is no necessary contradiction at all between a state and its majority population enthusiastically excluding, say, Jews or Greeks from its economy but bulking at murdering them.’¹⁴ Hence, to recognise that after 1938 Fascist Italy was an anti-Semitic country pursuing the ‘civil death’ of Jews¹⁵ is not enough per se to jettison the idea that the top Italian leaders were sincerely distressed by the specific reality of Nazi exterminatory policy. In this sense, this thesis attempts to explain how, why and to what extent a humanitarian refusal of the Holocaust could operate within the framework of the anti-Jewish thinking of the Italian rulers. This brings us to the third ramification of my empirical approach. Previous scholarship understood fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories essentially as either a humanitarian or pragmatic *reaction* to the Nazi requests to hand over the Jews. By showing that the refusal to hand Jews over was only one part, though certainly crucial, to a larger Jewish policy, this thesis reverses that perspective and places the distinct Italian-fascist outlook on the ‘Jewish problem’¹⁶ and corresponding praxis to solve it at the centre of its analysis. Consequently, this thesis deliberately moves ‘beyond the cliché that Fascist Italy was an unimportant sidekick to the all-powerful Nazi state’¹⁷ and seeks, instead, to explain the ways that the anti-Jewish persecution domestically enforced by the fascist State since 1938 influenced the Italian rulers’ decisions regarding the treatment of Jewish refugees in southeastern France, while contemporaneously analysing those decisions in relation to the larger geopolitical, diplomatic and military contexts of the occupation.

¹³ On this point see the sound remarks of M.A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini’s Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 76.

¹⁴ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 40.

¹⁵ Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, 416. See also *Ibid.*, 406-07.

¹⁶ M. Sarfatti, ‘Autochthoner Antisemitismus oder Übernahme des deutschen Modells? Die Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien’, in L. Klinkhammer, A.O. Guerrazzi and T. Schlemmer (eds), *Die „Achse“ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 231-43.

¹⁷ P. Bernhard, ‘Renarrating Italian Fascism: New Directions in the Historiography of a European Dictatorship’, *Contemporary European History* 23:1 (2014), 163.

Structure

The structure of this thesis follows the chronological development of the Italian occupation of southeastern France between 11 November 1942 and 8 September 1943. The first chapter introduces the topic by critically engaging with the existing scholarship on fascist Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories during the Second World War. By categorising and historicising the academic discussion on the topic, this section identifies the major shifts in the historical understanding of this period, as well as the key concepts investigated by the historiographical debate.

The second chapter focuses on the first two months of the occupation (early November to late December 1942) and, more specifically, on the decision made by the Italian Joint General Staff in early December 1942 to arrest enemy aliens and intern foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jews in the French territories occupied the previous month. The chapter retraces the genesis of that decision and analyses it in light of both the Italian authorities' security policy in their occupation zone, and the broader European context of the Nazi-led 'final solution of the Jewish question'. Finally, it explores the role played by the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Army in the preparations for the implementation of the measures against enemy aliens and Jews.

Chapter three focuses on the first clash between the fascist government and French government in Vichy regarding Jewish policy in southeastern France. It investigates the rationale for the Italian objection against the expulsion of some 1,400 foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department to German-occupied departments, pending their deportation to the east, by the French authorities. The Italian objection is analysed in the dual context of the racial persecution launched by fascism domestically since 1938, and the French-Italian rivalry over the territories occupied by the Italian troops.

The fourth chapter sheds light on a still largely unexplored phase of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, namely the preparations for the internment of enemy aliens and Jews in *residenze coatte*, or enforced residences, in the French interior under the supervision of Police Superintendent Rosario Barranco, between January and March 1943. This chapter analyses, in particular, the rationale for Barranco's decision to assign Jews to enforced residences, instead of interning them in Italian-

run concentration camps. Moreover, through retracing the biographies of two Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone, the chapter sheds some light on the Jewish community subjected to the Italian internment measures.

Chapter five broadens the focus to the larger national and international contexts. It retraces the Nazi authorities' reaction to the Italian objections against the French anti-Jewish measures in the Alpes-Maritimes department in December 1942. It reviews, in particular, the discussions between the Reich Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Mussolini regarding Jewish policy in the occupied territories during Ribbentrop's visit in Rome in late February 1943. This chapter adopts an explicit comparative approach, as the Mussolini-Ribbentrop meeting exposes the ideological matrix of the intra-Axis dispute over Jewish policy in southeastern France.

The sixth chapter further develops this perspective. It begins by investigating the second dispute between Rome and Vichy over the fate of Jews in the Italian occupation zone. By contextualising this struggle in relation to the Italian Joint General Staff decision to exert the full powers of an occupying army in those French territories occupied in November 1942, it then focuses on the ensuing German reaction to the Italian's renewed opposition to the French anti-Jewish measures. This chapter explores how Mussolini oscillated between refusing and accepting the German demand to have foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian zone surrendered, but was eventually convinced by the undersecretary of State at the Foreign Ministry, Giuseppe Bastianini, to compromise by exonerating the Italian Army from the management of the 'Jewish question' and to entrust such responsibilities to the fascist Police.

Finally, the seventh chapter examines the last phase of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France under the supervision of the Italian Police between mid-March and mid-August 1943. It focuses on the controversial actions of Police General Inspector, Guido Lospinoso, as head of the 'Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police' in Nice. Lospinoso's actions are analysed in the dual context of the German-Italian dispute over the fate of the Jews in southern France, and of the internment operations Barranco began in late February 1943. Against this background, the chapter then analyses the order Lospinoso received from the Italian Chief of Police, Renzo

Chierici, on 15 July 1943 to hand over German and former Austrian Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone to the Nazis. Was Mussolini's decision to transfer the enforcement of Jewish policy in southeastern France from the Army to the Police in March 1943 the first step in a coherent path towards the July 1943 decision to surrender German and former Austrian Jews to the Nazis? Should we understand Chierici's order as an indication that that the fascist government was finally willing to accede to the German requests for the handover of all foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories? The chapter attempts to answer these questions by carefully placing Chierici's order in the context of the sudden radicalisation of fascist Jewish policy in Italy from June to July 1943, as well as during the collapse of the fascist regime in the wake of the Allied landings in Sicily on 10 July. Additionally, the last section of the chapter touches upon the last forty-five days of the Italian occupation of southeastern France between Mussolini's fall on 25 July and Eisenhower's announcement of the armistice between Italy and the Allies on 8 September 1943.

Sources

My analysis draws mainly on the primary sources of the four actors involved in, or affected by, fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France – the Italian, German and French authorities, as well as the Jewish refugees in southeastern France. The Italian sources derive primarily from the Army's Historical Archive Office, the Foreign Ministry Archive and the Central State Archive in Rome, which holds the records of the Italian Police. These sources include the official documentation produced by the leaders of those agencies, as well as by the Police and military authorities (including the *Carabinieri*, or the military Police) and the diplomatic representatives that operated in France during the ten months of the Italian occupation. Portions of these sources were used by historians Jonathan Steinberg, Daniel Carpi, Klaus Voigt, Michele Sarfatti, Davide Rodogno and Mauro Canali¹⁸ in their studies. Extensive research that I conducted in Rome also led me to unearth some previously unused materials from the Italian Police records that complement those already utilised by historians regarding the decision-making process behind fascist Jewish policy and its

¹⁸ See ch. 1.

enforcement in southeastern France. The documents from the Army's Historical Archive Office published by Domenico Schipsi as appendices to his book on the Italian occupation of southeastern France have also been useful¹⁹. At the Archivio dell'Istituto Storico della Resistenza e della Società Contemporanea in Provincia di Cuneo I was also able to consult the *bollettini quindicinali*, or fortnightly bulletins, circulated by the Italian Armistice Commission with France.

The Vichy government's records regarding the treatment of Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone were consulted at the French National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine. The set of documents of greatest importance for my research were the records of the French Police (*sous-série F7*), the by-weekly and monthly reports of the departmental and regional prefects to Vichy (*sous-série F1c III*), the records of the administrative bodies created due to the armistice agreement of 1940 (*sous-série AJ/41*) and the records of Vichy's General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs (*sous-série AJ/38*). In addition, the records at the French Departmental Archives of Savoie (Chambéry), Haute-Savoie (Annecy) and Alpes-Maritimes (Nice) have helped this study's detailed focus upon the local context of the occupation. Additionally, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives in Washington, DC, allowed me access to selected records from the Departmental Archives of the Basses-Alpes department, today Alpes-de-Haute-Provence.

Copies of the records of the Nazi security services that were directly responsible for the implementation of the 'final solution' in France can be consulted as microfiche at the Shoah Memorial – Centre for Modern Jewish Documentation, in Paris (*fonds*: Gestapo Allemagne and Gestapo France). Léon Poliakov and Serge Klarsfeld have published a substantial portion of these documents in French translation²⁰. In most cases, I have referenced both the French (or English²¹) translation and the corresponding original German document in the footnotes. The Centre also contains copies of Italian documents regarding Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southern France, Croatia and Greece, as well as the racial persecution in fascist Italy (*fonds* Archives de l'état de l'Italie). Finally, the Centre comprises the

¹⁹ D. Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitani francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007).

²⁰ Poliakov, *La condition*; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France* 2 vols (Paris: Fayard, 1983-85).

²¹ L. Poliakov and J. Sabille, *Jews under the Italian occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1955).

records of the Jewish organisations that operated in the Italian occupation zone (*fonds*: UGIF, Institut d'étude des Questions juives and Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France) and the collection of testimonies of former Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone (*fonds*: Anny Latour, Lucien Lublin, Diamant and Archives de la "Sixième" et les Anciens de la résistance juive).

These numerous primary sources have been complemented by other published primary sources, including *I Documenti diplomatici italiani* (Italian diplomatic papers), and the *Diario Storico* (military log) of the Italian Joint General Staff. I have also examined the published diaries of Galeazzo Ciano and the post-war memoirs of Giuseppe Bastianini and Carmine Senise. At the Archive of the Luigi Einaudi Foundation in Turin, I consulted the unpublished diaries of Count Luca Pietromarchi.

Whenever available, I used existing English translations of Italian, French or German documents, while simultaneously also referencing the original document in the footnote.

Chapter 1. The historiography of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories

In his comparative study of the motivations for ‘perpetrator behaviour’, Donald Bloxham has pointed out that ‘it would be comforting to believe that there were large numbers of officials protesting against any and every genocide, but the evidence ... of historical cases suggests that the default position is at “best” quiet acquiescence. *The honourable few who resisted involvement in, and the fewer who actively opposed genocide, require more explanation than the many who fell into line.*’¹ Bloxham’s remark on the complexity of the task that historians face to explain the motivations of those who resisted genocide in different ways and to different degrees refers to the acts and choices of a minority population, in contrast to the majority of *génocidaires*. But what if fascist Italy was the actor that resisted involvement or, according to some, even sabotaged genocide, despite being a dictatorial regime responsible for political assassinations, which mercilessly and thoroughly enforced anti-Jewish persecution, other war crimes and, for all intents and purposes, was Nazi Germany’s chief ally during the Second World War?

At an international conference on ‘Rescue attempts during the Holocaust’ held at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, in 1977, historian Daniel Carpi explained the complexity of the Italian case. Carpi’s lecture focused on the Italian refusal to surrender Jewish refugees to the Nazis in the Croatian territories occupied by the Italian IInd Army in 1941:

It should be noted that we are dealing with an operation carried out by a foreign element – an occupation army in enemy territory – which acted as it did not for the sake of any rewards, on behalf of Jews with whom it had no cultural or emotional ties ... Moreover, these actions were undertaken despite the unsympathetic attitude of most of the native population, and the opposition of the authorities of the “Independent

¹ D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 278-79 and 295. Emphasis added.

State of Croatia,” and in spite of their German allies who spared no effort to sabotage their activities.²

Carpi’s comments highlighted three key, interrelated components of the historical conundrum of fascist Italy’s refusal to collaborate in Nazi exterminatory policy before 8 September 1943. Moreover, these components Carpi identified in Italian-occupied Croatia can also be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in the territories of southern France and southern Greece that the Italian Army occupied between 1941 and 1943, subsequent to the Axis’ invasions. First, the fact that the dispute between Rome and Berlin over the treatment of Jews took place within a wartime military context; second, the German efforts to win the collaboration (or, at least, avoid the interference) of the Italian government to its European-wide murderous enterprise; third, the presence of a ‘third’ political contestant, which Carpi’s exemplifies as the Croatian government.

However, if we move from the somewhat limited geographical contexts of Italian occupations to the broader European context, we notice that Fascist Italy was by no means the only country that had to negotiate Nazi exterminatory policy. Following the transition of Nazi Jewish policy from localised mass murder to outright genocide between late 1941 and early 1942, all Jewish populations under Nazi Germany’s control became a target of extermination. In the central and eastern European territories that were under direct German administration, the Nazi leadership was free to pursue the extermination of the Jews according to its own plans, though it should be stressed that the collaboration of local agents played a key role in achieving the Nazi murderous goals. Similar dynamics occurred in German-occupied Belgium, where the deportation eastward of 25,000 foreign and stateless Jews remained in the hands of the German military, and Serbia, where thousands of civilians, mostly Jews, were killed directly by Wehrmacht units during ‘pacification’ actions. By contrast, in all other countries, the Nazi leadership had to obtain the collaboration of local governments in order to carry out the deportation of the local Jewish populations. With the exceptions of Hungary (but only until 1944, when the Wehrmacht took over the country), Germany’s co-belligerent Finland (whose Jewish population amounted

² D. Carpi, ‘The rescue of Jews in the Italian zone of occupied Croatia’, reprint from *Rescue attempts during the Holocaust: Proceeding of the second Yad Vashem international historical conference – April 1974* (Jerusalem, 1977), 466.

to 2,000 people), German-occupied Denmark and, of course, fascist Italy, the governments of Slovakia, Norway, Romania, Croatia, Vichy France and Bulgaria, all agreed, though at different times and under different conditions, to allow the deportation of at least some Jews living within their borders; although, notably, many objected to further deportations at a later stage. Thus, in early 1942, the Slovakian government agreed to the German requests, whereby around 58,000 Jews were deported to Poland by October. However, despite repeated German requests to Slovakian leaders to resume the deportations throughout 1943, these began again only after the occupation of the country by the Wehrmacht in August 1944. A similar pattern can be discerned in Romania and Bulgaria. Romania, in particular, played a major role, second only to Nazi Germany, in exterminating Jews in eastern Europe following the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, while simultaneously hardening its anti-Jewish persecution enforced within its borders since 1938. Therefore, it seemed only natural for the Romanian government to grant the German request for the deportation of Jews with Romanian citizenship in July 1942. Yet, by the end of the year, the Romanian leaders reversed their decision and, in early 1943, the Nazi leaders ceased convincing their Romanian counterparts to deport Jews. Meanwhile, in February 1943, Bulgaria agreed to deport all of its Jews to the Nazis, but eventually delivered 'only' the 11,000 or so non-Bulgarian Jews who resided within the Bulgarian-occupied territories of Thrace (Greece) and Macedonia. Conversely, Croatia proved itself a much more reliable accomplice. From an original Jewish population of 30-40,000 people, only around 7,000 people survived the war³. As we shall see, Vichy France proved no less collaborative.

Why, then, did the fascist government refuse to hand over foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jewish refugees to its Nazi ally? Since the immediate post-war period, historians have attempted to answer this question. This chapter discusses the historiography of fascist Italy's policy towards the Jews in the Italian occupations between the summer of 1942 and September 1943. The chapter is structured chronologically, and follows the different publications on the subject that have appeared from 1946 to the present day. The reader will notice, however, a

³ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, ch. 3 and 238-51; P. Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), *passim*.

predominant focus on fascist Jewish policy in Croatia in comparison to France and Greece. This is not, however, the result of my choice; rather, it reflects the unbalanced focus of the historiography.

As mentioned, the scholarship on the topic spans over seventy years and, to the best of my knowledge, four different languages. Therefore, the following cannot and should not be taken as an exhaustive catalogue of all that has been written and published on the topic. Rather, this chapter attempts to categorise and historicise the academic discussions regarding fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories by identifying the major shifts in the historical understanding of this period, as well as the key concepts within the historiographical debate. This survey will thus assess the current state of this historical phenomenon within contemporary historiography, which will also serve as a starting point for this thesis's contribution to the understanding of this controversial topic.

Establishing the pattern: humaneness, anti-anti-Semitism and brava gente

Former Jewish refugee in Italian-occupied southeastern France, and later well-respected historian of the Holocaust, Léon Poliakov, was the first to offer an interpretation of the fascist government's decision not to hand over to the Nazis foreign Jewish refugees in the territories occupied by the Italian Army. In his essay, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne*⁴, published in France in 1946, Poliakov focused on the area in the southeast of France that the Italian IVth Army invaded on 11 November 1942.

Poliakov argued that during the ten months of the occupation, the departments under Italian rule 'were magically transformed into a "refuge area" for the Jews.' The Italians not only obstructed the French authorities' attempts to hand Jews over to the Nazis, but they also opposed 'formal refusals' or manufactured 'astute excuses' (*faux-fuyants subtils*) not to grant the Nazi authorities' requests for the transfer of Jews within their zone, pending their deportation to the east. According to Poliakov, the Italian protection of the Jews in southeastern France was a 'paradox', because

⁴ L. Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du centre, 1946).

fascist Italy, an officially anti-Semitic country, persecuted Jews domestically and was Nazi Germany's chief ally, but nevertheless rescued thousands of Jews from extermination.

For Poliakov, the fascist government's paradoxical stance vis-à-vis the Nazi exterminatory plans had multiple causes. 'National interests, some remote calculation, a vague search for reassurance or else an underlying Germanophobia', all influenced Rome's refusals to hand over the Jews. Still, for Poliakov, it was 'the attitude of the Italian people as a whole that shaped the stance taken by the [Italian] government.' The Italian people were 'profoundly imbued with an ancient tradition, humane and Christian', which bred the '*état d'esprit*' leading 'the key figures in charge' to oppose the German requests for the handover of Jews in Italian-occupied southeastern France. In this sense, Poliakov's solution to the Italian paradox was obtained by subtraction: 'while Hitler's racism found a resonance and a complete adherence among the Germans, Mussolini's [anti-Semitism] fell on deaf ears (*tombait à vide*).' According to Poliakov, if the Italian people refused to kill the Jews, then it must follow that they were never really anti-Semites⁵.

In 1952, the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine Press published the Yiddish translation of Poliakov's essay⁶. The English translation, which was entitled *Jews under the Italian occupation*⁷, appeared in 1955, followed by the Italian edition the next year⁸. In addition to Poliakov's essay, these new editions featured two essays by Jacques Sabille regarding the treatment of Jews in Italian-occupied Croatia and Greece. Sabille's interpretation of the events that occurred during the Balkan occupations between 1941 and 1943 overlapped with Poliakov's regarding the events in southeastern France. Sabille argued that 'it was in fact in Croatia that the Italian attitude on racial persecution first took shape.'⁹ As his argument goes, 'the rescue work was started spontaneously by the lower ranks of the Italian soldiery and ... was tolerated and soon after warmly approved by the highest authorities.'¹⁰ The result

⁵ Poliakov, *La condition*, 17-18 and 42-43.

⁶ M. Sarfatti, 'Renzo De Felice's Storia of Anti-Jewish Persecution: Context, Chronological Dimension, and Sources', *Telos* 164 (2013), 177.

⁷ L. Poliakov and J. Sabille, *Jews under the Italian occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1955).

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Gli ebrei sotto l'occupazione italiana* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1956).

⁹ Poliakov and Sabille, *Jews*, 131.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 132-33.

was always the same. ‘Like the eight¹¹ French departments a year later the coastal area of Yugoslavia became a refuge zone for all those in danger of racial persecution in the territories under German occupation.’¹² In the case of Greece, Sabille asserted that ‘it is not surprising to find ... the same reaction ... as in Croatia.’¹³ Because ‘as in Croatia and in France, the Italian zone in Greece was for a long time a zone of refuge for the Jews’¹⁴ until the announcement of the armistice between Italy and the Allies on 8 September 1943.

In the immediate post-war period, Poliakov’s arguments, later reaffirmed by Sabille, echoed strongly within the Italian Jewish community¹⁵. The efforts that fascist Italy allegedly undertook to save Jews from extermination lay the foundation of what has been termed, in more recent years, the myth of the *Italiani brava gente*, or Italians as decent folks¹⁶. Aligned with Poliakov’s portrayal, this image depicted Italians as immune from fascist ideology, including fascist anti-Semitism.

It was, however, only in the early 1960s that the argument of the Italian humanitarian rescue of the Jews in the occupied territories, and the image of the *brava gente*, became inextricably entangled. In 1961, Renzo De Felice published his book *Storia degli ebrei italiani*¹⁷, which presented three key arguments. First, he argued that the 1938 anti-Semitic turn of fascism was mostly, though not exclusively, due to Mussolini’s belief that racial policy was a necessary step to strengthen the alliance with Nazi Germany¹⁸. Second, De Felice maintained that ‘the famous slogan, “discriminate, but do not persecute”, reflected Mussolini’s [and fascism’s] true intentions’ regarding the ‘Jewish question’ from the beginning of the anti-Jewish

¹¹ In fact, the Italian Army occupied ten French departments. See ch. 2.

¹² Poliakov and Sabille, *Jews*, 134.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁵ P. Bertilotti, ‘Les Juifs d’Italie face au souvenir des Années noires’, in J.-W. Dereymez (ed.), *Le refuge et le piège: les Juifs dans les Alpes (1938-1945)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008), 321.

¹⁶ P. Bertilotti, ‘Italian Jews and the Memory of Rescue (1944–1961)’, in J. Sémelin, C. Andrieu, and S. Gensburger (eds), *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 136-37. Much has been written on the *brava gente* image. On the cultural and political origins of that image see D. Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1994) and F. Focardi and L. Klinkhammer, ‘The question of Fascist Italy’s war crimes: the construction of a self-acquitting myth (1943-1948)’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9:3 (2004), 330-48. On the place and ramifications of the *brava gente* image within Italian culture see R.S.C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 139-56.

¹⁷ R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani* (Turin: Einaudi, 1961). Here, however, I refer to the English translation of the fifth Italian edition (published by Einaudi in 1993) of De Felice’s book, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History* (New York: Enigma books, 2001).

¹⁸ De Felice, *The Jews*, 236.

campaign in 1938¹⁹. Third, De Felice argued that the 1938 racial laws drove a wedge between the Italian people and the regime²⁰.

The latter argument echoed Poliakov's claim that, after 1938, the Italians were unaffected by fascist anti-Semitism. However, De Felice's interpretation of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories shifted the focus (and the merit for the rescue of the Jews) entirely to Mussolini and the fascist rulers. De Felice maintained that 'Fascism ... tried to prevent Nazi horrors within the territories occupied by Italian troops as long as possible', notwithstanding the Italian rulers' need to behave as real anti-Semites vis-à-vis their Nazi allies²¹. Drawing on both editions of Poliakov's and Sabille's essays, De Felice argued that the Italian top leaders at the Foreign Ministry, Interior Ministry and within the Army did all they could to rescue the Jews in France, Croatia and Greece. Thus, for instance, the Italian authorities in France let Jews freely enter their occupation zone to escape the Nazi and French authorities. By the same token, the Italian diplomats and military men made use of delaying tactics to avoid carrying out the handover.

For De Felice, the so-called policy of 'pertinences' to ascertain the citizenship of Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied Croatia was a clear example of the latter solution. The Italian Foreign Ministry and Army adopted the policy of 'pertinences' following Mussolini's 'nulla osta', or no objection, to a German request to deliver all Jews under Italian rule in Croatia in August 1942. According to De Felice, Mussolini's response was not tantamount to an acceptance of the German request. On the contrary, it was just a way to transfer the responsibility to those whom had to carry it out. Thereupon, the Foreign Ministry and the Army decided to take a census of all Jews within the Italian occupation zone to ascertain their nationality. If they were 'pertinent', that is, if they were citizens of a country under Italian rule, they would not be surrendered to the Nazis. If they were not, they would be handed over. However, for De Felice this solution was 'nothing but a device intended to delay and not to effect the transfer.'

Also aligned with Poliakov's analysis, was De Felice's explanation for the Italian refusals to hand over the Jews. On the one hand, there was the immunity of the

¹⁹ Ibid., 240.

²⁰ Ibid., 296.

²¹ Ibid., 344.

Italian people to anti-Semitism. On the other hand, De Felice explained Mussolini's and the top Italian leaders' rescue of the Jews with their will to assert the Italian prerogatives in the Mediterranean area, as well as with their will to prepare the ground with the international public opinion in case of Italy's exit from the conflict²².

In the same way that De Felice validated the argument of the Italian rescue of the Jews in the occupied territories, Hannah Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial that was held in Jerusalem in 1961 cemented the image of the *brava gente*. Arendt's report first appeared in the American magazine, *The New Yorker*, and was subsequently published as a book entitled *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* in 1963²³. In her controversial analysis of Eichmann's persona, Arendt also discussed Italy's refusals to hand over Jewish refugees in the occupied territories. Arendt's explanation of those refusals was predicated upon the two assumptions that underpinned the mainstream historiography on fascist Jewish policy at the time. On the one hand, Arendt portrayed Italian fascism as a tinpot regime and its anti-Semitic persecution as a 'farce'. She wrote that 'when Mussolini, under German pressure, introduced anti-Jewish legislation ... he stipulated the usual exemptions', which in turn led Arendt to draw the unwarranted conclusion that 'the result must have been that the great majority of Italian Jews were exempted.' Likewise, she argued that 'the sabotage [i.e. the Italian refusals to hand Jews over] was all the more infuriating as it was carried out openly, in an almost mocking manner.' On the other hand, Arendt explained that sabotage with 'the almost automatic general humanity of an old and civilized people.'²⁴

Accordingly, in her explanation of the Italian refusals to hand Jews over, Arendt shifted the focus back onto the Italian people and their alleged innate humaneness. In this regard, like Poliakov, Arendt interpreted fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories in light of Nazi Jewish policy. The result was therefore a 'mirror effect' in which the *brava gente* became the perfect foil for the brutality of the Nazis. But her analysis of the Italian refusals to hand Jews over had more far-reaching ramifications. Indeed, by positing the Italian sabotage of the 'final solution', Arendt

²² Ibid., 387-403.

²³ H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). The original edition of Arendt's book was published in New York by The Viking Press.

²⁴ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 177-79.

suggested that not only the Italians wanted to save foreign Jews in the occupied territories, but they also tried to hamper Nazi exterminatory policy.

Variations on a theme: intra-Axis rivalry, geopolitics and the post-war reckoning of accounts

In his book *Mussolini and the Jews*²⁵, published in 1978, historian Meir Michaelis re-examined fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories within his new survey of fascist anti-Jewish persecution since 1938. Michaelis's task was to analyse the 'impact of German-Italian relations on the evolution of the racial question in Italy.'²⁶ Within the context of his larger interpretation that Mussolini's anti-Semitic turn was mainly a consequence of the 'ill-fated' alliance with Hitler in 1936²⁷, Michaelis advanced a new interpretation of the reasons behind the fascist government's rescue of Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories. More specifically, a prevailing role in the decision to save the Jews was attributed to 'Mussolini's determination to resist German encroachments on Italian sovereignty, with particular reference to German meddling in the areas under Italian occupation.'²⁸ At the same time, though, Michaelis still located this new interpretation within the boundaries of Arendt's interpretative pattern, whereby he referred to the 'Latin humanity'²⁹ of the Italian people to explain their 'resistance to the "final solution".' By so doing, Michaelis attempted (similar to De Felice) to ground the explanation for the fascist government's refusal to hand Jews over within Political History, while still retaining the distinction between the German and Italian national characters.

French historian Pierre Milza went in the same direction. In the journal article, 'Les Juifs dans la zone d'occupation italienne'³⁰, published in 1982, Milza focused on fascist Jewish policy in the context of the Italian military occupation of southeastern France between November 1942 and September 1943. Milza asserted that, although the 'humanitarian' argument could partly explain the Italian protection

²⁵ M. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews. German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1978).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 125-26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 330.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 304 ff. Michaelis's reference to Latin humanity at p. 311.

³⁰ P. Milza, 'Les Juifs dans la zone d'occupation italienne', *YOD. Revue des études modernes et contemporaines hébraïques et juives* 15-16 (1982), 127-44.

of the Jews in southeastern France, the policy itself was so widespread that such argument was not exhaustive. Instead, Milza stressed that four main political reasons played a significant role in influencing the Italian response to the Nazi authorities' requests for the handover of the Jews: first, Italian political and economic interests across the Mediterranean area; second, the need to maintain the 'friendship' of Jewish populations with an anti-German purpose; third, Italian concerns about international public opinion as well as about the Catholic Church's reaction in case of an Italian collaboration in the 'final solution' (moreover, the Church's favour could have been useful in case of a separate peace with the Allies); finally, the fear of possible reactions from American Jews³¹.

However, Milza's most innovative contribution was his reassessment of Mussolini's role in fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. Unlike De Felice and Michaelis, who both placed great emphasis on the duce's will *not* to collaborate in the 'final solution', Milza maintained that Mussolini would have eventually given in to the Germans' requests to hand over the Jews if the 25 July crisis had not occurred³². Hence, according to Milza, only the Italian Army and Foreign Ministry should be credited with the protection of the Jews, as they were the only two agencies of the Italian State that had managed to remain immune from fascist ideology³³. Thus, Milza made a distinction within the Italian leadership: on the one hand, there were the fascists (embodied by Mussolini) who would have eventually collaborated with the Nazis; on the other hand, there were the *brava gente* (represented by the Foreign Ministry and the Army) who, by escaping fascist ideology, had ultimately escaped Nazi genocide. Ultimately, and similar to Michaelis, Milza nuanced the interpretative pattern proposed by Arendt and De Felice in the 1960s, while however accepting its underpinning assumptions.

Arendt's legacy: the comparison with Vichy France and the focus on Italian 'culture'

The humanitarian thesis enjoyed its heyday in the second half of the 1980s into the

³¹ Ibid., 142-43.

³² Ibid., 143-44.

³³ Ibid., 142.

beginning of the 1990s³⁴. Italian ‘humanity’, as set forth by Arendt in her analysis of the ‘banality of evil’, provided the conceptual backbone to this renewed interest in fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. In addition to France, now this resurgence of interest included also the Anglo-Saxon world, though with important differences in those two contexts.

The 1980s in France were marked by the investigation into the French collaboration with the Nazis during *les années noires*, or dark years, of the Vichy regime. As historians Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton demonstrated in their ground-breaking book, *Vichy et les Juifs* (1981), French collaboration had extended to the ‘final solution’³⁵. During the 1970s, lawyer and historian Serge Klarsfeld, himself a survivor of the Holocaust and former refugee with his family in Italian-occupied southeastern France, emerged at the forefront of this juridical³⁶, political and historiographical battle for the recognition of the responsibilities of the French State in the deportation of little more than 75,000 French Jews to the Nazi death camps. As a result of his activity, Klarsfeld published a major two-volume study entitled *Vichy-Auschwitz*³⁷; the first volume covering the year 1942 was published in 1983, while the second volume for the years 1943/1944 followed two years later. Klarsfeld’s aim was clearly that of investigating and unveiling the Vichy government’s responsibilities in the ‘final solution’, as indicated by the subtitle: *Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France* (Vichy’s role in the ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ in France). The significant attention given in the second volume to fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France served therefore a political, as well as a historical, purpose. The fascist government’s choice not to hand Jews over to the Nazis, or to permit the French authorities to do so, exposed the

³⁴ See, for example, N. Caracciolo, *Gli ebrei e l’Italia durante la guerra* (Roma: Bonacci, 1986) and I. Herzer (ed.), *The Italian Refuge. Rescue of the Jews during the Holocaust* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989); M. Shelah, *Un debito di gratitudine. Storia dei rapporti tra l’Esercito italiano e gli ebrei in Dalmazia (1941-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 1991). Moreover, in 1988 the Italian publishing house Einaudi printed the fourth (revised and enlarged) edition of De Felice’s *Storia degli ebrei italiani*.

³⁵ M. R. Marrus and R. O. Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1981).

³⁶ In 1989 Klarsfeld pressed charges against the former Vichy Chief of Police, René Bousquet, who was indicted for crimes against humanity in 1991. R.O. Paxton, ‘Bousquet, René’, in B.M. Gordon (ed.), *Historical dictionary of World War II France: the Occupation, Vichy, and the Resistance, 1938-1946* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 43-44.

³⁷ S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz. Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1942 and 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1983-85). The total number of deportees from France between 1942 and 1944 is reported at p. 393 of the second volume.

opposite choices made by the Vichy leaders to collaborate in the German exterminatory machine³⁸. Against this background, the Italian humanitarian rescue of the Jews proved that resisting the Nazi requests was possible. Accordingly, similar to Milza, Klarsfeld also framed his analysis within the interpretative pattern proposed by both Arendt and Poliakov.

Less concerned with political ramifications, and more challenging towards previous scholarship, was instead Jonathan Steinberg's *All or Nothing. The Axis and the Holocaust*³⁹, published in 1990. Focusing upon fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories of Croatia, Greece and southern France, Steinberg aimed to re-examine the rationale for the Italian protection of the Jews. While introducing 'the problem' at the heart of the book, Steinberg called into question Arendt's thesis of the Italian 'almost automatic general humanity', which he dubbed 'too simple'⁴⁰. Steinberg attributed the general absence of satisfactory explanations for the Italian behaviour towards the Jews to the fact that 'only half the question has been asked.' For Steinberg, not only the question 'Why did the Italians save the Jews?' needed to be answered, but so did 'Why did the Germans let them?'⁴¹

The first part of Steinberg's book was devoted to the reconstruction of the events, whereby he advanced a brand new interpretation to explain the Italian diplomats' and Army officers' decision to rescue Jews. Steinberg began his argument with the episode of the failed implementation of Mussolini's 'nulla osta' to the German request for the handover of Croatian Jews. For Steinberg, the so-called policy of 'pertinences' was not only a way for both the Italian Foreign Ministry and Army to interrupt and delay the implementation of Mussolini's order but it also represented the first episode of a plot organised against Mussolini to save the Jews⁴². Like Milza, Steinberg thus made a distinction within the Italian leadership between Mussolini's 'heartless decision'⁴³ to hand Jews over and 'the Italian "resisters" [who] just could

³⁸ Ibid., 37.

³⁹ J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). In this thesis I reference the second edition of the book that was published by Routledge in 2002.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁴¹ Ibid., 5.

⁴² Ibid., 58-60. See also pp. 1-3.

⁴³ Ibid., 57.

not bring themselves to act in the inhuman way that their allies demanded.⁴⁴ Steinberg then retraced the development of Italian Jewish policy in Croatia, Greece, and France, which he dramatically defined as a ‘curious story of virtue and intrigue’⁴⁵. In each case, Steinberg stressed the dilatory tactics adopted by the Italian diplomats and Army officers in Rome and in the occupied territories to save the Jews.

It was, however, in the second part of the book, which was devoted to the ‘explanations’, that Steinberg attempted to reshape our understanding of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. To that end, Steinberg adopted a comparative approach. He compared four spheres of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany that in his view better serve to highlight the reasons for the Italian rulers’ refusal to kill the Jews – and, in turn, also casts light on the German reasons to do so. These spheres were ‘the two cultures [i.e. Italian and German], the two dictators, the two armies and the position of the Jews in Italian and German history.’⁴⁶ The second sphere, according to Steinberg, played a decisive role. Hitler’s affection for Mussolini was identified as the key element which enabled the Italian diplomats and senior military men’s rescue of the Jews, for it ‘gave the Italians some limited freedom to follow policies which frustrated German plans.’⁴⁷ Still, Steinberg isolated the deep-seated differences between Italian and German culture as the matrix for the Italian decision not to kill the Jews (and for the Germans to do so). Steinberg argued that the Italian ‘humanity’ towards the Jews ‘rested in a matrix of secondary vice’, that is, it relied upon the ‘disorder, disobedience and *menefreghismo* [...] of Italian public life’. Conversely, the German brutality rested ‘on a matrix of secondary virtue’, namely ‘punctuality, efficiency, [...] sense of duty and responsibility.’⁴⁸ Within this analytical framework, Steinberg concluded that ‘Italian officers behaved as they did because they served in a traditional, monarchist, liberal, gentlemanly, masonic, philo-semitic and anti-fascist [!] service.’ By contrast, ‘German officers

⁴⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 205.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 170.

acted as they did because traditions of obedience and rigidities of thought made any other action unthinkable.’⁴⁹

Despite Steinberg’s attempt to revise what he considered the overly simplistic image of Italians as *brava gente*, he eventually explained Italian policy towards the Jews through that same ‘national character’ – to which he referred as ‘culture’ – which it seemed he had initially intended to omit. Overall, Steinberg cast his arguments in the same vein of stereotypical and largely unwarranted images of (fascist) Italy and the Italians (as well as Nazi Germany and the ‘barbarian’ Germans) that previous scholarship on the topic was predicated upon. This analytical shortcoming was directly linked with the nature of the comparison between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Steinberg was keen to stress the (certainly undeniable) differences between Italy and Germany in the four spheres he examined. Yet, resembling previous scholarship, Steinberg’s comparison was flawed by the fact it used Nazi Jewish policy as the yardstick by which to measure fascist Italy and its persecutory policies. Rather than using the differences between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy to highlight the differences (as well as the commonalities) between the two regimes, Steinberg used these differences to draw unwarranted, largely unsubstantiated⁵⁰ conclusions regarding the alleged Italian way of doing things and the alleged nature of the Italians (which, in turn, begs the questions of: which Italians? The fascists? The anti-fascists? The a-fascists? All of them? Past and present Italians?). Steinberg’s effort to substantiate the (philosophical and, therefore, a-historical) Italian humanity posited by Arendt, culminated thus in an analytical cul-de-sac, whereby Steinberg could only conclude that ‘the vices of Italian public life [i.e. slyness, corruption and carelessness] made the virtues of humanity easier to practice’⁵¹, just as German ‘culture played a part in making Germans behave predictably as Germans’⁵² (inhumanely, that is). However, this conclusion was tantamount to arguing that the Italians did not kill the Jews because they were not Germans (and vice versa), which is self-evident.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 240-41.

⁵⁰ For instance, with regards to the Italian tendency to rely on personal connections outside and against the State’s control, Steinberg made reference to the fact that ‘the mafia call itself “friends of the friends”’, thereby establishing a direct link between that criminal organisation and the Italian society in its entirety. Ibid., 176.

⁵¹ Ibid., 170

⁵² Ibid., 177.

Shifting grounds: towards a reassessment of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories

To this day, Steinberg's *All or Nothing* remains the most sophisticated attempt to substantiate Arendt's thesis of the Italian humanity. At the same time, the prevailing assumptions that dominated scholarship on fascist anti-Jewish persecution were significantly shaken between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This trend developed initially with regard to the reception and enforcement of the 1938 fascist racial laws. In particular, historians called into question the argument that Mussolini's racist turn was met with hostility by most Italians, many of whom supposedly interfered with its implementation⁵³.

This revision had also a mild impact upon the scholarship of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories. On the one hand, many (especially French) scholars produced new analyses, which however followed the Arendtian tradition⁵⁴, while, on the other hand, others began to reassess some of the previously established wisdom on the topic. Daniel Carpi figured prominently among the latter group and even more so because, during the 1970s and 1980s, his research on Italian policy towards the Jews in Croatia and Greece had been instrumental in cementing the image of the Italians as rescuers of Jews⁵⁵. The 1994 English translation of his book *Between Mussolini and Hitler*⁵⁶, originally published in Hebrew, shifted the focus from the Balkans to the Italian-occupied territories in southern France and Tunisia. However, France was given more attention, as eight of the eleven chapters of the book dealt with the treatment of Jews in that area. By utilizing previously unavailable sources

⁵³ This turning point in the historiography on the Jewish persecution in Italy is described in S. Luconi, 'Recent trends in the study of Italian antisemitism under the Fascist regime', *Patterns of Prejudice* 38:1 (2004), 1-17.

⁵⁴ S. Zeitoun, *L'Oeuvre de secours aux enfants (O.S.E.) sous l'occupation en France. Du légalisme à la résistance, 1940-1944* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990); C. Villermet, *A noi Savoia. Histoire de l'occupation italienne en Savoie, novembre 1942-septembre 1943* (Les Marches: La Fontaine de Siloé, 1991); S. Klarsfeld, 'Le jeu de Vichy entre les Italiens et les Allemands', *Monde Juif* XLIX: 149 (1993), 74-83.

⁵⁵ See, by way of example, Carpi, 'The rescue', 465-525. At the end of his lecture, Carpi stated (p. 506): 'whoever thinks that the episode of the rescue of the Jewish refugees of Croatia can be explained solely on the basis of diplomatic interests errs. Soldiers [of the Italian Army] and civilians on all levels participated in the rescue work and almost everyone regarded the issue first and foremost as a humanitarian problem, which had to be solved for reasons of conscience, which were beyond political considerations.'

⁵⁶ D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994).

from the Italian Foreign Ministry and Army archives, Carpi retraced in detail the efforts of top ranking Italian diplomats and military officers to avoid surrendering foreign Jews into Nazi or French hands, which saved them from deportation and certain death. In his conclusions, however, Carpi reversed the interpretation emerging from his own reconstruction of the events and asserted that ‘the behaviour of the Italian authorities ... was linked first and foremost with the complex political and economic factors directing Italian policy in those days.’⁵⁷

As one commentator observed, ‘regrettably, the two parts of the book do not cohere.’⁵⁸ Indeed, on the one hand, Carpi argued that the 1938 racial turn ‘was a political decision conforming with the ideological sources of the fascist party’. On the other hand, he re-proposed Milza’s distinction between the bad fascists (again epitomised by Mussolini) and the good Italians (Foreign Ministry officials and Army officers) whose ‘humane and sometimes even sympathetic attitude ... toward Jews ... is not an act that may be credited to fascism.’⁵⁹ In this sense, Carpi’s book typifies the historiography on fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories during the mid-1990s, which was caught between the reassessment of the fascist anti-Jewish persecutions and the old-aged assumptions about Italian immunity from anti-Semitism⁶⁰.

Against the brava gente: the ‘logical’ protection of the Jews and the decision to hand them over

As far as fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories is concerned, it was only in the second half of the 1990s that the humanitarianism thesis was overtly and resolutely challenged. On 27 April 1996, the Italian daily newspaper *L’Unità* published an article by historian Michele Sarfatti, in which he announced the content of two telegrams that he had unearthed at the Italian Central State Archive in

⁵⁷ Ibid., 241.

⁵⁸ M. R. Marrus, ‘Review of D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994)’, *The American Historical Review* 101: 1 (1996), 206.

⁵⁹ Carpi, *Between*, 249.

⁶⁰ The second volume of Klaus Voigt’s otherwise seminal study *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996) is another case in point.

Rome⁶¹. These telegrams concerned the fates of German and former Austrian Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied southeastern France in July 1943. The first telegram, dated 10 July 1943, was signed by the Police General Inspector Guido Lospinoso, who, since March 1943, had been entrusted with handling the ‘Jewish problem’ in southeastern France. Lospinoso asked for a ruling from Renzo Chierici, the fascist Chief of Police, on how to respond to a request from the Gestapo unit in Marseilles for the ‘consignment by us of the German Jews currently living either under forced domicile or at liberty in the zone occupied by our troops’. In the second telegram, dated 15 July, Chierici ordered that Lospinoso ‘comply with the request from the German Police for the handing over of German Jews.’⁶²

Sarfatti published an expanded version of his essay as a journal article two years later⁶³. Sarfatti argued that previous arguments which advocated that the fascist government’s refusals to hand Jews over in Italian-occupied Croatia and France ‘were the consistent result of an *intentional* policy, and even that Italy (or a group of senior Italian officials) had been *actively* engaged in saving the Jews’ were ‘misconceived’. In his view, ‘only the granting of requests to hand over the Jews might be considered an *active* step; refusing those requests was no more than an obvious and logical continuation of the anti-Jewish policy (the attack on the *rights* of the Jews, but not their *lives*) implemented in the peninsula since 1938.’

By contrast, and despite the fact that the handover eventually did not occur⁶⁴, Sarfatti deemed Chierici’s order to illustrate the complete opposite; it was ‘an *intentional* and *active* decision’ proving ‘that monarchical and Fascist Italy deliberately took an *active* step that condemned Jews to death.’ In this respect, Sarfatti stressed ‘that – technically – there was a deep similarity’ between Chierici’s order and the earlier handover by the Italian authorities in Pristina (Kosovo) of fifty-one ‘Central European Jews to German occupation authorities in Serbia’ in March 1942 (albeit, Sarfatti conceded, it is unclear whether the Italians in March 1942 ‘were aware of the fate awaiting those people’). Moreover, Sarfatti pointed out that Chierici’s order was given only a few days earlier than the decision to transfer 2,000

⁶¹ M. Sarfatti, ‘Consegnate gli ebrei’, *l’Unità*, 27 April 1996.

⁶² M. Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy and German Jews in south-eastern France in July 1943’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3: 3 (1998), 323-24.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See ch. 7.

Jewish internees detained in the concentration camp in the town of Ferramonti, in the southern region of Calabria, to Bolzano, namely ‘the Italian town nearest to the Third Reich’s borders’. This new evidence led Sarfatti to conclude that ‘following ... the Allied landing in Sicily on 10 July [1943], two tendencies took shape within Fascism: one ... led to Mussolini’s first overthrow on 25 July, the other caused his [Jewish] policy to become increasingly savage.’⁶⁵

It is worth noticing, however, that the circumstances described in the two documents published by Sarfatti in 1996 and 1998 were not entirely new to historians. In fact, as early as 1946, Poliakov published three German cables from August 1943 as appendices to his essay, which reported an agreement between Lospinoso and the German unit in Toulon for the handover of German and former-Austrian Jews living on the Côte d’Azur⁶⁶. However, before Sarfatti, only Klarsfeld and Carpi had touched upon the episode in their respective books, only to stress that Lospinoso did not surrender any Jews⁶⁷.

As mentioned, this was not Sarfatti’s interpretation of the events. For Sarfatti, the three German cables published by Poliakov proved that ‘before 25 July Lospinoso had begun to carry out the orders he had received from Rome.’⁶⁸ More importantly, for Sarfatti Chierici’s order brought ‘the complex question’ of the handover to the Nazis of Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories ‘to a head’, as he argued in his book *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista*⁶⁹, first published in Italian in 2000 and translated into English in 2006. Drawing on Chierici’s order, Sarfatti argued in particular that between August 1942, when Mussolini first granted his ‘nulla osta’ to the handover of Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied Croatia, until July 1943, ‘Fascism assumed a posture that can best be described as initially opposing, but increasingly yielding to, the progressive German demands to permit the deportation of Jews over whom they claimed jurisdiction’ (i.e. German Jews or Jews who were citizens of countries directly occupied by the Nazis)⁷⁰. Thus, in light of the Chierici

⁶⁵ Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy’, 319-22.

⁶⁶ Poliakov, *La condition*, 126-28, docs 37-39.

⁶⁷ Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 102; Carpi, *Between*, 184.

⁶⁸ Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy’, 321.

⁶⁹ M. Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell’Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007 [2000]). All quotations derived from the English translation of the book, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 158-61.

order, Sarfatti not only categorically rejected the thesis of the Italian humanitarian rescue of the Jews in the occupied territories (while also reversing Arendt's argument of the Italian sabotage of the 'final solution'), but he also suggested that we should understand fascist Jewish policy as the story of a progressive alignment of fascist Italy to Nazi Germany's exterminatory plans.

Against the brava gente: Italian 'pragmatism'

In recent years, historian Davide Rodogno has also been very critical of the humanitarian thesis. However, in his book *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo. Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista in Europa*⁷¹, published in Italian in 2003 and translated into English in 2006, Rodogno approached the topic from a different analytical angle than Sarfatti. In his introduction, Rodogno stated his intention to explain the fascist government's refusals to hand over Jewish refugees in Croatia, Greece and France to the Nazis, by abandoning what he labelled 'a genocide-centred view'. Instead, Rodogno attempted to reassess 'the history of the Greek, Yugoslav and French Jewish refugees within the Fascist occupation.'⁷²

Rodogno argued that the fascist occupation should be understood as the result of a war that Mussolini and the fascist rulers waged in an effort to fulfil the goal of conquering *spazio vitale*, or vital space, and establishing a fascist 'New Mediterranean Order'. This Empire was supposed to be built on racial grounds and would exclude Jews. Yet, the reality of Italian occupation was quite different from the underlying plans. The Italian military weakness, as well as the unpreparedness of the Italian Army to rule the occupied territories, which was counterbalanced by the overwhelming power of the Wehrmacht, in addition to the mutual distrust between the Axis partners, made fascist Italy the subordinate partner within the Axis as early as the failed Italian attack on Greece in late 1940⁷³.

Rodogno argued that this is the context within which the Italian refusal to hand Jews over should be understood. Accordingly, he firmly rejected the image of the

⁷¹ D. Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo. Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista in Europa (1940-1943)* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003). All quotations derived from the English translation of the book, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷² Ibid., 6.

⁷³ Ibid., 21-36.

Italians as *brava gente*, which he considered an inconsistent myth⁷⁴. Instead, Rodogno asserted that ‘Italian policy [towards the Jews] should be interpreted as an attempt to respond pointedly and assertively to Nazi interference in Fascism’s imaginary *domaine réservé*.’ Drawing mainly on the case of Italian-occupied Croatia, Rodogno claimed that ‘conflicts of interest with Germany reduced the Jews to pawns in a conflict between the Axis powers in the occupied territories’. He listed three ways in which the fascist rulers could have used their Jewish pawns: first, to stress the difference between Nazi and fascist rule over subjugated populations; secondly, to use the possible handover of Jews as ‘a useful bargain counter’, that is, to obtain from Hitler the withdrawal of the Axis forces from the Russian front and focus all the German military power towards the African front in order to prevent a direct attack by the Allies on Italian soil; third, the same could have been achieved by the Italian leaders with the Allies in the event of defeat, i.e. the humane treatment of the Jews could reward the Italians with the leniency of the Allies⁷⁵.

As a result, Rodogno rejected the thesis of the humanitarian protection of the Jews on Mussolini’s orders, which he asserted as ‘simply absurd and disproved by the documents.’ In his view, ‘equally false is the idea that the political and military authorities conspired against Mussolini’, as argued by Steinberg. Instead, Rodogno asserted that the Italian political and military authorities ‘worked towards the Duce’. Rodogno explained isolated cases of ‘humanity’ towards the Jews with reference to ‘corruption’ caused by increasing ‘disorder, disobedience and amorality’ of the rank-and-file as well as of Italian officials, who were, in turn, influenced by the ‘agony of the regime’. In partial contradiction of his previous claim that the Italian authorities worked towards the duce, Rodogno asserted that ‘the behaviour of certain Italian soldiers and officers also resulted from the partial failure to Fascistize the Regio Esercito [i.e. the Italian Army].’⁷⁶

Rodogno’s book has greatly contributed to our understanding of the complex ideological and geopolitical dynamics of fascist occupation policies. He has also refocused scholarly attention upon aspects, such as the anti-Semitism of the Italian Army, that diverge from the established image of the *brava gente*. At the same time,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 400.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 363-64.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 401-03.

however, the correct rejection of Arendt's a-historical Italian humanity has led him to also firmly reject any form of Italian humanitarianism towards the Jews, that is, humanitarianism with specific, historical causes and contextualisations. Instead, Rodogno adamantly refused to even entertain the possibility that the fact that Jews faced certain death played a role in the fascist rulers' decisions not to hand Jews over. Taking De Felice's, Michaelis' and Milza's arguments to the extreme, any episode of Italian protection is therefore interpreted through the lenses of political expediency and/or personal gain and, thereby, systematically explained away⁷⁷. As David Roberts put it, 'Rodogno seems so eager to minimize any humanitarian component [of the Italian attitude towards the Jews] that his conclusions fail to convince.'⁷⁸ But we can go further still. In his effort to better contextualise Jewish policy within the Italian occupations, the objective and deadly specificity of the 'Jewish problem' during the Second World War vanishes almost entirely into its surrounding contexts. Accordingly, in one chapter of over forty pages entirely devoted to Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories, Rodogno acknowledged differences between fascist and Nazi anti-Semitism as sources of their different treatment of Jews only in a few lines at the very end⁷⁹.

What Italians? The on-going debate on the brava gente and the present-day analytical stalemate

Despite the attacks upon the thesis of the Italian rescue of the Jews on humanitarian grounds, this argument still enjoyed broad consensus at the turn of the millennium⁸⁰. Some scholars accordingly called Sarfatti's and Rodogno's arguments into question. Alberto Cavaglioni, in particular, has been critical of Rodogno's and Sarfatti's conclusions in two journal articles published in 2005⁸¹. Cavaglioni criticized

⁷⁷ Rodogno has claimed that 'the humanitarianism displayed by some Italians, in certain circumstances, was often overridden by political considerations.' Ibid., 404.

⁷⁸ D. Roberts, 'Italian Fascism: New Light on the Dark Side', *Journal of Contemporary History* 44: 3 (2009), 523-33. Quotation from p. 531.

⁷⁹ Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 406-07.

⁸⁰ S. Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 166-67 and 180; J. Delarue, 'La sorte degli ebrei in Francia nella zona di occupazione italiana', *Studi Piacentini* 30 (2001), 115-23.

⁸¹ A. Cavaglioni, 'Gli ebrei e l'occupazione italiana nella Francia meridionale (1940-1943). A proposito di un libro recente', *Mondo Contemporaneo* 1 (2005), 149-57; A. Cavaglioni, 'Foreign Jews in the western Alps (1938-43)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10: 4 (2005), 426-46. The latter

Rodogno's use of his archival sources. In particular, Cavaglione deems 'unacceptable ... the credibility that is usually attributed to fascist documentation.' Instead, he suggested that the 'reasons of prestige and the desire for "autonomy"' underpinning the Italian authorities' refusals to accede to the Nazi authorities' requests for the handover of Jews were only a pretext to save them⁸². In the same vein, Cavaglione contradicted Sarfatti's reading of Chierici's order to Lospinoso to hand over to the Nazis German Jewish refugees in southeastern France in July 1943. For Cavaglione, Chierici's order 'need[s] to be read more prudently.' Cavaglione claimed that by 'read[ing] with greater objectivity, the documents probably indicate an extreme attempt at stalling: a final display of the strategy of postponement that had produced favourable results in terms of the number of lives saved in the preceding months.'⁸³

At the same time, and following the publication of Rodogno's book, arguments which stressed the fascist rulers' pragmatism⁸⁴ in dealing with the issue of Jews in the occupied territories gathered momentum and strength. In an article published in 2007, historian MacGregor Knox was particularly keen to underscore the prominent influence of the fascist rulers' fear of later post-war judgments by the Allies upon their wartime refusals to hand Jews over in Croatia and southeastern France. For Knox, the awareness of the inevitable defeat of the Axis powers was widespread among Italian Generals and senior diplomats as early as the summer and early autumn of 1942. The Anglo-American landing in North Africa on 8 November, the destruction of a large portion of the Italian VIIIth Army serving on the Russian front, and Mussolini's increasingly frequent absence from Rome due to illness later that year, followed by the defeats in Russia and North Africa in early 1943 were all perceived as confirmation that the war was lost. Moreover, by July 1942, the Italian rulers became aware of the Allied intention to punish those responsible for the mass killing of European Jews. When coupled with the widespread anti-Semitism of the

essay has been also published in French translation as a book chapter in J.-W. Dereymez (ed.), *Le refuge et le piège: les Juifs dans les Alpes (1938-1945)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 179-98.

⁸² Cavaglione, 'Gli ebrei', 154-55.

⁸³ Cavaglione, 'Foreign Jews', 440.

⁸⁴ Here I echo the title of Rodogno's article on fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, 'La politique des occupants italiens à l'égard des Juifs en France métropolitaine. Humanisme ou pragmatisme?', *Vingtième Siècle* 93 (2007), 63-77. Two years earlier, Rodogno also published an article focusing on the Balkan territories annexed or occupied by the Italian Army, 'Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's Policy Toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943', *European History Quarterly* 35: 213 (2005), 213-40.

fascist establishment, the use of retaliatory violence against Balkan populations and conceptions of Italian prestige and sovereignty, it was clear to Knox that a humanitarian rescue of Jews in the territories occupied by the Italian Army was not possible⁸⁵.

In addition, Rodogno responded to Cavaglion's criticisms in 2010, reaffirming his argument that the fascist rulers' refusals to hand over Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories were not due to humanitarianism⁸⁶. Sarfatti also stood by his argument. In an essay published in 2012, which was devoted to the action of the Italian Consul in German-occupied Thessaloniki, Guelfo Zamboni, on behalf of Italian Jews and of Jews 'pertinent' to Italy living in that city, Sarfatti asserted that Zamboni's action was driven by 'essentially humanitarian motives'. However, Sarfatti concluded, 'it would be ... ridiculous to use this study to draw general conclusions about the "behaviour of the Italians towards the Jews".'⁸⁷ Other scholars, mainly working on the Italian occupations in the Balkans, have taken the middle ground, acknowledging the presence of humanitarianism along with more mundane motivations⁸⁸.

Here we come full circle to Poliakov's theses and to the dichotomy of humanitarianism and pragmatism in the explanation of the fascist government's decisions not to hand over to the Nazis foreign Jewish refugees in Croatia and southeastern France. In this sense, one may agree with Roberts that 'Italian decisions in this highly complex situation were surely overdetermined, so proportions cannot

⁸⁵ M. Knox, 'Das faschistische Italien und die "Endlösung", 1942/43', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 53-92.

⁸⁶ D. Rodogno, 'L'Italia fascista potenza occupante in Europa', in M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matarad-Bonucci and E. Traverso (eds), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. 1 (Turin: UTET, 2010), 479-504. See also most recently D. Rodogno, 'Histoire et historiographie de la politique des occupants italiens à l'égard des juifs dans les Balkans et la France métropolitaine (avril 1941-septembre 1943)', *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* 204 (2016), 275-98.

⁸⁷ M. Sarfatti, 'L'evacuazione nel 1943 da Salonico degli ultimi ebrei italiani e degli ebrei italiani 'provvisori': contesto, questioni e numeri', in P.C. Ioly Zorattini, M. Luzzati and M. Sarfatti (eds), *Studi sul mondo sefardita in memoria di Aron Leoni* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2012), 251-76. Quotations from pp. 275-76.

⁸⁸ E. Gobetti, *Alleati del nemico. L'occupazione italiana in Jugoslavia (1941-1943)* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2013), 129-132; R. Nattermann, 'Humanitäres Prinzip oder politisches Kalkül? Luca Pietromarchi und die italienische Politik gegenüber den Juden im besetzten Kroatien', in L. Klinkhammer, A. Osti Guerrazzi and T. Schlemmer (eds), *Die „Achse“ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 319-39. See also the review article by A. Pitassio, 'Una storia riscritta: l'Italia nei Balcani e in Grecia (1940-1945)', *Il mestiere di storico* VI: 1 (2014), 6-15 [especially p. 14].

be assessed definitively.’⁸⁹ Even if no definitive answer to the question ‘Why did fascist Italy refuse to hand over the Jews?’ can be given, such a question is nonetheless worth exploring once more, in light of the increasing scholarship on the ‘origins’ of the ‘final solution’ and the motivations of its perpetrators, as well as the on-going reassessment of fascist racism. Sarfatti, Rodogno and Knox all seem to take fascist anti-Semitism for granted, without any further analysis of how, and to what extent, anti-Semitism shaped fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories.

Against this backdrop, the Italian occupation of southeastern France is an even more interesting case to study, for three reasons. First, in recent years, new research⁹⁰ has convincingly shown that, while not as harsh as the German occupation, the Italian occupation of southeastern France was far from being the benevolent occupation often described by historians. Arguments such as: ‘The Italians were busy winning the sympathy of the French population by courteous treatment, while refusing to allow Vichy’s police to act against the Jews’⁹¹ do not convince anymore. Consequently, it makes sense to take up Rodogno’s challenge and reassess fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France within its surrounding military, diplomatic and geopolitical contexts. Second, contemporary research indicates that southeastern France is the only occupation where fascist non-collaboration in the ‘final solution’ came close to being overturned by a policy of (partial) collaboration, via Chierici’s order in July 1943. However, historians have thus far either ignored (or explained away) that decision, or analysed the entire fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories through the prism of that sole, albeit important, episode. In turn, the minor or major importance attributed by historians to that episode reflects their larger arguments to support or condemn the humanitarian thesis. The result has been that the complexity and the evolving nature of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories vanishes almost entirely in favour of mono-dimensional analyses. Third, as historians have mainly focused on Jewish policy in Italian-occupied Croatia, the occupation of southeastern France provides an opportunity to not only test the arguments briefly presented in this chapter, but also possibly offer a brand new

⁸⁹ Roberts, ‘Italian Fascism’, 531.

⁹⁰ J.-L. Panicacci, *L’occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

⁹¹ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 112.

outlook upon fascist Jewish policy as a whole.

Chapter 2. Fascist security policy in southeastern France: political refugees, enemy aliens and Jews

On 11 November 1942, the Axis Armies invaded so-called 'free France' or the Unoccupied Zone. Following the French surrender in June 1940, this portion of France had remained under the rule of the so-called Vichy government as a result of the Franco-German armistice agreement of 22 June. The invasion and subsequent occupation of the Unoccupied Zone by the Axis Armies was launched in response to the Anglo-American landings in French Morocco and Algeria on 8 November. As historian Daniel Carpi stressed, the Allied landings in North Africa meant that 'for the first time since the surrender of France, [the Allies] succeeded in posing a direct threat from close quarters to the inner heart of the "Fortress of Europe", first and foremost to the territory of Italy and the Unoccupied Zone of France.'¹ Therefore, militarily, the Axis invaded the Unoccupied Zone for primarily defensive reasons. As the German Führer, Adolf Hitler, wrote to the head of the French State, Marshal Philippe Pétain, the Axis takeover of the Unoccupied Zone was carried out 'in order to occupy the Mediterranean coast and to take part in its protection against the aggression which is imminent from the Anglo-American forces.'²

However, for fascist Italy and its duce, Benito Mussolini, the occupation of the French Mediterranean coast offered also the opportunity to seize those French territories that Italy had long claimed as theirs by right, such as Nice and the island of Corsica, but had failed to acquire owing to the disastrous attack on France of June 1940. Indeed, the armistice agreement at Villa Incisa between Italy and France on 24 June 1940 only fourteen days after Mussolini's declaration of war on France and Great Britain (10 June), which attempted to take advantage of the unstoppable German advance into western Europe of May/June 1940, left fascist Italy merely 840

¹ D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: the Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 79.

² 'Chancellor Adolf Hitler's letter to Marshal Pétain announcing complete German occupation of France, 11 November 1942', *Inter-Allied Review*, 15 November 1942, reproduced in D. Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitani francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007), 656-57.

square kilometres of French territory along the Franco-Italian border. That was the only territory that the Italian Army had actually managed to conquer³.

Map 1



Source: Carpi, *Between*, 5.

Subsequently, as the Wehrmacht seized territory between the Spanish border and the western bank of the Rhône on 11 November, the Italian VIIth Army Corps landed in Corsica and the IVth Army, led by General Mario Vercellino, began its advance into French territory. Despite the pressure that the Capo di Stato Maggiore, or Chief of the Joint General Staff, Marshal Ugo Cavallero, put on General Vercellino

³ J.-L. Panicacci, *L'occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 15.

to reach the Rhône River as quickly as possible to occupy the port town of Marseilles, the IVth Army was soon overtaken by the faster German troops. As mentioned, Germany's lightning takeover of major cities and communication routes, such as Marseilles, Lyons and Aix-en-Provence, was dictated by the military necessity to swiftly reach the southern French coast to counter what Hitler considered an imminent Allied landing.

In the weeks following the invasion, the Axis partners began to establish borders between the Italian and German occupation zones. While the Italian Comando Supremo delle Forze Armate, or Joint General Staff, wished for Marseilles and its harbour to remain in the Italian zone, General Vercellino demurred. The IVth Army could not bear the burden of occupation and defence of the city in the case of an Allied landing. The demarcation line between the two occupation zones was established at the beginning of December. It began west of the town of Bandol, on the French coast and some thirty-five kilometres east of Marseilles, which was thus left in German hands, and joined the Durance River on the border between the Var and the Bouches-du-Rhône departments; it then followed the Durance westward, before joining the Rhône north of Avignon, which also remained in the German zone along with Aix-en-Provence; the demarcation line then ran northward along the eastern bank of the Rhône until just north of Vienne, at which point it bent north-east towards Pont-d'Ain and Nantua, before reaching the Swiss border at Saint-Julien-en-Genevois through Bellegarde-sur-Valserine. The Italian zone enclosed seven fully-occupied departments, namely Alpes-Maritimes, Basses-Alpes, Hautes-Alpes, Var, Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Isère and two partially-occupied departments, Drôme and Vaucluse, in addition to a small portion of the Ain department and a strip of territory of the Bouches-du-Rhône⁴. By virtue of Hitler's decision to leave the defence of the Toulon military harbour to the French Navy, Nice and Grenoble were the only two major cities under direct Italian control⁵.

⁴ The Italian military authorities' preparations for and implementation of the invasion of southeastern France have been retraced in detail by Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 105 ff. See also Carpi, *Between*, 80.

⁵ Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 112.

Map 2



Source: Carpi, *Between*, 81.

This chapter retraces fascist security policy in the Italian occupation zone in the wake of the invasion of the Unoccupied Zone in November 1942. It focuses on the Comando Supremo's decision in early December 1942 to arrest enemy aliens and intern foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jews in the French territories where the IVth Army

was stationed. This decision marked a turning point in fascist security policy in southern France, as it significantly extended the scope of the Italian repression in the French territories that fell under the IVth Army's control. Moreover, the decision to target Jews as part of the purge of the newly occupied territories was taken at a time when the Nazi-led 'final solution of the Jewish question', that is, 'the extermination of all Jews under German rule'⁶, was well underway. This chapter retraces the genesis and rationale of the Comando Supremo's decision and then reconstructs the preparations of the different Italian agencies, namely the Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry, involved in its implementation. Historians usually perceive that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was a reaction to the Nazi and/or French efforts to get hold of Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone. However, this chapter reveals that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France took shape *before* those efforts. The Italian decision to target Jews was taken simultaneously⁷ but, crucially, independently from the French authorities and, therefore, fascist Jewish policy needs to be understood in the context of the broader security policy implemented by the Italian military and Police authorities in their occupation zone.

Italian security policy in southeastern France

Similar to their German counterparts, the Italian top military leaders were very concerned with being prepared to counter a possible Anglo-American landing on the French Mediterranean shores. Accordingly, as soon as the IVth Army poured into southeastern France on 11 November 1942, the purge began of any real or alleged enemy presence that could have operated behind the Italian defensive lines in the territories that eventually fell under Italian control⁸. In addition to the arrests carried out directly by the Italian troops, two other operations were immediately launched. The Centre for counterespionage (Centro C.S.) in Nice, led by the Maggiore dei

⁶ P. Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 313.

⁷ See ch. 3.

⁸ News of arrests carried out by the Italian troops immediately after their invasion of southeastern France can be found in several reports sent in the first weeks of the occupation by the French local authorities to the government in Vichy. AN, AJ/41/439, s.d. A.II Arrestations (Libérations) and s.d. A.V Attitude des troupes italiennes; ADS, 1382W/44, d. Armée italienne: arrestations et incidents 1942-43; ADS, 1372W/48, d. Affaires liés à l'occupation italienne – Rapports au ministère de l'Intérieur (Préfet de Savoie) 1942-1943; ADS, 1382W/20, d. Rapports du Préfet de la Savoie au Préfet régional 1942 et 1944, s.d. novembre-décembre 1942).

Carabinieri (Carabinieri Major), Edoardo Pescara Diano⁹, launched its own operation targeting known British and French intelligence agents on the Riviera. Meanwhile, the Commissario di Pubblica Sicurezza (Police Superintendent), Rosario Oreste Barranco, and his unit began pursuing antifascists, most notably communists.

The Vichy government's reaction was just as quick as the Italian operations. Perceiving the arrests carried out by the Italian authorities as an encroachment on French sovereignty, the head of the French government, Pierre Laval, immediately lodged a formal protest through the president of the French delegation at the Italian Armistice Commission with France¹⁰ (CIAF), vice-Admiral Émile Duplat¹¹. In addition, a few days after the Italian invasion, the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes, Marcel Ribière, and his Savoie colleague, Henri Maillard, demanded that General Vercellino put an immediate stop to the arrests. Vercellino acceded to the prefects' demands and requested a ruling from the Comando Supremo¹². The Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM), or Military Intelligence Service, and the Foreign Ministry, however, deemed the French protests groundless¹³. On 24 November, the Comando Supremo informed the IVth Army Command that the operations against enemy agents had 'to be fully developed.'¹⁴ Finally, at the end of the month, Mussolini also gave his approval to resume the operations¹⁵. Hence, Pescara's and Barranco's units immediately continued the operations. On 29 November alone, Barranco reported to Rome about twelve arrests carried out by his men¹⁶.

⁹ The Centre for counterespionage in Nice, which was a branch of the 'Bonsignore' Division of the Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM), or Military Intelligence Service, was created sometime during 1941 (M. G. Pasqualini, *Carte segrete dell'intelligence italiana, 1919-1949* (Rome: edition out of commerce, 2007), 179). Regarding its activity in southern France, see G. Conti, *Una guerra segreta. Il Sim nel secondo conflitto mondiale* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2009), 340-51.

¹⁰ The CIAF (Commissione Italiana di Armistizio con la Francia) was created soon after the armistice agreement between Italy and France on 24 June to supervise its implementation. Regarding its activities, see R. H. Rainero, *Mussolini e Pétain. Storia dei rapporti tra l'Italia e la Francia di Vichy*, 2 vols (Rome: USSME, 1990-92).

¹¹ AN, AJ/41/439, s.d. A.II, correspondence between Laval, Duplat and the *Direction des Services de l'Armistice*, November 1942.

¹² AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1099, Comando 4a Armata – Stato maggiore, Diario storico militare (ottobre, novembre, dicembre 1942), entry 20 November 1942 and allegato 39.

¹³ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/9 Spionaggio e stranieri sospetti.

¹⁴ USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. VIII, tomo 1 (Diario) (Rome: USSME, 1999), 864, entry 24 November 1942.

¹⁵ Conti, *Una guerra*, 346; Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 395, footnote 632.

¹⁶ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, bb. 1942-34/36, Barranco to Chief of Police, (35691, 35704 to 35712 and 35734) 29 November 1942. Two days later, 1 December, Barranco reported on yet two new arrests. *Ibid.*, (35949 and 35951) 1 December 1942.

These operations were justified by the Italian military authorities' concerns to guarantee the security of their troops. This motive was pointed out plainly to Duplat by General Arturo Vacca Maggiolini, the president of the CIAF, in response to the French protests during a meeting held on 25 November¹⁷.

A turning point in the purge of dangerous civilians from the Italian occupation zone occurred on 3 December when, in response to a message from the German Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or Armed Forces High Command, the Comando Supremo announced to its German counterpart the measures to be taken 'against enemy aliens and Jews in the French metropolitan territory'¹⁸ under Italian control. I have been unable to find the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's message (which was dated 30 November) or the Comando Supremo's reply (that the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht received on 4 December)¹⁹. Nonetheless, the content of the Comando Supremo's decision can be inferred based upon an exchange of messages during December 1942 among the Italian Ministries directly involved in the policy's implementation.

The first message below was an undated copy of the *appunto*, or note, that the Office IV for Confidential Affairs (A.G. IV) of the Direzione generale Affari generali, or General Affairs Directorate of the Foreign Ministry, sent to the SIM to express its views on the measures due to be implemented in southern France. The *appunto* began thus:

With relation to the memorandum (*Promemoria*) n. 5357/C.S. dated 8.12.1941²⁰ from the Comando Supremo (SIM), this R[oyal] Foreign Ministry acknowledges the decision to proceed in the French metropolitan territories occupied by the Italian troops:

- to the apprehension of dangerous enemy aliens;

¹⁷ AN, AJ/41/439, s.d. A.II, Duplat to head of the French government, (1485/P) 26 November 1942.

¹⁸ USSME, *Diario Storico*, 951, entry 3 December 1942.

¹⁹ In particular, the *allegato* (enclosure) 191 to the *diario storico* (military log) of the Comando Supremo (AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1481, Diario storico militare del Comando Supremo, Allegati 1-20 dicembre 1942) baring the latter's reply to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, was not found in the Italian military archives in Rome at the time of my visit in the spring of 2013. In fact, it is not even clear whether the *allegato* has survived the war, for it has not been published in the edition of the *diario storico* edited by Antonello Biagini and Fernando Frattolillo (USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. VIII, Tomo 2 (Allegati) (Rome: USSME, 1999)).

²⁰ Although I could not find the memorandum from the SIM, it is apparent that the date indicated in the Office IV *appunto* was a typo and that the real date of the memorandum n. 5357/C.S. was 8 December 1942.

– to the internment of Jews²¹.

The content of the Office IV *appunto* was confirmed in a second message that the Comando Supremo sent to the Foreign Ministry and the Interior Ministry on 12 December:

Following concerns raised by the Germans, it has been decided upon high that all subjects of enemy states deemed dangerous must be arrested immediately, and Jews resident in metropolitan French territory must be interned²².

Not only were enemy intelligence agents and Italian political refugees to be tracked down and held by the Italian troops, but also generically all ‘dangerous’ enemy aliens and Jews living in the ten French departments either fully or partially occupied by the IVth Army. As historian Klaus Voigt indicated, the reference in the Comando Supremo’s message to the highest echelons suggests that it was Mussolini himself who made that decision²³. Equally noteworthy was the implicit conflation, in that message, of enemy aliens and Jews under one umbrella of ‘dangerous’ elements. As early as the summer of 1940, the fascist government had implemented the domestic internment of foreign Jews as a means to neutralise their ‘danger’²⁴. As will be explored in the next chapter, a similar measure was also later implemented in the Croatian territories occupied by the Italian IInd Army. In southeastern France, the

²¹ A copy of the *appunto* was forwarded with other cables from the Foreign Ministry by the director of the General Affairs Directorate, Count Luigi Vidau, to the Political Police Division which in turn forwarded them to the Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, or Division for General and Confidential Affairs, both part of the Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, or Head Police Branch, at the Ministry of the Interior, on 13 January 1943. ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46 Campi di concentramento in territorio francese.

²² Quoted by D. Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 394. Original Italian document reproduced by K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 296. The gist of the Comando Supremo’s message to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht was also reported in a message dated 2 February 1943 from the German Embassy in Paris to the *Oberbefehlshaber West*, or High Commander in the west. The following day, the same message was forwarded to the head of the SiPo-SD in the Occupied Zone and, for reference, to Heinz Röthke (CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-259, German Embassy in Paris to various recipients, (249/43g) 3 February 1943; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 203).

²³ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 296.

²⁴ In the weeks immediately preceding Italy’s entry into the war, Mussolini gave instructions to intern in concentration camps certain categories of foreign Jews residing in Italy and Italian Jews deemed dangerous, along with other categories of civilians. M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 141-42 and 146-47.

decision to take measures against Jewish refugees as part of a larger security policy was, therefore, the result of an overlap between military rationale and anti-Semitic prejudices. The underlying reasoning was that all Jews, by the very fact of being Jews, were potential enemy agents possibly supporting the western Allies or, worse, the Soviet Union²⁵.

The ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ in France

According to Voigt, the message of 12 December also indicates that the Italian decision to extend security policy to enemy aliens and Jews was taken after the Comando Supremo had received the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht’s message from 30 November²⁶. As mentioned, the Axis invasion of the Unoccupied Zone was due to the German fear of an Anglo-American landing on the French Mediterranean coast. Hence, it seems reasonable to link the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht’s message with strategic concerns to secure that new potential frontline²⁷.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that the Comando Supremo’s decision to arrest enemy aliens and intern Jews was taken scant months after the Nazi policy to exterminate European Jews, the so-called ‘final solution of the Jewish question’, had reached its most intensively murderous, and at a time vastly extensive murderous ambition²⁸. Military ‘rationale’ (and the war at large) and the ‘final solution’ were

²⁵ Traces of these accusations can be found in some of the *notiziari quindicinali*, or fortnightly bulletins, distributed by the CIAF to the Italian security services in southern France. For instance, one *notiziario* reported rumours that ‘wealthy Jews’ (*ebrei molto abbienti*) residing in Nice were trying to create ‘an atmosphere of consensus’ around communists. In another *notiziario*, ‘denaro ebraico’, or Jewish money, was associated with clandestine resistance organisations (AISRC, *Notiziario Quindicinale n° 52* [second fortnight of January 1943], and *Notiziario Quindicinale n° 54* [second fortnight of February 1943], 18). An echo of Italian anti-Semitic prejudice can be also found in a report on the situation in France dated 5 April 1943, whereby the Italian Border Police associated Jews with illegal abortion practices (ACS, MI, PS, DAGR, Cat. perm. A5G Seconda guerra mondiale, b. 55, f. 20/2 Notizie dalla frontiera e oltrefrontiera – Francia, Border Police Report, (1076/9) 5 April 1943). Moreover, it should be stressed that since 1939 Jews in Italy were prohibited from participating ‘in the provision of supplies for military barracks’, as this activity entailed knowledge of sensitive information about Italian military units. M. A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini’s Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 87.

²⁶ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 296.

²⁷ Schipsi, *L’occupazione*, 129-30, and Carpi, *Between*, 79-80. For the same reason, on 3 December – that is, on the same day of the Comando Supremo’s message to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – German and Italian intelligence services met in Nice to discuss new measures to adopt in newly occupied territories, agreeing on that occasion upon the need to arrest and intern enemy aliens (Conti, *Una guerra*, 348, and Schipsi, *L’occupazione*, 394-95).

²⁸ Donald Bloxham writes that ‘the year from mid-March 1942 was the most murderous of the whole genocide ... the most murderous *weeks* [Italics in the original] were the seven from late July to mid-

two strictly intertwined and mutually reinforcing components in the Nazi worldview. Peter Longerich has explained that ‘war was synonymous with the opportunity to realize the national Socialist utopia of a comprehensive new social order conceived on racial grounds.’²⁹ Within this ideological framework, the hunt for ‘the Jew’ in all territories under direct German control had become an imperative for the Nazi security services, especially after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, when a sheer paranoia of Judeo-Bolshevik ‘fifth columns’ seized the Nazi leadership³⁰. In the eyes of the Nazi central and occupation authorities, security policy in the occupied territories was synonymous with the implementation of the ‘final solution’³¹.

In France, deportations began as early as March 1942 and resulted in a total of around 42,000 deportees by the end of the year³². The already precarious life conditions of the Jewish refugees living in the Unoccupied Zone worsened particularly during the months immediately preceding the Axis armies’ invasion. At the end of August 1942, the French Police carried out massive round-ups across the Unoccupied Zone³³. The operation resulted in the deportation to Auschwitz of more than 6,500 foreign and stateless Jews, and of approximately 3,000 foreign Jews previously interned in camps in the Unoccupied Zone³⁴. The very last deportation train from France in 1942 left the Drancy camp packed with 745 Jews on 11 November³⁵, on the very same day that the IVth Army invaded southern France.

It was against this background that as early as 16 November Hitler issued the ‘Special Order Number 1 for newly occupied French territory’ which gave free rein to the SS in the former Unoccupied Zone. Accordingly, SS-Brigadeführer Carl

September 1942.’ D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.

²⁹ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 132.

³⁰ An example of this in Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 223-28. See also Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 46 and 159.

³¹ See chs 5 and 6.

³² Longerich, *Holocaust*, 327-29 and 360-61.

³³ Following instructions from the French Chief of Police, René Bousquet, the French Police targeted Russian refugees and Jews from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Danzig, the Saar Basin, and the Soviet Union, who had entered France after 1 January 1936. R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 275.

³⁴ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 360-61.

³⁵ S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1942* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 493.

Oberg, the Supreme Head of the SS and Police in France, mobilised his *Einsatzkommandos*. These units were to swiftly move south to begin their operations in the new occupation zones. However, Oberg's men could not operate in the territories where the Italian troops were stationed, for these were not under the direct German command. Therefore, also on the 16th, Oberg, who had been directly involved in the extermination of Jews during his tenure as SS and Police Leader in Radom, Poland, between September 1941 and May 1942, immediately wired Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, the request to be allowed to 'make a personal visit to the Italian divisional commanders in question to make an attempt in your name to settle the matter.' The reason for taking such an urgent and direct step was that 'it is absolutely vital that our *Einsatzkommandos* ... be allowed to operate in the area near Lac Léman, in Marseilles and on the Côte d'Azur.'³⁶

It is not clear whether Oberg was ever allowed to approach the Italian occupation authorities³⁷. Regardless, *if* Voigt's argument – that the Comando Supremo's decision to arrest enemy aliens and intern Jews was taken only *after* it had received the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's message – is correct, then we may conclude that the Comando Supremo's decision to arrest enemy aliens and intern Jews had been influenced by the German intervention. What is certain is that following the invasion of the Unoccupied Zone the Nazi authorities intended to put pressure on their fascist allies to align (or not interfere) with the German security policy. This in view of what Longerich has called 'an expansion of persecution'³⁸ to the newly French occupied territories (including Tunisia) that followed the Allied landing in North Africa.

Interning the Jews: the role of the Italian Police

News of the German authorities' resolve to purge the newly occupied territories of any 'dangerous' presence soon reached also the Italian Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry. On or immediately before 1 December, and presumably still against the

³⁶ J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 106-08. The quotations come from an extract of Oberg's message to Himmler that is reproduced by *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 401.

background of Hitler's special order, the recently appointed head of the *Sicherheitspolizei – Sicherheitsdienst* (SiPo-SD, Security Police – Security Service) unit in the Lyons region³⁹, SS-Sturmbannführer Rolf Mühler, visited the Italian General Consulate⁴⁰ in Lyons. Mühler informed the Italian representatives of his plans to arrest all German political refugees and suspects potentially endangering the German troops. In addition, he made enquiries about Italy's 'intentions as to political exiles and Italian communists' living in the Lyons area, adding that, in his opinion, they all had to be arrested and handed over to the Italian authorities⁴¹. It is not clear whether Mühler took that step as per instructions from his superiors, or on his own initiative. No evidence suggests that it was linked in any way to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's message to the Comando Supremo or to Oberg's message to Himmler⁴². Nevertheless, although Mühler did not mention the 'Jewish problem' to the Italian representatives, it is difficult to ignore the timing of his visit.

Mühler's enquiry eventually arrived via the Foreign Ministry⁴³ to the desk of the fascist Chief of Police, Carmine Senise, who on 5 December requested Commissario

³⁹ Before his appointment in Lyons, Mühler served as head of the SiPo-SD unit in the Rouen region, north-west of Paris. I. Levendel and B. Weisz, *Hunting Down the Jews: Vichy, the Nazis and Mafia Collaborators in Provence 1942-1944* (New York: Enigma Books, 2011), 325.

⁴⁰ From July 1940 onwards, the Italian Consular offices in Nice, Cannes, Toulon, Marseilles and Chambéry operated under the official name of Regie Delegazioni per il Rimpatrio e Assistenza Italiani all'Estero, or Royal Delegations for Repatriation and Assistance to Italians Abroad. The former General Consulate in Lyons was renamed Organismo di Controllo per l'Esecuzione Articolo XXI Convenzione Armistizio, or Supervisory Body for the Implementation of the Clause XXI of the Armistice Agreement. These delegations were attached to the CIAF and, officially, were in charge of supervising the implementation of the Franco-Italian armistice's clauses. In fact, they replaced the Italian Consular offices that had been closed after Italy's entry into the war on 10 June. Eventually, the Foreign Ministry was also allowed to open delegations in Avignon, Montpellier, Nîmes, Toulouse, Grenoble and Annecy (ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 69/6 Ufficio di Mentone – Conte Bonarelli, Appunto (note) for the Comando Supremo, 29 March 1943; Ibid., b. 69/5 Riapertura RR. Uffici consolari; Carpi, *Between*, 6 and 252-53 endnote 14; Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 117-20). However, for the sake of clarity, throughout this thesis, I will refer to these delegations as (vice-)Consulate or General Consulate, depending on the case.

⁴¹ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/13 Fuoriuscitismo. General Consulate in Lyons to Foreign Ministry, (7592R) 1 December 1942.

⁴² Possibly, Mühler's visit to the Italian General Consulate should be read in relation to the German-Italian collaboration that had been established for the handover to the fascist Police of Italian political refugees arrested in German-occupied Belgium and France since 1940. M. Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2004), 472-73.

⁴³ Although the Italian representatives in Lyons assured Mühler of 'an effective collaboration', they did not give any definitive answers to the SS officer as to what they planned to do with Italian political refugees. Instead, they requested to the Foreign Ministry that a 'high-ranking Police officer' be sent to discuss the matter directly with the Germans. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/13, General Consulate in Lyons to Foreign Ministry, (7592R) 1 December 1942.

Barranco to go ‘at once, if possible’, to Lyons to meet the SS officer⁴⁴. Meanwhile, Senise and the fascist Political Police had also become involved in the preparations for the measures due to be taken against enemy aliens and Jews residing in the Italian occupation zone. In particular, the SIM requested that the Political Police Division take charge of implementing the measures against ‘dangerous and suspect people’ (i.e. enemy aliens and Jews) residing in the Italian occupation zone, ‘also because this question was linked with the political police services’ in that area⁴⁵. Likely following consultations with the Chief of the Political Police, Guido Leto, in the evening of 8 December Senise announced to Barranco his new appointment as officer in charge of security policy in southern France. In addition to his tasks of political repression and counterespionage, Barranco was now entrusted with arranging and supervising the operations of the IVth Army to purge the Italian occupation zone of ‘suspect elements.’ Once arrested, these individuals would be interned in ‘concentration camps’ established by the IVth Army, which would also put men at Barranco’s disposal⁴⁶. It is important to stress that, unlike the Comando Supremo, Senise (i.e. the fascist Police) did not receive any direct German requests to take action against suspect elements in the Italian-occupied French territories.

Barranco reacted promptly to Senise’s instructions. On 14 December he was in Lyons to meet with Mühler⁴⁷. Regarding the operations due to be taken against suspect elements, on his return to Nice on 15 December, Barranco discovered that the Italian troops were preparing a concentration camp to hold 400 inmates. Yet, in a telegram from 16 December, Barranco informed Senise that the IVth Army

⁴⁴ Ibid., b. 1942-90, Chief of Police to Barranco, (500/89732) 5 December 1942.

⁴⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Political Police to DAGR, (500/6672) 5 March 1943.

⁴⁶ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Partenza, b. 1942-91, Chief of Police to Barranco, (500/90427) 8 December 1942.

⁴⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period December 1942. There is no record in the Italian archives of the content of Barranco’s meeting with Mühler. In the telegram that Barranco sent to Senise upon his return from Lyons on 16 December, there was no reference of meeting the German authorities. However, due to another telegram that Barranco sent to Senise a few days later, we can infer that some sort of agreement regarding the German handover of Italian political refugees to the fascist Police was reached in Lyons. On 20 December 1942, Barranco asked Senise for instructions as to the arrest of two Italian suspects residing in the German occupation zone. In particular, Barranco wanted to know whether he should simply ask the Germans to obtain the targets or, instead, organise a joint operation by involving an Italian agent. ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1942-38, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (37708) 20 December 1942.

Command had still not received any instructions as regards the measures due to be taken against enemy aliens and Jews⁴⁸.

How many Jews?

Tellingly, in November and December 1942, none of the Italian agencies involved in the decision-making process concerning the internment of Jews seem to have raised the question of their number. Senise's second message to Barranco (dated 8 December) made no reference to Jews or their internment. This absence is even more striking if we look at it in light of the logistical problems that, in terms of sheer numbers, the Comando Supremo's decision to intern Jews in Italian-occupied France posed to Barranco and the IVth Army.

As scholars have highlighted⁴⁹, every attempt to accurately calculate the number of Jews living in Vichy France during the war invariably meets with major difficulties. The ten departments occupied by the IVth Army in November 1942 are no exception. Three, strictly interrelated and mutually influencing reasons account for these difficulties: firstly, the Vichy authorities' failure to keep track of Jewish population movements, despite their efforts; secondly, the continual roundups and deportations that, from the summer of 1942 onwards, repeatedly altered the number of Jews residing in France as well as their distribution across the country; and thirdly, the unceasing stream of Jews fleeing south from the Occupied to the Unoccupied Zone, and throughout the Unoccupied Zone, in order to escape arrest and deportation⁵⁰. Because of these challenges, we can only estimate the general trends of the Jewish presence in the ten departments under the IVth Army control, as well as those departments bordering them. According to French data, in early 1942, the Jewish population in the Unoccupied Zone fluctuated between 110,000 and 150,000 people, of whom approximately 21,500 lived in departments later occupied by the Italian IVth Army (or approximately 39,000, if we also take the Bouches-du-

⁴⁸ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1942-38, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (36950) 11 December 1942 and (37387) 16 December 1942

⁴⁹ Poznanski, *Jews*, 356-58; Carpi, *Between*, 13.

⁵⁰ Poznanski, *Jews*, 356-58.

Rhône department into account)⁵¹. A French report from March 1943 reported similar figures: 140,000 Jews were living in the former Unoccupied Zone between the period from December 1942 to early 1943⁵². Some 15,000 were reportedly in the Nice region (comprising the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments and fully under Italian control), 40,000 in the Lyons region (half occupied by the IVth Army, which was stationed in Savoie, Haute-Savoie, part of the Ain, Drôme and Isère⁵³, with the latter alone harbouring between 8,000 and 12,000 Jews⁵⁴), while 32,000 were said to be in the Marseilles region (which was also almost entirely under the control of the Italian troops, stationed in Vaucluse, Var and Hautes-Alpes, and also controlling a strip of territory of the Bouches-du-Rhône⁵⁵). Consequently, around 87,000 Jews, meaning those deemed French, foreign and/or stateless Jews, were living in the Italian occupation zone and its neighbouring departments in early 1943⁵⁶.

Although these figures are the result of rough estimation, they convey the scale and complexity of the task that the IVth Army was entrusted with in December 1942. At the same time, the great relevance of the sheer numerical weight of the Jewish population in the Italian occupation zone accounts for Oberg's, and later other Nazi authorities', relentless efforts to extend the 'final solution' to that region.

The Foreign Ministry's protection of Italian Jews in France

Similar to the fascist Police, also the Foreign Ministry gave Mühler's request priority over the measures due to be taken against enemy aliens and Jews. The Foreign

⁵¹ The figure of 110,000 refers to March 1942, but was based on data that the prefects of the Unoccupied Zone collected during the 1941 census and did not include children under the age of fifteen, as well as Jews interned in the camps (AN, F/7/14887, d. Affaires juives, s.d. Recensement et listes de Juifs, the chief of the Police for Jewish Affairs in the Unoccupied Zone to chief of the S.P.A.C., (HL/YP 2071) 13 April 1942, and AN, AJ/38/244, d. Recensement des juifs en Z.N.O (1942); see also, Poznanski, *Jews*, 356). The figure of 150,000 is based on an estimate made by Xavier Vallat, head of the *Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives*, or Commissariat-General for Jewish Affairs, in early 1942 (Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 103).

⁵² Poznanski, *Jews*, 356-57. The data in the report referred to February 1943.

⁵³ The other departments listed as belonging to the Lyons region were Jura, Saône-et-Loire, Rhône and Loire.

⁵⁴ R. Fivaz-Silbermann, 'Par la porte de secours: la fuite des Juifs dans l'après 8 septembre 1943', in J.-W. Dereymez, *Le refuge et le piège: les Juifs dans les Alpes (1938-1945)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 224.

⁵⁵ The other departments listed as belonging to the Marseilles region were Corsica, which was also under Italian occupation, and Gard.

⁵⁶ Poznanski, *Jews*, 356-57.

Minister himself, Galeazzo Ciano, discussed Mühler's request within a telegram addressed to the Embassy (Regia rappresentanza) in Paris and the General Consulates in Lyons and Marseilles on 14 December. Ciano explained that the matter was now in the hands of the Interior Ministry, which had charged Barranco to meet the German authorities. Nonetheless, Ciano requested the Italian political plenipotentiary in Paris, Gino Buti, to inform the local SS Command that, although the Foreign Ministry 'had no objections' to 'contingent' German measures addressing 'urgent and exceptional cases', the Italian government wanted to settle the issue of Italian political refugees in France 'by mutual agreement' with the German authorities. Accordingly, Ciano requested that no 'definitive measures' be taken against Italian citizens, 'even if they are not Aryans.'⁵⁷

This last remark referred to twenty Jews of Italian nationality (one of whom had died, while three others had been 'deported [to] eastern Europe') that the Nazi authorities had arrested in the Occupied Zone in the previous months. The Foreign Ministry had already given clear instructions to the Italian Embassies in Berlin and Paris demanding their immediate release and assurances to prevent such cases from happening again in the future⁵⁸. However, from Ciano's words, it is apparent that the Foreign Ministry feared that both the invasion of the Unoccupied Zone and the German resolve to purge the newly occupied territories of dangerous elements could create similar cases⁵⁹.

It is important to stress that the fascist government was not the only government that sought dispensation for its Jewish citizens from German or French persecutory

⁵⁷ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/13, Ciano to Embassy in Paris and Deleciaf in Lyons and Marseilles, (43114 PR/C) 14 December 1942. Copy of the telegram in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46.

⁵⁸ Ibid., b. 64/8 Sionismo, Ciano to Italian Embassies in Berlin and Paris, (42843 PR) 11 December 1942. The telegram is reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. IX (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1989), 396-97, doc. 399.

⁵⁹ This concern clearly emerged also in a second telegram that was sent to the Italian Ambassador to Berlin, Dino Alfieri, on 19 December. This time, the telegram was signed by Marquis Blasco Lanza d'Ajeta, Ciano's chief of cabinet. D'Ajeta informed Alfieri of the fascist government's recent decisions as to the arrest of Italian political refugees in the German occupation zone and explained that Rome's decision to collaborate with the Nazi authorities was taken in the quest 'to avoid possible [German] mistakes in the choice of the elements to be removed or in any case isolated', that was, Italian Jews. Hence, as Ciano had instructed Buti, d'Ajeta also instructed Alfieri to remind the 'German central authorities' that similar to the Occupied Zone, Italian citizens, Jews included, in the former Unoccupied Zone, had to be spared any 'definitive measures.' ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, (43770 PR) d'Ajeta to Italian Embassy in Berlin, 19 December 1942. Copy of d'Ajeta's telegram in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46. Quotation from Carpi, *Between*, 87.

measures. On a number of occasions, the Turkish representatives in France approached German or French authorities to obtain exemption for Jews whose Turkish citizenship had been ascertained (and only for them) from persecutory measures⁶⁰. The Spanish and Romanian representatives took similar steps to protect their Jewish co-citizens⁶¹. Equally noteworthy is that the diplomatic protection granted by the Foreign Ministry to the few hundred Italian Jews living in the former Unoccupied Zone (and to Italian Jews in the Occupied Zone) was primarily concerned with prohibiting their arrest and deportation eastward, while nonetheless still permitting lesser discriminatory measures in accordance with the anti-Jewish persecution enforced in Italy since 1938⁶². That said, it is worth pondering over the rationale behind the Italians' objections against the deportation eastward of 'their' Jews. This rationale was summarised by the officials of the Foreign Ministry in an unsigned memorandum, dated 22 September 1942, that was submitted to Mussolini to discuss the German request that as of 1 January 1943, Italian Jews in the Occupied Zone either be stripped of their diplomatic protection, with all the consequences that this would entail (i.e. deportation eastward), or else be repatriated to Italy. The officials of the Foreign Ministry reacted to the proposal by stating that 'the deportation to Poland, which could have tragic consequences, is a step not in tune with Italian racial policy, which starts out from the concept of distinguishing and separating (*distinguere e differenziare*) the Jews ... , without however going as far as persecution.' The memorandum then added that the German request clearly

⁶⁰ Corry Guttstadt (*Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 191-209) reveals that the Turkish representatives in France were quite strict on this issue. The action of the Turkish honorary Consul in Lyons, Albert Routier, was the only (temporary) exception. Moreover, this policy also continued after the beginning of deportations from France. In fact, on several occasions the Turkish authorities showed disinterest even towards Jews with Turkish citizenship. Moreover, in February 1943, the Turkish government stripped of their citizenship some thousand Turkish Jews residing in France, whose repatriation had been demanded by the Nazi authorities in October 1942, yet without explicitly consenting to their deportation (Ibid., 209-15 and 224 ff.).

⁶¹ Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 305.

⁶² Regarding Italian Jews in the Occupied Zone, see Carpi, *Between*, 40-63. Persecutory measures endured by Italian Jews in Vichy France before the Italian occupation in November 1942 consisted primarily of a slightly mitigated version of the measures of economic dispossession of Jewish properties (the so-called *aryanisation*) carried out by the French government from July 1941 onwards. However, to this day, the aryanisation of properties owned by Italian Jews in the Unoccupied Zone has not yet been thoroughly studied by scholars and, thus, very little is known of its actual implementation and outcome. For the Foreign Ministry's stance on the issue see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46. For an individual case of aryanisation, though not necessarily representative of major trends, see L. Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati e la «questione ebraica» nella Francia occupata dall'esercito italiano* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2013), 73-79 and 116-17.

conflicted with ‘conditions of a political, economic, and military character’ that had pushed the Foreign Ministry to protect Italian Jews abroad, as well as the economic positions they held, especially in North Africa and the Levant. Hence, in the Foreign Ministry’s view, it ‘seem[ed] appropriate to make it clear to the German authorities that it is impossible to accede to their request.’⁶³

The German proposal for the repatriation of Italian Jews fell on deaf ears, but the Foreign Ministry memorandum rejected also the possibility of killing (or permit the killing of) Italian Jews. Hence, we can assume that the Foreign Ministry’s refusal to allow the deportation of Italian Jews from the Occupied Zone in September 1942, and from the Unoccupied Zone in December 1942, was underpinned by its refusal to participate in the German ‘final solution of the Jewish question’. However, it should also be noted that, although Mussolini approved of the Foreign Ministry’s viewpoint, he nonetheless decided to grant the German request that Italian Jews in the Occupied Zone wear the ‘yellow star’. The Foreign Ministry accepted Mussolini’s decision⁶⁴.

Fascist Italy and the knowledge of the ‘final solution’

What, precisely, did the fascist rulers know about Nazi exterminatory policy by the end of 1942? Since earlier that summer, information on deportations and massacres carried out by the Nazis, as well as on the appalling conditions that Jews were subjected to while shut in the ghettos in eastern Europe, had begun to reach the highest echelons of Italian politics. As early as 10 July, Count Luca Pietromarchi, a senior diplomat and head of the Armistice-Peace Office at the Foreign Ministry, reported in his diary a BBC news report about the killing of 700,000 Polish Jews⁶⁵.

Indirect, yet unequivocal, confirmation of this news arrived on 18 August, when Prince Otto Christian von Bismarck, adviser of the German Embassy in Rome, requested, allegedly on behalf of Reich Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop,

⁶³ Carpi, *Between*, 47-50 [quotations from pp. 49-50]. A copy of the Foreign Ministry’s memorandum and the Italian translation of the German request, which was also dated 22 September, are in ASMAE, Gab., Serie V - Ufficio Armistizio-Pace, 1507 b. 15 Condizione degli ebrei in Croazia. The official response of the Foreign Ministry to the German request is reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. IX, 212-13, doc. 206, Italian Foreign Ministry to German Embassy in Rome, (34R – 10117/297) 10 October 1942.

⁶⁴ Carpi, *Between*, 51.

⁶⁵ M. Knox, ‘Das faschistische Italien und die “Endlösung”, 1942/43’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 57. Other examples of similar information that via different channels reached Rome in that same period in *Ibid.*, 54.

that the fascist government hand over Jewish refugees in the Croatian territories controlled by the Italian Ind Army. These Jews were to be surrendered to the Ustaša regime which, since April 1941, the Axis powers had put at the head of a formally independent Croatian State born from the ashes of Yugoslavia. When delivering Ribbentrop's request to a senior official of the Italian Foreign Ministry, Bismarck also revealed that Jews would subsequently be deported eastward where their 'dispersion and total elimination' would be carried out⁶⁶.

Further news about mass killings reached Rome in the following months. On 30 September, Alfieri informed Ciano that the German authorities in Poland 'withdrew all Jews' ration cards with the consequences that can be imagined.'⁶⁷ On 11 October, during Himmler's visit to Rome, Mussolini was informed by the Reichsführer SS of the mass executions of Jews, including women and children, carried out by the Germans on the eastern front⁶⁸. Then, in early November, Mussolini was presented with an *appunto* reporting that 'Jews of Croatia deported from the German zone of occupation to the eastern territories have been "eliminated" by means of toxic gas in the train in which they were enclosed.'⁶⁹ Some twenty days later, on 27 November, Pietromarchi reported similar news in his diary, adding chilling details of daily atrocities perpetrated in the Warsaw ghetto. Pietromarchi concluded by reporting that 'it is estimated that one million Jews have been killed.'⁷⁰ Regarding the top Italian military authorities, Jonathan Steinberg argues that Cavallero, who was a staunch supporter of collaboration with the Germans, was well informed about the Nazi 'final

⁶⁶ Ibid., 53. These events are discussed in more detail in ch. 3.

⁶⁷ Alfieri to Ciano, (RS 15136) 30 September 1942. Reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. IX, 173-76 (quotation from p. 175), doc. 168. In his diary Ciano made no reference to the news. G. Ciano, *Diary 1937-1943* (New York: Enigma Books, 2002), 549-51.

⁶⁸ Knox, 'Das faschistische', 59; Carpi, *Between*, 53; J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 69-70. During that visit, Himmler also announced to Mussolini the German plans 'to remove the Jews from the whole of Germany, from the area of the General Government and all the occupied countries.' Apparently, Mussolini reacted to Himmler's statement by saying that 'this was the only possible solution.'

⁶⁹ Quoted by Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 76-77. The *appunto*, dated 4 November 1942, was based on information gathered by the Carabinieri General Giuseppe Pièche during a mission in Croatia. The original copy of the *appunto* has not been preserved in the Foreign Ministry archives. A copy of it in ASMAE, Gab., Serie V – Ufficio Armistizio-Pace, 1507 b. 15 Condizione degli ebrei in Croazia.

⁷⁰ ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio-31 dicembre 1942, entry 27 November 1942. Drawing on a *New York Times* article from 9 December 1942, entitled 'President renews pledges to Jews', Pietromarchi updated his records on 13 December that the estimated number of Jews murdered by the Nazis had reached 'almost two millions' (Ibid., entry 13 December 1942).

solution'⁷¹. By contrast, it is unclear what the IVth Army Command knew about it in late 1942.

Interning the Jews: the role of the Foreign Ministry

Once the issue of German action against Italian citizens had been handled, the Foreign Ministry began reviewing the Comando Supremo's decision to arrest enemy aliens and intern Jews in southeastern France. In a cable dated 19 December, Ciano's chief of cabinet, Blasco Lanza d'Ajeta, announced to the Italian Ambassador to Berlin, Dino Alfieri, that a dedicated 'police force' subordinate to the IVth Army Command (i.e. Barranco's unit) would soon start arresting dangerous enemy aliens and interning Jews residing in the Italian occupation zone⁷². When d'Ajeta dispatched the cable, the Foreign Ministry had presumably already received the abovementioned *promemoria* from the SIM dated 8 December, as well as the message of 12 December⁷³ from the Comando Supremo, announcing the decision to take action against enemy aliens and Jews. The matter had then been assigned to the Office IV of the General Affairs Directorate⁷⁴. Hereupon, the Office IV officials prepared the aforementioned secret *appunto* in response to the SIM *promemoria* to outline the Foreign Ministry's point of view on the Comando Supremo's decision. The *appunto* read that the Foreign Ministry 'completely agreed' ('*questo R. Ministero si dichiara perfettamente d'accordo*') with the arrest of dangerous enemy aliens to such an extent that it proposed the arrest not only of enemy aliens, but also citizens of countries with which Italy had no diplomatic relations, and even citizens of neutral countries who nonetheless 'could be equally considered as dangerous.' Alternatively, these people could be interned in concentration camps or removed from the Italian occupation zone, according to their degree of dangerousness. Regarding the internment of Jews, the Foreign Ministry 'agreed' ('*si è d'accordo*') with the measure, provided that the internment be carried out 'adopting the same

⁷¹ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 63-66.

⁷² See footnote 59.

⁷³ See footnotes 21 and 22.

⁷⁴ Among the many tasks that were entrusted to this office, it also dealt with the statute and protection of Italian citizens in France, including Italian Jews; yet, following the messages of 8 and 12 December, these tasks now also included security policy in the territories under the control of the IVth Army. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Italia 1943, b. 87/6 Applicazioni di leggi razziali ai cittadini italiani all'estero.

criteria as in the Kingdom and therefore with some consideration (*con dei riguardi*) towards the elderly, children, women and sick people.⁷⁵

It is unclear when, if at all, the Office IV *appunto* was dispatched to the SIM. What seems to emerge clearly from the documentation, however, is that by the second half of December, the coordination of all the agencies (i.e. Comando Supremo, Police and Foreign Ministry) involved in the implementation of the decision to arrest dangerous enemy aliens and intern Jews in southeastern France had been accomplished. This is evidenced in the organisational and also operational guidelines (for matters concerning the Foreign Ministry's representatives in France) that d'Ajeta sent on 22 December to all the Italian central and occupation authorities directly involved in the security policy to be applied in the territories under the IVth Army control. The duties to identify, arrest and/or intern suspicious individuals, as well as to establish 'the concentration camps' were entrusted to a 'police force' deployed by the Interior Ministry, but subordinate to the IVth Army Command (i.e. Barranco's unit). In fact, as we have seen, at that point the IVth Army had already begun preparing one concentration camp to hold 400 inmates. In addition to the police force, d'Ajeta explained, the SIM's Centre for counterespionage in Nice would offer 'consultancy and help' to execute the purge effectively. The cooperation of the Foreign Ministry's representatives in the security policy was three-fold: firstly, providing information to help with 'locating people, companies and properties of Jewish origin'; secondly, resolving problems that would 'inevitably' arise with the French authorities; thirdly, collaborating with both the Italian military and Police authorities to help them fulfil their task. With regard to the specific measures against enemy aliens and Jews, d'Ajeta echoed the guidelines outlined in the Office IV *appunto*, whereby 'the criteria' adopted for the internment of Jews 'should not be different from those followed in the Kingdom towards foreign Jews' and that

⁷⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, *appunto* undated. The Office IV words on the treatment of Jews were not an empty euphemism. Those Jews who had been interned in camps scattered across the southern and central regions of the Italian peninsula after June 1940 had been subjected to decent, though often difficult, living conditions and almost always spared violence and humiliations of any sort (C. S. Capogreco, *I campi del duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)* (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), 132-33 and 156; Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 142-43). By contrast, the living conditions in the camps 'for Slavs' located astride the Italian-Yugoslav border and in territories under the control of the Italian IInd Army were very different and often appalling. In those camps, the death rates owing to undernourishment and illnesses were often terribly high (Capogreco, *I campi*, 135-52 and 156-57).

‘therefore some consideration (*qualche riguardo*) will have to be used towards the elderly, children, women and sick people.’ In fact, the biggest concern about Jews in southeastern France was related to the properties of those with Italian nationality. D’Ajeta stressed that those properties (and not the Jews) had ‘to be particularly protected as they represent Italian interest abroad’, notwithstanding the Foreign Ministry’s decision not to interfere with Vichy’s *aryanisation* of Jewish properties in the Unoccupied Zone. Similar to the case of deportations from the Occupied Zone, once again d’Ajeta underscored that the Foreign Ministry’s standpoint on property belonging to Italian Jews also applied to the new German occupation zone, and requested, therefore, that the Nazi authorities be reminded of this⁷⁶.

The Sospel concentration camp

Only the clearance of the Italian top military leaders was needed to launch the new phase of the Italian security policy in southeastern France. As mentioned, in mid-December the IVth Army Command was still waiting for instructions on the measures due to be taken against enemy aliens and Jews. In fact, in the *diario storico*, or military log, of the IVth Army Command for the period from October to December 1942, there was no record of orders or instructions regarding enemy aliens or Jews (or suspect civilians, for that matter)⁷⁷. Despite this, Vercellino and his staff had not remained idle on the matter of repression. In addition to the roundups of Frenchmen and foreigners carried out by the Italian troops immediately after the invasion of southeastern France, on 27 November the IVth Army Command ordered the arrest of any individuals caught in the act of sabotage or espousing defeatist propaganda. These orders were issued in response to a series of minor attacks, mostly without consequences, which targeted the Italian troops or Italian nationals during the first weeks of the occupation. Accordingly, on 4 December Vercellino issued new instructions to the corps commanders of the IVth Army, who were

⁷⁶ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 54/11 Dislocazione truppe italiane, d’Ajeta to Minister Bonarelli, head of the liaison office of the Foreign Ministry with the IVth Army Command, to the Italian representatives in Nice, Marseilles, Toulouse, Toulon, Montpellier, Chambéry, Annecy, Cannes, Grenoble, Nîmes, Avignon, Lyons, Bastia and Monaco, and for reference to the SIM, DAGR and the Italian representatives in Paris and Vichy, (34R/12579) 22 December 1942. Copy in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46.

⁷⁷ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1099, Comando 4a Armata – Stato maggiore, Diario storico militare (ottobre, novembre, dicembre 1942).

instructed to make lists of prominent French individuals and civilians suspected of anti-Italian activity who were to be taken hostage in case of new attacks on Italian troops⁷⁸.

One reason for the delay by the Comando Supremo and the Army General Staff (Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito) in granting clearance to the IVth Army Command to begin the operations was logistical. Before the operations against enemy aliens and Jews could begin, the IVth Army had to establish the concentration camps to intern those arrested. However, if we look at the broader picture, we see that also the Italian war effort on the Russian and African fronts might hint at part of the answer. In early December 1942, battles of the utmost importance were fought both in North Africa and Russia. Following the Anglo-American landings on 8 November, the circumstances of the Axis Armies in North Africa had progressively deteriorated. At the end of November, the eastern Libyan region of Cyrenaica was lost to the British Army. Meanwhile, on the eastern front, after the Wehrmacht's failed attempts to seize Stalingrad or the Russian oilfields in the Caucasus in September 1942, the Soviet Army began its counteroffensive in November, soon inflicting serious losses on the Axis forces. In an attempt to break the siege of Stalingrad, in mid-December the Soviets funnelled all their efforts towards the VIIIth Italian Army and the IIIrd Romanian Army, which were stationed on the western bank of the Don River to protect the flanks of the German troops. The Italian and Romanian resistance lasted only a few days. Consequently, portions of the Italian and Romanian Armies were forced to retreat westward, thereby allowing the Soviets to penetrate the Axis lines. In addition to the increasingly gloomy, though not yet desperate, military scenario on the African and Russian fronts, the Italian top military officers were also concerned about the Italian inner front, as the British and American air forces bombed major Italian cities⁷⁹. In this sense, we cannot exclude that, in the eyes of the Italian top brass, the African and Russian campaigns represented more urgent matters than the arrest of enemy aliens and the internment of Jews in the somewhat secondary theatre of southeastern France.

⁷⁸ Ibid., entry 6 December 1942 and allegato 52; Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 217 ff.

⁷⁹ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 88-90; M. Knox, *Hitler's Italian Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 189-90; E. Ziemke, 'Stalingrad, the battle of', in I.C.B. Dear and M.R.D. Foot (eds), *The Oxford Companion to the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1057-59.

Nonetheless, Senise finally informed the Comando Supremo on 27 December that one concentration camp for civilians had been established in the Salel Barracks located just outside of Sospel⁸⁰, a French township northeast of Nice, close to the French-Italian border. During the week of 14 to 20 December, a platoon of seventy Carabinieri (military Police) was dispatched to Sospel to serve as guards⁸¹. On 28 December, the Chief of the Army General Staff, General Vittorio Ambrosio, sent his instructions to the IVth Army Command. These echoed the gist of Marquis d'Ajeta's cable of 22 December, namely that the Police was in charge of carrying out the operations against enemy aliens and Jews under the 'high jurisdiction of the IVth Army commands.' The Centre for counterespionage in Nice would provide intelligence to identify any dangerous civilians and the Foreign Ministry's representatives would offer information to identify Jews, as well as diplomatic support⁸². Less than a month after the Comando Supremo's message to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, the new phase in Italian security policy in southeastern France was ready to begin.

Conclusions

The Comando Supremo's decision to intern Jews was taken as part of a broader purge of the French territories that the IVth Army occupied in November 1942. Although this decision addressed primarily the Italian commanders' concerns to secure the IVth Army rears against 'fifth columns', the inclusion of Jews within the categories of civilians to be targeted was rooted in anti-Semitic prejudices that depicted Jews as potentially dangerous. In other words, Jews were to be treated as potentially dangerous elements because of their Jewishness. Notably, the Italian Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry both agreed with the Comando Supremo's decision to intern Jews.

⁸⁰ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Copy of a report from the Chief of Police to the Comando Supremo forwarded to the DAGR, (500/39872) 27 December 1942.

⁸¹ ADAM, 616W/133, d. Etat d'esprit de la population, French intelligence weekly report, week from 14 to 20 December 1942.

⁸² General Vittorio Ambrosio to the Commands of the IVth and Vth Armies, (23487) 28 December 1942, reproduced in Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 730. Ambrosio's message was also addressed to the Vth Army Command to which was subordinate the VIIth Army Corp that occupied the island of Corsica.

At the same time, this chapter has proven that this decision was certainly taken in concert with the German military authorities, and possibly even caused by the latter's intervention. Yet no evidence has surfaced to suggest that the internment measure was to lead to more radical measures on the Italian side in the future, or to indicate that the Nazi authorities made a request in that sense. Conversely, the Italian authorities' solution to the Jewish 'threat' was consistent with the praxis of anti-Jewish persecution conducted by the fascist government domestically since 1940.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the Italian authorities' decision to take action against Jewish refugees in their occupation zone predated any effort by the Vichy government or the Nazi authorities to arrest and deport them. It is, therefore, in light of the Italian authorities' decision that in the next chapter we will analyse the first clash between Rome and Vichy over the fate of Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone.

Chapter 3. The first clash with the Vichy government over Jewish policy

The decision of the Comando Supremo to intern Jews as part of the security policy in the Italian occupation zone was not the only anti-Jewish measure taken in the former Unoccupied Zone in late 1942. Following the massive manhunts for foreign and stateless Jews of the summer of 1942 throughout metropolitan France, in early December the Vichy government set out to further worsen the already dire life conditions of the Jews still residing in the Unoccupied Zone. In the context of the ‘final solution’, some of these measures were to lay the groundwork for the aforementioned ‘expansion of persecution’ to the newly occupied French territories. As a result, the Comando Supremo’s order and the anti-Jewish measures ordered by Vichy crisscrossed, prompting the fascist government decision to oppose the implementation of the French measures and eventually sparking off a diplomatic row between Rome and Vichy.

This chapter seeks to explain the Italian reaction. More specifically it focuses on the Italian Army and Foreign Ministry’s opposition to the expulsion by the French authorities of some 1,400 foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department to German-occupied departments, pending their deportation to the east. Historians have given opposing interpretations of that decision, which has been portrayed as the result either of the Italian diplomats’ and Army officers’ will to sabotage the ‘final solution’ in order to rescue the Jews or of their pragmatic decision to reaffirm Rome’s full authority over the Italian occupation zone. Through the detailed reconstruction of the dispute between Rome and Vichy, this chapter tests these arguments both at the local and at the macro level. It shows that there was no such thing as the Italian sabotage of the Nazi exterminatory policy. Moreover, it demonstrates that both the humanitarian and political components were at play in the Foreign Ministry’s stand on the matter, though filtered through the prism of the anti-Jewish persecution launched by the fascist regime domestically in 1938. Accordingly, this chapter breaks down the rigid divides separating humanitarianism and pragmatism in the explanation of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories

and lays the groundwork for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of that policy in southeastern France.

Vichy's new raft of anti-Jewish measures

Only three months after the massive manhunts that the French Police had carried out across the Unoccupied Zone in late August 1942, the Vichy government launched a new raft of anti-Jewish measures. On 6 December 1942 instructions were sent out to the prefects to expel to the interior of the country foreign Jews who had established themselves within thirty kilometres from the Spanish border and the Mediterranean coast after 1 January 1938¹. On the same day, another telegram addressed to the prefects of the 'free zone' gave instructions to immediately enlist in the *Compagnies de Travailleurs Étrangers*, or Foreign Workers Units, all physically fit, unwedded male Jews aged 18 to 55 with foreign nationality who had entered France since 1 January 1933². Finally, the law of 11 December ruled that all people considered Jewish according to the second *Statut des Juifs* of June 1941 had to report within one month to the local authorities to have the word *Juif* (Jew) stamped on their identity papers and food ration cards³.

Although all three new measures significantly affected the already precarious life conditions of Jews in the former Unoccupied Zone, it was the first one that posed the most direct threat. The Vichy government took the decision to concentrate foreign Jews in departments situated in the interior in obedience to German desires. For the Nazi security services in France this measure was to lay the groundwork for the next phase of deportations 'to the east' (*nach dem Osten*) that would begin in February 1943 and that had become urgent after Hitler's order of 10 December that all Jews

¹ ADAM, 616W/242, d. Mesures concernant les israélites étrangers habitant dans la zone occupée par les troupes italiennes, Lyons regional prefect to Nice regional prefect, (743) 7 December 1942; D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 88; M.R. Marrus and R.O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 305-06.

² ADHS, 41W/29, d. Étrangers, s.d. Listes des Israelites étrangers résident en Haute-Savoie, Copy of the telegram from the French Ministry of the Interior to the prefects of the 'free' zone, (18.736) 6 December 1942. Two days later, on 8 December, the Ministry of the Interior sent out additional instructions. Ibid., Copy of the telegram from the French Ministry of the Interior to the prefects of the free zone, (18.844) 8 December 1942; R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 365; Carpi, *Between*, 89.

³ ADAM, 616W/242, and ADS, 1362W/1, Excerpt from the *Journal Officiel de l'État français. Lois et décrets*, 12 December 1942; Poznanski, *Jews*, 359; Carpi, *Between*, 90.

and other enemies of Nazi Germany be deported from France⁴. Within the Italian occupation zone, the areas most affected were the Alpes-Maritimes and Var departments. In the former case, foreign Jews affected by the evacuation order were due to move to the departments of the Drôme (which, though entirely in the Italian occupation zone, featured German troops, too⁵) and the Ardèche (entirely under German rule)⁶. As a result, according to the estimate of the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department, Marcel Ribière, 1,400 Jews were due to be expelled from his department and effectively surrendered into German hands⁷.

The protection of Italian Jews in the Alpes-Maritimes department

Vichy's new raft of anti-Jewish measures elicited the immediate reaction of the Italian Consul General in Nice, Alberto Calisse, on behalf of Italian Jews living in the Alpes-Maritimes department. On 14 December⁸, Calisse informed Ribière in writing that he was going to personally give instructions to Jews of Italian citizenship living in his department not to report to the local authorities to have the word Juif stamped on their identity cards and ration cards, before demanding in a cordial yet firm tone that Italian Jews be exempted from the measure altogether⁹. Calisse took a similar step about a week later, when Ribière published the order decreeing the evacuation within three days to the Drôme and Ardèche departments of foreign Jews who had moved to his department after 1 January 1938: the Consul General approached the prefect demanding that Italian Jews not be forced to leave the department¹⁰. Moreover, it was probably at around that moment that Calisse also

⁴ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-260, Knochen to Oberbefehlshaber West, 3 February 1943; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 205-06; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 304-05.

⁵ C. Lévy, 'La 4^a armata italiana in Francia (11 novembre 1942-8 settembre 1943)', Istituto Storico della Resistenza in Cuneo e Provincia, 8 settembre. *Lo sfacelo della quarta armata* (Turin: Book Store, 1979), 37-38.

⁶ ADAM, 616W/242, Lyons regional prefect to Nice regional prefect, (743) 7 December 1942.

⁷ Ibid., Ribière to Lyons regional prefect, 18 December 1942.

⁸ The law prescribing the stamp of the word Juif on Jews' identity papers was published in the *Journal Officiel* two days earlier, on 12 December. ADAM, 616W/242, and ADS, 1362W/1, Excerpt from the *Journal Officiel de l'État français. Lois et décrets*, 12 December 1942; Poznanski, *Jews*, 359.

⁹ ADAM, 616W/242, Calisse to Ribière, (2522 R) 14 December 1942.

¹⁰ Ibid., Ribière to the French Chief of government and, for reference, to the Chief of Police, 14 January 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 197.

demanded the exemption of Italian Jews from enlistment in the Foreign Workers Units.

It is noteworthy that out of the three steps taken by Calisse on behalf of his Jewish co-citizens only the second step could be subsumed under the umbrella of the 'diplomatic protection' that, as of summer 1942, the Foreign Ministry granted to Jews with Italian nationality living in the Occupied Zone and that was extended to the Unoccupied Zone in the wake of the Axis occupation. The protection sheltered Italian Jews 'only' from deportation eastward and, within given limits, from economic spoliation, while nonetheless leaving them defenceless before lesser (or 'non-definitive,' in the Foreign Ministry's jargon) measures of persecution. In this respect, the steps taken by Calisse to get dispensation for Italian Jews from all of Vichy's anti-Jewish measures rested on a broad interpretation of the Foreign Ministry's stand whose protection was thus considerably extended. At the same time, however, the fascist government was orientated, although with reservations, towards acceding to the German request that Italian Jews in the Occupied Zone wear the yellow star¹¹.

Following on from Calisse's steps, on 19 December Ribière requested to the bureau of René Bousquet, the French Chief of Police, a ruling on how to respond to Calisse's demands¹². The answer arrived a few days later. It granted a dispensation for Jews of Italian citizenship who were therefore exempted from being drafted in Foreign Workers Units as well as from being expelled from the department¹³. The French government thus acceded to all of Calisse's demands. This should not be interpreted as a sign of weakness on the French part; it was a simple recognition of the Italian State's prerogative to protect its citizens abroad. Nor did the French concessions represent an exception. As soon as Ribière set out to execute the new anti-Jewish measures decreed by Vichy, other foreign representatives approached him to seek dispensation for their Jewish co-citizens. On 17 December the Turkish

¹¹ Italian Foreign Ministry to German Embassy in Rome, (34R – 10117/297) 10 October 1942. Reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. IX (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1989), 213-14, doc. 206 (English translation in L. Picciotto Fargion, 'Italian Citizens in Nazi-Occupied Europe: Documents from the Files of the German Foreign Office, 1941-1943', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 7 (1990), 118-19, doc. 3). ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio-31 dicembre 1942, entry 10 December 1942.

¹² ADAM, 616W/242, Ribière to Chief of Police in Vichy, (46647) 19 December 1942.

¹³ Ibid., Ribière to the Chief of the police regional services in Nice, 24 December 1942.

Consul General in Marseilles, Bedî Arbel, acting on orders from the Turkish Ambassador to Vichy, Behiç Erkin¹⁴, charged his deputy with securing the temporary exemption of their Jewish co-citizens from the enlistment in the Foreign Workers Units, a request that was eventually granted. The Swiss Consul in Nice also ensured that Jews with Swiss nationality were excluded from expulsion and enlistment in labour units¹⁵.

Call of duty or humanitarianism? Calisse's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order

It soon became clear, however, that the issues related to the application of the new French anti-Jewish measures to Italian Jews had not been resolved to Italy's full satisfaction. On 24 December – the same day that the French government in Vichy granted dispensation to Italian Jews – Calisse reported to the Foreign Ministry and to the Italian General Consulate in Vichy on some of the anti-Jewish measures that were being taken by the Vichy government. Calisse drily opened by stating that 'foreign Jews residing in the Alpes-Maritimes department are assigned to enforced residence in a department under German occupation.' The Consul General then reported that 'some Italian Jews are asked to leave the Drôme department that is partially occupied by German troops', before concluding with a request for instructions as to 'a line of conduct in connection with the latter's protection.'¹⁶

Calisse's decision to inform his superiors of Ribière's evacuation order and the expulsion of Italian Jews from the Drôme department was, of course, not unusual. It was part of the Consul General's duty, as well as the responsibility of other Italian representatives in France, to keep the Foreign Ministry posted on all the Vichy government's policies, including anti-Jewish policy¹⁷. Nevertheless, historians have

¹⁴ S. J. Shaw, 'Roads East: Turkey and the Jews of Europe during World War Two', in A. Levy (ed.), *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth Through the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 253.

¹⁵ By contrast, it is not clear whether Alejandro Pons y Bofill, the Spanish vice-Consul in Nice, had his request granted to defer the stamp of the word Juif on Spanish Jews' identity papers until an agreement was reached between the French government and the Spanish Embassy in Vichy. ADAM, 616W/242.

¹⁶ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 88. Original document: ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8 Sionismo, Calisse to Foreign Ministry, (8123R) 24 December 1942.

¹⁷ The reports of the Italian representatives in France on Vichy's anti-Jewish persecution are in ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, whereas Calisse's reports on the political and social

offered additional explanations for Calisse's decision to inform Rome of that specific measure. These explanations are worth discussing, for they accurately epitomise the current analytical impasse in the scholarship regarding fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories.

Some scholars¹⁸ searched for an explanation for the Consul General's action in the testimony of Angelo Donati, a wealthy and well-connected Italian Jew who had reached the Côte d'Azur in the summer of 1940 after leaving his home in Paris before the German takeover of the city on 14 June¹⁹. According to Donati, as soon as he heard of the evacuation order (which he dated at 20 December²⁰), he visited his 'personal friend' Calisse. Hereupon, they 'sent (*nous adressâmes*) a dispatch to the Italian Foreign Ministry, essentially stating that the French authorities, without informing the occupation authorities, had ordered foreign Jews to leave the [Alpes-Maritimes] department; thus, though without being technically responsible, Italy would bare moral responsibility for this measure, and this could impair its prestige.'²¹

The second half of Donati's testimony is not corroborated by the report that Calisse sent to the Foreign Ministry on 24 December which, to my knowledge, is the only message that Calisse sent to the Foreign Ministry on the matter. Moreover, as denoted by the last sentence in Calisse's report, his request for instructions solely concerned the protection of Italian Jews. For these reasons, Klaus Voigt and Daniel Carpi deemed Donati's testimony unreliable. Though not disregarding Calisse's sympathy for the fates of the Jews affected by Ribière's evacuation order, they justified the Consul General's message as conveying his concerns to take 'care of

situation in Nice and the Alpes-Maritimes department are in Ibid., b. 59/7 Situazione e rapporti da Nizza.

¹⁸ L. Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du centre, 1946), 20-21; J.-L. Panicacci, *L'occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 195.

¹⁹ I retraced the stages of Donati's flight from Paris to Nice in the book *Angelo Donati e la «questione ebraica» nella Francia occupata dall'esercito italiano* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2013), 68-70.

²⁰ In his testimony (CDJC, CCXVIII-22, 1) Donati did not state the date of his visit to Calisse, a circumstance that further complicates assessing the accuracy of his words. Yet, Donati did refer to the fact that the foreign Jews concerned in Ribière's evacuation order had '72 hours' to leave the Alpes-Maritimes department. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to date Donati's visit to Calisse between 20 and 23 December, namely before the time limit allegedly set by Ribière expired, yet before Calisse sent his message to the Foreign Ministry. Moreover, as we shall see below in this chapter, according to Donati the decision to inform Rome of Ribière's order was not the only one made by him and Calisse (which is another clue that the meeting took place before or by 24 December).

²¹ CDJC, CCXVIII-22, 1.

Italian interests, including the welfare of Italian citizens,²² and react to any action openly interfering with the Italian security policy in their occupation zone²³.

The fascist government's stand on the 'Jewish problem' in the Italian occupation zone, conveyed through the Foreign Ministry cable of 22 December, would seem to corroborate this second explanation. As revealed in chapter two, the Foreign Ministry provided guidelines regarding the incoming arrest of dangerous enemy aliens and the internment of Jews as part of the security policy to ensure the safety of the Italian zone for the IVth Army troops. Apart from the specific directives concerning the implementation of these measures, the Foreign Ministry cable implied that, from that moment onwards, the 'Jewish question' in southeastern France was of exclusive concern to the Italian occupation authorities. Hence, it would seem reasonable to conclude that Calisse was simply complying with his superiors' directives. However, this second explanation needs to be examined carefully. To begin, it is uncertain whether Calisse received the 22 December cable before or *after* he sent his telegram on the 24th²⁴. In other words, it is not clear whether the Consul General was already aware of the new stand taken by the Foreign Ministry on the 'Jewish question' in the Italian zone when he decided to report on Ribière's evacuation order (although, the fact that Calisse sent his report five days after he demanded Ribière to exempt Italian Jews from the evacuation order, is circumstantial evidence that at that point he had already received the 22 December cable). Also uncertain, in this respect, is the accuracy of the news on the expulsion of Italian Jews from the Drôme department. Although there is no reason to doubt Calisse, I have found no other sources that would confirm the accuracy of the information he gave to the Foreign Ministry²⁵.

Thus, we are back to the only certain fact that Calisse's decision to inform the Foreign Ministry of the events taking place in the Alpes-Maritimes department in

²² Carpi, *Between*, 97-98.

²³ K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 302 and 326 (footnote 98).

²⁴ In his telegram, there is no reference to the Foreign Ministry cable of 22 December. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, Calisse to Foreign Ministry, (8123R) 24 December 1942. However, it is certain that Calisse received the cable at some point, for he referred to it in a report to Rome on 6 January 1943. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7 Sionismo, Calisse to Foreign Ministry and other recipients, (3R) 6 January 1943.

²⁵ It should be pointed out that the files of the Italian Consular agencies in France during the Second World War were inaccessible to scholars during my research at the Italian Foreign Ministry archives in July 2012 and in February-April 2013.

late December 1942 was not unusual. To gain better insight into Calisse's rationale, it is perhaps useful to expand our perspective and incorporate other sources in our analysis, in addition to those at the Foreign Ministry archives. This brings us back to the testimony of Angelo Donati.

Carpi's and Voigt's emphasis on the inaccuracies of Donati's account must be taken into serious consideration. These inaccuracies should not, however, lead to the hasty dismissal of Donati's words, whose veracity we have no clear reasons to doubt²⁶. Overall, Donati's testimony is fairly accurate. This is due to its early recording in the immediate post-war period, approximately between 1944 and 1946. In any case, the testimony was presumably given before the publication of Léon Poliakov's *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* in October 1946²⁷ whose narrative and analysis of the events chiefly relied on Donati's account²⁸. Consequently, the testimony remained largely uninfluenced by the increasingly dominant narratives of the Italian protection of Jews in the occupied territories that Poliakov and later historiography were centrally responsible in establishing between the early post-war years and the late 1980s²⁹. This does not mean to take Donati's words at face value and conclude that Donati instructed Calisse on his reaction to Ribière's evacuation order. Rather, it means to take advantage of the privileged vantage point from which Donati experienced Calisse's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order to go beyond the 'facts' conveyed by the official documents. In order to achieve this, we require a clearer picture of Donati's figure and the capacities in which he decided to approach Calisse.

As a prominent member of the Italian Community in Nice since the summer of 1940, Donati was well known to the Italian representatives who received him to hear (and, as far as we can tell, quite often accede to) his personal requests. Born in the city of Modena on 3 February 1885, Donati settled in Paris after the end of the First

²⁶ As Carpi himself allowed. Carpi *Between*, 98.

²⁷ M. Sarfatti, 'Renzo De Felice's Storia of Anti-Jewish Persecution: Context, Chronological Dimension, and Sources', *Telos* 164 (2013), 176.

²⁸ Information here was kindly provided with by Karen Taïeb, head of the Archives Service at the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris in May 2015. Daniel Carpi (*Between*, 97) maintained that Donati gave his testimony in 1944 but offered no evidence to support his argument. Regarding the linkages between Donati's testimony and Poliakov's book see Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*.

²⁹ See ch. 1. On the role that Poliakov's book had in validating the image of *Italiani brava gente* see P. Bertilotti, 'Italian Jews and the Memory of Rescue (1944–1961)', in J. Sémelin, C. Andrieu, and S. Gensburger (eds), *Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 136-37.

World War. In the early 1920s, he experienced a steady rise through the social and economic milieus of the French capital. Soon becoming a liberal and well-respected notable of the Italian Community, over the coming years Donati established connections with the Italian representatives both at the Embassy and the General Consulate in Paris. Despite the limited effects abroad of the fascist anti-Jewish persecution launched in 1938, which nonetheless forced Donati to resign from the presidency of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Paris in December 1938, and his subsequent flight from Paris in June 1940, these events did not deprive Donati of his connections nor his status. Once on the Côte d'Azur, Donati swiftly renewed more professional and social connections from Cannes and subsequently from his office at the Nice branch of the Banque Italo-Française de Credit. Despite Donati's strong reputation and his Italian citizenship, as a Jew living in Nice, he was not immune from the Vichy government's anti-Jewish measures, in particular, the so-called aryanisation of Jewish properties in the Unoccupied Zone. Nevertheless, similar to his time in Paris, Donati established an amicable relationship with the Italian General Consulate in Nice and his three successive representatives, Silvio Camerani, Quinto Mazzolini (both old acquaintances of his) and Calisse³⁰.

In addition to the wisdom of hindsight that perhaps affected Donati's words, when using his testimony, we therefore need to take into account Donati's perspective on the events. In this regard, one additional passage of his testimony relating to Calisse's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order must not be ignored in order to better grasp the motives of the Consul General's action in late December 1942. According to the testimony, the first decision made by Calisse and Donati was to provide 'all Jews' brought to the General Consulate by Donati with 'official documents (*pièces officielles*), ordering them to remain in Nice at the Armistice Commission's disposal'³¹, and *de facto* sheltering them from deportation.

No copy of these documents has yet been discovered. Yet, once again, we have no clear reason to doubt the veracity of Donati's words. To overcome this dilemma, it is therefore useful to examine sources at the Alpes-Maritimes departmental archives and, more specifically, the dossier concerning the enforcement by Ribière of Vichy's anti-Jewish measures in late December 1942. This dossier also includes the records

³⁰ Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*, chs 2 and 3.

³¹ CDJC, CCXVIII-22, 1.

of the aforementioned steps taken by Calisse on behalf of Italian Jews. In addition, two messages dated 28 December, intended for the French authorities (and likely for Ribière himself), plead the case of two Jews of Greek nationality, Isaac Menahem and Vitale Matalon, who had recently settled in Nice and were directly threatened by Ribière's evacuation order. Menahem, in particular, was in a very dangerous position, as he had already been ordered by the French police to move within three days to the Ardèche department. The two Italian messages emphasised Menahem's and Matalon's poor health and therefore asked, in a very propitiatory tone, that both Jews be exempted from the evacuation order, especially in Menahem's case as he was also a Greek citizen and Greece was under Italian occupation³².

It is not clear who wrote the two messages. They are not signed nor bare the indication of the recipient, whereas Ribière's correspondence referred to them as the Italian Armistice Commission with France intervention. This last detail is of great interest. When forwarding Calisse's demands to Vichy concerning the exemption of Italian Jews, Ribière always presented them as originating from the CIAF. We should also note that the messages concerning Menahem's and Matalon's cases presumably originated from the Italian General Consulate in Nice, for it was where Jews living in the city could approach the Italian authorities to ask for help and protection. At the same time, we cannot say with any degree of certainty who was the author of the two messages. Likewise, to argue that those messages were the official documents delivered by the General Consulate and mentioned by Donati would clearly be ill-founded. Yet, more prudently, we can argue that the messages Ribière received which pleaded the cases of two Greek Jews, whose fates should be of little or no interest to the Italian authorities, reflect that, in Nice, the Italian attitude was not averse – though not necessarily favourable either – to Jews. All in all, in my opinion this indicates that Donati's account of his meeting with Calisse has what Christopher R. Browning calls 'a contextual plausibility'³³, which, as a consequence, indicates that Calisse was not unsympathetic to the fates of the Jews affected by Ribière's evacuation order.

³² ADAM, 616W/242, (31852 and 31853) 28 December 1942.

³³ C.R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 67.

But then: what was Calisse doing? Was he plotting with Donati to sabotage Ribière's evacuation order and rescue the 1,400 foreign Jews facing expulsion from the department? Or, by contrast, was he simply doing his duty in an effort to safeguard Italian citizens as much as the political interests of his own country, irrespective of Donati's intervention?

As Donald Bloxham has pointed out in his study of the perpetrators of the 'final solution', 'boiling down human motivation to simple, single causes is to ignore what it is to be human: acculturation, socialization, and the interplay of interests, pressures, and values shape everyone.'³⁴ Accordingly, the answer to the questions above cannot be reduced to a simple choice between one of two options, be it the 'call of duty' argument or 'humanitarianism'. On the contrary, and also in light of the gaps in the available documentation, in order to understand Calisse's action in late 1942, we must adopt a more comprehensive and nuanced analytical approach which enables us to assess how, and to what degree, those two components combined within the framework of fascist Jewish policy in France. In this regard, the content of Calisse's telegram to the Foreign Ministry is perhaps enlightening. Indeed, the reason for the discrepancy between Donati's testimony and Calisse's telegram, which is certainly not negligible, might lie within the Consul General's decision, in itself quite reasonable, not to disclose the contents of his intended report to Rome to Donati, despite his willingness to address Donati's concerns. Irrespective of Calisse's personal stand on Ribière's attempt to surrender foreign Jews into German hands, Calisse did not have the authority to suggest to the Foreign Ministry the guidelines of its potential, but not assured, reaction to Ribière's evacuation order. Moreover, the Consul General was aware that, up to that point, the fascist government's policy towards Jews abroad only provided 'diplomatic protection' to Jews with Italian citizenship. Accordingly, in his telegram, Calisse limited himself to reporting on Ribière's attempt to surrender foreign Jews into German hands, while asking for a ruling only as to the protection of Italian Jews expelled from the Drôme department³⁵, because, at that time, those were the boundaries of fascist Jewish policy in France.

³⁴ D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 267.

³⁵ Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*, 91-93.

The Foreign Ministry's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order

In addition to Calisse's report to the Foreign Ministry about Ribière's evacuation order, two other messages reporting on the same matter reached Rome. The first message originated from Commissario Barranco, who informed his superiors at the Interior Ministry about the evacuation order, as well as the IVth Army Command³⁶. From here, General Alessandro Trabucchi, the IVth Army Chief of Staff (Capo di Stato Maggiore), reported the viewpoint of the Army Command on the French action directly to the Comando Supremo. Trabucchi stressed that 'the [French] initiative, clearly taken under German pressure, inside the territory occupied by the Italian Army and under its control is heavily wounding to our prestige and the ruling authority of our occupation forces.' In the IVth Army Command's view, Ribière's evacuation order was no more than a smoke screen through which 'the German action ... completely unbeknown to us, interferes with and is prejudicial to the decisions that have been taken concerning Jews resident in the French territories under Italian occupation.'³⁷

Trabucchi's emphasis on the German paternity of the French initiative and the consequent German meddling in the Italian zone presumably reflected the IVth Army Command's fit of pique about the operation that on 27 November the Wehrmacht had carried out to seize the French naval base in Toulon. On that occasion the German military authorities acted with almost complete autonomy, despite the harbour being within the Italian occupation zone. Moreover, the French authorities responded to the German operation by scuttling the navy that lay at anchor in the harbour, with the result of depriving the Italian government of much needed ships to supply its troops in North Africa³⁸.

Trabucchi's message eventually reached the Foreign Ministry³⁹. That same day, 29 December, the Foreign Ministry responded to Calisse's report, which it had received in the evening of the 24th. The response was sent in the form of a cable

³⁶ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7 Sionismo, Barranco to Calisse, (027) 6 January 1943.

³⁷ MAE, *Relazione sull'opera svolta dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri per la tutela delle comunità ebraiche (1938-1943)* (Rome: unpublished, 1946), 25-26; Carpi, *Between*, 88.

³⁸ D. Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitani francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007), 172-81 and E. Costa Bona, *Dalla guerra alla pace. Italia-Francia 1940-1947* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995), 132. From early December 1942 the Germans began to progressively withdraw leaving the Toulon naval base to the Italian Military Maritime Command in France that as of 15 December took over completely (Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 191-94).

³⁹ MAE, *Relazione*, 25.

signed by the Foreign Minister's chief of cabinet, Marquis Blasco Lanza d'Ajeta. The cable was addressed to the IVth Army Command, as well as to the SIM, the Division for General and Confidential Affairs of the Head Police Branch and the Foreign Ministry's representatives in Paris⁴⁰, Vichy, Nice and Lyons. It read thus:

... it cannot be tolerated that in zones occupied by the Italian troops the French authorities should force foreign Jews, including Italian citizens, to move to localities occupied by the German troops. The precautionary measures (*misure cautelari*) concerning foreign and Italian Jews should be taken only by our organs, which have long since received clear instructions on how to act [in the matter], as results from the cable [of the Foreign Ministry dated 22 December⁴¹] in which the directives that inspire the treatment [of Jews] in the Kingdom are outlined ...

Then, d'Ajeta added that

following the request for instructions on whether [our organs] should favour the transfer into our occupation zone of foreign Jews asking for the same, we want to specify that it is not in our interest to foster the inflow of undesirable elements into the territories occupied by the Italian troops. The case is different for Italian Jews resident in zones occupied by the Germans who want to enter into the zones occupied by our troops. Clearly, we cannot refuse to receive them ...⁴²

Interestingly enough, d'Ajeta made no reference at all to the expulsion of Italian Jews from the Drôme department, despite the fact that Calisse's requests for instructions concerned precisely and solely them. This fact might suggest the Foreign Ministry's lack of concern for the matter. By contrast, the focus of the response was entirely on Ribière's evacuation order, regarding which the Foreign Ministry established three principles: first, the measures against Jews fell solely within the competence of the Italian occupation authorities; second, these prerogatives concerned only foreign Jews, that is, all but those with French citizenship, whose management was left to the Vichy government; third, the Italian occupation

⁴⁰ The Embassy forwarded d'Ajeta's cable to the Italian General Consulate in Paris on 9 January 1943. L. Poliakov and J. Sabille, *Jews under the Italian occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1955), 183.

⁴¹ See ch. 2.

⁴² ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, d'Ajeta to Minister Bonarelli and other recipients, (34/R 12825) 29 December 1942. Copy of the cable in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46.

authorities had to prevent the inflow of non-Italian Jews, this time including French Jews, into the Italian occupation zone.

Yet, only four days later these principles underwent a significant change. On 2 January the Foreign Minister Ciano saw it fit to address further instructions to the IVth Army Command, the SIM, the Division for General and Confidential Affairs and the Italian representatives in Paris, Vichy, Nice and Lyons about Jewish policy in southeastern France. Ciano opened by stating that additional news on the measures taken by the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department against 'French, foreign and Italian Jews' had come to the attention of the Foreign Ministry. Hence,

the Ministry, for additional clarification, maintains that the adoption of precautionary measures regarding these Jews must, without exception, remain the exclusive responsibility of the Italian authorities ... The measures of internment of them and other [similar measures] belong solely to our authorities, who will act as they see fit and based on the directives they have been given.⁴³

Thus, Ciano not only reiterated the already very clear stand taken by the Foreign Ministry on the issue of the treatment of Jews in the Italian occupation zone, but he extended the Italian prerogatives to French Jews as well. According to his intentions, the Vichy government would be completely excluded from dealing with what was still in principle a domestic French matter.

Humanitarianism or pragmatism?

Scholars have long debated the rationale for such a firm and uncompromising stand on the part of a dictatorial regime that was persecuting Jews in its own country and that was fighting a war as Nazi Germany's chief ally. Historians such as Léon Poliakov, Susan Zuccotti and Jonathan Steinberg though not disregarding the reasons of political expediency influencing the Italian reaction to Ribière's evacuation order, have been keen to underscore the humanitarian concerns that in December 1942 led the Italian authorities to hinder the French authorities' attempt to surrender some

⁴³ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 90-1. Original document: ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, Ciano to Minister Bonarelli and for reference to SIM, DAGR and Italian representatives in Paris, Vichy, Nice and Lyons, (34/R 12936) 2 January 1943. Copy of the cable in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46.

1,400 foreign Jews to the Nazis. Despite different nuances in their arguments, these scholars have been unanimous in concluding that the Italian decisions of late December 1942 and early January 1943 stood as a proof of the Italian diplomats' and military officers' will to rescue Jews and even sabotage Nazi genocide in the territories under the control of the IVth Army (as in the other Italian occupation zones in Europe)⁴⁴. Yet, neither in d'Ajeta's nor in Ciano's cables can we read any reference to – or even hint about – the need to rescue Jews, and even less to hampering the German plans for their deportation eastward. By contrast, d'Ajeta made clear to the Italian occupation authorities that they had to prevent the arrival in the Italian zone of foreign Jews living in the portion of the former Unoccupied Zone under German control – Jews who were desperately trying to escape deportation. Ciano's silence on this issue should also be taken as a sign that the Foreign Minister approved these instructions. It is evident, then, that the Foreign Ministry's firm opposition to Ribière's evacuation order cannot be taken as the result of a will to sabotage the 'final solution'. As we mentioned in the past chapter, when d'Ajeta instructed closing the borders of the Italian zone, he was aware that Jews still in German-occupied France faced deportation and certain death at the hand of the Nazis.

Historians Daniel Carpi and Davide Rodogno have offered a different interpretation of the Foreign Ministry's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order. Focusing chiefly on Ciano's cable of 2 January 1943, Carpi argues that despite the presence of humanitarian concerns in Italian Jewish policy in southeastern France, 'the struggle taking place between [Rome and Vichy over Ribière's evacuation order] was of a political nature' and it 'had nothing to do with the fates of the Jewish refugees who were the subject of the dispute.'⁴⁵ Even more firm in his rejection of the idea of Italian rescue of Jews is Rodogno who, focusing on d'Ajeta's instructions to close up the border of the Italian zone, avers that fascist Italy's opposition to the expulsion of foreign Jews to the German occupation zone 'had no humanitarian foundation at all.' For Rodogno, Italian actions stemmed uniquely from 'the

⁴⁴ L. Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1946), 20-24; S. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 94-100; J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 108 ff.

⁴⁵ Carpi, *Between*, 92.

intolerance of the Italian authorities towards any act putting their prestige or prerogative [within their occupation zone] in jeopardy.’⁴⁶ Yet the case against humanitarianism and the parallel emphasis on the ‘political’ motives for the Italian opposition to Ribière’s evacuation order is assumed rather than demonstrated by the two scholars. This as a consequence of their rejection (implicit in Carpi, overt in Rodogno) of the image of the Italians as *brava gente* whereby Italians are intrinsically humane and thus incapable of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis. However, while the (certainly correct) refusal of this assumption is substantiated by the fact that Italians, too, were able to commit violence⁴⁷ and, according to some historians, even genocidal violence in other contexts⁴⁸, it does not necessarily follow that Italians, and in this specific case the Italian officials at the Foreign Ministry, were not sincerely distressed by the particular reality of the Nazi ‘final solution of the Jewish question’. To argue that such a reaction did not exist, or had no influence at all on the Italian decision to hinder Ribière’s evacuation order, we would have to assume, as indeed Carpi and Rodogno do, that the context of the Franco-Italian political and jurisdictional struggle over Nice and Corsica was the one and only ‘true’ context within which the clash between Rome and Vichy took place⁴⁹. And by positing that scenario, we would also have to conclude that the Italian rulers were acting irrespective of their awareness of the reality of the ‘final solution’ and somehow outside *its* context, but most importantly irrespectively of their stand – not so much as individuals, but as ruling class of a sovereign country – on the Nazi-driven extermination of Jews. In my opinion d’Ajeta’s and Ciano’s cables suggest otherwise.

For one thing, in both cables we can notice the absence of any reference to the wound that Ribière’s order would inflict on Italian prestige as that wound was stressed by Trabucchi in his message to the Comando Supremo. This does not

⁴⁶ D. Rodogno, ‘La politique des occupants italiens à l’égard des Juifs en France métropolitaine. Humanisme ou pragmatisme?’, *Vingtième Siècle* 93 (2007), 73-74.

⁴⁷ See the Introduction, footnote 9.

⁴⁸ J. Walston, ‘History and Memory of the Italian Concentration Camps’, *The Historical Journal* 40: 1 (1997), 169-83; N. Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia 1911-1931* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012), 197-98.

⁴⁹ In the introduction to his book on fascism’s Mediterranean Empire Rodogno made explicit his intention to analyse ‘the history of the Greek, Yugoslav and French Jewish refugees within [the context of] the Fascist occupation’, rather than from what he called ‘a genocide-centred view.’ (*Fascism’s*, 6; the same argument in ‘La politique’, 64)

necessarily mean that the Foreign Ministry was indifferent to that argument, but it shows that different agencies had different agendas and therefore looked at Jewish policy in southeastern France from different angles. By contrast, d'Ajeta and Ciano linked the Italian prerogatives in southeastern France with the 'directives that inspire' the internment of Jews in Italy, and more specifically to the 'consideration' to be given to women, children and the elderly mentioned in the aforementioned cable of 22 December. Linking the claim to full authority over Jewish policy within the Italian occupation zone – and the consequent opposition to Ribière's order – to the generally fair living conditions that Jews interned in the peninsula were subject to, implicitly signified the radical difference between the French-German approach (that is, deportation and killing of the Jews) and the Italian approach (social exclusion and internment of the Jews) to the 'Jewish question'. In the memorandum for Mussolini dated 22 September 1942 that we mentioned in the past chapter, the Foreign Ministry had already taken a similar stand concerning the deportation eastward of Italian Jews from the Occupied Zone. In that case, the Foreign Ministry had pointed out that 'the deportation to Poland ... is a step not in tune with Italian racial policy, which starts out from the concept of distinguishing and separating the Jews ... , without however going as far as persecution.'⁵⁰ In my opinion, d'Ajeta's reference to the 'directives that inspire' the treatment of Jews interned in concentration camps in Italy rested upon the same tenet, namely: 'discriminate, not persecute.'⁵¹

Clearly, this conclusion should not obscure the grim reality of the anti-Jewish persecution that was officially launched in 1938 in Italy and consisted of economic spoliation, social exclusion, personal suffering and even a few instances of physical

⁵⁰ Carpi (*Between*, 49-50) reproduces the English translation of the document. A copy of the Italian document in ASMAE, Gab., Serie V - Ufficio Armistizio-Pace, 1507 b. 15 Condizione degli ebrei in Croazia.

⁵¹ This formula was coined by the author (i.e. Mussolini himself) of the *Informazione diplomatica* (Diplomatic bulletin) number 18 of 5 August 1938. The text of the *Informazione diplomatica* is reproduced by R. De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 558-59 and M. Sarfatti, *Mussolini contro gli ebrei. Cronaca dell'elaborazione delle leggi del 1938* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 1994), 23-24. On the authorship of the *Informazione diplomatica* see Sarfatti, *Mussolini*, 23.

violence⁵². Nor ought it conceal the zeal and application of the agencies of the fascist State in charge of Jewish policy in carrying out the complete and thorough exclusion of Jews from Italian society until the downfall of the regime in July 1943. It simply acknowledges that in late 1942 the Italian rulers, or at the very least the Foreign Ministry, regarded Nazi Jewish policy as something irreconcilable with the fascist plans not only for what concerned Italian Jews and foreign Jews in Italy (as showed by Michele Sarfatti⁵³), but also with regard to foreign Jews residing in southeastern France. This refusal, however, was certainly *not* nurtured by what Hannah Arendt called ‘the almost automatic general humanity of an old and civilised people.’⁵⁴ On the contrary, as d’Ajeta’s instructions to the IVth Army Command not to let foreign Jews cross into the Italian occupation zone indicate, the Foreign Ministry’s refusal to collaborate in the ‘final solution’ needs to be read through the prism of fascist Jewish policy, as this was understood by the fascist leaders in the context of a total war. Indeed, it is difficult not see reflected in that decision the effects of the long-term fascist goal to make Italy ‘free of Jews’.

To underscore the influence that the specific goals of fascist Jewish policy had in shaping the Foreign Ministry’s reaction to Ribière’s evacuation order is not tantamount to arguing that the context of the French-Italian struggle (stressed by Carpi) and the intra-Axis geopolitical rivalry and mutual distrust (brilliantly retraced and analysed by Rodogno⁵⁵) were irrelevant. Nor should it lead to an ‘intentionalist’ interpretation that construes the Italian decision not to (directly or indirectly) collaborate in the ‘final solution’ as ‘no more than an obvious and logical continuation of the anti-Jewish policy (the attack on the *rights* of Jews, but not their *lives*) implemented in the peninsula since 1938.’⁵⁶ Indeed, it was the decision not to hand the Jews over, and therefore let Ribière surrender some 1,400 foreign Jews to the Nazis, that *caused* fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France not to become

⁵² M.-A. Matard-Bonucci, *L’Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 308-21, 333-53 and 359-81, and M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 138-41, 151-59 and 161-74.

⁵³ Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 141-61.

⁵⁴ H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 179.

⁵⁵ Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, chs 1 to 5.

⁵⁶ M. Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy and German Jews in south-eastern France in July 1943’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3:3 (1998), 319.

complicit in genocide, not the other way round. As in the case of Calisse that we discussed earlier in the chapter, the historiographical issue is not to establish which single reason on its own *really* shaped the Foreign Ministry's reaction to Ribière's order (or any other decisions concerning the fates of Jews in the Italian occupation zone), as if there could only be one reason. Rather, the issue is to understand the differing visions of 'the Jew' (and of 'his' threat) within the Nazi and Italian-fascist worldviews, which in turn underpinned the differing Jewish policies of the Axis allies, and to assess the interplay between those ideological standpoints and multiple other, overlapping causes⁵⁷. Those other causes included, but were not limited to, geopolitical rivalry and military concerns.

The Croatian precedent

In order to place fascist Jewish policy in southern France into a wider context, it is perhaps appropriate to recount the decisions taken by the fascist rulers between late October and late November 1942 regarding the issue of Jews in the Croatian territories under Italian control.

As mentioned, on 21 August Mussolini was presented with the German request that Jews in Italian-occupied Croatia be surrendered to the Ustaša regime, with the ultimate outcome that their surrender entailed. The Ustaša would hand Jews over to the Nazis, who would subsequently deport them eastward and kill them, as similarly undertaken with Jews residing in the German-occupied portion of Croatian territory. Nevertheless, Mussolini granted his 'nulla osta', or no objection. The officials at the Italian Foreign Ministry, in turn, took Mussolini's 'nulla osta' as an order to hand over those Jews living in the Croatian territories occupied by the IInd Army led by General Mario Roatta. Yet, despite several German requests to follow Mussolini's 'nulla osta', in December 1942 no Jew had yet been handed to the Germans or the Ustaša. However, in late October, all the obstacles to the surrender of Jews seemed to have been finally overcome when Mussolini agreed to the Foreign Ministry's

⁵⁷ In so doing, I follow Donald Bloxham's approach to Nazi exterminatory policy. Bloxham explains that: 'Recognizing the role played by ideology beneath a series of different rationales for killing Jews does not mean that "material realities" were not relevant to Nazi Jewish policy ... The question is how these realities were interpreted through the lens of ideological and political presumptions, and how in turn those realities stimulated increasingly radical measures.' Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 218.

proposal to 'intern immediately all [underlined in the original] the Jews in the zones occupied' by the IIInd Army. Those of Croatian nationality (the great majority, that is) would be handed over to the Ustaša at a later time, while those Jews 'with title to Italian citizenship' would remain in Italian custody. It is worth noting that the Foreign Ministry's solution was a counter-proposal to the Croatian proposition that Jews in the zone occupied by the IIInd Army be transferred to Italy. To this proposition d'Ajeta reacted by stating that 'Italy was no Palestine.' Therefore, in the following days, the Comando Supremo issued orders to Roatta who, albeit disagreeing with the decision, began the internment operations, pending the handover of Jews. A total of 2,602 Jews were in the IIInd Army's custody by mid-December 1942, at the same time when the initial frictions between Calisse and Ribière were taking place in France. Of those 2,602 Jews, 2,353 held Croatian nationality, hence to be handed over, and only 22 were 'pertinent' to fascist Italy. However, while the IIInd Army was getting ready to implement Mussolini's 'nulla osta', the *appunto*, dated 4 November regarding the gassing of Jews by the Germans, reached the duce's desk through the Foreign Ministry. Besides the chilling content of the note, the *appunto* is interesting because of the change of opinion that it produced on its author, Carabinieri General Giuseppe Pièche, a very influential voice in the highest Italian echelons, on the topic of the handover of Croatian Jews. After Pièche expressed his agreement to the handover in a 'Report on Croatia' dated 1 November, in a new report dated 14 November, he suddenly expressed his doubts on the timeliness of the measure. Pièche stressed particularly that 'the decision to consign the Jews would be the equivalent of condemning them to death and has provoked very unfavourable comments ... among the troops ... and among the rest of the orthodox and Muslim populations' inside the Italian occupation zone. He therefore concluded that 'at this particular moment, perhaps, an act of clemency would, in the opinion of most people, be very opportune.' Similar objections to the handover had, after all, already been raised by other Italian senior officers who, as the occupation progressed, had grown particularly sensitive towards the Nazi authorities' tendency to forcibly influence events in what they perceived as the Italian sphere of interests. However, the decision not to surrender Jews emerged only at the end of November, during a meeting between Roatta and Mussolini. During this visit, Roatta managed to obtain

Mussolini's approval to the adjournment of the handover: Jews were to stay in concentration camps established by the IInd Army until the spring of 1943. At that point, Mussolini added, Jews' position would be reconsidered⁵⁸.

The analysis of fascist Jewish policy in Croatia falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Within the territories of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, perhaps more than anywhere else under Italian occupation in Europe, geopolitical considerations, inter-Axis rivalry and 'Jewish question' all interweaved, proving to be an extremely complex context for historians to retrace and analyse⁵⁹. However, it is worth emphasising how, in both the French and Croatian contexts in late 1942, the intersection of multiple motives channelled Jewish policy into the Italian refusal to participate in the 'final solution'. At the same time, the different (in fact, opposite) dynamics of the decision-making processes behind the internment measures in the two contexts confirm that fascist Jewish policy in France was not a simple repetition of the decisions concerning Croatia. As mentioned in the past chapter, unlike in Croatia, in southern France the internment of Jews was not a temporary measure pending their (direct or indirect) handover to the Nazis.

The French 'resistance'

The Foreign Ministry's instructions to put a stop to Ribière's evacuation order were immediately executed. On 30 December General Trabucchi communicated to the commanders of the IVth Army corps stationed in the departments under Italian control that, in order to avoid any episode similar to the one that occurred in the Alpes-Maritimes, they must 'forbid the prefects to carry out the internments of people of the Jewish race.' This measure was to be justified with the Italian government's firm refusal that 'people likely to have been involved in activities against Italy or against the Axis ... be taken away' from its surveillance. Moreover,

⁵⁸ J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 1-3 and 50-84; M. Knox, 'Das faschistische Italien und die "Endlösung", 1942/43', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 56-63 and 67; Rodogno, *Fascism's, passim*. According to figures reported by Rodogno (*Fascism's*, 462, Table 67), in December 1942 Jews interned in the Italian occupation zone amounted to 2,661. As for the diverging interpretations of Mussolini's 'nulla osta' real meaning, see ch. 1 and the compelling argument proposed by Giorgio Fabre ('Review of R. De Felice, *Mussolini l'alleato. L'Italia in guerra 1940-1943* vol. I (Turin: Einaudi, 1990)', *Quaderni di Storia* 35 (1992), 140-46). Fabre demonstrates that the Italian diplomats in the Foreign Ministry took Mussolini's words as an order to surrender to the Nazis Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied Croatia.

⁵⁹ See A. Korb, 'Understanding Ustaša violence', *Journal of Genocide Research* 12:1-2 (2010), 2.

the IVth Army must stand ready to ‘intervene in order to avoid any eventual attempt by the French authorities to put into execution the orders of the Vichy government.’⁶⁰

That same day a similar message (but without the passage on military intervention in case of French resistance) was delivered to the French liaison officer with the CIAF delegation in Nice, Colonel Émile Bonnet. The message was accompanied by the request that all regional and departmental prefects in the Italian occupation zone be notified of it⁶¹. In fact, Bonnet went even further and either on 30 December or the day after forwarded the message directly to his government in Vichy, whose reaction was immediate. On 31 December Bousquet ordered Ribière to ‘suspend the evacuation’ of foreign Jews to the Drôme and Ardèche departments. Still, the message instructed the prefect to ‘continue the preparations’ to carry out the evacuation order at a later stage⁶². Clearly Bousquet, who in the summer of 1942 played a key role in helping the Nazi authorities deport eastward thousands of Jews from both Occupied and Unoccupied France⁶³, was unwilling to give in to the Italians. His decision to accede to the latter’s request therefore probably needs to be read as a temporary expedient before the matter was discussed further at the highest echelons (and with the involvement of the German authorities). This would certainly explain why in early January 1943 Henri Maillard⁶⁴, André Lahillonne⁶⁵ and Édouard Dauliac, the prefects of the Savoie, Var and Haute-Savoie departments respectively, began implementing Vichy’s measures concerning the stamp of the word Juif on Jews’ identity papers and the drafting in labour units of foreign male Jews between the ages of 18 and 55. Ribière did the same in the Alpes-Maritimes

⁶⁰ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 89. Trabucchi’s order in AUSSME, L-3, b. 59/13bis Azione svolta dalle truppe italiane durante la guerra per proteggere gli ebrei.

⁶¹ Bonnet forwarded the Italian message to Ribière on 31 December. ADAM, 616W/242, de Ferrari to Bonnet, (8258/02) 30 December 1942, and Bonnet to Ribière, (1282/5A) 31 December 1942.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Ministry of the Interior, National Police, to Ribière, (19.871) 31 December 1942. Ribière, in turn, forwarded the order to the Nice police services on 2 January 1943.

⁶³ Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, ch. 5.

⁶⁴ Maillard gave instructions on how to enforce the law of 11 December to the sub-prefect of Savoie and to the head of the Police on 1 January 1943. That same day, the prefectural decree for the stamp of the word Juif on Jews’ identity papers was passed along to the local press. Jews had to conform to the dispositions ‘before 15 January 1943.’ ADS, 1362W/1.

⁶⁵ In the department of Var the law of 11 December was enforced as of 8 January 1943. J.-M. Guillon, ‘Vichy et les Juifs dans le Var’, *Provence historique* 195-196 (1999), 265.

department⁶⁶. Still, eager to avoid another clash with the Italian authorities, Ribière prudently ruled that Jews due to be recruited in labour units would join the 702 Unit stationed in the town of Entrevaux, in the Basses-Alpes department occupied by the Italian troops⁶⁷. This time the Italian authorities could not oppose his decision on the grounds that ‘enemies’ of Italy and of the Axis were removed from their surveillance⁶⁸.

A reaction nevertheless occurred. As we have mentioned, on 2 January Ciano reiterated that all measures concerning the treatment of Jews were in the sole competence of the Italian occupation authorities. Accordingly, on the morning of 9 January the head of the CIAF delegation in Nice summoned Colonel Bonnet and informed him that preparations for the removal of foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department had to be suspended too⁶⁹. Other similar notifications from the Italian authorities to Ribière followed⁷⁰.

As on previous occasions, Ribière complied with the Italian demands⁷¹, while keeping Bousquet and Laval posted on the situation. However, this time Laval felt that the French government could not endure the Italian demands anymore and that a more pointed response was needed. Hence, either on 13 or 14 January Laval instructed Ribière to summon Calisse and the Italian military authorities to discuss the matter further. Ribière had in particular to propose to the Italian representatives that foreign Jews affected by Vichy’s anti-Jewish measures of early December be transferred to Italy⁷².

⁶⁶ The decree that Ribière signed on 29 December 1942 ruled that the law of 11 December will be enforced as of 1 January 1943. The deadline for Jews to report to the local authorities was 31 January 1943. ADAM, 616W/242.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Ribière to the head of government and, for reference, to the Chief of Police, 14 January 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 197-99.

⁶⁸ Carpi, *Between*, 90.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Bonnet to Ribière, (29/5-I) 9 January 1943.

⁷⁰ Between 9 and 12 January Calisse demanded twice to Ribière that both the stamping of Jews’ identity papers and their drafting in labour units be altogether abandoned. The same demand, but formulated ‘with a more imperative tone’, concerning the labour units was made on 12 January to the prefect by the Italian military authorities in Nice. Ibid., Calisse to Ribière, (28R) 12 January 1943 and Ribière to the head of government and, for reference, to the Chief of Police, 14 January 1943.

⁷¹ Ibid., Ribière to the head of the local Police in Nice and to the head of the Police regional service, 12 and 13 January 1943.

⁷² ADAM, 616W/242, Ribière to the Chief of Police, (499) 11 January 1943 and (00067) 13 January 1943, and Ribière to the Chief of the French government and to the Chief of Police, (00078) 14 January 1943.

Laval's reaction cannot be explained only by his desire to get rid of the Jews and meet the German demands. Matters of national prestige and French sovereignty over the territories under Italian occupation were at stake, too. Laval was aware of the still unaccomplished, yet never relinquished, Italian territorial claims over Nice and Corsica. Yet, he also knew that the Axis invasion of 11 November was predicated upon the need to protect the French Mediterranean shores from an Allied landing, without however entailing any curtailment of the Vichy government's sovereign powers over the former Unoccupied Zone. But this scenario had significantly changed on 27 December 1942, when the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht announced to the Vichy government its decision to exert the full powers of an occupying army throughout the territories that the Wehrmacht had occupied in November 1942⁷³. Hence, for Laval, to allow the fascist government to meddle in a French domestic matter such as Jewish policy (with the obvious exception of Italian Jews), was tantamount to setting a dangerous precedent.

However, during the meeting between Ribière and the Italian representatives that followed (probably on 14 January), Laval's proposal met with the firm opposition of the Italian military authorities. For his part, Calisse reacted to Laval's proposal by stating that 'the Italian government intended to give to Jews living in the Italian operational zone the same statutes as in Italy, namely [a] humane legislation (*législation humaine*)', as Ribière reported to Laval and Bousquet⁷⁴. Calisse's words were reported verbatim also in the detailed report dated 14 December that Ribière sent to Laval and Bousquet to summarise the stages of the Italian opposition to Vichy's anti-Jewish measures. We have therefore no reason to question their nature. However, Calisse's reaction to Laval's proposal, by itself very interesting, becomes even more so in light of the explanation of the reasons for the Italian government's firm stand on Vichy's new anti-Jewish measures that Ribière offered in the second half of his report. According to the prefect, 'political considerations' (*préoccupations politiques*), and not concerns as to the security of the Italian troops, were to be regarded as the real motive for the Italian decision to claim full

⁷³ USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 2 (Allegati) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 105-06, doc. 42. See also Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 271.

⁷⁴ ADAM, 616W/242, Ribière to the head of the French government and to the Chief of Police, (00078) 14 January 1943.

authority over Jewish policy in their occupation zone. For one thing, with their opposition to Vichy's anti-Jewish measures the Italian authorities got to win the sympathies of the 'Jewish milieus' where the rumour that the Italians 'protect the Jews' had begun diffusing. Still, for Ribière the fascist government's stance needed to be seen first and foremost as a 'claim to a policy that on this specific point wants to diverge (*se séparer*) from the German one.'⁷⁵

What humaneness? Fascist Jewish policy and the 'final solution'

In the apparent contrast between the humaneness that, according to Calisse, marked the anti-Jewish persecution in fascist Italy and the political rationale for the Italian opposition to Vichy's anti-Jewish measures stressed by Ribière, we can discern the matrix of the opposition, which we have already in part discussed in this chapter, between historians' explanations of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories as a result either of humanitarianism or political expediency. In particular, over the years historians have taken pains to explain the meaning of this seemingly simple noun 'humaneness' that comes out so often in the Italian documents discussing the attitude of the Italian authorities towards Jews in France, Greece⁷⁶ and Croatia⁷⁷, and that Calisse, too, used to signify before Ribière the difference between the fascist persecution of the Jews and Nazi Jewish policy. Those scholars like Susan Zuccotti who uphold the argument of the Italian rescue of Jews are particularly keen to construe that 'humaneness' as the Italian 'humanitarian' concern for the Jews' fate. In this view, the importance of the 'humanitarian' component in the Italian attitude towards the Jews surpasses that of other reasons (such as those listed by Ribière), thus leading Zuccotti to posit the Italian sabotage of the 'final solution'⁷⁸. By contrast, historians such as Davide Rodogno and MacGregor Knox who read the Italian decision not to collaborate in the 'final solution' as a result of political expediency interpret that 'humaneness' as a compound of military honour and firm belief in the Italian 'civilising mission' developed in the Risorgimento framework, of which the other side of the coin was the violence perpetrated in the Balkan territories

⁷⁵ Ibid., Ribière to the head of government and, for reference, to the Chief of Police, 14 January 1943.

⁷⁶ An example by Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 390.

⁷⁷ ASMAE, Gab., Serie V - Ufficio Armistizio-Pace, 1507 b. 15 Condizione degli ebrei in Croazia.

⁷⁸ Zuccotti, *The Italians*, 95-100.

under Italian occupation. As this argument goes, the Italian ‘humaneness’ was nothing more than a deceptive self-portrait devoid of any humanitarian concern for the Jews which found its counter-image in the portrayal of the Germans as barbaric (and of the Balkan people as inferior and uncivilised)⁷⁹. Against this backdrop, Calisse’s words provide an interesting case study.

Historians Renzo De Felice and David Bidussa have alerted us to the fact that the interpretative issues with the vocabulary of any given period of Italian history are not just philological ones, but are linked with the meaning that words acquire in the specific historical contexts under scrutiny⁸⁰. In Calisse’s case, this means we should understand the adjective ‘humane’ in the context of the Foreign Ministry’s reaction to the Vichy government’s new anti-Jewish measures of early December 1942, and primarily to Ribière’s evacuation order. This reaction took place within the double, contiguous contexts of the fascist anti-Jewish persecution and the Nazi ‘final solution’. In this respect, it is perhaps germane to stress that immediately before being appointed to the Italian General Consulate in Nice, Calisse served in German-occupied Sarajevo where he saw the Nazis’ approach to the ‘Jewish problem’ at work⁸¹. Hence, when in late 1942 the Consul General described the Italian anti-Jewish legislation as ‘humane’ to Ribière, he did so in full awareness of the distinction between the Italian solution to the ‘Jewish question’ and the Nazi ‘final solution’⁸².

At the same time, Calisse’s refusal to participate in the German ‘final solution’ went hand in hand with the closure of the Italian occupation zone that, as the Consul General was certainly aware, would very likely mean deportation for those Jews still in the German zone. Knox was therefore right in arguing that the Italian rulers ‘measured their “humaneness” on a scale of values necessarily learned through the racist turn [that] occurred in Italy between 1936 and 1938.’⁸³ What Knox seemed not to notice is that such scale of values implied nonetheless the rejection – at least in southern France at the end of 1942 – of the ultimate murderous outcome of Nazi

⁷⁹ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 69-74, and Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, 37-39 and 400-05.

⁸⁰ D. Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1994), 14-15.

⁸¹ K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 302.

⁸² For a different interpretation of Calisse’s words see Zuccotti, *The Italians*, 97.

⁸³ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 72.

Jewish policy and that we cannot therefore exclude the concerns for the Jews' fates were at play, too (although 'proportions cannot be assessed definitively', as noted by one commentator⁸⁴). In Calisse's 'personal' action these concerns probably had an important role, although, as d'Ajeta's instructions to close up the Italian zone's border remind us, they could find a practical outcome only within the specific boundaries of the fascist anti-Jewish persecution, which bring us back to the interplay of interests, pressures, and values stressed by Bloxham. Accordingly, as in the case of the Foreign Ministry's stand on the matter of Ribière's evacuation order, to acknowledge the role played by humanitarianism does not imply ignoring that the dispute over Ribière's order unfolded parallel to the diplomatic struggle between Rome and Vichy of which Calisse had of course full knowledge. Calisse's actions before and after instructions from Rome to hinder Ribière's evacuation order had arrived show that humanitarian and political concerns were complementary rather than alternative, thus obviating 'extreme' and irreconcilable representations of the Italians either as decent, courageous and humane⁸⁵ or as unsympathetic⁸⁶ (positions that, however, were certainly present too). More broadly, Calisse's words show the extent to which the formula 'discriminate, not persecute' was embedded in the Italian diplomats' worldview. This confirms that d'Ajeta's cable of 22 December mentioned in the previous chapter not only provided operational guidelines on how to carry out the internment of Jews, but it provided also – at least in Calisse's reading – a general reminder of the overall political-ideological difference between the fascist solution to the 'Jewish question' and the Nazi 'final solution'.

At the same time, Calisse's words explain the reason that both Frenchmen and Germans were often in a quandary as to the rationale for fascist Italy's seemingly inexplicable stand on the 'Jewish question' in southeastern France. Indeed, Ribière's step was not the only one envisaged by Laval. On the same day, the head of the

⁸⁴ D. Roberts, 'Italian Fascism: New Light on the Dark Side', *Journal of Contemporary History* 44: 3 (2009), 531.

⁸⁵ Here I echo Zuccotti's argument (*The Italians*, 99) that 'when all the logical reasons for and against [Italian] cooperation in the Holocaust are weighted and measured, it is apparent that decency, courage, and humanity often tipped the balance.'

⁸⁶ Knox, 'Das faschistische', especially section 2 'Erklärungsmuster: „Rettungsaktion“ – Ideologie und Berufsehre – Ressortkonflikte – Todesangst im Zeichen des Zusammenbruchs?', and Rodogno, *Fascism's*, ch. 11.

French government contacted the Italian Embassy in Paris to protest against the Italian ‘intervention “in favour” of foreign Jews’. Laval stated ‘that he would see rather with favor the transfer to Italy of the Italian Jews and perhaps of the foreigners too.’ Also in this case, however, the French proposition fell on deaf ears. In fact, on that very same day the Italian Consul General in Vichy, Count Vittorio Zoppi, gave instructions to his subordinates to reiterate to the French Foreign Ministry that ‘for reasons of military security the Italian authorities decided to take upon themselves the exclusive competence on the precautionary measures to be taken toward the Jews, according to the criteria that they consider to be the most suitable.’⁸⁷

In fact, once again the Italian demands partially fell on deaf ears. Although the prefect of the Var, Lahillonne, had to desist from enforcing the law of 11 December on the stamping of the word Juif on Jews’ identity papers⁸⁸, he was able to implement Vichy’s instructions as to the enlistment of foreign Jews in labour units. These foreign Jews were deported ‘inland’ sometime between January and February 1943⁸⁹. In Savoie, Maillard enforced the law of 11 December without interference by the Italians and on 20 January he reported to Alexandre Angeli, the Lyons regional prefect, that 570 French Jews and 267 foreign Jews had had their identity papers stamped with the word Juif⁹⁰. In Haute-Savoie, two foreign male Jews were included in the departmental lists of Jews due to be drafted in labour units⁹¹.

Fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France: beyond monocausality and false dichotomies

Describing the outcome of the fascist government’s opposition to Ribière’s evacuation order, Susan Zuccotti has argued that ‘in the weeks that followed, Italian occupying forces prevented other anti-Jewish measures. They refused to allow foreign labor camps in their occupation zone. They forbade the stamping of identification papers on ration books with the word “Jew”, as required by the French

⁸⁷ Carpi, *Between*, 91-92 (quotations from p. 92) and MAE, *Relazione*, 27-28.

⁸⁸ Guillon, ‘Vichy et les Juifs’, 265.

⁸⁹ Poznanski, *Jews*, 369.

⁹⁰ ADS, 1362W/1, Maillard to Angeli, 20 January 1943.

⁹¹ ADHS, 41W/29, Minutes of the meeting of the Haute-Savoie Departmental Enlistment Commission, 6 January 1943.

law.⁹² This chapter has revealed that this characterization of the results achieved by the Foreign Ministry's decision to prevent the implementation of the Vichy government's anti-Jewish measures in the Italian occupation zone is not entirely accurate. Yet, despite the French reluctance to accede to the Italian demands, Ribière's surrender (first and foremost on the expulsion of foreign Jews to German-occupied departments) as a consequence of the fascist authorities' claim to exclusive authority over Jewish policy in southern France did represent the success of fascist Italy's approach to the 'Jewish problem' over Nazi Germany's 'final solution' within the boundaries of the Italian occupation zone.

This said, the chapter has also shown that in December 1942 there was no such thing as the Italian sabotage of the 'final solution'. In order to define the fascist government's reaction to Ribière's evacuation order as sabotage of Nazi exterminatory policy, one would need to prove that the intention of the fascist rulers was not only to prevent the transfer of some 1,400 foreign Jews into the German zone, but also that they wanted to put a halt to the deportation of Jews from France (and elsewhere in Europe) to the east. To this day no scholar has been able to unearth such proof. When on 29 December 1942 the Italian Foreign Ministry blocked the French attempt to hand over certain Jews to the Nazis, at the same time it also instructed the Italian occupation authorities to close the border of the Italian zone and not let any Jew in. This last instruction was tantamount to a death sentence, as the Italian diplomats knew. In this respect, the chapter has exposed the faultiness of the assumption underpinning the argument of the Italian sabotage of the 'final solution' whereby, since the fascist government refused to participate in the murder of the Jews living within the Italian occupation zone, then it must follow that the fascist rulers were immune from anti-Semitism (or were even philo-Semites). As we mentioned in the introduction, anti-Semitic persecution and refusal of genocide can coexist. And, indeed, in 1942 the fascist rulers did not see any contradiction between the two⁹³. In fact, the analysis of Calisse's actions suggests that the Italian officials, far from rejecting fascist anti-Jewish persecution, considered it as a humane solution to the 'Jewish problem' (whose existence they thus implicitly acknowledged)

⁹² Zuccotti, *The Italians*, 83.

⁹³ In this sense, Fascist Italy fit larger patters of what Donald Bloxham has termed 'ethnic dominance' in Europe from the second half of the nineteen century onwards. Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 39-40.

compared to the Nazi 'final solution'. But we can push this argument further. Calisse's case indicates that, within the Italian-fascist worldview, anti-Semitic policy and humanitarian refusal to send Jews to their death could coexist.

In this regard, equally wrong, in light of the findings presented in this chapter, is therefore the assumption underlying the 'pragmatic' explanation of the Italian opposition to Vichy's anti-Jewish measures in December 1942, namely that humanitarian concerns and political interests are perforce mutually exclusive. This assumption, in turn, is directly linked with an analysis that singles out the geopolitical rivalry between the Axis powers in the occupied territories as the 'crucial'⁹⁴ context in which to understand the Italian refusal to hand Jews over, while deliberately leaving the 'final solution' and the issue of Italian collaboration in it in the background. Although there is much value in moving beyond a genocide-centred analysis of fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories, this chapter has proven that the fascist rulers were perfectly aware of what was at stake when discussing Jewish policy with their Nazi allies, namely the murder of the Jews. To put it another way, when faced with Ribière's attempt at handing over to the Nazis foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian zone, the fascist rulers knew that the lives (or deaths) of those people depended on their decisions. Hence, to overlook the fact that the German requests for the handover of Jews and the Italian refusals to grant those requests also belong to the context of the 'final solution' is to misapprehend the issue under discussion.

This chapter has shown that in order to fully grasp the rationale for the fascist refusal to let some 1,400 Jews be handed over to the Nazis and be sent to their death, we need to reverse the aforementioned perspective and put fascist Jewish policy at the centre of our analysis. This must be done without falling into the trap of a circular argument that sees that policy as necessarily non-genocidal. As we shall see in the seventh chapter, the non-genocidal outcome of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was not a given consequence of prior logic in Italian policy. Instead, it was the result of a choice (just as was the extermination of the Jews by Nazi Germany). More importantly, as with every choice, this one, too, was the result of multiple motivations. In the specific case of the Italian government's reaction to

⁹⁴ Rodogno, 'La politique', 67.

Vichy anti-Jewish measures in late December 1942, and more particularly to Ribière's evacuation order, these can be summed up as follows: the Foreign Ministry was particularly concerned with upholding the specific fascist approach to the 'Jewish question' summarised in the formula 'discriminate, not persecute.' Though this approach can hardly be considered as innocuous for Jewish refugees in southeastern France, it nevertheless rejected deportation and consequent killing as a means to solve the 'Jewish problem' in the Italian occupation zone, without however going as far as meddling in Nazi Jewish policy (the extermination of Jews within the German sphere, that is). As for the Italian military authorities, these were mainly concerned with safeguarding the prestige of their troops, lest their authority be undermined in the eyes of the French government and population. Ultimately, both agencies found common ground in their will to assert the Italian government's full authority over the territories that fascism had long since claimed to be Italian by full right, while implementing their own Jewish policy consisting in the internment of Jews as decided by the Comando Supremo in early December.

Chapter 4. The preparations for the internment of foreign Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied southeastern France

This chapter focuses on the preparations for the expulsion of foreign Jews from the French Mediterranean coast to *residenze forzate*, or enforced residences, in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments as part of the comprehensive purge of the Italian occupation zone decided by the Comando Supremo in early December 1942. Unlike the two previous chapters, which combined the analysis of decisions taken high up in Rome and Vichy with the study of their implementation, this chapter shifts the focus entirely onto the local level. Historians have long portrayed the internment of foreign Jews in the enforced residences as a humanitarian decision taken by the Italian authorities to rescue Jews from deportation. This chapter shows that this argument is mistaken. Instead, it reveals that the internment of Jews must be read as connected to the aforementioned Comando Supremo order.

The chapter begins by placing the Italian decisions concerning Jews within the context of the larger Italian security policy in southeastern France. It then traces the profile of the Commissario Rosario Barranco, the high-ranking Police officer who was responsible for supervising the internment operations. The chapter shows that Barranco was a member of the fascist Political Police and a faithful servant of the regime, thereby exposing the unwarranted (and largely stereotypical) assumptions portraying the Commissario's decisions concerning the treatment of Jews as a rescue policy in disguise. By doing so, the chapter calls into question the conclusions drawn by historians as a result of the comparison between Nazi and Vichy internment policies, on the one hand, and the corresponding fascist policies, on the other. Consequently, it further challenges the alleged necessary connection between anti-Semitism and genocide. As a result, the chapter shows that Barranco's decisions regarding the treatment of Jews were security measures grounded in anti-Semitic prejudices and consistent with the aims and praxis of the anti-Jewish persecution launched by the fascist regime domestically in 1938.

Commissario Barranco and Italian security policy in southeastern France

The clash between Rome and Vichy over Ribière's evacuation order that took place between late December 1942 and mid-January 1943 did not hinder the Italian preparations for the measures against allegedly dangerous civilians that had been announced by the Comando Supremo to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in early December¹. These measures called for the apprehension of dangerous enemy aliens and the internment of Jews. Accordingly, on 28 December the Chief of the Army General Staff, General Vittorio Ambrosio, sent his instruction on how to implement the Comando Supremo's decision to the IVth Army Command², which promptly set the operations in process. These began on 29 December in Monaco which, despite its neutrality, had been occupied by the Italian troops since mid-November³. The operations resulted in the arrest of forty-seven enemy aliens who were then interned in the concentration camp established by the IVth Army outside of Sospel⁴. Six days later, on 4 January, another twenty-six arrests were carried out in the coastal town of Antibes, between Nice and Cannes⁵. While General Mario Vercellino, the IVth Army Commander, forwarded Ambrosio's instructions down the chain of command⁶, the operations continued in the areas of Nice, Cannes, Antibes and Monaco, leading to the arrest of more than two hundred people by 11 February⁷.

¹ A French report written sometime between 21 December 1942 and 23 January 1943 reveals that the Italian military authorities requested the mayor of Nice to provide the lists of foreigners and naturalized people living in the city. The mayor refused to grant the request. According to the report, the Italian authorities added that 'measures against foreigners living in the coastal region should be expected.' AN, AJ/41/2315, d. XXIC Sections de liaison Leguay et Vialet Comptes rendus hebdomadaires, Exposé n. 6 (undated).

² Ambrosio to the Commands of the IVth and Vth Army, (23487) 28 December 1942, reproduced in D. Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitani francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007), 730.

³ J.-L. Panicacci, *L'occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 116.

⁴ Of the forty-seven people arrested, only one was not immediately interned in the concentration camp outside Sospel. Those arrested included twenty-six British citizens, twelve Americans, seven Poles, one Frenchman and one Australian. ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1942-39, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (38382) 29 December 1942.

⁵ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-1, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (248) 4 January 1943. In this telegram, Barranco reported the arrest of 'twenty-five civilians of French nationality and naturalised.' However, in a report that Barranco sent later to his superiors, he listed twenty-six names. ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46 Campi di concentramento in territorio francese, Political Police to DAGR, (500/1162) 17 January 1943.

⁶ Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 731.

⁷ According to the figures that Barranco reported to Senise, 195 arrests were carried out between 29 December 1942 and 11 February 1943. Yet, on two occasions Barranco did not report the number of

These operations were implemented under the supervision of the Commissario Rosario Barranco whose squad comprised the Commissario Giovanni Cerrato⁸, Police officer Antonio Zaccheo⁹ and ten agents¹⁰. To assist Barranco and his squad in carrying out the operations, by 18 December the IVth Army Command had offered ten lorries and a hundred men from the Second Company of the Xth Battalion of Carabinieri (i.e. military Police) to the Commissario¹¹. Furthermore, in the early days of the operations across the Côte d'Azur, Barranco received two additional reinforcements that he had expressly requested from the Chief of the fascist Police, Carmine Senise¹²: police officers Vincenzo Di Stefano and Luigi Civilotti¹³, both French-speaking and well acquainted with the political milieu of the Côte d'Azur. These last reinforcements, however, were used by Barranco mainly for his on-going political police duties, for which he had been originally deployed by Senise in southern France in 1939.

Born in the city of Palermo on 6 January 1900, Barranco joined the Police in 1924, two years after graduating in law. His training therefore took place in the crucial years 1924-26, when fascism transitioned into a dictatorial regime¹⁴. Barranco was assigned first to the Questura (Police Headquarters) in Turin, before serving in Trapani, Rome, Palermo and Trieste. By virtue of his brilliant record of service, excellent skills and dedication to duty, Barranco was appointed to the 1st

people who had been arrested, which justifies this study's estimate of more than 200 arrests in total. ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-1/2/3/4, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (600) 9 January 1943, (990) 14 January 1943, (1679) 22 January 1943, (2096 and 2186) 27 January 1943, (2822 and 2823) 3 February 1943, (3857) 11 February 1943.

⁸ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1942-36, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (35405) 26 November 1942.

⁹ In fact, we only know that Zaccheo was part of Barranco's unit (Canali, *Le spie*, 819 endnote 21), but it is not clear when he joined it.

¹⁰ ACS, PCM, ACSCF, tit. XVI, f. 11/111, Barranco's testimony presented to the Deputy High Commissariat for the punishment of fascist crimes, 31 October 1945, 3. In a later testimony Barranco stated that he had fifteen agents at his disposal (ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Epurazione, Barranco's testimony before the Commission of First Instance for the purge of the Police Personnel, 16 August 1946, 3).

¹¹ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 854, f. Comando Decimo Battaglione Carabinieri Reali, Diario storico militare (novembre, dicembre 1942), entry 19 December 1942 and Allegato (enclosure) 3.

¹² ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1942-37, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (36950) 11 December 1942.

¹³ Civilotti, born on 2 June 1908, joined the Police in October 1940. Previously, he worked for the Italian Foreign Ministry as an Italian teacher abroad for several years. Between 1938 and 1940, he taught mostly in the town of Cannes, on the Côte d'Azur. There Civilotti also served as secretary of the local *Fascio*. Civilotti left Rome for Nice on 29 December 1942. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1959, b. 149 bis, f. Civilotti Luigi.

¹⁴ Canali, *Le spie*, 59; S. Cassese, *Lo Stato fascista* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2010), 34.

Department (1^a Sezione) of the Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati (DAGR), or Division for General and Confidential Affairs, within the Head Police Branch at the Ministry of the Interior in May 1935. The 1st Department of the DAGR served jointly with the Political Police Division as the main instruments of political repression under the fascist regime¹⁵. In 1935, Barranco thus entered the sprawling system of repression that, since the mid-1920s, fascism had effectively used to eradicate any form of political opposition in Italy.

However, it was not until after Barranco's return in February 1939 from Bolivia that he was entrusted with political police duties¹⁶. In March 1939, Barranco was appointed as head of the Emigration Office of the Italian General Consulate in Nice. There he was meant to replace the Questore (Head of Police Administration) and vice-Consul Guido Lospinoso. This appointment to the Emigration Office concealed Barranco's real task, namely to assume control over Lospinoso's decade-long work of infiltration in the large Italian anti-fascist colony living on the Côte d'Azur¹⁷. Upon taking office, Barranco began establishing an extensive network of informants throughout the Côte d'Azur¹⁸. He also began reporting directly to the Chief of the fascist Political Police, Guido Leto, and soon gained his superior's trust and appreciation. Despite the tensions caused by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, and the ensuing and increasingly convoluted diplomatic relations

¹⁵ As part of the Head Police Branch (Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza), both the Political Police Division – with its armed branch OVRA – and the DAGR were subordinate to the Chief of Police. On the complex organisation and interactions between the fascist services of political repression see Canali, *Le spie*, ch. 2, and G. Fabre, 'Le Polizie del Fascismo', *Quaderni di storia* 31 (1990), 137-93.

¹⁶ Barranco was sent to Bolivia in December 1936 as a member of the Italian mission to that country. The main purpose of the mission was to help the local government reorganise its police services according to the Italian-fascist model. Despite the meagre results achieved by the mission, Barranco received the praise of the Bolivian government for his services (ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco). On the Italian mission to Bolivia see Canali, *Le spie*, 123-25.

¹⁷ I retrace Lospinoso's activity in southern France before the war in the seventh chapter of this thesis. Records of Barranco's first months and 'training' in his new office in ACS, MI, DGPS, POLPOL Materia, b. 263, f. Richiesta alla polizia tedesca di arresto fuoriusciti italiani residenti in Francia. Regarding the fascist Police services in pre-war France see Canali, *Le spie, passim*. On the Italian anti-fascist colony in the Alpes-Maritimes department see R. Schor, 'Les italiens dans les Alpes-Maritimes 1919-1939', in P. Milza (ed.), *Les italiens en France de 1914 à 1940* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1986), 589-98.

¹⁸ On Barranco's network of informants see Canali, *Le spie*, 137-38 and 587-88.

between fascist Italy and France¹⁹, Barranco managed ‘to inflict a hard blow to anti-fascism’ in southeastern France²⁰.

By virtue of Italy’s entry into the war on 10 June 1940, Barranco was forced to repatriate. Yet, following the signing of the armistice agreement between Italy and France on 24 June, Barranco was sent back to Nice in late 1940, albeit this time officially as a member of the Italian Armistice Commission with France (CIAF). Notably, Barranco was appointed to the Royal Delegation for Repatriation and Assistance to Italians Abroad in Nice. This delegation was nothing but a new guise under which the Italian authorities reopened the former General Consulate. Accordingly, upon his return to Nice Barranco immediately resumed his political police duties, which now also included counterespionage²¹. Between mid-1940 and November 1942 Barranco headed several important operations (while also travelling to Spain for a mission during the summer of 1942²²) that earned him great praise from his superiors, as well as their trust²³. Barranco also reported occasionally to Senise on the effects in the Alpes-Maritimes department of the anti-Jewish persecution implemented by the Vichy government as of October 1940²⁴. Finally, on

¹⁹ E. Costa Bona, *Dalla guerra alla pace. Italia-Francia 1940-1947* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995), 20-24 and 27-36.

²⁰ These are Barranco’s words in an undated report, but certainly written after 23 January 1944, that he sent in the first half of 1944 to the Chief of Police of the Italian Social Republic to sum up his activities in southern France between March 1939 and January 1944. As a result of Barranco’s actions, Leto recommended in March 1940 that Barranco receive the title of ‘Cavaliere Ufficiale della Corona d’Italia’, or Knight Officer of the Crown of Italy, because of his role in ‘ensuring the functioning of important services of political police [in France] avoiding even the smallest of problems.’ The title of ‘Ufficiale della Corona d’Italia’ was bestowed upon Barranco on 30 October 1941. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco.

²¹ Apparently, on orders from Senise and in accordance with the Italian Military Intelligence, Barranco established contacts with the French *deuxième bureau*. Regarding the relationship between Italian and French intelligence agencies, see G. Conti, *Una guerra segreta. Il Sim nel secondo conflitto mondiale* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2009), 346.

²² ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period August-September-October 1942 and Ibid., sottof. Epurazione, Barranco to his Excellency the Chief of Police, 19 May 1945.

²³ One of these operations was undertaken in the second half of 1941 and led to the identification and consequent arrest of the Italian Police officer Tertulliano Borri, alias ‘agent X-Y-Z’ on charges of espionage in favour of France. Barranco received the praise of the Military Intelligence for his role in Borri’s arrest. Canali, *Le spie*, 75-77 and ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Ricompense ed encomi, Political Police to Police Personnel Division, (500/41325) 9 December 1941.

²⁴ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 51 Rapporti politici, Copy of Barranco’s report to the Chief of Police dated 14 May 1942 forwarded by Consul General in Nice Quinto Mazzolini to the Foreign Ministry and other recipients, (1240R) 15 May 1942; ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Epurazione, Copy of a report from Barranco to the Chief

8 December 1942 Senise informed Barranco of his new appointment as Chief officer in charge of purging the Italian occupation zone of 'suspect elements' as per the Comando Supremo's orders²⁵. Clearly, Senise's (and Leto's) decision to put Barranco in charge of the Italian security policy in southeastern France was rooted in firm faith in his competence.

Towards the systematic internment of Jews: the timing of the order

Foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jews were among those arrested in the early stages of the purge of the Italian zone launched on 29 December. On 14 January, Barranco reported to Senise that the first group of Jews had been arrested, but without specifying the exact number. On 27 January, Barranco reported a second round-up which resulted in the arrest of eleven Jews. As was customary, those arrested were subsequently interned in the concentration camp near Sospel²⁶. However, these were not the first Jews arrested by the Italian occupation authorities. On 13 December, the Italian troops had arrested Bruno Wolf, a Jewish refugee with Danzig citizenship born in Stolp, Germany (today Słupsk, in Poland)²⁷. Less than a month later, as part of the operations implemented in Antibes on 4 January, Barranco arrested a Polish Jew named Carol Bitter who, according to the Commissario's report on the operation, was 'known for his hostility to the Axis forces.'²⁸ We can also assume that the arrests of Wolf and Bitter were not the only ones involving Jews before the beginning of the operations on 29 December. Yet, in Bitter's case, and presumably in Wolf's too, their political orientation, not their 'race', was the chief reason for their detention. By contrast, it remains unclear whether the two groups of Jews in Nice

of Police, (873.M.19) 2 September 1942. At the beginning of his report, Barranco mentioned another message for Senise that he had sent earlier but that I did not find in his personal file.

²⁵ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Partenza, b. 1942-91, Chief of Police to Barranco, (500/90427) 8 December 1942.

²⁶ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-1/3, Barranco to Chief of Police, (990) 14 January 1943 and (2186) 27 January 1943. The words 'Urgentissimo' (Very urgent) were clearly written on the first telegram reporting on the arrest of Jews.

²⁷ According to the bulletin, Wolf was subsequently taken to the Italian headquarters at the Bristol Hotel in Monaco. ADAM, 616W/133, d. État d'esprit de la population – Rapports et bulletins des commissariats, commissariats spéciaux et RG, Weekly Intelligence Bulletin for the week from 14 to 20 December 1942 (6085).

²⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46 Campi di concentramento in territorio francese, Political Police to DAGR, (500/1162) 17 January 1943.

had been arrested because they were Jews, or because they were deemed dangerous enemy aliens (or perhaps both).

Indeed, the sources do not reveal when precisely Barranco was put in charge of Jewish policy (i.e. the internment of Jews) in addition to the arrest of enemy aliens and Italian political refugees²⁹. When on 8 December 1942 Senise informed Barranco of his new appointment as the chief officer in charge of security policy in the Italian occupation zone, he made no reference to Jews³⁰. Similarly, subsequent correspondence between Barranco and the Chief of Police did not refer to Jews³¹. The only evidence that Barranco was, at some point, responsible for Jewish policy is the Commissario's testimony (dated 31 October 1945) presented to the Alto Commissariato Aggiunto per la punizione dei delitti fascisti, or Deputy High Commissariat for the punishment of fascist crimes³², during a criminal investigation (*istruttoria penale*) into Barranco's wartime service in Nice³³. In his testimony, Barranco maintained that 'the order to take charge of the Jewish question ... , namely to send foreign Jews to enforced residences', arrived in January 1943³⁴.

Barranco's testimony is corroborated by a brief report that he sent to Consul General Calisse on 6 January. The report informed Calisse of Barranco's proposed measures for the impending internment of Jews that, presumably, the Commissario had already presented to the IVth Army Command for perusal. Barranco reiterated

²⁹ My research has not discovered any written order from Senise or any other Italian authority, specifically entrusting Barranco with the 'Jewish question' in the Italian occupation zone. Moreover, according to Barranco's reports on his movements in December 1942 and January 1943, he did not travel to Rome until 18 January, when, however, he had already proceeded to deal with Jewish policy. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period December 1942 to January 1943.

³⁰ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Partenza, b. 1942-91, Chief of Police to Barranco, (500/90427) 8 December 1942.

³¹ In addition to the file concerning the purge of the Italian occupation zone (ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46) and Barranco's several personal files (see footnotes of this chapter), I examined the incoming and outgoing telegrams from the Gabinetto (cabinet) of the Minister of the Interior (ACS, MI, Gab., UC Partenza and Arrivo) for the period November 1942 to March 1943.

³² The Deputy High Commissariat for the punishment of fascist crimes was one of the four Deputy High Commissariats (for the Purge of the Public Administration; for the Takeover of the Regime's Profits; for the Liquidation of Fascist Properties) that formed the High Commissariat for sanctions against Fascism established in July 1944. The High Commissariat was abolished in March 1946. See H. Woller, *I conti con il fascismo. L'epurazione in Italia 1943-1948* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1997).

³³ The Deputy High Commissariat investigated accusations of 'all sorts of abuses and acts of violence' (*soprusi e violenze di ogni genere*) allegedly perpetrated by Barranco against 'antifascists and Frenchmen' between 1940 and 1943. The case was eventually dismissed in the late 1946.

³⁴ ACS, PCM, ACSCF, tit. XVI, f. 11/111, Barranco's testimony presented to the Deputy High Commissariat for the punishment of fascist crimes, 31 October 1945, 5.

that he had recently been put in charge of the police services in order to purge the Italian occupation zone of any suspect elements and enemy aliens. As part of this policy, it had been agreed with the military authorities that those deemed most dangerous were to be interned in the Sospel concentration camp. Others arrested were to be sent to ‘*residenze forzate*’, or enforced residences, in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments. The latter measure also applied to Jews. Once detained in their enforced residences, inmates (including Jews) were placed under the surveillance of the Carabinieri. Barranco explained that he would preferably choose ‘localities possessing a well-developed network of hotels and where it would be possible to provide conveniently³⁵ accommodation and eating for such a crowd of people’, who he would also attempt ‘to allocate in such a way as to keep families together.’ The only people exonerated from transfer would be ‘the elderly, the crippled, single women and children’ who Barranco intended to ‘leave in their place of habitual residence.’ According to the lists in his possession, ‘about 3,500 Jews’³⁶ were currently residing in the Alpes-Maritimes department and, as soon as the orders arrived, he would begin their removal without delay. ‘I believe’, Barranco concluded, ‘that this measure conforms to the criteria of justice and humaneness and it should therefore be favourably received.’³⁷

The enforced residences as a solution to the internment of Jews: what rationale?

In a book devoted to this very subject, Daniel Carpi interpreted Barranco’s proposals for the internment of Jews in light of the concurrent clash between Rome and Vichy over the attempt of the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department Ribière to expel

³⁵ As Daniel Carpi has pointed out, ‘the word *comodamente* (conveniently) here refers to the Italian authorities’, meaning that the localities chosen by Barranco (as enforced residences) would make it easier for Italians to provide Jews with accommodation and provisions (D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 282 endnote 64).

³⁶ Barranco did not say when or from whom he obtained the lists, nor did he report whether the figure of 3,500 referred to foreign Jews only (which seems the most likely option), or to the entire Jewish population in the department.

³⁷ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 99-100. Original document: ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7 Sionismo, Barranco to Calisse, (027) 6 January 1943. The same day Calisse forwarded Barranco’s report to the Foreign Ministry. *Ibid.*, Calisse to Foreign Ministry and other recipients, (3R) 6 January 1943.

some 1,400 foreign Jews to two German-occupied departments³⁸. Drawing solely on the report that Barranco submitted to Calisse, Carpi argued that ‘the timing in introducing the subject, as well as the contents of the memorandum itself, clearly show that the intention of the police officer [was] to propose a plan that would be not only an answer to the security needs of the Italian forces but also a kind of alternative to the measures taken by the Vichy government in those days.’³⁹ Further expanding on Carpi’s argument, in a somewhat sarcastic tone, Renée Poznanski contended that Barranco’s ‘clever plan’ had the (sole) purpose of showing the Germans ‘that the Italians took seriously the job incumbent on them to monitor the Jews’, while in fact doing the opposite⁴⁰.

In fact, both arguments misapprehend the rationale underlying the internment system that Barranco intended to force upon Jews. This misconception is due to Carpi’s and Poznanski’s lack of knowledge regarding the decision-making processes that led to the detainment of Jews and enemy aliens within enforced residences. First, the time-frame of Barranco’s set of proposals must be examined. It is certainly true that the Commissario presented his set of proposals when the fascist government was clashing with the Vichy government over Ribière’s evacuation order. However, this study has revealed that he also submitted his plan *after* having received the general order to take charge of the ‘Jewish question’ in the Italian occupation zone. Hence, Barranco’s set of proposals cannot be considered, as Carpi argues, as his ‘own program for solving the problem of these Jews’⁴¹, for in presenting those proposals the Commissario was simply carrying out orders⁴². Moreover, even if we assume that the general order to intern Jews was given to Barranco after, or even as a result of the clash between Rome and Vichy, we cannot ignore that the decision to intern Jews as part of the comprehensive purge of the Italian occupation zone was taken by the Comando Supremo in early December 1942, that is, before the conflict between Rome and Vichy occurred. Accordingly, this general order cannot be interpreted as a

³⁸ See ch. 3.

³⁹ Carpi, *Between*, 99.

⁴⁰ R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 387. In the original French version of Poznanski’s book, the sarcastic tone was emphasised by the use of the suspension points at the end of the sentence: ‘Cela [i.e. Barranco’s plan] montrait bien que les Italiens prenaient au sérieux les tâches de surveillance qui leur incombaient...’ R. Poznanski, *Les Juifs en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Hachette, 2005), 463.

⁴¹ Carpi, *Between*, 99.

⁴² See later in this chapter.

humanitarian reaction to hinder the French or German attempt to arrest and detain Jews living in the Italian occupation zone. The opposite is true: it was the Comando Supremo's earlier decision to intern Jews that led the fascist government to prevent the French authorities from expelling some 1,400 foreign Jews from the Italian zone. In other words, as a result of the Comando Supremo's decision of early December 1942, the Italian occupation authorities were planning to intern Jews (and arrest enemy aliens) regardless.

Second, Barranco's use of enforced residences as the specific solution for the internment of Jews must be examined. Poznanski's characterisation of this choice epitomises a broader tendency often present within non-Italian scholarship regarding fascist Jewish policy in the occupied territories, and sometimes on the fascist racial persecution as a whole, to belittle the anti-Semitic and persecutory nature of Italian decisions and actions towards Jews⁴³. This tendency, in turn, usually intermingles with the largely stereotypical characterisation of the Italians as Machiavellian and two-faced, as well as careless and apathetic. As a result, the significance of the Italian authorities' anti-Jewish measures is almost automatically inverted, so that these measures are presented as rescue actions in disguise or, simply, shortcut solutions⁴⁴. However, by focusing solely on Barranco's set of proposals for the internment of Jews, it is clear that this characterisation lacks justification. Barranco was indeed cunning and manipulative, yet it was precisely these attributes that made him a committed and proactive Police officer faithfully serving Fascist Italy. Therefore, Barranco's proposals must be assessed for their true historical value, namely measures to neutralise the danger which, in the Italian authorities' view, Jews (and enemy aliens) posed to the Italian troops.

In order to expose the flaws behind the humanitarian explanation of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, it is essential to analyse the implicit premise underpinning this tendency to belittle the Italian anti-Jewish measures. This tendency is rooted in the implicit comparison that scholars make between the Nazi (and French, too, in Poznanski's case) persecution and the Italian-fascist persecution. This

⁴³ For a powerful analysis of this tendency see R. Ben-Ghiat, 'A Lesser Evil? Italian Fascism in/and the Totalitarian Equation', in H. Dubiel and G. Motzkin (eds), *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices* (London: Routledge, 2004), 137-53.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

comparison, in turn, is made within the analytical framework of what David Moshman has called ‘a Holocaust-based conception of genocide’ that sees the Holocaust ‘as the measure to all genocides’⁴⁵ or, in this case, to all persecutions. Thus, by using the Nazi-driven ‘final solution’ as the yardstick by which to measure the ‘reality’ of the fascist anti-Jewish persecution, these scholars construe it as a rescue policy. But simply because the Italian occupation authorities were not killing Jews as the Nazis did, or persecuting them as ruthlessly as the French authorities, this does not necessarily mean that the main purpose of their Jewish policy was to save Jews⁴⁶. Genocide and rescue are the two poles of a wider spectrum of behaviours, not the only two options of a strict dichotomy.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that if we are to appreciate fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France fully, we cannot examine it through the prism of the Nazi ‘final solution’. Instead, we need to analyse it in the larger context of the Italian security policy in southeastern France⁴⁷. Thence, in order to appreciate the rationale for Barranco’s proposed measures for the internment of Jews a fine balance between *action* and *outcome* needs to be established. It is certainly true that Barranco’s proposals respected – at least on paper – the gist of the Foreign Ministry guidelines regarding the internment of Jews. These guidelines stated in particular that ‘the criteria’ for the internment of Jews ‘should not be different from those adopted in the Kingdom [i.e. in Italy] towards foreign Jews’ and that ‘therefore some consideration will have to be used towards the elderly, children, women and sick people.’⁴⁸ And there is also little doubt that the living conditions envisaged by Barranco for Jews were much different from those they would experience in a French concentration camp⁴⁹ or under German control. Yet, we also know that providing acceptable living

⁴⁵ D. Moshman, ‘Conceptual constraints on thinking about genocide’, *Journal of Genocide Research* 3:3 (2001), 432-33.

⁴⁶ In this sense, I agree with Guri Schwarz’s conclusion that the Italian government’s ‘non-adherence to Nazism’s policy of extermination did not imply *ipso facto* the absence of anti-Semitism, nor even less did it reflect an innate good heartedness.’ G. Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 134.

⁴⁷ In this sense, the following analysis of the Italian rationale for interning Jews in enforced residences confirms and expands on the analysis proposed by Davide Rodogno, ‘L’Italia fascista potenza occupante in Europa’, in M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci and E. Traverso (eds), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. 1 (Turin: UTET, 2010), 496.

⁴⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, d’Ajeta to Minister Bonarelli, head of the liaison office of the Foreign Ministry with the IVth Army Command, and other recipients, (34R 12579) 22 December 1942.

⁴⁹ M.R. Marrus and R.O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 165-76.

conditions to Jewish inmates in Italian-run concentration camps in the peninsula was an integral part of the fascist *persecution*. Hence, it is unclear on what grounds can Barranco's proposals be credited to humanitarianism or to his alleged will to protect Jews.

In fact, the documents clearly show that Barranco's plan to detain Jews in enforced residences in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments, instead of interning them in the concentration camp set up by the IVth Army outside of Sospel, was the consequence of practical considerations. This option had been outlined by Senise himself in a message that he sent to the Comando Supremo on 27 December. The Chief of Police explained that only the most dangerous civilians would be interned in the camp near Sospel, owing to its limited capacity and the parallel impossibility of transferring the people arrested to the crowded concentration camps in Italy. Senise added that the elderly and privileged inmates would be placed in a hotel nearby the camp, while less dangerous civilians, most notably women, would be assigned to enforced residence (*'residenza coattiva'*) in French localities far from both the coast and militarily sensitive centres, at least temporarily⁵⁰.

Although Senise did not mention Jews in his message to the Comando Supremo, it is clear from Barranco's report to Calisse of 6 January that Jews were included in the category of civilians deemed less dangerous. This fact does not diminish the persecutory nature of the decision to assign Jews to enforced residence⁵¹ – a solution that was envisaged not only for Jews, but also for that portion of enemy aliens who were deemed less dangerous (and who, unlike the Jews, were not facing a mortal threat). What it reveals is that Senise (i.e. the fascist Police) viewed Jews as a secondary and minor threat compared to political opponents. This, in turn, highlights the difference between the fascist approach to the 'Jewish question' and the apocalyptic, radically racist Nazi *Weltanschauung* that considered Jews the chief enemy of the German Reich⁵².

⁵⁰ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Copy of a report from the Chief of Police to the Comando Supremo forwarded to the DAGR, (500/39872) 27 December 1942.

⁵¹ Indeed, the Italian authorities considered both Jews and non-Jews assigned to enforced residence as inmates in all respects. ADAM, 166W/10, Report from the French Police Brigade of Saint-Martin-Vésubie, 7 April 1943.

⁵² Donald Bloxham (*The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18) has written that 'the Nazi world-view perceived enemies everywhere; but ... Jews were the ultimate enemy, supposedly exploiting and manipulating all others.'

The approval of Barranco's plan: the (uncertain) role of the IVth Army

The involvement of the IVth Army headquarters in the drafting of Barranco's proposals for the internment of Jews and enemy aliens in the initial weeks of 1943 remains largely unknown. The *diario storico*, or military log, of the Army Command for the period from January to February 1943⁵³ contains no information regarding the measures taken against enemy aliens and Jews. Yet, from a *promemoria*, or memorandum, from the Comando Supremo (dated 3 April 1943), there is evidence that the Tenente Colonnello (Lieutenant Colonel) Antonino Duran, the Chief of the Intelligence Department of the IVth Army General Staff, had been 'dealing with the Jewish question.'⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the *promemoria* does not reveal when precisely Duran had been entrusted with the matter, or the nature of his specific responsibilities and jurisdiction vis-à-vis Barranco.

Equally unclear is exactly what the Italian authorities intended to do with the Jews who had been assigned to enforced residences in the department of Alpes-Maritimes in the previous years by prefect Ribière⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, by mid-February the IVth Army Command approved Barranco's proposals for the internment of less dangerous civilians in enforced residences. On 14 February, the Command of the 1st Army Corp issued orders to all divisional commanders instructing them to prepare to 'initiate operations by the 20th of this month [i.e. 20 February 1943] for the assignment to enforced residence of the subjects of hostile states and of all foreign Jews resident in the department of Alpes-Maritimes.' To that end, the Command informed the divisional commanders of having 'notified the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes to have the hotels in Saint-Martin-Vésubie and Vence reopened and to secure the victualing of the interned.' Aligned with Barranco's proposals, the instructions highlighted that

⁵³ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, Comando 4a Armata – Stato maggiore, Diario storico militare (gennaio, febbraio 1943).

⁵⁴ *Promemoria* (memorandum) from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943, reproduced in USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 2 (Allegati) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 306-10, doc. 102. Copy of the memorandum in YV, 031/4-4. Thanks go to Michele Sarfatti who kindly gave me copy of the latter.

⁵⁵ For instance, in November 1941 Ribière assigned 47 foreign Jews to enforced residences in Nice. ADAM, 30W/102, d. Sujets Juifs en résidence surveillée à Vence 1942.

as a general rule persons aged sixty or above and women living alone [underlined in the original] are not to be interned. The assignment of persons to the various localities, the message concluded, will be carried out in agreement with *Dott. Barranco* bearing in mind the nationality of the persons involved and the degree of danger they represent.⁵⁶

At around that moment, the Italian military authorities also announced to the prefect of the Basses-Alpes that 160 people were due to be interned in his department⁵⁷. Further instructions regarding the impending detainment of Jews and enemy aliens within enforced residences were circulated on 17 February. Besides the localities indicated by the military authorities, namely Saint-Martin-Vésubie and Vence in the Alpes-Maritimes department, also Barcelonnette, Enchastrayes, Moustiers-Sainte-Marie and Castellane in the Basses-Alpes department, and the château de Charance located just outside the town of Gap in the Hautes-Alpes department, were chosen as places of enforced residence. The Command of the 1st Army Corp was responsible for notifying each Jew to reach the assigned locality within five days, lest they be arrested and interned in the Sospel camp. Initially, the internment of enemy aliens residing in Monaco would be given priority⁵⁸.

These instructions demonstrate that the Italian military authorities fully approved Barranco's proposals to intern Jews and those enemy aliens who were deemed less dangerous. There was, however, one major change in relation to the measures that the Comando Supremo had announced to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in early December. These measures were originally supposed to affect the whole of the Italian occupation zone. By contrast, the instructions circulated in mid-February reflect that the operations to detain enemy aliens and Jews within enforced residence were initially limited to the Alpes-Maritimes department.

One reason for this change to the original plans probably lay in the IVth Army Command's concerns regarding the difficulties experienced in monitoring an ever-

⁵⁶ AUSSME, [N1-11] b. 1100, f. Comando 1° Corpo d'Armata – Diario storico militare, 14 February 1943, quoted by Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 113.

⁵⁷ Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 205.

⁵⁸ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 69/6 Ufficio di Mentone – Conte Bonarelli, Minister Bonarelli to Calisse, Plaja and Lepri and, for reference, to Foreign Ministry, (244) 17 February 1943.

increasing number of inmates⁵⁹. At the same time, this decision, from the perspective of the Police, also considerably diminished the scale of Barranco's task. This is particularly significant, since he and his men had been involved in a vast intelligence operation since early 1943 with the Centre for counterespionage in Nice. The main goal of the operation was to put down trafficking of sensitive Italian military documents between France, Italy and Switzerland⁶⁰.

Yet the utilitarian component was only one of the many underlying reasons to initially limit the operations to the Alpes-Maritimes department. Indeed, logistical issues can only account for the decision to limit the initial phase of the operations to one department; they do not necessarily explain the decision to prioritise the purge of the coastal department of the Alpes-Maritimes over that of other departments in the interior of the French territory. To understand this choice, the IVth Army's efforts to be forearmed against a possible landing of the Allied troops must be kept in mind, as this was the chief military reason for the Axis powers' occupation of Vichy France in the first place. Therefore, it was imperative to purge the coastline of any suspects who the Italians feared could sabotage their defensive system⁶¹ (which also included the Ligurian coast that bordered the Italian occupation zone to the east⁶²). As shown in the second chapter, when applied to Jews, the implicit and clearly anti-Semitic assumption underlying this reasoning was that all Jews, by the very fact of being Jews, were sympathetic to or even potential agents of the western Allies or the Soviet Union⁶³. At the same time, it is worth reiterating that at this early stage of the operations this rationale applied only to Nice and the Alpes-Maritimes department,

⁵⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, *Promemoria* (memorandum) from the Army General Staff to the undersecretary of State at the Interior Ministry Umberto Albini, (3352) 24 February 1943.

⁶⁰ The operation led to several arrests, including highly-sought French agent Simon Antonmarchi on 8 January, and the Italian vice-Consul in Nîmes, Carlo Rocco, on 21 January 1943. ACS, PCM, ACSCF, tit. XVI, f. 11/111; ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, bb. 1943-1/2/3, Barranco to the Chief of Police, (546) 8 January 1943, (816, 823) 12 January 1943, (1577) 21 January 1943, (2044) 26 January 1943, (4087) 13 February 1943; *Ibid.* Partenza, bb. 1943-3/6, Senise to Barranco, (2826-27/500) 14 January 1943, (5196/500) 23 January 1943. For his contribution to the operation, Barranco received the commendation of the Army General Staff in February 1943. ACS, MI, PS, Personale PS, vers. 1973, b. 119bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Ricompense. On the role of the Centre for counterespionage in the operation see Conti, *Una Guerra*, 345 and 350.

⁶¹ A description of the Italian measures to fortify the coast is given by Panicacci, *L'occupazione*, 127-30.

⁶² AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, Comando 4a Armata – Stato maggiore, Diario storico militare (gennaio, febbraio 1943), allegato (enclosure) 31.

⁶³ As even one prominent supporter of the argument of the humanitarian rescue of Jews in the Italian-occupied territories has conceded. Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 113.

namely those territories where the longstanding Italian territorial claims were the strongest (although it appears that some arrests were carried out in the Var department, too)⁶⁴. Hence, we observe that as in the case of the Italian government's *reaction* to the French anti-Jewish measures in late December 1942, also the anti-Jewish *action* of the Italian occupation authorities was not shaped only by one factor. On the contrary, it stemmed from the interplay of anti-Semitic prejudice and immediate military concerns, long-term geopolitical goals to secure the Italian sphere of interests in southern France and practical matters of logistics.

The flight of Jews in the Italian zone

Perhaps the fact that the vast majority of Jews within the Italian occupation zone were concentrated in the Alpes-Maritimes department also influenced the Italian authorities' decision to initially limit the internment operations to that department. On 24 February, the Army General Staff reported information from the IVth Army, whereby 'the total number of enemy aliens and foreign Jews' in the Alpes-Maritimes department amounted to about 7,000 people⁶⁵. Within the same period, the French authorities estimated that 15,000 Jews resided in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes department⁶⁶. Although the French figures are the most reliable, they probably underestimated the real Jewish presence in the Nice area, considering the number of Jews in hiding or those whose presence went unreported to the French Police. In addition, we must take into account those Jews who passed from the German occupation zone into the Italian zone, after the Axis forces' invasion of the Unoccupied Zone.

Initially, the Italian occupation of southeastern France elicited a mixed reaction from Jews who suddenly fell under the IVth Army rule. In the early days of September 1942, only days following the massive manhunts of foreign Jews carried

⁶⁴ AN, AJ/41/439, s.d. A.II Arrestations (Libérations), Report, (PL/2/MB) 14 February 1943. In this regard, it is interesting to read in a French report dated 5 January 1943 on the situation in several departments occupied by the IVth Army that the Italian tendency to meddle in French domestic affairs was the most acute in the Alpes-Maritimes department and Corsica, that is, the two main objects of the Italian territorial claims. Ibid., s.d. A.V Attitude des troupes italiennes, Copy of report for the secretary-general for the Police, 5 January 1943.

⁶⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, *Promemoria* (memorandum) from the Army General Staff to the undersecretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior Umberto Albin, (3352) 24 February 1943.

⁶⁶ Poznanski, *Jews*, 356-57.

out by the French Police across the Côte d'Azur, Barranco reported to Senise that the French roundups had fostered Jewish sympathies towards Italy. Barranco explained these sympathies with the 'humaneness and civilisation (*dell'umanità e del senso di civiltà*) of which Italy [gave] proof' towards Jews in the peninsula⁶⁷. These sympathies were reflected in an anonymous report on the reaction of the 'Jewish milieu in Nice' to the Italian occupation, which Calisse confidentially forwarded to the Foreign Ministry and the IVth Army Command on 15 December. The report stated that the takeover of the Côte d'Azur by the Italian troops had been 'welcomed by all [Jews] with a feeling of relief (*senso di sollievo*).'⁶⁸ Other sources suggest, however, that in the first days of the occupation a 'wait and see' mentality prevailed among Jews⁶⁹. After all, fascist Italy was Nazi Germany's chief ally. Moreover, since 1938, Mussolini's regime had been carrying out its own racial persecution. In fact, some of the very Jewish refugees from central Europe who suddenly found themselves under Italian rule in November 1942 had already experienced the fascist rigour first-hand. Following the approval of legislation concerning the expulsion of foreign Jews from Italy in September 1938⁷⁰, the Italian authorities had forced Jews to illegally cross the French border from the western Ligurian Riviera towards the Côte d'Azur⁷¹.

Admittedly, by mid-November 1942, it was difficult to anticipate the Italian authorities' attitudes towards the Jews. At the same time, considering the obvious threat of the Nazis, it seems realistic to believe that Jews preferred Italian to German occupation. The aforementioned anonymous report points in that direction, as it reported that 'Jewish mutual-aid associations based in Marseilles' had asked the

⁶⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS, vers. 1973, b. 119 bis, f. Rosario Barranco, sottof. Epurazione, Copy of a report from Barranco to the Chief of Police, (873.M.19) 2 September 1942.

⁶⁸ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8 Sionismo, Calisse to Foreign Ministry, Italian Embassies in Paris and Vichy, and IVth Army Command, (2525R) 15 December 1942.

⁶⁹ A glimpse of this attitude in the early weeks of the Italian occupation can be found in the book of memoirs of Philippe Erlanger. Erlanger, a historian, art critic and journalist, was born in Paris on 11 July 1903. In 1941, he escaped to the Côte d'Azur, where on 11 November 1942 he witnessed the Italian invasion. P. Erlanger, *La France sans étoile. Souvenirs de l'avant-guerre et du temps de l'occupation* (Paris: Plon, 1974).

⁷⁰ The order to leave Italy by 12 March 1939 concerned foreign Jews who had established their domicile in the peninsula after 1 January 1919. M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 129 and 141.

⁷¹ R. B. Khalifa, 'L'Italie fasciste et l'émigration clandestine des réfugiés juifs en France (1939-1940)', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 27: 3 (2011), 165-76; J. Kleinmann, 'Pèrigrinations des Juifs étrangers dans les Alpes-Maritimes (1938-1944)', in J.-W. Dereymez, *Le refuge et le piège: les Juifs dans les Alpes (1938-1945)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 201-02.

Italian authorities to suggest localities in the Italian zone, so they could move their activities. The report concluded by referring to ‘the many Jewish families’ whose relatives had been deported in the previous months and who were now hoping for ‘Italian protection’ from the new raft of anti-Jewish measures taken by the French government⁷².

This reference was presumably to the French law of 11 December, which prescribed that the word *Juif* be stamped on Jews’ identity papers, and to the Vichy government’s decision to immediately draft certain categories of Jews into labour units. As discussed in chapter three, a few days after Calisse forwarded the anonymous report to the Foreign Ministry and the IVth Army Command, these measures were followed by Ribière’s decree for the expulsion of some 1,400 foreign Jews to the German-occupied Ardèche department. And it was precisely the Italian government’s firm reaction to these three measures (but first and foremost to Ribière’s evacuation order) that prompted a major shift in Jews’ attitude to the Italians both within and outside the Italian occupation zone. As described in the CIAF *notiziario quindicinale* for the second fortnight of January 1943, ‘a feeling of gratitude (*senso di gratitudine*) towards Italy has spread across the Jewish milieu’⁷³ of the Alpes-Maritimes department, following the steps taken by the Italian occupation authorities that eventually forced Vichy to renounce the implementation of the anti-Jewish measures. Jews in the former Unoccupied Zone now believed the Italians were protecting them or, at the very least, were less hostile towards them than the French authorities or the Nazis. Indeed, we need to bear in mind that many, and perhaps even the majority, of the central and eastern European Jews who were around to witness the Axis invasion of the Unoccupied Zone on 11 November, were in that position because less than three months before they had managed to escape the massive manhunts carried out by the French Police. Many of those Jews therefore were ‘survivors’. In consequence, faced with the alternatives of living under the constant threat of arrest and deportation or seeking sanctuary in the Italian zone, they began to cross into Italian-occupied territory. Nice and the Côte d’Azur were their main destinations, yet not the only ones. For example, the majority of the members

⁷² ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, Calisse to Foreign Ministry, Italian Embassies in Paris and Vichy, and IVth Army Command, (2525R) 15 December 1942.

⁷³ AISRC, *CIAF Notiziario Quindicinale n° 52* [second fortnight of January 1943], 14-15.

of the Jewish communities of Montpellier, Béziers and Perpignan hid in small villages in the Isère department, which was almost completely occupied by the Italian troops, as well as in the Aveyron and Lozère departments⁷⁴.

Klaus Voigt has estimated that the number of Jewish refugees (i.e. with a nationality other than Italian or French) who arrived in the Italian zone after 11 November was between 3,000 and 5,000. This figure increases slightly if we add the French Jews who passed into the Italian zone after the Nazi-led roundup in Marseilles on 21-27 January 1943, which made them realise that they could be subjected to the same treatment as foreign Jews⁷⁵. Tellingly, this mass flight in the Italian zone occurred despite the fact that the Foreign Ministry had issued instructions at the end of December to prevent the arrival of foreign Jews living in the portion of the former Unoccupied Zone under German rule⁷⁶. At the same time, by mid-March 1943 the IVth Army Command took measures to put a stop to the constant flow of Jews to the Italian occupation zone, as we shall examine in detail in the next chapter. In this sense, Voigt's argument that the arrival of Jewish refugees in the Italian zone probably peaked between January and March 1943⁷⁷ seems plausible. But who were these Jews? Where did they come from? Why were they in the Unoccupied Zone in late 1942?

A mosaic of nationalities and experiences: the cases of the Toronczyks and Fink

According to the aforementioned anonymous report that Calisse forwarded to the Foreign Ministry and the IVth Army Command, 'three categories' of Jews lived in the Alpes-Maritimes department after 11 November 1942: Jews who resided in the department since before the war, Jews who had fled southward because of the German invasion of Belgium, the Netherlands and France of May 1940, and finally, as of 11 November, Jews who fled Marseilles and the former Unoccupied Zone now under German control. Perhaps more important than the timing of the arrival of the

⁷⁴ Poznanski, *Jews*, 394-96.

⁷⁵ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 306; Poznanski, *Jews*, 371-73.

⁷⁶ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, d'Ajeta to Minister Bonarelli, head of the liaison office of the Foreign Ministry with the IVth Army Command, and for reference to SIM, DAGR and Italian representatives in Paris, Vichy, Nice and Lyons, (34/R 12825) 29 December 1942.

⁷⁷ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 306.

Jews on the Côte d'Azur were, however, the different economic conditions that they experienced, which leads to alternative categorisations. In addition to 'a significant minority of intellectuals and well-to-dos', such as the aforementioned Italian businessman Angelo Donati, the report revealed the presence 'of a majority of persons who owing to their flight and the expropriations have lost almost all of their possessions and live miserably.'⁷⁸ Often Jews belonging to this second category were originally from central and eastern Europe and their arrival on the Côte d'Azur (or in other parts of the Italian zone) sometime between May 1940 and November 1942 was only one of several stops across Europe in an attempt to flee discrimination, persecution and eventually deportation. Beyond the crucial need for money, Jews experienced problems due to a lack of language skills and local connections. Moreover, the Vichy anti-Jewish laws further worsened their condition, thereby making their life in the Unoccupied Zone increasingly difficult even before the turning point of late August 1942.

However, this schematic categorisation provided in the anonymous Italian report of 15 December should not be taken as an accurate picture of the mosaic forming the Jewish community in the Italian occupation zone. Nor should the differences in the economic conditions experienced by Jews be seen as a strict divide in that community. Across the waves of arrivals in southern France, and in between these two economic extremes, there was a wide range of experiences and personal trajectories sometimes criss-crossing in unexpected and circuitous ways.

The Toronczyks, a Polish Jewish family composed of husband Wolf, his wife Régina Minc and their two children Frédy and Pierrot⁷⁹, entered France before the Vichy government launched its own anti-Jewish persecution in October 1940. Wolf and Régina got married in April 1926 in Leipzig. By the birth of their second son, Pierrot, on 12 October 1939⁸⁰, the Toronczyks had already moved to Brussels, where

⁷⁸ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1942, b. 64/8, Calisse to Foreign Ministry, Italian Embassy in Paris, General Consulate in Vichy and IVth Army Command, (2525R) 15 December 1942.

⁷⁹ Wolf was born on 26 September 1896 in Płock, while Régina was born on 28 May 1901 in Włodawa (both cities were part of the Russian Empire at the time). For some reason, the French authorities registered and usually referred to Toronczyk as Wulf (and also Wilf on one occasion) instead of Wolf. Likewise, his two children were also referred to as Freedy and Pierre. ADAM, 1468W/143, d. 194.089 Toronczyk.

⁸⁰ Their first son, Frédy, was born on 9 October 1931 in the German town of Senftenberg.

Wolf worked as manager of a metalworking factory⁸¹. They decided to flee Brussels at the time of the German invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940. Hereupon, the Toronczyks crossed the border into France on 19 May (or 21, according to other sources). They arrived in Nice on 25 July. The Prefecture of the Alpes-Maritimes granted the Toronczyks a temporary residency permit that was subsequently renewed until February 1942⁸². Later, in compliance with the Vichy law of 2 June 1941, each member of the Toronczyk family presented their declaration of Jewishness to the French authorities⁸³. However, it was only in 1942 that the situation for the Toronczyks, as well as for Jews in both Occupied and Unoccupied France, became deadly serious. The circular from the French Interior Ministry, dated 2 January 1942, ordered that all Jews who had entered France after 1 January 1936 be confined in specific localities. Hence, on 3 April, Ribi re assigned the Toronczyks to enforced residence in the commune of Vence, and prohibited them from leaving without safe-conduct. The sources do not reveal whether the Toronczyks complied with the order. Regardless, on 29 July, a new prefectural order reassigned Wolf, Regina and their children to enforced residence in a hotel in Nice⁸⁴.

By the time the second prefectural order was issued, Wolf had already become involved in the activities of the Comit  d'Aide aux R fugi s, or Refugees Relief Committee, located adjacent to the synagogue on boulevard Dubouchage in Nice. It was precisely through his activity at the Comit  Dubouchage, as it became popularly known, that Wolf's path crossed with another Polish Jewish refugee from Belgium, Ignace Fink. Born on 10 October 1910 in Sanok (at that time part of Austria-Hungary), Fink settled in Antwerp before the Second World War⁸⁵. According to one of his two post-war testimonies, at the time of the French surrender in June 1940 Fink was in France, where he remained until December 1940. Yet, unlike the Toronczyks, Fink decided to return to German-occupied Antwerp from France,

⁸¹ AN, AJ/38/3972, d. Toronczyk Wulf, Report on Toronczyk Wulf, (813) 22 June 1943.

⁸² ADAM, 1468W/143, d. 194.089 Toronczyk.

⁸³ See footnote 81.

⁸⁴ See footnote 82.

⁸⁵ ADAM, 1468W/420, d. 214.464 Fink Ignace, Application for a residency permit, (11286E) 19 June 1942.

instead of heading southward to the Unoccupied Zone⁸⁶. He remained in Antwerp until early June 1942⁸⁷, when he managed first to re-enter France, and then crossed the demarcation line into 'free' France. Fink then submitted an application for a residency permit to the Prefecture of the Alpes-Maritimes on 19 June. This application reveals that, on 17 August 1941, the Bolivian Consulate in Antwerp granted Fink an entry visa valid for two years that he apparently intended to use to emigrate in North America⁸⁸. Fink did not manage to cross the Atlantic, however. This fact probably explains his later involvement in the aid activities of the Comité Dubouchage. His failure to emigrate also exposed Fink to a mortal threat when, in late August 1942, the French Police began hunting for Polish and other foreign and stateless Jews to handover to the Nazis.

Somehow both Fink and the Toronczyks managed to escape the great roundup across the Unoccupied Zone by going into hiding and eventually witnessed the Italian occupation of Nice on 11 November 1942. It was at that time that their paths crossed with that of Angelo Donati who, following the Italian invasion of southeastern France, began collaborating with the Comité Dubouchage⁸⁹.

Fink, Donati and the Toronczyks represent the diverse and sometimes overlapping experiences and personal trajectories of Jews who, after 11 November, found themselves under Italian rule (or decided to place themselves under Italian control in southeastern France). Their stories are not necessarily paradigmatic, but both their differences and similarities offer a glimpse into the multifaceted Jewish microcosm populating the Italian occupation zone at the time of the impending implementation of the Italian anti-Jewish measures. This said, it is also important to emphasise that a crucial difference between Donati, on the one hand, and Fink and the Toronczyks, on

⁸⁶ CDJC, Fonds Lublin, CMXXI-21 Ignace Fink – Témoignage. The testimony is not dated, but was given after 1968, according to information kindly provided by Karen Taïeb, head of the Archives Service at the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris in May 2015, whom I also thank.

⁸⁷ In his other post-war testimony (CDJC, Fonds Anny Latour, DLXI-25 Ignace Fink's testimony), Fink stated that he left Belgium in August 1942, which clearly could not be the case. The testimony was collected by Anny Latour, most likely in 1968, while she was researching her book *La Résistance juive en France (1940-1944)* (Paris: Stock, 1970). After the publication of her book, Latour gave Fink's testimony and others she had collected to the *Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine* in Paris, which, in 1973, contacted the authors to reread their testimonies and sign them. Here again I thank Karen Taïeb for providing me with this information.

⁸⁸ ADAM, 1468W/420, d. 214.464 Fink Ignace, Application for a residency permit, (11286E) 19 June 1942.

⁸⁹ CDJC, DLXI-25 and CDJC, CCXVI-61.

the other hand, did exist. While the Italian Jew Donati was spared from the Italian authorities' anti-Jewish measures due to be implemented as of the second half of February 1943, Fink and the Toronczyks were not. Instead, they fell within the category of Jews whom Barranco had planned to assign to enforced residence.

The internment of Jews in enforced residences: a reassessment

In the first of his two post-war testimonies, Ignace Fink stated that the Italian authorities' decision to assign Jews to enforced residences was due to the pressures from their Nazi allies. According to Fink, 'vis-à-vis the Germans, [the enforced residences] could give the impression that the Italians had taken some measures against the Jews' living in their occupation zone⁹⁰. Like Fink, several historians portray the decision of the Italian authorities, and more precisely of the Commissario Barranco, to detain Jews in enforced residences as a rescue operation in disguise⁹¹. One scholar even went so far as to argue that 'it is impossible not to see a certain protective design' in that decision⁹².

This chapter has demonstrated that these arguments betray a lack of knowledge of the decision-making processes that led the Italian authorities to adopt the enforced residences as a solution for the internment of Jews. Barranco's set of proposals for the internment of Jews was never formulated on humanitarian grounds. Internment did not illustrate the intention to rescue the 1,400 foreign Jews subject to Ribière's evacuation order, nor Barranco's carelessness or his alleged Machiavellian plan to deceive the Germans. Barranco's actions in southeastern France before and after the Italian invasion in November 1942 plainly prove that he was a faithful and proactive servant of the fascist regime. In this respect, the chapter has also challenged the argument according to which 'collective and individual measures to repress any threats to the security of the occupation troops elicited insuperable hostility

⁹⁰ CDJC, DLXI-25.

⁹¹ C. Villermet, *A noi Savoia. Histoire de l'occupation italienne en Savoie, novembre 1942-septembre 1943* (Les Marches: La Fontaine de Siloé, 1991), 63.

⁹² A. Cavaglioni, 'Foreign Jews in the western Alps (1938-43)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10:4 (2005), 435. The same argument in A. Cavaglioni, 'Gli ebrei e l'occupazione italiana nella Francia meridionale (1940-1943). A proposito di un libro recente', *Mondo Contemporaneo* 1 (2005), 150.

(*un'invincibile ostilità*) on the part of the Italian authorities when they meant persecuting Jews of any nationality or stateless resident in France.'⁹³

In fact, this chapter has confirmed that in order to appreciate fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France we need to analyse it in the context of the Italian security policy targeting also enemy aliens and political opponents. As also shown by Barranco's post-war testimony, his wartime proposals were an integral part of the comprehensive purge of the Italian occupation zone that the Comando Supremo ordered in early December 1942. Furthermore, this chapter has confirmed that the inclusion of Jews in the expulsion of less dangerous civilians to enforced residences was predicated upon anti-Semitic prejudices. At the same time, it has demonstrated that the Italian authorities considered Jews as a minor and less immediate threat than the threat posed to the Italian troops by enemy aliens, whose arrest was, therefore, a priority to Barranco. In addition, logistical constraints compelled the Chief of Police Senise and Barranco, in agreement with the Italian military authorities, to select enforced residences as a solution for Jewish internment. Therefore, the decision to detain Jews in enforced residences was the result of the interaction and partial overlapping of anti-Semitic prejudices, military concerns and practical considerations.

Within this context, Barranco's choice to provide future inmates of the enforced residences, including Jews, with acceptable living conditions, complied with the specific instructions given by the Foreign Ministry. These instructions considered the conditions of those concentration camps controlled by the civilian authorities in Italy as a model for the internment of less dangerous civilians in southeastern France. Here again, far from hinting at a hidden rescue agenda on the part of Barranco (or of any Italian authority), that choice only reinforces my argument that the measures towards the Jews in Italian-occupied southeastern France unfolded along the lines of Jewish policy that the fascist regime had domestically enforced since 1938. In this respect, the difference in terms of violence between the Italian internment practices on the one hand, and the French and German internment policies on the other, must be recognised by the historian,' but so must the persecutory nature of the Italian measures. Otherwise, by focusing solely on the non-genocidal outcome of the Italian

⁹³ Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 391.

decision to intern Jews in enforced residences, we risk misrepresenting and trivialising Italian intentions, ultimately preventing us from reaching a deeper understanding of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France.

Chapter 5. The German reaction to the Italian government's cancellation of Ribière's evacuation order

On the evening of 24 February, as Commissario Barranco and the IVth Army Command began the operations in southeastern France to intern Jews in enforced residences, a German delegation led by the Reich Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, arrived in Rome to undertake a series of intra-Axis meetings at the highest echelons. Among the topics on Ribbentrop's agenda was the treatment of Jews in the territories occupied by the Italian Army.

This chapter examines the discussions between Ribbentrop and Mussolini regarding Jewish policy in the occupied territories during the Reich Foreign Minister's visit to Rome in late February 1943. It shows that the steps taken by Ribbentrop within the context of the German reaction to Italian obstruction of the French anti-Jewish measures in the Alpes-Maritimes department were linked with the strategic function that, from the viewpoint of the Nazi leadership, was fulfilled by the extermination of the Jews after the shift in the tide of the war in the winter of 1942. By analysing the political and ideological standpoint from which the Nazis approached the 'Jewish problem' in the occupied territories, the chapter exposes the corresponding fascist standpoint, thereby shedding light on the ideological matrix of the intra-Axis dispute over Jewish policy in southeastern France. In so doing, this chapter confirms that 'humanitarianism' and 'pragmatism' are useful, but are however inadequate, analytical categories to explain fascist Italy's decision not to hand over Jews in southeastern France.

The German reaction to the cancellation of Ribière's evacuation order

By early 1943, the Nazi authorities had grown impatient with the Italian government's attitude towards the 'Jewish problem' in the occupied territories. After Mussolini's 'nulla osta' to the handover to the Ustača of Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied Croatia in August 1942, the Nazi authorities had repeatedly urged the

fascist government, in particular the Italian Foreign Ministry officials, to follow up on the duce's orders, but to no avail. Accordingly, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), or Reich Security Main Office, namely the agency at the heart of the Nazi exterminatory machine, had decided to go ahead without the Italians and deport those Jews already in their hands. A similar dynamic would later develop in Axis-occupied Greece, where the Reich Foreign Office's efforts between late 1942 and the spring of 1943 to coordinate Jewish policy with the Italian government invariably failed¹. It is therefore no surprise that, following the fascist government's successful opposition to the expulsion of foreign Jews living in the Alpes-Maritimes department to the Drôme and Ardèche departments (the latter entirely under German control) at the end of December 1942, also the Italian occupation zone in southeastern France became a source of concerns for the Nazi authorities. Moreover, as mentioned, the fascist government's decision was followed in early January 1943 by new measures that, although only partially successful, prevented the French authorities from stamping the word *Juif* on Jews' identity papers and from drafting certain categories of foreign Jews in labour units².

It was, however, the Italian opposition to the expulsion of foreign Jews that troubled the Nazi authorities the most. In December 1942, the SS announced to the French Chief of Police, René Bousquet, that the evacuation of all Jews from coastal and border departments to the interior was the first stage of a three-step programme to further advance the 'final solution of the Jewish question' following the great round-ups across the Unoccupied Zone in late August 1942³. Consequently, the initial reaction to the Italian opposition to the French anti-Jewish measures came from the top of the Nazi security services in France. On 9 January 1943, SS-Brigadeführer Carl Oberg, the Supreme Head of the SS and Police in France, reported a complaint from Bousquet, who lamented the Italian authorities preventing their French counterparts from implementing the expulsion of Jews to the interior. In the following weeks, the Italian opposition to the French anti-Jewish measures became a central concern of the Chief of the SiPo-SD, SS-Standartenführer Dr.

¹ C.R. Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office: A Study of Referat D III of Abteilung Deutschland 1940-43* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), 134-41 and 161-62.

² See ch. 3.

³ M.R. Marrus and R.O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 305.

Helmut Knochen, who played a key role in the implementation of the ‘final solution’ in France. Between 13 January and 12 February 1943, Knochen complained four times to the head of the Gestapo (Office IV of the RSHA), SS-Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller, about the damage caused by the Italians to the ‘final solution’ in France. Knochen asked that the matter be directly submitted to Himmler⁴. On 3 February, Knochen also requested to the Oberbefehlshaber West, General Field Marshal von Rundstedt, that he negotiate with the Italian Commander in Chief in southern France (General Vercellino) regarding the measures calling for the expulsion of Jews to the interior⁵.

The Reich Foreign Office was equally committed to overcoming the Italian opposition to Nazi Jewish policy, especially those officials working in its Division Germany (*Abteilung Deutschland*), headed by Martin Luther. As per instructions from Luther, the first counsellor at the German Embassy in Paris, Rudolf Schleier, requested to Rundstedt on 2 February that negotiations take place with the Italian Commander in Chief in France. The goal was to obtain closer collaboration between the Axis powers regarding Jewish policy. Schleier pointed out that Italian collaboration was absolutely necessary to guarantee the safety of the Axis troops. Additionally, Schleier insisted on the fact that the Italian opposition was ‘in apparent conflict’ (*in offenbaren Widerspruch*) with the Italian internment of Jews, previously announced by the Comando Supremo to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in early December 1942⁶. Notably, the same reference to the (alleged) inconsistency between the Italian decision to intern Jews and the prevention of their expulsion by the French authorities out of the Italian zone (a measure that was tantamount to their deportation to the east) was made to Rundstedt by Knochen in his message of 3 February. Clearly, the Comando Supremo’s announcement had led the German agencies responsible for the ‘final solution’ in France to believe that, unlike in Croatia and Greece, the Italian authorities would not stand in their way.

⁴ Apparently Knochen’s request was granted. However, instead of addressing the Italian government directly, Himmler preferred to delegate the task to Ribbentrop. See below in this chapter.

⁵ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-260, Knochen to Oberbefehlshaber West, 3 February 1943; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 204-5.

⁶ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-259, Schleier to Oberbefehlshaber West, (249/43g) 2 February 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 203.

The request that all Jews with their families residing in the Italian zone should be interned, as per the Comando Supremo's announcement, was also communicated by the Reich Foreign Office to the Italian Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Office stated clearly that Ribière's order had been issued according to German demands. Hence, instead of obstructing Ribière's evacuation order, the Italian government was requested to assist the French Police to implement the aforementioned measures, and to collaborate with the German military and security services to prevent the inflow of Jews from the German into the Italian occupation zone⁷.

The clash within the Reich Foreign Office

By February 1943 major changes were taking place at the highest echelons of Nazi diplomacy that would also directly impact the intra-Axis discussions over Jewish policy in the occupied territories. When Italy's opposition to Vichy's anti-Jewish measures presented itself in early 1943, the 'issue' – as the Nazi diplomatic personnel and security services considered it – of the Italian treatment of foreign and stateless Jews in the territories controlled by the Italian Army had been on Ribbentrop's agenda for quite some time. Before late February 1943, the Reich Foreign Minister always refrained from raising the issue with the Italians, however. The only significant exception had been in late August 1942, when Ribbentrop gave permission to approach the fascist government to request that Jews holding Italian citizenship living in German western occupied countries be subjected to the same persecutory measures imposed upon other categories of Jews, including deportation

⁷ These events have been retraced in detail by D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 102-08. See also Browning, *The Final Solution*, 165. A relevant portion of the correspondence of the German organs in France from this period is in CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France and Fonds Gestapo Allemagne; see also Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 195 ff. The Reich Foreign Office note (dated 3 February) and three of the four cables that Knochen sent to Müller between 13 January and 12 February 1943 are reproduced in MAE, *Relazione sull'opera svolta dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri per la tutela delle comunità ebraiche (1938-1943)* (Rome: unpublished, 1946), 28-29 and 64-68. According to the *Relazione* (p. 28), on 10 February the director of the General Affairs Directorate of the Italian Foreign Ministry, Count Luigi Vidau, responded to the German Embassy in Rome that 'French and foreign Jews could not be transferred to the French administration's custody because that would mean, in a subsequent stage, their surrender into the hands of the German police for deportation to Poland [emphasis in original].' However, I was unable to find any confirmation of the content of Vidau's communication to the German Embassy.

eastward. Alternatively, they were to be repatriated to Italy by the end of 1942. When the Italian Foreign Ministry responded that it could not grant the request, Ribbentrop let the matter drop, before again changing his mind in January 1943. On the 13th, the German Embassy in Rome again requested the fascist government to withdraw Italian Jews from German western occupied countries by 31 March 1943, or allow their deportation to the east.

Ribbentrop's unwillingness to confront the fascist ally on this issue was not an attempt to respect Italian sovereignty in domestic matters or prerogatives in the occupied territories. Rather, it was the result of the latent power struggle between him and Luther that developed in the second half of 1942. Against this background, the Italian issue became a mere instrument that both Ribbentrop and Luther used (or refused to use) to achieve their goals. As Christopher R. Browning has explained,

As Luther was trying to cement an alliance with the SS in preparation for the ousting of Ribbentrop, Italy and the Jewish question seemed to provide the perfect tool for driving a wedge between Himmler and Ribbentrop. Luther calculated that if he succeeded in pushing Ribbentrop into making sharp demands upon the Italians in the Jewish question, and the pressure worked, he would get some of the credit. But if the Italians put up the expected resistance and refused to give in to German demands, Ribbentrop would be discredited by the failure ... On the other hand, if Ribbentrop showed his usual reluctance to confront the Italians, the foreign minister's hesitancy would stand in marked contrast to Luther's zeal in supporting the Jewish policy of Hitler and Himmler.

As mentioned, Ribbentrop managed to resist pressure to take diplomatic steps vis-à-vis Italy, thereby avoiding falling into Luther's trap. Clearly, the only beneficiary of this power struggle was the Italian government which, until early 1943, could more easily resist German requests regarding Jewish policy in Croatia and Greece. Luther's arrest on 10 February 1943, and the ensuing dissolution of Division Germany, changed this scenario drastically. Once Ribbentrop regained full control over the Foreign Office and was no longer threatened by an alliance between Luther and the SS, he was now free to deal with the Italian issue on his own terms⁸.

⁸ Browning, *The Final Solution, passim* [excerpt from p. 137]. On the Italian-German discussions about the repatriation of Italian Jews from German-occupied territories see also L. Picciotto Fargion, 'Italian Citizens in Nazi-Occupied Europe: Documents from the Files of the German Foreign Office, 1941-1943', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 7 (1990), 93-141.

After all, by the time of Luther's arrest, only the German request for the withdrawal from German-occupied western regions of Jews with Italian nationality had been granted. Italian Jews, Jews native to the Yugoslav regions annexed to Italy, as well as Libyan Jews, were due to be repatriated by 31 March 1943 (although the deadline was extended several times)⁹.

The extermination of the Jews and the changing of the guard at the head of the Comando Supremo and the Foreign Ministry

In the early days of February 1943, important changes also occurred in the highest echelons of the Italian State. On 1 February, General Vittorio Ambrosio replaced Marshal Cavallero as Chief of the Comando Supremo. More importantly, one week later, Mussolini dismissed his son-in-law Ciano from the post of Foreign Minister as part of his last Cabinet reshuffle. The duce formally assumed the position himself, but he immediately handed the Ministry over to the newly appointed undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Giuseppe Bastianini.

Both Ambrosio and Bastianini had a clear understanding of the issue of foreign Jewish refugees in the territories where the Italian Army was stationed. As Commander of the IInd Army, in April 1941, Ambrosio took part in the Axis attack on Yugoslavia. Later that year, he intervened to stop the massacre of thousands of Serbs and Jews that the Croatian Ustača were carrying out in the territories left under their control. Thereupon, and in order to halt the insurgency that had arisen as a result of the Serbs' reaction to Ustača's violence, the Wehrmacht and the Italian Army took over the whole of Croatia. In the Italian zone, Ambrosio extended Italian protection to all local populations, including Jews, on the condition that they collaborated with the Italian troops¹⁰. In January 1942 General Roatta replaced

⁹ Initially, the measure only involved Jews residing within the Reich, the Protectorate and the occupied western countries, but was later extended to include Italian Jews residing in Polish territories, in the Baltic countries, and in Thessaloniki. Browning, *The Final Solution*, 154-55; Picciotto Fargion, 'Italian Citizens', 103-04; M. Sarfatti, 'L'evacuazione nel 1943 da Salonico degli ultimi ebrei italiani e degli ebrei italiani 'provvisori': contesto, questioni e numeri', in P. C. Ioly Zorattini, M. Luzzati and M. Sarfatti (eds), *Studi sul mondo sefardita in memoria di Aron Leoni* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2012), 262; M. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1978), 319-21.

¹⁰ D. Rodogno, 'Italiani brava gente? Fascist Italy's Policy Toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943', *European History Quarterly* 35: 213 (2005), 225-26.

Ambrosio as Commander in Chief of the IInd Army in Croatia. Simultaneously, Ambrosio was appointed as new Chief of the Army General Staff and in his new capacities he was also involved, albeit indirectly, in the events that followed Mussolini's 'nulla osta' to the handover of Croatian Jews to the Ustača in August 1942.

Conversely, Bastianini had been directly involved in the matter. Bastianini served as Governor of annexed Dalmatia from June 1941 until his appointment at the Foreign Ministry. He has long been praised for the role that he played in preventing the handover of Jewish refugees in the territories occupied by the IInd Army to the Ustača¹¹. However, in recent years, historians have revealed that Bastianini duly enforced the 1938 fascist anti-Jewish legislation in Dalmatia. Moreover, he refused entry to illegal immigrants, among them many Jews fleeing the Ustaša, and expelled those illegally entered in his Governorate; all this, in the words of Davide Rodogno and MacGregor Knox, in order to render Dalmatia *judenrein*¹².

In this regard, it is worth noticing that by the time of his appointment Bastianini (and possibly Ambrosio, too) had full knowledge (although not necessarily of all the details) of the murderous outcome of the Nazi solution to the 'Jewish problem'. Indeed, there is evidence that either during or in preparation for the talks between Mussolini and Ribbentrop, Bastianini was made aware of the secret memorandum that on 3 February the Italian Ambassador to Berlin, Dino Alfieri, sent to the soon-to-be ousted Ciano to summarise 'the recent history' of Nazi Jewish policy. Alfieri provided a survey of the progressive radicalisation of Nazi Jewish policy 'from the end of 1938 to 30 January 1943'. For Alfieri, the evolution of that policy was aligned with Hitler's prophecy that 'the prosecution of the conflict would be tantamount to the extirpation and destruction of the Jewish race.' Alfieri plainly told Ciano that 'there cannot be many doubts (*non possono nutrirsi molti dubbi*) about the fate that is reserved for [the some 500,000¹³ Jews deported from Germany], like the fate towards which the Polish, Russian, Dutch and also French Jews have gone and are still

¹¹ Carpi, *Between*, 109-10.

¹² Rodogno, '*Italiani brava gente?*', 225; M. Knox, 'Das faschistische Italien und die "Endlösung"', 1942/43', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 82. Regarding Bastianini's Jewish policy during his tenure as Governor of Dalmatia, see also K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 259-63.

¹³ This figure was the result of Alfieri's own estimate.

going.’ After all, the Nazi leaders themselves ‘did not conceal and are not concealing the aim they have set themselves’, namely ‘to exterminate the Jewish race completely.’¹⁴

The document was certainly submitted to Mussolini for perusal, although it is not clear when precisely¹⁵. At the same time, the influence that this information had upon the decision-making process of the Italian rulers, and the Foreign Ministry in particular, in early 1943 should not be overemphasised. As we discussed in chapter three, a stream of continuous information on the deportations and massacres of Jews by the Nazis had reached the highest echelons of Italian politics during the summer of 1942. On 18 January, Pietromarchi wrote in his diary that when Prince Bismarck, the first counsellor at the German Embassy in Rome, handed in Ribbentrop’s request that Italian Jews be repatriated from German-occupied territories five days earlier, he said that ‘by the end of 1943 all Jews of Europe must be eliminated (*devono essere eliminati*).’¹⁶ In this respect, Alfieri’s memorandum merely confirmed what was already known to some extent. Regardless, the memorandum confirms that at the time of their new appointments Bastianini, and presumably also Ambrosio, knew what was at stake when the Nazis wanted to discuss Jewish policy in the occupied territories.

The Mussolini-Ribbentrop meeting on 25 February 1943

Browning has explained that Ribbentrop’s ‘turnabout’ on the issue of Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories ‘was very sudden.’ On 23 February, the Reich Foreign Office asked the SS to forward their detailed requests regarding the ‘Jewish problem’ in Italy and Italian-occupied territories, so that Ribbentrop could view them in preparation for his imminent visit to Rome to confer with Mussolini. The document that reached Ribbentrop the following day only contained two general requests, however. First, the SS encouraged the enactment within Italy of similar anti-Jewish measures as those enforced in Germany. Second, the SS requested that

¹⁴ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 107. Original document: Alfieri to Ciano, (Rs 1687) 3 February 1943, reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. IX (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1989), 580-83, doc. 578.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 18 January 1943.

the Italian Army refrain from interfering with Nazi deportation plans in France and Greece. In other words, the SS wanted the Italian military authorities to hand over Jewish refugees under their control. As mentioned, the document did not mention any specific case of Italian obstructions to Nazi Jewish policy. Hence, on the morning of 25 February Ribbentrop requested that the SS submit a new document concerning the 'Jewish question' in Italy and Italian territories by that evening, when his first meeting with Mussolini was programmed¹⁷.

In the meantime, news of renewed obstructions by the Italian military authorities to the Vichy government's anti-Jewish measures in the departments of Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Drôme – which will be retraced in detail in the next chapter – reached the SiPo-SD in Paris¹⁸. On 22 February, Knochen therefore alerted Müller to remind him of the great damage that the Italian obstructions were causing to Nazi Jewish policy in France and urged Müller to intervene to bring this situation to an end¹⁹.

The news of the recent Italian obstructions in southern France, and Ribbentrop's request for additional SS requests reached the Gestapo in Berlin almost simultaneously. Hereupon, the head of the Section IV-b-4 of the Gestapo, SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, prepared a second memorandum detailing a number of cases of previous Italian opposition to German anti-Jewish measures in France and Croatia. Eichmann also mentioned various cases of alleged fraternization between Italian officers and Jews in the occupied territories. Unsurprisingly, Eichmann, who had visited Paris two weeks previously to present a deportation programme which included French Jews²⁰, concluded by reiterating that not only in France, but elsewhere in Europe, the deep intra-Axis disagreements over Jewish policy were detrimental to the German plans for a final solution to the Jewish question upon the larger European scale. This was due to the fact that Italy's attitude

¹⁷ Browning, *The Final Solution*, 166-67 [quotation from p. 166]; Carpi, *Between*, 116-17.

¹⁸ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-274a, memorandum signed by SS-Obersturmbannführer Lischka, 22 February 1943 (with a French translation of the memorandum); Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 222.

¹⁹ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-38, (9675) Knochen to Müller, 22 February 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 223-24. Two days later, Knochen's deputy, SS-Obersturmbannführer Kurt Lischka, also alerted Müller to problems arising from the Italian obstructions. This time the Italian military authorities had blocked the transfer to the German authorities of one hundred foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jews, aged 16 to 65, arrested by the French Police in the Grenoble area. CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-277, Lischka to Müller, 24 February 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 225.

²⁰ P. Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 392.

offered an excuse to other governments not to follow German leadership in this matter²¹. Apparently, however, Ribbentrop did not receive Eichmann's memorandum in time for his first meeting with Mussolini²².

Ribbentrop visited Rome from 24 to 28 February. During his sojourn, he conferred with the duce four times: once on 25 and 26 February and twice on the 28th. The first and third meetings were also attended by the Ambassadors to Berlin and Rome, Alfieri and Mackensen, respectively. General Ambrosio and General Walter Warlimont, deputy Chief of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, were also present at the second meeting. With the exception of the last *tête-à-tête* with Ribbentrop, Mussolini was always accompanied by Bastianini²³.

Ribbentrop was responsible for conveying the contents of a letter from Hitler, dated 16 February, directly to Mussolini. The letter focused on the Axis powers' increasingly difficult military situation on both the Russian and Mediterranean fronts in the wake of the German defeat at Stalingrad (2 February) and the concurrent definitive loss of Libya to the British Army (31 January-3 February)²⁴. Accordingly, the discussion in the first meeting initially centred around Hitler's military strategy on the Russian front. Then, the focus moved on to Yugoslavia²⁵. In the latter case, Ribbentrop reported Hitler's concerns about the increased possibility that the Allies would stage a grand-scale landing in Europe in the coming months. In this regard, particularly worrisome for the Führer was the situation in the Balkans²⁶.

Among the various topics Ribbentrop intended to discuss with Mussolini, there was also one that Hitler did not explicitly mention in his letter: the issue of the treatment of Jews in the territories occupied by the Italian Army²⁷. Although Ribbentrop was still waiting for Eichmann's memorandum, he nonetheless brought the subject of Jewish policy to the duce's attention during their first meeting. He opened by reminding Mussolini of the 'radical position' that the German government

²¹ Müller to Reich Foreign Office, 25 February 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 225-27.

²² Browning, *The Final Solution*, 167; Carpi, *Between*, 117.

²³ Carpi, *Between*, 117.

²⁴ Hitler to Mussolini, 16 February 1943. Italian translation reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1990), 37-46, doc. 31.

²⁵ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 116.

²⁶ See footnote 24.

²⁷ Hitler referred to Jews twice in his letter. The first time was when he reaffirmed his determination to continue the fight until the bitter end, lest 'international Judaism' destroy 'our races and particularly their ruling classes' (p. 45). The second time was when he referred to 'Judaic plutocracy' (p. 38). See footnote 24.

had taken up ‘on the question of the treatment of Jews’, and even more so ‘as a result of the development of the war in Russia.’ This position included the deportation ‘from Germany and from the territories occupied by her to reserves in the East.’ Although the enemy qualified this measure as ‘cruel’, it was nonetheless ‘necessary’ to win the war. In fact, Ribbentrop continued, ‘it could still be called relatively mild, considering its enormous importance.’ The Vichy government ‘also had taken measures against the Jews, which were extremely useful’, though these ‘were only temporary, because [t]here too the final solution would be in the deportation of Jews to the East.’ In this regard, Ribbentrop added, ‘he knew that in Italian military circles – just occasionally amongst German military people too – the Jewish problem was not sufficiently appreciated.’ Ribbentrop pointed out that this was the only possible explanation for the ‘order of the Commands Supreme [*sic*] which cancelled measures in the Italian occupation Zone of France that had been taken against the Jews by the French authorities acting under German influence.’²⁸ To back up his accusation, it was presumably at this moment that Ribbentrop handed Mussolini a memorandum listing such orders from the Comando Supremo²⁹.

At this point, however, Mussolini ‘contested the accuracy of this report and traced it back to the French tactics of causing dissention between Germany and Italy.’ The duce pointed out that ‘the Jews had in fact been concentrated by the Italians in various camps.’ It remains unknown whether Mussolini truly believed that Jews in southeastern France had already been interned in concentration camps. This information might have been given him by the Foreign Ministry officials who, according to Pietromarchi’s diary, had also prepared ‘a courageous and clever note’ with instructions for the duce to not accede to any new measures intended against

²⁸ The section of the German report (dated 27 February 1943) of the first meeting between Mussolini and Ribbentrop concerning Jewish policy has been published in English translation by Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* vol. VII (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 188-90 [all quotations come from this source] and in French translation by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 228. See also Carpi, *Between*, 117-19 and 287 endnote 46, and Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 116-17.

²⁹ This memorandum has not yet surfaced in the Italian archives. However, two independent sources confirm that Ribbentrop actually delivered the memorandum to Mussolini. The Reich Foreign Minister made reference to the memorandum in two messages sent to Mackensen on 9 and 13 March (Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 235-40). On 11 March, Pietromarchi mentioned a note in his diary, dated 26 February (this date was presumably erroneous), which was delivered by Ribbentrop that ‘enumerated all the attitudes taken by our occupation authorities on behalf of the Jews.’ Quoted by Carpi, *Between*, 120-21; original source: ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 11 March 1943.

Italian Jews in the German-occupied territories differing from the fascist racial policy³⁰. What is certain was Mussolini's claim that the French authorities, particularly the French head of government Laval, were using the issue of Jews to drive a wedge between the Axis allies³¹. Perhaps as a gesture of courtesy to his guest, Mussolini nonetheless 'admitted that the Reich Foreign Minister was right with regard to the remark that the [Italian] military people had not got the right sentiment where the Jewish problem was concerned.'³²

According to the German report on the meeting, Mussolini did not hint how he intended to fix this issue. Following Mussolini's rebuttal, the two leaders continued to quibble about the measures taken by the fascist government to solve the 'Jewish problem' in Italy, before the discussion over Jewish policy came to an end³³. Yet, in two later messages addressed to Mackensen (and that will be examined in detail in the next chapter) Ribbentrop claimed that during their first meeting, Mussolini had 'clearly taken the stand that in Jewish questions there must be unity in adopting very harsh measures.'³⁴ According to the post-war testimony of Colonel Vincenzo Carla, a senior officer of the IInd Army, during the same meeting, Ribbentrop even managed to obtain Mussolini's (second) approval to the handover of Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied Croatia³⁵. Regarding the issue of Jews in Italian-occupied southeastern France, Ribbentrop apparently limited himself to handing Mussolini another note from the German Embassy in Rome. The note reiterated the usual requests to prevent the crossing of Jews from the German into the Italian zone and allow the expulsion of Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department³⁶.

³⁰ ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 1 March 1943.

³¹ Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 320; S. Klarsfeld, 'Le jeu de Vichy entre les Italiens et les Allemands', *Le Monde Juif* XLIX: 149, 76-77.

³² *Nazi Conspiracy*, 189.

³³ *Ibid.*, 189-90; Carpi, *Between*, 119-20.

³⁴ *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Series E, Bd. V (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977) 347-48, doc. 181, quoted in English translation by Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 121.

³⁵ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 122; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 287; Rodogno, 'Italiani brava gente?', 230. However, Carpi (*Between*, 287 endnote 47) has argued that 'Mussolini was referring to Ribbentrop's general remarks concerning "the Jews in the Italian Occupied Zones"', thus not specifically to Croatia.

³⁶ German Embassy in Rome to Italian Foreign Ministry, 25 February 1943, reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 83, doc. 59. We cannot exclude that this note, and the memorandum listing the Comando Supremo's orders to foil those French anti-Jewish measures mentioned by Ribbentrop and Pietromarchi (see footnote 29) were, in fact, the same document, although this option seems unlikely.

Nevertheless, without the detailed report from the SS regarding the Italian objections Ribbentrop could not discuss the matter further with Mussolini. Nor was Ribbentrop yet aware at that point of the renewed Italian opposition to the French anti-Jewish measures in Savoie, Haute-Savoie, Drôme (and Isère). Consequently, the focus of the talks shifted to military matters³⁷ and the subject of Jews was raised again only during the final talks concerning the joint closing communiqué. The Germans insisted that an explicit reference to the ‘Jewish problem’ be included³⁸. This time, the Italians yielded to the request and agreed to add a clause on ‘Jewish plutocracy.’³⁹

The role of Jewish policy in the Nazi war effort after the turn of the war in the winter 1942/43

Why were the Nazi rulers so concerned about the fascist government’s refusals to hand over foreign and stateless Jewish refugees in the Italian occupied territories in Croatia and France in early 1943?

As Peter Longerich has explained, ‘in the second half of the war ... *Judenpolitik* was a main axis of Germany’s occupation and alliance policies. In the view of the National Socialist leadership the more the war advanced the greater the significance of the systematic murder of the Jews for the solidarity of the German power block.’ The further intensification of the extermination process served a double purpose. On the one hand, ‘with the implementation of the murder of the Jews within the German power bloc, the executive organisations – German occupying administrations, local auxiliary organisations, collaborative governments or allies – were turned into lackeys and accomplices of the extermination policy and ... irretrievably bound to the engine of this policy, the leadership of National Socialist Germany.’ On the other hand, that process enabled the Nazi rulers to accomplish their long-lasting goal of creating a ‘New Europe’ shaped in conformity with their racial principles. Accordingly, as the tide of the war turned between the Allied landing in north Africa in November 1942, and the German defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, the

³⁷ DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 84-86, doc. 61.

³⁸ Carpi, *Between*, 120.

³⁹ DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 86-87 footnote 2.

German effort for victory and the ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ became inextricably entangled. The result was that, from the winter of 1942, from the perspective of the Nazi leaders, the extermination of Jews became ‘a guarantee for the complete victory of the National Socialist Revolution.’⁴⁰

Consequently, at the beginning of 1943, large-scale killings and deportations from the General Government resumed, while in February about 3,000 Jews were murdered in Minsk. Between early January and mid-March 1943, sixteen trains departed the German Reich to Auschwitz. Around the same period, deportations plans resumed in the Netherlands (January) and were launched in the Greek territories under German rule (mid-March) and in Bulgarian-occupied Thrace and Macedonia (March)⁴¹.

In France, the deportations began again on 9 February 1943, when a train packed with 997 stateless Jews departed the Drancy camp for Auschwitz⁴². Yet, at that point, the main problem for the RSHA was to convince the Vichy leaders to allow the deportation of Jews with French nationality. But, as Knochen stressed in one of his February reports to Müller, Vichy exploited the Italian opposition as a way of not complying with the German authorities’ pressing requests to deport French Jews⁴³. In fact, the Vichy government was not the only one that was using the Italian refusals to resist German pressure. In a letter sent to Ribbentrop in late January 1943, Himmler wrote that ‘the continued presence of the Jews in the Italian sphere of influence’ as a result of those refusals ‘provides many circles in France and in the rest of Europe with a pretext for playing down the Jewish question, it being argued that not even our Axis partner Italy sees eye to eye with us on the Jewish issue.’⁴⁴

Furthermore, news of the disagreements between the Axis partners over Jewish policy had started to become known into the Allied camp. On 21 January, *The Times* of London published a short article significantly entitled ‘Jews’ badges in France:

⁴⁰ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 374-75. See also D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 187 and 236. Knochen’s message to Rundstedt of 3 February provides a clear example of the overlapping military and political reasons in the Nazi worldview (CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-260; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 205-06).

⁴¹ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 376-92.

⁴² Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 215-16.

⁴³ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-38, Knochen to Müller, 12 February 1943; *Ibid.*, 218-20. See also Longerich, *Holocaust*, 396. On the German plans to deport French Jews see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 305-06.

⁴⁴ German Foreign Ministry Records/5602H/E40158-12, quoted by Michaelis, *Mussolini*, 335.

Vichy order cancelled by Italians.’ Although the news was inaccurate (the correspondent mistook the Italian rejection to stamp the word *Juif* on Jews’ identity papers as rejecting that Jews wear the yellow badge in public⁴⁵), the article did succeed in exposing the intra-Axis dispute over the treatment of Jews in the Italian occupation zone⁴⁶. By refusing to even indirectly collaborate in the ‘final solution’ the fascist rulers were not only staying outside what Donald Bloxham calls the ‘community of fate’⁴⁷ with their Nazi allies, but they were also jeopardising the increasingly unstable Nazi network of alliances as well as Axis security policy in the Unoccupied Zone. All in all, for the Nazi leadership and its mid-level structures, the fascist government was effectively sabotaging the Nazi effort for victory.

In this regard, Ribbentrop’s attempts to foster Italian collaboration regarding the anti-Jewish measures in southeastern France and Croatia fit the rationale underpinning Nazi Jewish policy in the second half of the war. Ribbentrop aimed to catch the ally in the ‘blood pact’ with Nazi Germany⁴⁸. By so doing, he wanted to deprive other recalcitrant countries of the Italian ‘shield’, with the aim also of boosting the increasingly unstable German network of alliances. Furthermore, Ribbentrop personally ensured the persisting inner stability of Italy, and of the fascist regime, after the recent important changes in leadership of the Comando Supremo and the Foreign Ministry⁴⁹.

Interim conclusions: the ideological matrix of the intra-Axis dispute over Jewish policy in southeastern France

The foregoing discussion serves to expose the ideological and strategic viewpoint from which Ribbentrop⁵⁰, Himmler, Eichmann, Knochen and the other Nazi officials, viewed fascist Jewish policy in early 1943. This viewpoint, in turn, was clearly reflected in the Nazi authorities’ obsessive insistence on the risks that Italian Jewish

⁴⁵ See ch. 3. See also Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 240.

⁴⁶ ‘Jews’ badges in France: Vichy order cancelled by Italians’, *The Times*, 21 January 1943.

⁴⁷ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 236.

⁴⁸ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 88.

⁴⁹ ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 28 February 1943; Carpi, *Between*, 115.

⁵⁰ During his first meeting with Mussolini, Ribbentrop went to pains to convince his host that ‘if one was to allow 100,000 Jews to remain in Germany or Italy or one of the territories occupied by them, then ... this would be roughly equivalent to letting 100,000 Secret Service agents into one’s country.’ *Nazi Conspiracy*, 189.

policy posed to the security of the Axis troops in southern France. In the aforementioned letter to Ribbentrop, Himmler stated clearly that he wanted ‘Italian and other foreign nationals of Jewish race to be removed from the Italian-occupied area in France’, because ‘the Jews in this area are the elements of resistance and the authors of the Communist propaganda which is particularly dangerous for the Italian troops.’⁵¹ The requests by Schleier and Knochen to Rundstedt to directly confront the Italian allies in order to settle the issue of the treatment of Jews in the Italian zone provide another example. The emphasis by both the RSHA officer and the Foreign Office official upon the fact that the Italian opposition to the expulsion of Jews from the Italian to the German zone were in conflict with the announced internment of Jews made by the Comando Supremo in early December 1942 reveals that, within the Nazi worldview, internment and deportation were one and the same. Indeed, after the foundations for the ‘final solution of the Jewish question’ had been laid during the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942, every anti-Jewish measure was a method to reach that radical goal⁵². Yet, this was not how the fascist rulers viewed the issue.

Chapters two to four have confirmed that both regimes shared the view that a ‘Jewish problem’ did exist and needed to be solved. The fascist government’s decision to intern Jews (as part of the security policy in the Italian occupation zone) and the Foreign Ministry’s instructions to prevent the inflow of Jews to the Italian zone, were attempts to solve, inter alia, the ‘Jewish problem’. Yet, chapter three has also demonstrated that, according to the fascist authorities in Rome and in southeastern France, internment and deportation (the annihilation of Jews, that is) were two separate matters. In other words, the fascist rulers viewed the internment of Jews as the core of their anti-Jewish action in southeastern France, rather than one of many steps towards the most radical of actions, as it was for the Nazis. In this respect, Jonathan Steinberg’s argument that ‘Italian policy in southern France put a stop to the “persecution of the Jews”’⁵³ is only partially correct: in southern France

⁵¹ German Foreign Ministry Records/5602H/E40158-12, quoted by Michaelis, *Mussolini*, 335.

⁵² Longerich, *Holocaust*, 305-10.

⁵³ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 115.

the fascist government put a stop to the *Nazi* (and *partially* to Vichy's⁵⁴) persecution of the Jews, while enforcing its own persecutory policy.

The story of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was not one of darkness versus light⁵⁵. Nor was it the story of the fanatic Nazis who, solely driven by their Jew-hatred, worked towards the 'extradition and extermination' of Jewish refugees in the Italian zone 'as though possessed by a real devil'⁵⁶. Nor was it a result of the 'pragmatism' of the Italians, who were instead solely interested in their own personal and/or national gain⁵⁷. We have seen in this chapter that the Nazi authorities' determination to extend the killings, after the turning of the war in the winter of 1942/1943, was partly justified by 'pragmatic' strategic reasoning. This, in turn, confirms that pragmatism does not exist outside in some independent sphere of activity, neutral to value. Any decision *becomes* pragmatic always (and only) in relation to a given cultural and ideological context. Consequently, to understand the roots of the Italian decision not to hand over the Jews (and consequently of the intra-Axis dispute over Jewish policy) in southeastern France, it is the ideological context of the Italian rulers' actions that we must examine.

The analysis of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France from December 1942 through February 1943 has demonstrated that the difference between the Nazis and Italian-fascists lay in *how* to solve the 'Jewish question'. The dispute over the Italian delay to intern non-Italian Jews in enforced residences, which was still in its early stages in late February, typifies these differing views perfectly. While the fascist authorities considered this measure as less urgent *within* the boundaries of their security policy, which also involved targeting political opponents and enemy aliens, the Nazis viewed the hunt for the Jew as their top priority. This different perceptions

⁵⁴ Despite the Italian claim to have exclusive authority over Jewish policy, the *Section d'enquête et de contrôle* of the General Commissariat for Jewish Affairs branch in Nice continued to enforce the Vichy measures of economic dispossession of Jewish properties. AN, AJ/38/243.

⁵⁵ Referring to the Italian treatment of Jews in Croatia, Sabille wrote: 'The Italian officers and men whose wonderful rescue work calls for recognition and admiration were careful not to leave any evidence about in their official documents. That is why this period is veiled in legend, in which the black nightmare of the gas chambers and the crematorium ovens is repeatedly illuminated by fleshes of heroism and humanity.' L. Poliakov and J. Sabille, *Jews under the Italian occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1955), 132.

⁵⁶ Carpi, *Between*, 108.

⁵⁷ D. Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire. Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ch. 11; Knox, 'Das faschistische', 66 ff.

of the threat posed by Jews was, in turn, the *result* of different conceptions of the ‘Jewish problem’ *within* the Italian-fascist and the Nazi worldviews.

As Longerich has explained, ‘at the heart of National Socialist political thinking was the idea that all the most pressing problems besetting Germany could be solved with the introduction of a fully comprehensive “new racial order”.’⁵⁸ Saul Friedländer has argued that the Nazi obsession for *der Jude* was a manifestation of a distinct brand of racial anti-Semitism: what he labelled ‘redemptive anti-Semitism’. The most distinctive feature of redemptive anti-Semitism was precisely that ‘the struggle against the Jews is the dominant aspect of a worldview in which other racist themes are but secondary appendages.’⁵⁹ Within the Nazi understanding of reality in strict ‘biological’, ‘racial’ and hierarchical terms, Jews were considered to be a disease, an alien and parasitic element that by its very nature was tainting the German blood and, thereby, poisoning the German *Herrenvolk*, or master race⁶⁰. For Hitler in particular, the battle against ‘the Jew’ was a matter of life and death⁶¹. Against this backdrop, ‘political enmity and biology were coterminous’⁶², for Jews were the ultimate enemies of (Nazi) Germany⁶³. In practical terms, this meant that within the context of total war, the all-important need to solve the ‘Jewish problem’ eventually demanded the most radical of solutions, although political and military needs made this imperative ‘negotiable’ outside Nazi Germany’s immediate sphere of interests⁶⁴.

Conversely, we already mentioned that the Italian authorities viewed Jews as one of many threats that they faced in their common effort with Nazi Germany to win the war. In fact, from the vantage point of the Italian Army and Police officers, foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jewish refugees in southeastern France were a secondary threat

⁵⁸ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 30.

⁵⁹ S. Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The years of Persecution 1933-1939* vol. 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 87.

⁶⁰ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 140. On the Nazi view of Jews as parasites see A. Bein, ‘The Jewish Parasite - Notes on the Semantics of the Jewish Problem, with Special Reference to Germany’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 9 (1964), 3-40.

⁶¹ Friedländer, *Years of Persecution*, 95-104.

⁶² Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 140.

⁶³ Ribbentrop asserted, ‘we [the Nazis] have recognized Jewry as a disease that threatens to corrupt the body politic and hinder the reconstruction of Europe’, and that ‘Jewry as a whole is the worst enemy for us and our struggle.’ Ribbentrop to German Embassy in Rome, 13 January 1943, reproduced by Picciotto Fargion, ‘Italian Citizens’, 123-24, doc. 6.

⁶⁴ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 187; see also 212-58.

compared to communists and political opponents, who indeed were the first targets of Italian repression in November 1942, and even enemy aliens, whose apprehension was given priority to the internment of Jews in the early weeks of 1943. Interestingly, all this despite the fact that the Italian-fascist understanding of the ‘Jewish problem’, as evidenced by the anti-Jewish legislation enacted in September/November 1938, was predicated upon biological racism⁶⁵. Furthermore, at the time of their enactment, some of the fascist anti-Jewish measures surpassed Nazi legislation (although the German government would soon regain the lead)⁶⁶. Even the vast anti-Jewish campaign launched by the Italian press in the summer of 1938 to uphold the newfound fascist racial consciousness espoused vicious anti-Semitic stereotypes and iconography which would have had easily found their place within the most rabid Nazi anti-Semitic press. Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci has even argued that if we were to judge solely based upon some of the images published in the Italian press, we might in fact be tempted to label fascist anti-Semitism as ‘eliminationist’⁶⁷. So, why did the Italian rulers not share the Nazi obsession for the ‘Jewish question’ but instead consider Jews a minor issue?

As the example of the anti-Jewish images suggests, propaganda and political action do not necessarily overlap. This does not equate to revamping the old-aged and completely discredited argument that fascist anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish persecution were nothing but an empty shell with no real content. If it is true that the

⁶⁵ The typology of the fascist anti-Semitic persecution has been the subject of controversy. Michele Sarfatti has argued for an interpretation in terms of biological racism. M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 131-33. Recently, Michael A. Livingston has argued, instead, that ‘notwithstanding the nominally “racial” character of the laws, the authors are setting up what is in effect a multifactor scoring system, in which an individual’s race, religion, and even their family name are taken into account in determining what legal category a person should be placed in.’ M. A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 35. Sarfatti’s response to Livingston in M. Sarfatti, review of M.A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy. Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943*, in T. Catalan, C. Facchini (eds), *Portrait of Italian Jewish Life (1800s-1930s)*, *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, n. 8 November 2015 [online; available at <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/reviews.php?id=80>; accessed on 15 May 2016].

⁶⁶ M. Sarfatti, ‘Autochthone Antisemitismus oder Übernahme des deutschen Modells? Die Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien’, in L. Klinkhammer, A. O. Guerrazzi and T. Schlemmer (eds), *Die „Achse“ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 242.

⁶⁷ M.-A. Matard-Bonucci, *L'Italie fasciste et la persécution des juifs* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 214-58. Quotation from p. 243.

so-called *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* was but an ‘incoherent mish-mash’⁶⁸ of racial theories, it is equally true that those theories were the product of an autonomous and autochthonous debate among Italian scientists, intellectuals and politicians, and whose origins predated fascism⁶⁹. Accordingly, I argue that beyond this propaganda, different and competing visions of the reality of the ‘Jewish problem’ in Italy (and how that reality should have been addressed) co-existed at the top of the fascist State⁷⁰. After all, Mussolini himself changed opinion at least three times between 1938 and 1943 about what should form the ideological core of the anti-Jewish campaign⁷¹. Thus, we need to resist the temptation to reduce fascism either to an ideologically airtight monolith or, conversely, to an incoherent agglomerate of forces kept together solely by the glue of political expediency. One of the strengths of the regime was precisely its ability to tolerate and absorb internal debate⁷². Hence, in order to get to the roots of the Italian decision not to hand Jews over, we need to look at the specific brand of anti-Semitism of the two agencies that were primarily responsible for the fates of foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories, i.e. the Foreign Ministry and the Army. To accomplish this, we need to look at what Salvatore Garau has called the ‘twin roots’ of Italian anti-Semitism.

The first strand of anti-Semitic thinking originated from the Italian nationalist movement born in the 1910s. Although the nationalists officially repudiated anti-Semitism, this nonetheless was brought back into the picture by some of the movement’s ideologues as part of the broader nationalist discourse on the Italian ‘race’ and its need for military expansion. According to Garau, by virtue of the merger between the nationalist movement and fascism in 1923, not only the imperialist component of nationalist ideology but also the underlying ‘idea of a hierarchy of races’ became an integral part of fascist ideology⁷³. The second strand of Italian anti-Semitism was what Garau termed ‘religious anti-Semitism’. This

⁶⁸ Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, 406.

⁶⁹ S. Garau, ‘Between ‘Spirit’ and ‘Science’: The Emergence of Italia Fascist Antisemitism through the 1920s and 1930s’, *Holocaust Studies* 15:1-2 (2009), 37-58.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ A. Gillette, ‘Guido Landra and the Office of Racial Studies in Fascist Italy’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16:3 (2002), 357-75.

⁷² P. Zunino, *L’ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze, valori* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2013), 370-75.

⁷³ Garau, ‘Between ‘Spirit’, 41-3.

brand of anti-Semitic thinking had found its most enthusiastic supporters and propagators in sectors of the Roman Catholic Church at the turn of the century. It featured all the tropes of modern anti-Jewish thinking, which depicted Jews as responsible for all the evils of modernity, such as democracy and liberalism, as well as relentlessly working behind the scenes to obtain world domination⁷⁴.

The fascist wars of aggression against Ethiopia in 1935-36 and Yugoslavia in 1941, and the ruthless policies implemented against those local populations, are vivid illustrations of how the nationalist component and the related 'idea of a hierarchy of races' played out within the Foreign Ministry and Army worldviews⁷⁵. However, it was chiefly the second strand of Italian anti-Semitism that influenced the Foreign Ministry's and Army's attitude towards the Jews. The very decision to intern Jews as part of the security policy in southeastern France, which as we have seen was predicated upon the equation of Jews and anti-fascism, evidences the influence that an 'updated' version of the stereotypes normally associated with Catholic Judeophobia had within the ranks of both agencies. In spite of (and to some extent beyond) the essentially 'biological' setting of the fascist racial persecution, the anti-Jewish action of the Foreign Ministry and the Army was predicated upon what we could call a 'traditional' view of the Jews⁷⁶. This vision deemed Jews a real danger⁷⁷ and certainly bought into the pan-European paranoia of the Judeo-Bolshevik revolution⁷⁸; yet, this vision did not recognise Jews as a fatal danger, and certainly did not consider Jews as parasites in strictly biological terms, as compared to the Nazis⁷⁹. To put it another way: while the Nazis considered the 'ethnic' – to borrow Bloxham's⁸⁰ term – and racial elements of the Bolshevik revolution as the predominant ones, for the Italian rulers it was the 'socio-political'⁸¹ element of that revolution which really mattered (hence, the focus on anti-fascists and communist of the Italian security policy in the wake of the invasion of southern France in November 1942). In this regard, I agree with Davide Rodogno that 'Italian anti-Semitism cannot be equated

⁷⁴ Ibid., 39-41.

⁷⁵ Although such ideas were by no means a prerogative of those two agencies. See Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 99 and 108-9. On violence in the colonies and the Balkans see footnote 9 in the Introduction.

⁷⁶ This definition has been suggested to me by Stephan Malinowski, whom I thank.

⁷⁷ Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 405-6.

⁷⁸ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 80-81.

⁷⁹ Bein, 'The Jewish Parasite'.

⁸⁰ Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 81.

⁸¹ Ibid.

with Nazi “redemptive anti-Semitism”⁸². However, this had little to do with humanitarianism and pragmatism per se. Instead, it reveals that this profound ideological difference between the Axis partners’ perceptions of the ‘Jewish problem’ was central to their long-lasting disagreement over the handover of foreign Jews in southeastern France. This disagreement was not due to an alleged proclivity of the Italians to practice humaneness, as opposed to the equally supposed German disposition to violence (though ‘the sheer difference in scale, intensity, and outcome of racial violence’ between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy ‘cannot and should not be elided’⁸³, as Robert S. C. Gordon rightly reminded us). Nor can we fully make sense of that time-consuming and politically damaging dispute by placing it solely within the immediate context of the occupation policies. At the core of the intra-Axis inability to compromise over the issue of foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories was a profound ideological dissonance over how central and strong the ‘Jewish question’ and its ‘solution’ should have been within the partly competing, partly complementary Nazi and fascist plans for a European New Order.

In this sense, if we return to the treatment of Jews in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany after November 1938, we can see that the seeds for the subsequent disagreement between the Axis allies over Jewish policy already existed. While in Italy the fascist leadership had largely spared Jews from physical violence, thus confining the enactment of the persecution to forms of moral and economic violence⁸⁴, in Germany the infamous pogrom of *Kristallnacht* and the ensuing new raft of anti-Jewish legislation had marked, instead, what Longerich has deemed ‘a qualitative change’ in Nazi Jewish policy, whereby ‘the Jewish minority would henceforth be subjected to pure terror.’⁸⁵ However, it would be mistaken to justify the subsequent difference in fascist and Nazi treatment of Jews only in terms of the ‘chronological progression’ of the two persecutory policies⁸⁶. This argument is predicated upon the flawed assumption that every persecution was bound to reach a

⁸² Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 406.

⁸³ R. S. C. Gordon, ‘Race’, in R. J. B. Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 314.

⁸⁴ Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 158-59.

⁸⁵ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 97.

⁸⁶ M. Sarfatti, ‘Characteristics and Objectives of the Anti-Jewish Racial Laws in Fascist Italy, 1938-1943’, in J. Zimmerman (ed.), *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi rule 1922-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 74.

Nazi-like level of violence. Yet, apart from few exceptions⁸⁷, in 1943, Fascist Italy still spared Jews in Italy and abroad from the systematic violence that would have been inflicted on them by the Nazis, Frenchmen or Ustaša. This indicates that the great difference between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany to resort to violence to solve the ‘Jewish problem’ both domestically, and later within their respective spheres of interests, reflected the deep ideological, and consequently political, distance between the Nazi and Italian-fascist perceptions of the Jewish threat⁸⁸. Accordingly, it should not come as a surprise that for the Italian rulers, Nazi Jewish policy was considered politically inexpedient and morally unacceptable; they saw no sense in killing people whose death would not have had any significant impact on the course of the war, and whose threat could be easily neutralised by sending them to enforced residences or by impeding others to reach the Italian zone.

Yet, neither Knochen nor Schleier (nor any other Nazi official) were ever able to appreciate this critical difference between the Nazi and fascist approaches to the ‘Jewish question’. In fact, the *deliberate* – and perfectly sensible (from the Italian point of view) – delay by Commissario Barranco and the IVth Army to intern Jews in the early weeks of 1943 only further fuelled German distrust and suspicions. From the perspective of the Nazi authorities, the Italian allies did not really intend to intern Jews, but were simply using delaying tactics⁸⁹ – an argument, as we have seen, that, although erroneous, is still very popular among scholars⁹⁰. Hence, overcome by a mix of disbelief, anger and frustration, but, most importantly, deeply imbued with the perverted logic so brilliantly elucidated by Longerich, from the beginning of 1943 onwards the Nazis misunderstood (and, as a result, largely misrepresented in their internal correspondence) the Italian motives and action in the realm of Jewish policy. Knochen exemplifies this in his report of 12 February to Müller, whereby he gave credit to unwarranted rumours about ‘the excellent relations’ (*bestes*

⁸⁷ Ibid., 75 and Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 158-59.

⁸⁸ In this sense, I disagree with Michael A. Livingston’s analysis (*Fascists and the Jews*, 117) that ‘the differences between Italy and other countries [in carrying out anti-Semitic policies] appear to have been more institutional than attitudinal in nature, and to have resulted less from an inherently lower level of Italian antisemitism than from significant differences in the way the Italian and German (or other) governments organized and pursued their anti-Jewish campaigns.’ Indeed, one could argue that the differing organisation of the Nazi and fascist persecutions (the institutional component) reflected the differing Nazi and fascist views of the ‘Jewish problem’ (the attitudinal component) and that it is therefore analytically flawed to analyse the two components as separate from each other.

⁸⁹ Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 214.

⁹⁰ See ch. 4.

Einvernehmen’) that allegedly reigned between the Italian occupation troops and the Jewish population, and even that ‘Italians live with Jews and allow themselves to be invited out and paid for by Jews’ (*Italiener wohnen bei Juden und lassen sich von Juden einladen und bezahlen*)⁹¹. At one point, Knochen and other Nazi officers in France even convinced themselves that the person responsible for the benevolent treatment of Jews in the Italian zone was the well-connected Jewish businessman Donati, whose influence on the Italian officers on the ground was regarded as an explanation for their decisions in Jewish matters⁹². The truth is, however, that these rumours (or even total falsifications, as in Donati’s case⁹³) tell us more about the deep-seated distrust of the Nazis in fascist Italy’s ability to appropriately (that is, the German way) handle the ‘Jewish question’, than they do about the actual fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France (and even less do they tell us about the rationale for the decision of the fascist government not to hand over the Jews)⁹⁴.

Against this backdrop, Ribbentrop’s reference to the ‘Jewish question’, particularly regarding Italy, in his discussions with Mussolini marked a watershed in the diplomatic relations between the Axis partners. Ribbentrop’s decision to raise the issue of Jewish policy with Mussolini demonstrated that, in their efforts to indissolubly bond the Italians to the Axis alliance, the Nazi leadership was now ready to go as far as breaking – as Ribbentrop did – the implicit German-Italian agreement not to interfere with the other’s Jewish policies; a line of conduct that, until then, both Axis partners (and the Italian Foreign Ministry in particular, albeit with the obvious exception of Italian Jews) had followed when dealing with the issue of Jews in the occupied territories⁹⁵. In turn, this very fact shows that, from February 1943 onwards, the Nazi authorities stopped using the Vichy government as their

⁹¹ Quoted by Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 115-16; German original in CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-38, Knochen to Müller, 12 February 1943.

⁹² Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*, 120-25.

⁹³ This, however, is not tantamount to saying that Donati’s action on behalf of his coreligionists was irrelevant. Donati’s influence was confined to the *implementation* of the Italian decisions regarding Jews. Yet, those decisions were always prerogative of the Italian central and occupation authorities. *Ibid.*, 161-65.

⁹⁴ In October 1942 Luther submitted to Ribbentrop a memorandum in which he stressed the fascist authorities’ deficient understanding of the ‘Jewish problem’ and the inadequate enforcement of the 1938 racial laws in Italy (Michaelis, *Mussolini*, 318, and Browning, *The Final Solution*, 137-38). Michaelis (p. 274) also argues that on the eve of the Second World War, the Nazi authorities believed ‘that Mussolini’s anti-Jewish laws were little more than a smokescreen, under cover of which the Fascist authorities continued to aid and protect Jews.’

⁹⁵ See ch. 3.

proxy, in their effort to bring about the 'final solution' in Italian-occupied southeastern France, but instead assumed control over the matter themselves and raised it within the highest political echelons, when necessary.

Chapter 6. The second German intervention and Mussolini's decision to transfer Jewish policy to the Italian Police

While in Rome Ribbentrop was trying to convince Mussolini that ‘the Jews hated National Socialist Germany and the Fascist Italy fanatically’¹, in southeastern France the confrontation between the Italian military authorities and the French prefects over the treatment of foreign Jews resumed. Yet it was only several days after Ribbentrop had left Rome that he was made aware of the events in the Italian occupation zone. Enraged at the news of the renewed Italian opposition to the new raft of French anti-Jewish measures, Ribbentrop therefore ordered Ambassador Mackensen to directly present Mussolini with a set of proposals that, in the eyes of the Nazi leadership, was meant to solve the ‘Jewish problem’ in southeastern France once and for all.

This chapter focuses on the ultimatum that Ribbentrop issued to Mussolini regarding Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southeastern France in mid-March 1943. The chapter begins by retracing the renewed struggle between the fascist government and the Vichy government over Jewish policy in the territories under the control of the IVth Army. It contextualises this struggle in relation to the Comando Supremo's decision to exert the full authority of an occupying army in those French territories occupied in November 1942. It then focuses on Ribbentrop's reaction to the Italians' renewed opposition to the French anti-Jewish measures. The chapter retraces how Mussolini oscillated between refusal and acceptance to give free rein to the Germans to chase foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian zone, but was eventually convinced by Bastianini to compromise by exonerating the Italian Army from the management of the ‘Jewish question’ and to entrust such responsibilities to the Italian Police.

¹ Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* vol. VII (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 189.

Ultimately, this chapter calls into question the argument that the Italian rulers' decision to repeatedly deny the handover of foreign Jews was due to their increasing awareness of the inevitable defeat of the Axis powers. Instead, aligned with the interim conclusions of the past chapter, it provides a more comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted Italian Jewish policy beyond the sole (although certainly relevant) decision not to surrender the Jews.

The renewed struggle between the fascist and Vichy governments regarding Jewish policy

March 1943 was a month of intense discussions between Rome and Vichy concerning the fascist government's claim to full and exclusive authority over Jewish policy in the Italian occupation zone. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the evacuation of all Jews from coastal and border departments to the interior, decreed by the French authorities on 6 December 1942 and in accordance with German demands, was only the first stage of the three-step German programme to advance the 'final solution of the Jewish question' in France. As the SS outlined to the French Chief of Police Bousquet also in December, the second stage required the French government to intern foreign Jews (with the exceptions of British and American citizens, as well as neutrals) in anticipation of their imminent deportation².

In consequence, on 18 February the French Interior Ministry ordered the regional prefects to round up foreign Jews and send them to the Gurs camp, within the German occupation zone. The operations were due to be carried out in the interior territories of the former Unoccupied Zone, where foreign Jews formerly residing on the French Mediterranean coast had been concentrated during the two previous months. From Gurs, these foreign Jews were due to be transferred to Drancy, awaiting deportation to the east³. In the prefectural region of Lyons, which also comprised five departments partially or entirely within the Italian occupation zone,

² M. R. Marrus and R. O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 305.

³ *Ibid.*, 306-07; R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 375.

namely Drôme, Isère, Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Ain, the French authorities were to arrest and dispatch 200 to 300 foreign Jews to Gurs⁴.

On 19 February – the day before the Italian operations for the internment of Jews residing in the Alpes-Maritimes department were due to begin – the French Police were already in action. In La Roche-sur-Foron (Haute-Savoie), eight Jews were arrested and then shipped to Gurs. On the 20th, four foreign Jews were arrested in Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (Savoie)⁵. On the same day, a group of twenty-five Jews was arrested in Grenoble⁶. Altogether, the French Police arrested one hundred Jews in the Grenoble area⁷. Simultaneously, another three groups of twenty-five Jews each were arrested in the Drôme department⁸, in Annecy⁹ and in Chambéry¹⁰, respectively. The latter group was then placed under surveillance in Bressieux, in the Isère department¹¹. Other Jews were arrested in Savoie and Haute-Savoie and then concentrated in Bassens and Annecy¹².

The Italian authorities' reaction was almost immediate. On 20 February, the Italian Division stationed in the northern part of the Italian zone forced the French authorities in Grenoble to cease the arrests¹³. Not as cooperative were, however, the prefects of the Drôme, Savoie and Haute-Savoie departments. These prefects refused to comply with the Italian demands, on the grounds that they were compelled to implement Vichy's orders¹⁴. Consequently, the Italian military units in the field resorted to more forceful methods. In Annecy, the Italian soldiers surrounded the

⁴ The French Police officer Marchais, who ordered the arrests in the Italian zone, conveyed this to the SS unit in Lyons. CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-272, SS unit in Lyons to the SS-Standartenführer Dr. Helmut Knochen, (9434) 20 February 1943.

⁵ ADS, 1362W/4, d. Israélites, recherches et arrestations (1942-1944), Report of the Brigade of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne on the apprehension of four foreign Jews, (169) 20 February 1943.

⁶ J.-L. Panicacci, *L'occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 198.

⁷ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-277, SS-Obersturmbannführer Lischka to Heinrich Müller, 24 February 1943; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 225.

⁸ AN, F/1cIII/1152, Report of the prefect of the Drôme department, 1 March 1943.

⁹ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (gennaio-febbraio 1943)', entry 22 February 1943 and allegato (enclosure) 56, (2501/1) 22 February 1943.

¹⁰ AN, F/1cIII/1186, Report of the prefect of the Savoie department, 27 February 1943.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² AISRC, *Notiziario Quindicinale n° 54* [second fortnight of February 1943], 23.

¹³ See footnotes 4 and 7.

¹⁴ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, allegato 56, (2501/1) 22 February 1943 and AISRC, *Notiziario Quindicinale n° 54* [second fortnight of February 1943], 23.

local Police station¹⁵. A similar episode appears to have happened in the Drôme department¹⁶. Moreover, in Chambéry, it was probably due to steps taken by the Italian troops that, on 2 March, the French authorities delayed the deportation of twenty-five Jews interned in Bressieux. These Jews were liberated four days later¹⁷. Yet, the Italian demands did not prevent the deportation ‘to the Pyrenees’ of eight Jews held in Annecy¹⁸. In the Drôme, fourteen foreign Jewish workers were transferred to Gurs, presumably on 25 February and unbeknownst to the Italian authorities, in view of ‘their departure for Germany.’¹⁹

At that point, however, the matter had already reached the highest echelons of Italian politics. On 22 February, General Vercellino informed the Army General Staff of the arrests of foreign Jews by the French Police in the Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Drôme departments. Vercellino added that the prefects refused to comply with the order to halt the arrests. Therefore, he asked for a ruling on whether he should reiterate the Italian government’s objection to the arrest or internment of Jews residing in the Italian zone by the French Police. Moreover, as if anticipating the Army General Staff’s response, Vercellino asked whether he should have the prefects arrested, in order to prevent them from further violating the aforementioned objection²⁰.

At this point, it is worth noticing that on 26 January Vercellino received a telephone call from the soon-to-be replaced Chief of the Comando Supremo, Marshall Cavallero. Cavallero wanted to discuss a declaration that had appeared on newspapers abroad, condemning the campaign against Jews²¹. Yet, it is likely that

¹⁵ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-274a, memorandum signed by SS-Obersturmbannführer Lischka, 22 February 1943 (with a French translation of the memorandum); Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 222. Lischka reported information given to the Parisian headquarters of the SiPo-SD in France by Bousquet’s representative in the Occupied Zone, Jean Leguay.

¹⁶ D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 114.

¹⁷ Panicacci, *L’occupation*, 198.

¹⁸ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, ‘Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (gennaio-febbraio 1943), entry 22 February 1943 and allegato (enclosure) 56, (2501/1) 22 February 1943.

¹⁹ AN, F/1cIII/1152, Report of the prefect of the Drôme department, 1 March 1943; Panicacci, *L’occupation*, 199.

²⁰ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, allegato 56, (2501/1) 22 February 1943.

²¹ USSME, *Diario Storico*, 217, entry 26 January 1943. This presumably was the joint declaration issued by the United Nations on 17 December 1942 that *The New York Times* reproduced on its front page the day after. The declaration condemned ‘in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of

Cavallero's decision to call Vercellino was triggered by the article from the London *Times* appeared of 21 January, concerning the Italian opposition to the stamp of Jews' identity papers in the Alpes-Maritimes. Although the content of the conversation remains unknown, the date of the phone call is indicative of the moment that Vercellino, and therefore the IVth Army Command, became fully aware of the murderous goals of Nazi Jewish policy, as well as of the double-edged implications of that policy in southeastern France (i.e. either to keep opposing the French anti-Jewish measures, but with the risk of undermining the Axis alliance, or to collaborate in the Nazi exterminatory endeavour, but accepting the risks of post-war retribution).

Copies of Vercellino's message were also sent to the Comando Supremo²² and the Foreign Ministry²³. This indicates that the Italian top brass and diplomats received news about the new raft of Vichy's anti-Jewish measures either preceding or within a few days of Ribbentrop's visit to Rome to discuss, *inter alia*, Axis Jewish policy in the occupied territories.

The Comando Supremo and the Foreign Ministry reacted to Vercellino's message almost simultaneously. The issue was identical to the anti-Jewish measures that prefect Ribière tried to implement in the Alpes-Maritimes department in late December 1942²⁴. Accordingly, Ambrosio instructed the Comando Supremo's representative in Vichy, Brigade General Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri²⁵, to order the French government to cancel the arrests and any internment of Jews already undertaken. Such actions, Ambrosio stated, were the sole responsibility of the Italian military authorities. Avarna was also instructed to convey the Comando Supremo's order to the prefects to halt any further measures against Jews. At the same time, Ambrosio instructed Vercellino to 'delay (*soprassedere*) the apprehension of the

cold-blooded extermination' of Jews by the Nazis, and reaffirmed the United Nations' 'solemn resolution to insure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution.' '11 Allies Condemn Nazi War on Jews', *The New York Times*, 18 December 1942.

²² AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, allegato 56, (2501/1) 22 February 1943.

²³ Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 222.

²⁴ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, Cremese to Foreign Ministry, (6582 PR) 1 March 1943.

²⁵ Avarna was appointed on 5 December 1942 and his full title was *Generale Italiano presso il Governo di Vichy*, or Italian General at the Vichy government. USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 1 (Diario) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 967, entry 5 December 1942; C. Avarna di Gualtieri, 'Una missione presso il governo di Vichy', *Nuova Antologia di lettere, arti, scienze* 1 (1958) 79-88.

prefects.²⁶ The IVth Army Command was nonetheless ordered to prevent the French local authorities from implementing the anti-Jewish measures²⁷. Avarna conveyed the Italian official protest to the Vichy government on 2 March²⁸.

The firm Italian reaction to Vichy's new anti-Jewish measures must be understood in the context of the Comando Supremo's decision in mid-January 1943, whereby it assumed the full powers of an occupying force in the territories where the IVth Army troops were stationed²⁹. The Italian decision aligned with that of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, which had been communicated to Vichy at the end of December

²⁶ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (marzo-aprile 1943), allegati 3 and 4; L-3, b. 59/13 Problema ebrei francesi nei territori occupati dalla IVa Armata (Francia); D. Schipsi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitan francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007), 732; Carpi, *Between*, 122. The Foreign Ministry received the message the following day, 2 March. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7 Sionismo, Colonel Cesare Cremese, Chief of the Office for General Affairs, to Foreign Ministry, (6581 PR) 1 March 1943.

²⁷ Comando Supremo to IVth Army Command, (1074/AG) 8 March 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 233-34. Ambrosio sent these last instructions on behalf of the Foreign Ministry, which feared that, while discussions were taking place in Vichy between Avarna and the French government, the French local authorities would continue to take action against the Jews, irrespective of Italian orders (MAE, *Relazione sull'opera svolta dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri per la tutela delle comunità ebraiche (1938-1943)* (Rome: unpublished, 1946), 29-30; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 230-31 and 233; USSME, *Diario Storico*, 570-71, entry 7 March 1943; AUSSME, L-3, b. 59/13). Subsequently, and presumably on orders from the IVth Army Command, Colonel Anchisi, commander of the Italian troops stationed in Chambéry, and General De Castiglioni, commander of the Pusteria Division, gave the same notification to the prefects of the Savoie and Isère departments, respectively (AN, AJ/41/2315, d. XXLB Lettres et rapports du Préfet de la Savoie sur l'activité des troupes d'opération, Prefect of Savoie to various recipients, 23 March 1943; AN, F/1cIII/1186, Prefect of Savoie's monthly report, 24 April 1943; Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 199).

²⁸ Avarna personally handed to the secretary of State *auprès* the Vichy Head of Government, vice-Admiral Charles Platon, an official note demanding that the French government first, 'cancel the arrests and internments carried out so far' and, secondly, 'order the department prefects in all the territories under the control of the Italian Armed Forces to refrain from taking these measures, whether they involve arrests or internments of Jews of Italian, French, or foreign nationality residing in the indicated region.' AN, AJ/41/1182, d. Lettres adressées par le Général Avarna représentant à Vichy le Commandant Suprême Italien, and AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens, Avarna to Platon, (670) 2 March 1943 (also in Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 229, and Carpi, *Between*, 122-23); AN, AJ/41/1178, d. XXII/Arrestations et perquisitions, Confidential report on the meeting held on 2 March [1943] at 6pm between Avarna and Platon, 3 March 1943. On 5 March, Count Bonarelli informed the European and Mediterranean General Affairs Directorate and the Office IV of the General Affairs Directorate at the Foreign Ministry, as well as the Italian representatives in Chambéry, Grenoble, Valence and Annecy, of Avarna's notification to the Vichy government. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, (306/C) 5 March 1943.

²⁹ USSME, *Diario Storico*, 113, entry 14 January 1943, and 136, entry 17 January 1943. The Comando Supremo's decision was communicated to the Vichy government on 16 January. That day Avarna handed in an official note dated 15 January to vice-Admiral Platon (AN, AJ/41/1182, Avarna to vice-Admiral Charles Platon, secretary of State *auprès* the Vichy Head of Government, (204) 15 January 1943). However, it should be stressed that, while the German claim for full authority throughout the territories in which the Wehrmacht was stationed was grounded within the Franco-German armistice agreement, the Comando Supremo could not make such claim. To make up for this lack of legality, and to justify its demands for French war materials, the Comando Supremo defended its decision with reference to the need to 'better contribute to the defence of Europe.' Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 274. The quotation is from the note handed in by Avarna to Platon on 16 January.

1942. Rome's move was meant to take full advantage of Berlin's decision, while at the same time redressing the balance of power between the Axis allies vis-à-vis their French enemy³⁰. However, unwilling to burden themselves with the day-to-day administration of the former Unoccupied Zone, the Germans and Italians agreed not to denounce their armistice agreements of June 1940 with France³¹. In the Italian zone, this meant that the Italian military authorities did not assume powers over civilian matters, which were instead left to the French authorities, including ordinary police duties. The IVth Army Command restricted its rule to matters directly linked with the security of the Italian troops. Even in that case, however, it was decided that the IVth Army Command, and the subordinate Divisional commands, would preferably rule through their French counterparts, which were thus expected to promptly adopt the measures that the Italians saw fit to administer in their occupation zone³².

It was therefore against this background that the fascist government repeatedly demanded in March 1943 that the Vichy government cancel the arrests and detentions undertaken by the prefects in the Italian zone, and that it return all Jews already arrested or deported. The Italians claimed that the 'preventive measures' (*provvedimenti cautelativi*) against Jews, including arrest and internment of Jews of any nationality, were a matter of law and order and lay, therefore, within the exclusive domain of the Italian military authorities. At the same time, aligned with the Italian self-limitation of powers, the Comando Supremo conceded that this ban on measures against Jews by the French authorities did not concern the arrest of Jews charged with common crimes (*reati comuni*). The prosecution and punishment of those Jews could take their course according to French legislation with, however,

³⁰ The fascist government was particularly determined to get its share of French raw materials and military equipment to be found in the recently occupied French territories. The Comando Supremo's note from 15 January (see footnote 29) stated explicitly that 'all weapons and war materials, as well as every other equipment of the French Armed Forces existing in said territories [under Italian rule], and also buildings belonging to the aforementioned Forces go to the Italian Armed Forces insofar as they see fit.' On this aspect of the Italian occupation see Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, ch. 7.

³¹ Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 271-75; E. Costa Bona, *Dalla guerra alla pace. Italia-Francia 1940-1947* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1995), 134-36; Carpi, *Between*, 82-3.

³² Advisory Commission for the Law of War of the PCM to Comando Supremo, (1589dg) 30 December 1942, in Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 684-85; AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1127, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (gennaio-febbraio 1943)', entry 21 February 1943 and allegato (enclosure) 52, (940/P) 20 February 1943; AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (marzo-aprile 1943)', allegati 29, (4957) 23 March 1943, and 47, (244) 15 January 1943.

two provisos. First, in the event of Jews being arrested for common crimes, the French government must inform the Italian authorities of the precise reasons and provide proof of its accusations. Second, Jews must serve their sentence in France (i.e. they could not be deported)³³.

However, the Comando Supremo's (partial) concession to French sovereignty proved pointless. In spite of the fascist government's assumption of full powers and the setback (from the Vichy perspective) of December 1942 in the Alpes-Maritimes department, the Vichy central and local authorities were adamant in reaffirming their full authority over the territories where the Italian troops were stationed. Particularly fearful that the Italian move could pave the way for the future annexation to Italy of the territories occupied by the IVth Army, the Vichy government did not miss a chance to challenge the Italians' 'full authority' over the territories occupied in November 1942³⁴. Consequently, it refused to grant the Comando Supremo's demands³⁵.

In this sense, the French reaction needs also to be assessed in relation to another controversial decision taken by the Italian authorities in the second half of February 1943, which represented a direct challenge to French sovereignty: the Italian

³³ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, Comando Supremo to General Avarna and, for reference, to A.G.IV at the Foreign Ministry (which received the message on 9 March), (1499R) 8 March 1943; AN, AJ/41/1182 and AJ/41/1179, Avarna to Platon, (857) 17 March 1943 (reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 242). See also the report of a meeting held in the morning of 19 March 1943 between Avarna and Platon in AN, AJ/41/1179 (incomplete) and AJ/41/439, s.d. A.V Attitude des troupes italiennes. The Comando Supremo's decision to demand that French arrests of Jews be justified with actual proof was made at the suggestion of General Avarna. USSME, *Diario Storico*, 591, entry 9 March 1943.

³⁴ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 68/2 Nizza, Calisse to Foreign Ministry and other recipients, (186R) 4 March 1943. See also C. Lévy, 'La 4^a Armata italiana in Francia (11 novembre 1942-8 settembre 1943)', in ISRCP, *8 settembre. Lo sfacelo della quarta armata* (Turin: Book Store, 1979), 39-40; J.-L. Panicacci, 'L'occupation italienne et ses ambiguïtés: l'exemple des Alpes-Maritimes', *Recherches Régionales* 190 (2008), 69; D. Grillère, 'L'occupation italienne en France de 1940 à 1943. Administration, souveraineté, rivalités', *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea* 4 (2010), 16-18.

³⁵ More specifically, the Vichy government refused to recognise concerns over military security as a reasonable justification for the Italians to claim exclusive authority over Jewish matters. Furthermore, the French authorities argued that the Comando Supremo's demands infringed Article 43 of the Annex to the Hague Convention of 1907 on Laws and Customs of War on Land, which stated that the occupying power had to respect, 'unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the [occupied] country.' Ironically, the Vichy government acknowledged the Italian authorities' status as an occupying power only to use it against them. AN, AJ/41/1179, AJ/41/2316, d. XXII and AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestations des Juifs par les Italiens, Platon to Avarna, (1079) 27 March 1943; 'Hague Conference of 1907: Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV) 18 October 1907', *The Avalon Project*, 2008 [online; available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp; accessed on 12 August 2015].

opposition to the expulsion of British and American nationals (altogether 317, according to Bousquet³⁶) by the French authorities from the Italian zone to German-occupied Lyons, accompanied by the demand for the release of those previously arrested³⁷. It is therefore apparent that the Vichy government's refusal to grant the Comando Supremo's demands to desist from arresting foreign Jews was not due uniquely to its desire that they be shipped off to Gurs as per German demands. The opportunity to further exploit the intra-Axis discord over Jewish policy, while once again undermining the already fragile Italian authority, were equally relevant. To be sure, as soon as the head of the French government Laval was informed of the renewed Italian opposition, he immediately contacted the German authorities. Laval did not fail to stress that the Italian attitude was contrary to Nazi Jewish policy in France³⁸.

The second German intervention

The truth is that, in early 1943, neither the Reich Foreign Office nor the RSHA needed encouragement to confront their fascist ally over Jewish policy. As mentioned in the past chapter, following Luther's ousting from the Foreign Office, Ribbentrop in particular had set for himself the task to overcome the Italian resistance to Nazi Jewish policy. Hence, eventually becoming aware of recent events in southern France, on 9 March, Ribbentrop ordered Mackensen to visit Mussolini to deliver two notes to the duce for him³⁹.

The delivery of the two notes was not the main aim of the visit, however. They were only to be used as evidence to support Ribbentrop's ultimatum to Mussolini

³⁶ Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 236.

³⁷ AN, F/7/14898, d. Arrestations de Juifs; AN, F/1cIII/1186, Prefect of Savoie's monthly report, 24 April 1943; AN, F/1cIII/1187, Prefect of Haute-Savoie's monthly report, 4 March 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 230.

³⁸ Note signed by Schleier, (1419) 4 March 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 230.

³⁹ The first note concerned the recent measures taken by the Italian occupation authorities to cancel French measures intended to expel foreign Jews, as well as British and American citizens, to the German occupation zone. The note stressed that the French authorities had taken both measures in accordance with German demands, but had then been prevented from implementing them because of the intervention of the Italian military authorities. The second note repeated German accusations against the Italian soldiers of fraternising with Jews, and against the Italian military commands, which allowed 'all the Jews, Britons, Americans and other elements suspected of espionage' to freely enter the Italian zone to flee the Germans troops. Ribbentrop to German Embassy in Rome, (1036) 9 March 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 235-37.

concerning Jewish policy in Italian-occupied southeastern France. Accordingly, Ribbentrop instructed Mackensen to also deliver a message to Mussolini on his behalf.

In his message, Ribbentrop began by recalling his recent visit to Rome, the agreement with the duce on the need that ‘in Jewish questions there must be unity’ between the Axis powers, and the fact that on that occasion Mussolini refused to believe that the Italian military authorities had foiled the German and French anti-Jewish measures in their occupation zone. ‘Today’, Ribbentrop continued, ‘with the two documents I submit to you we have the clearest proof that Italian military authorities and the Comando Supremo are pursuing policies even in France that are diametrically opposed to the ideas and intentions of the duce.’ Ribbentrop requested Mussolini to personally and immediately intervene to make sure that this situation came to an end. He then proposed three solutions: first, ‘the duce gives the Comando Supremo clear orders to leave these things to the French Police and to stop getting in the way’; second, ‘the duce withdraws the administration of these matters from the military authorities and transfers them to the civilian police, who in dealing with these issues must be independent of the military authorities’; third, ‘the Reichsführer SS [i.e. Heinrich Himmler] undertakes the management of these matters together with the French Police even in the Italian-occupied area so that Italian agencies no longer have anything more to do with them.’ Ribbentrop concluded his instructions to Mackensen by asserting that, from the German viewpoint, the second option, which ‘has been suggested by the Reichsführer SS’ or, even the third, seemed to be the most suitable. He also suggested that Mackensen hint to the duce that the Führer had a specific interest in the matter⁴⁰.

Ribbentrop’s instructions reached Mackensen almost simultaneously to the Italian Foreign Ministry’s response, which was signed by Bastianini, to the earlier note from the German Embassy in Rome that Ribbentrop had given to Mussolini during their first meeting on 25 February⁴¹. The German note requested that the fascist government withdraw its order to stop the expulsion of foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department to German-occupied territories, and called for the Italian

⁴⁰ All quotations from Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 121. See also Carpi, *Between*, 125-26 and footnote 39 of this chapter.

⁴¹ See ch. 5.

authorities' collaboration to prevent Jews from fleeing the German anti-Jewish measures by crossing into the Italian zone. The Italian Foreign Ministry replied that security policy, including Jewish policy, lay in the exclusive competence of the Italian occupation authorities and that these 'would take the necessary measures alone.' Regarding the 'eventuality that foreign or French Jews cross or try to cross from the German occupation zone to the Italian zone', Bastianini emphasised that 'since 29 December 1942⁴², the Italian authorities in charge had received instructions to ward off these undesirable elements.' Bastianini concluded those orders were reconfirmed⁴³.

Mackensen forwarded the Foreign Ministry's response to Berlin on 11 March⁴⁴. However, its only effect was to strengthen Ribbentrop's distrust of the Italians. Ribbentrop considered Bastianini's words as proof that the Italian Foreign Ministry knew about the orders to oppose the French anti-Jewish measures from the beginning and therefore it, too, was implicated with the Italian military authorities in the sabotage of Nazi Jewish policy⁴⁵.

Meanwhile, another week passed before Mackensen could carry out the task Ribbentrop had ordered him to perform. In March 1943, on Mussolini's agenda, there were more urgent matters to deal with than the fate of some Jewish refugees in southeastern France. In Turin, a wave of strikes paralysed the Italian industrial heartland⁴⁶. In North Africa, the Axis was desperately fighting to resist the advance of the British and American armies into Tunisia, whose airbases, if conquered by the Allies, would have opened a route into southern Europe. Furthermore, on 5 March, Mussolini received a visit from the Reich Marshall and Supreme Commander of the *Luftwaffe*, Hermann Göring. According to Mackensen, Göring was in Rome to

⁴² This referred to the cable with which the Foreign Minister's chief of cabinet at the time, Marquis d'Ajeta, instructed the IVth Army Command, the SIM, the DAGR and the Italian representatives in Paris, Vichy, Nice and Lyons to oppose prefect Ribière's expulsion of foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department to German-occupied departments. See ch. 3.

⁴³ Italian Foreign Ministry to German Embassy in Rome, 9 March 1943, reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1990), 132, doc. 96.

⁴⁴ As it can be inferred from Ribbentrop's reply two days later. Ribbentrop to German Embassy in Rome, (1117) 13 March 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 238-40.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ M. Knox, 'Das faschistische Italien und die "Endlösung", 1942/43', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 77.

discuss military matters only⁴⁷ and, indeed, it seems that during his talks with Mussolini the issue of Jews in the occupied territories was not discussed⁴⁸.

Thus, it was only in the evening of 17 March – eight days after Ribbentrop had originally sent his instructions – that, during an audience held at the Palazzo Venezia, Mackensen was able to present the duce with the list of German grievances⁴⁹. Mackensen reported to Mussolini Ribbentrop's request that the management of the 'Jewish question' in southeastern France be removed from the Italian military men, before presenting the duce with the aforementioned three options to choose from for their replacement⁵⁰.

What sabotage?

Before discussing Mussolini's reaction to Ribbentrop's proposals, it is first necessary to examine the German accusations against the Italian Foreign Ministry and Army. Historians have often taken these accusations at face value and have used them, in turn, to assert that the Italians wished to sabotage the 'final solution'. However, a closer analysis proves that none of these allegations can be accepted without qualification. For instance, the internment of Jews and enemy aliens announced by the Comando Supremo to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht on 3 December 1942 demonstrates the impact of German perspective on the portrayal of Italian actions. Ribbentrop lamented that, despite Bastianini's reassurances, both the arrest and internment of Jews had, in fact, been cancelled⁵¹. However, in March 1943 the Italian authorities had assigned 188 people to enforced residence in the Alpes-Maritimes (110) and Basses-Alpes departments (78)⁵². While it is uncertain whether

⁴⁷ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 120.

⁴⁸ Carpi, *Between*, 127.

⁴⁹ The text of Ribbentrop's message that Mackensen presented to Mussolini had been slightly amended by Ribbentrop himself. The new text, which was dispatched to Mackensen on the 13th, also included a reference to Bastianini's note of 9 March. See footnote 44.

⁵⁰ Mackensen to Reich Foreign Office, (1246) 18 March 1943. Reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 243-44; L. Poliakov and J. Sabelle, *Jews under the Italian occupation* (Paris: Éditions du Centre, 1955), 68-70, doc. 8.

⁵¹ See footnote 44.

⁵² The first group of people were interned in Vence. Among them there were also two French citizens who had been previously interned in the Sospel concentration camp (ADAM, 166W/10 d. Troupes italiennes d'occupation: assignation à résidence (en particulier d'israélites) mars-avril 1943, Vence Police Superintendent to Nice regional prefect, (1191) 15 March 1943 and (1427) 27 March 1943). The second group was divided thus: twenty-seven people were interned in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie; 51

Jews were interned in the first group (although highly probable), there is no doubt that there were Jews among those interned in the Basses-Alpes. In addition, we must take into account the hundreds of people, including Jews⁵³, who had been arrested and interned in the Sospel concentration camp by the Italian troops since 29 December 1942. Once again, Ribbentrop conflated two measures that were different in nature (and scope), namely internment, which was being carried out by the Italians, and arrest pending deportation, which according to the German plans should have been carried out by the French authorities on their behalf. Moreover, we saw in the past chapters that if the arrest and internment in Sospel of enemy aliens had been given priority over placing Jews in enforced residence by the Commissario Barranco, this was not due to the fascist government's will to tamper with Nazi Jewish policy. Instead, it was the result of a decision that was consistent with the different degree of danger that enemy aliens and Jews were perceived as representing to the fascist authorities.

Also useful to remind us of the caution that should be used in dealing with German sources on this matter is the issue of the crossing of Jews (and other 'undesirable' elements) into the Italian zone. On 13 March, Bastianini informed the Comando Supremo and the Head Police Branch at the Interior Ministry about the latest discussions between the Foreign Ministry and the Reich Foreign Office regarding Jewish policy in France. Bastianini reminded the Italian military authorities and Police that they were to act alone towards the Jews in the Italian zone. Bastianini also announced that measures must be taken by the Italian occupation authorities to put a stop to the influx of non-Italian Jews from the German zone. These directives had been approved 'high up' (*superiormente approvate*), that is, presumably by Mussolini himself. Consequently, Bastianini asked the Comando Supremo and the Interior Ministry to 'urgently make the necessary arrangements' to enforce them⁵⁴. Accordingly, between the end of February and mid-March 1943, the IVth Army Command began to take measures to stop Jews from crossing into the

were interned in Castellane (USHMMA, RG-43.089M (Selected records from the department archives of the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, 1939–1952), reel 4 (42W32), frames 771-72 and 775-77).

⁵³ See ch. 4.

⁵⁴ ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, Bastianini to Comando Supremo, Head Police Branch at the Interior Ministry and, for reference, to the Italian Embassy in Paris, the Italian General Consulate in Vichy, and the IVth Army Command, (34R/2315) 13 March 1943. Copy in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46 Campi di concentramento in territorio francese.

Italian zone from the German zone⁵⁵. This is clear proof that Bastianini's instructions had been received and forwarded by the Comando Supremo. Despite the absence of records in the Italian archives attesting to the Italian authorities' rejection of Jews (or anyone else, for that matter) at the 'border' between the Italian and the German zones, in my opinion there is little doubt that from March 1943 onwards, such a policy did, in fact, exist in some manner.

Hence, the Italian diplomats' reassurances to their German colleagues can be hardly seen as 'meaningless arguments and excuses.'⁵⁶ Nor can Bastianini's reassurances to the Germans of 9 March be seen as the expression of the Italian will to sabotage or even hinder the Nazi deportation plans, Bastianini's refusal to grant the German requests for the (direct or indirect) surrender of Jews notwithstanding. Rather, one may wonder why it took so long for the Italian military authorities to implement instructions that the Foreign Ministry had already given in the clearest possible way in late December 1942, at the time of the first French-Italian crisis over the Jews' treatment. Yet, once again, the answer to this question does *not* exist in unwarranted (and vaguely stereotypical) Italian efforts to deceive the Germans in order to rescue the Jews, as believed by Ribbentrop. Instead, we need to look at the specific context of the occupation in the early months of 1943, and the increasingly hostile environment the IVth Army Command and troops operated within, especially after Italy's assumption of full powers in mid-January⁵⁷.

The increasingly effective and often bold actions of the French Resistance across the Italian occupation zone hint at part of the answer. By February 1943, the ranks of the Resistance began to swell with young Frenchmen who failed to report for the *Service du Travail Obligatoire*, a situation that forced the Divisional commanders to deploy their troops in vast mopping up operations⁵⁸. These operations soon led, in turn, to another problem, namely the ever-increasing number of inmates in the Sospel concentration camp. For this reason, in mid-February, the Army General Staff urged

⁵⁵ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (marzo-aprile 1943)', allegato 31, (6178 Op.) 8 April 1943.

⁵⁶ Carpi, *Between*, 125.

⁵⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Copy of a *promemoria* (memorandum) from the Army General Staff, 16 February 1943; *promemoria* from the Army General Staff to the undersecretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior Umberto Albinì, (3352) 24 February 1943; *appunto* (note) from Political Police to DAGR, (500/5783) 11 March 1943.

⁵⁸ Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 212 ff. News of attacks on the Italian troops in AISRC, *Notiziario Quindicinale* n° 54 [second fortnight of February 1943].

the Interior Ministry to take charge of the camp, so that the freed troops could be used in active duty. Eventually, the administration of the Sospel camp was entrusted to the Commissario Giovanni Cerrato, one of the officers of Barranco's unit⁵⁹. This solution did not solve the problem of troop shortage, however (not least because of the employment of soldiers in the construction of coastal defences on the French Mediterranean shores).

Accordingly, only a few days after suggesting the possibility of arresting the departmental prefects in the Italian occupation zone to the Army General Staff, the IVth Army Command requested the Vichy government's collaboration in implementing Italian security policy. The content of the request is worth analysing. On, or shortly after, 25 February, the IVth Army Command announced to the French government that 'the commands of the Italian troops need to adopt security measures towards enemy aliens and foreign Jews residing in their zone of jurisdiction.' Although 'a large portion of these people have already been located', the IVth Army Command nonetheless requested that the French government instruct the prefects 'to fulfil any requests that the commands of the troops may make to obtain information about enemy aliens and foreign Jews.'⁶⁰ Despite the attempt to minimise the importance of French cooperation in the arrest and/or internment of enemy aliens and Jews, the note clearly demonstrates the difficulties that the Italian occupation authorities experienced in implementing the security policy decided in early December 1942. At the same time, the IVth Army Command presumably hoped to give *ex post* grounds for the comprehensive purge of the Italian zone which began in the wake of the invasion of the Unoccupied Zone, in order to placate the Vichy government's protests⁶¹.

If coupled with the decision to prioritise the apprehension of political opponents and enemy aliens over the internment of Jews, the preceding discussion demonstrates

⁵⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Head of Political Police to DAGR, (500/5783) 11 March 1943.

⁶⁰ AN, AJ/41/1182 and AJ/41/1179, Avarna to Platon, (619) 25 February 1943. Copy of the document also in AN, AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens.

⁶¹ As we discussed in the second chapter, the Italian military authorities claimed that these operations, including those carried out under Barranco's supervision as of 29 December, fell within the Italian right (as operative forces before 16 January, and occupying forces afterwards) to guarantee the safety of their troops. Conversely, the French government protested that the vast majority of those arrests were acts of political retaliation, which was, in fact, true, and were therefore illegitimate, as the French Police should have carried them out. AN, AJ/41/439.

that the IVth Army Command (and Barranco) were far from ‘surrounding inaction with a gauze of active words.’⁶² In fact, the IVth Army Command’s request again confirms this thesis’ findings in chapter two and four, namely that the Italian military authorities took their security policy very seriously. Yet, that policy had different priorities than the corresponding Nazi security policy.

Mussolini’s response to Ribbentrop’s proposals and Bastianini’s intervention

Irrespective of the factual accuracy of Ribbentrop’s allegations about the Italian Army, during his meeting with Mackensen on 17 March Mussolini could no longer deny that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was in key respects in tension with the Nazi ‘final solution’. According to the report on the meeting with Mussolini that Mackensen sent to Ribbentrop on the morning of 18 March, the duce ‘listened, not interrupting my lengthy explanations, and only underlined certain phrases, with animated gestures of agreement, especially the observation ... that we could not understand for what reasons the Italian military authorities prevented the action of the French Police.’ Afterwards, Mussolini ‘proceeded to make fuller observations.’ First of all, the duce pointed out that the Germans’ ‘main attitude about the absolute necessity of energetic measures against the Jews and against persons of British and American nationality ... is clear and indisputable. If his [i.e. Mussolini’s] Generals interfered in this question it is because they cannot with their mentality, comprehend its entire importance ... we ought to be pleased that there is a French Government in existence which is prepared to carry out the police regulations.’ Then, Mussolini added that

his Generals seem to have forgotten that they are not in France as an occupying force; they came only to help assist [the Germans] ... This is a question with which the Generals must not meddle. Their attitude is the result not only of lack of understanding, but also of sentimental humanitarianism, which is not in accord with our harsh epoch. The necessary instructions will therefore be issued this very day to General Ambrosio, giving a completely free hand to the French Police in this matter.

⁶² Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 60.

Mussolini chose, therefore, the first of the three options proposed by Ribbentrop, and left the management of the ‘Jewish question’ to the French Police. Moreover, according to Mackensen’s report, when he stressed to Mussolini that ‘General Ambrosio would surely object that such an order from the duce could not be permitted, because it would discredit the Italian military authorities in the eyes of the French’, Mussolini dismissed the objection with a gesture that Mackensen interpreted ‘as saying: “I am the one who gives orders here.”’⁶³

A thorough analysis of Mussolini’s controversial personal stand on the Nazi-led ‘final solution’ falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Historians have offered opposing interpretations of the duce’s oft-contradictory decisions in this domain. Some argue that Mussolini’s decisions should be read as a rescue in disguise; Mussolini told the Germans what they wanted to hear, but then instructed or left his Generals and diplomats to do otherwise⁶⁴. Others contend that Mussolini implicitly supported the Nazi exterminatory policy⁶⁵. Whether he was double-crossing his allies, or was using the Jews as a bargaining chip to retain Hitler’s support, especially as his regime showed signs of crumbling, remains unanswered.

Due to the boundaries of this thesis, only three aspects of Mussolini’s response should be highlighted. First, although we have no explicit reason to doubt the nature of Mackensen’s report, Mussolini’s comment on the fact that the Italian Army was in southern France only to support the Germans, rather than as an occupation army, sounds quite odd. That comment directly opposed the policy vis-à-vis France that Mussolini had followed since the armistice agreement of June 1940. This policy had consisted in the *de facto* annexation of Menton⁶⁶ and in the orders for the Italian Army to assume the full authority of an occupation power in December 1942⁶⁷.

⁶³ See footnote 50. Quotations from Poliakov and Sabille, *Jews*, 68-70, doc. 8.

⁶⁴ R. De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy. A History* (New York: Enigma Books, 2001), 344; S. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue and Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 85.

⁶⁵ M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 160. As evidence, Sarfatti cites Mussolini’s response from 8 March, to Hitler’s letter delivered by Ribbentrop on 25 February, in which the duce stated that ‘steel and fire will cure [the] ills that the demoplutocracies and Judaism have inflicted on the human species’. The text of the letter, which is dated 9 March, is reproduced *in extenso* in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 128-32, doc. 95.

⁶⁶ Panicacci, ‘L’occupazione italiana’, 66.

⁶⁷ Schipsi, *L’occupazione*, 272-73.

Second, the decision to leave Jewish policy in the hands of the French Police meant that, for the third time in less than a year, Mussolini granted (although admittedly indirectly this time) a German request for the deportation of Jews from the Italian-occupied territories. Third, Mussolini's response to Ribbentrop's message overtly contradicted, and therefore undermined in the eyes of the Germans, his *de facto* foreign Minister Bastianini who, no less than seven days previously, had officially declined a renewed German offer of collaboration in Jewish policy.

Yet, another dramatic turn of events shortly followed. During a meeting held on the morning of 18 March, also attended by Ambrosio, Bastianini managed to convince the duce to backpedal on his decision. For Bastianini, Mussolini should opt for the second option and place the Italian Police in charge of Jewish policy in southeastern France, which Mussolini eventually did. Thereupon, Mussolini's new instructions were passed along to the Chief of Police, Carmine Senise, who, on the following day of 19 March, presented a list of four high-ranking Police officers to the duce, so he could choose one to entrust with the delicate matter. Mussolini singled out the Ispettore Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza, or Police General Inspector, Guido Lospinoso, who was summoned that same evening to the Palazzo Venezia. Meanwhile, on the morning of 19 March, Bastianini also met with the Vatican nuncio in Italy, Monsignor Francesco Borgongini Duca, who had been instructed to reach out to the undersecretary only a day earlier to ask his intercession in favour of the Jews in France. Yet, by the time the meeting took place, the problem had already been solved and Bastianini could dispel the nuncio's fears⁶⁸. The last person to be made aware of Mussolini's change of heart was thus Mackensen who, to his surprise, was informed of the duce's new instructions directly by Bastianini on the morning of 20 March⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Carpi, *Between*, 129-35; Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 125-28 (according to Steinberg the meeting between Bastianini and Borgongini Duca took place in the evening of 18 March); In his book of memoirs, Bastianini (*Uomini, cose, fatti: memorie di un ambasciatore* (Milan: Vitagliano, 1959), 86-88) stated that he met twice with Borgongini Duca, both before and after his meeting with Mussolini.

⁶⁹ Mackensen to Reich Foreign Office, 20 March 1943, reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 245-46; Poliakov and Sabille, *Jews*, 70-72, doc. 9.

Fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France within its contexts

Why did Bastianini, a man who had personally ordered the expulsion of Jews into the hands of the Ustača slayers during his tenure as Governor of Dalmatia, deliberately try to convince Mussolini to reverse his decision and, thereby, save the lives of few thousand foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France? More broadly, how did Bastianini's and Ambrosio's earlier decisions not to allow the French authorities to hand Jews over to the Nazis align, if at all, with fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France?

Mussolini's decision to transfer Jewish policy to the fascist Police in southeastern France was not the duce's first change of heart regarding the 'Jewish question' in the territories occupied by the Italian Army in March 1943. According to the post-war testimony of Colonel Carla, when Mussolini informed General Mario Robotti, the new Commander of the IInd Army, of his promise to Ribbentrop to hand over Jews in Italian-occupied Croatia, Robotti protested so vehemently that the duce eventually conceded and told the General to 'invent whatever excuse he liked, but not to hand over a single Jew to the Germans.'⁷⁰

In the case of southeastern France, no official record of the meeting between Mussolini and Bastianini has yet been discovered. Moreover, almost all of the sources reporting first- or second-hand information on the meeting, such as Bastianini's or Senise's books of memoirs⁷¹, were written after the war, when political and personal necessities made it expedient to highlight humanitarianism as a key feature of the Italian attitude towards the Jews⁷². The only contemporary source at our disposal is, therefore, the account of the meeting that Pietromarchi reported in his diary. Pietromarchi reported the comments that Bastianini made during a private conversation with him and Pellegrino Ghigi⁷³ on 31 March 1943.

According to Pietromarchi, Bastianini recounted that he managed to change Mussolini's mind by giving the duce a memorandum prepared by Count Vidau with 'the latest news from Berlin of the horrifying massacres perpetrated against the

⁷⁰ Quoted by Rodogno, '*Italiani brava gente?*', 230. See also Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 122.

⁷¹ Bastianini, *Uomini*, 86-88; C. Senise, *Quando ero capo della Polizia 1940-1943* (Rome: Ruffolo Editore, 1946), 102-3.

⁷² Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 125-26.

⁷³ At the time, Ghigi was the Italian plenipotentiary in Athens and was involved in the issue of Italian Jews in German-occupied Greece. See Sarfatti, '*L'evacuazione*', 262 ff.

Jews.’ Bastianini then addressed Mussolini directly, remarking that the real reason for the Italian officers’ oppositions to the French anti-Jewish measures was because ‘our people know what fate awaits the Jews consigned to the Germans. They will be gassed without distinction, the old, women and babies. And that is why our people will never permit such atrocities to take place with their connivance (*con la loro connivenza*).’ Bastianini then recounted to Pietromarchi and Ghigi how he had presented Mackensen with the duce’s new instructions to put the Italian Police in charge of Jewish policy in southeastern France. He explained to Mackensen that the reason for Mussolini’s change of heart was that ‘the French Police ought not to carry out the rounding-up of the Jews because they are in cahoots with them’. Nonetheless, Bastianini assured Mackensen that ‘we shall put them in concentration camps and watch them.’ Pietromarchi, therefore, concluded with his own remark that ‘in this way we saved the Jews in southern France (*Così gli ebrei della Francia meridionale sono stati salvati da noi*).’⁷⁴

And they did. However, Pietromarchi failed to mention in his diary (or possibly did not know) that during the meeting with Bastianini, after Mackensen ‘asked what would be done with [the Jews] then, whether the intention was to deport them’, Bastianini did not rule out the possibility entirely. Instead, he ‘answered that so far this was not projected’, as we can read in the report that Mackensen sent to the Reich Foreign Office on 20 March⁷⁵. Also, Pietromarchi’s diary failed to mention (again, possibly because he did not know about them) the aforementioned directives to prevent non-Italian Jews from crossing from the German into the Italian occupation zone that, only a few days earlier, Bastianini had forwarded to the Comando Supremo and the Interior Ministry. These directives were, as we have seen, meant to be implemented by the IVth Army Command at the same hour that Bastianini was desperately persuading Mussolini not to surrender Jews in the Italian zone. Curiously, scholars who advocate the ‘Italian protection’⁷⁶ of the Jews tend to overlook this last component of Bastianini’s Jewish policy in that period. But,

⁷⁴ Quoted by Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 126-27. Original document: ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 31 March 1943. Bastianini’s (*Uomini*, 86-88) post-war version of how he managed to have Mussolini change his mind confirms Pietromarchi’s words.

⁷⁵ See footnote 69. Quotations from Poliakov and Sabille, *Jews*, 70-72, doc. 9.

⁷⁶ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 124.

notwithstanding the undeniable fact that Bastianini saved the non-Italian Jews residing in the Italian occupation zone (and *only* them) from deportation to the Nazi death camps, this is not enough *per se* to prove that Bastianini was deliberately attempting to stop or hamper the Nazi ‘final solution’.

Likewise, the arguments about the untrustworthiness of the French Police in carrying out their anti-Jewish tasks presented by Bastianini to justify Mussolini’s change of heart to Mackensen cannot be hastily explained away with reference to ‘Italian *furberia*’⁷⁷, or deceptive slyness. In late March 1943, the IVth Army Command demanded that the Chief of the *Renseignements Généraux* in Nice, Mr Juillard, be removed from his office and expelled from the Italian zone before 10 April. The Italian military authorities accused Jouillard of being ‘hostile to the Axis powers’ (*elemento contrario all’Asse*) and of having helped American and British Jews to cross into Spain in the days immediately preceding the Italian invasion in November 1942 ‘in exchange for hefty fees’ (*percependo ingenti compensi*)⁷⁸. To reiterate: the Italian military authorities took security policy very seriously.

However, Bastianini’s call on the Comando Supremo and the Interior Ministry for a swift implementation of the instructions to curb the inflow of foreign Jewish refugees into the Italian occupation zone (and the subsequent Comando Supremo and Vercellino’s prompt positive responses) also challenges the argument that the fascist government’s repeated refusals to hand Jews over (or let the French authorities do so) were the result of the fascist rulers’ will to save themselves (and not the Jews), in view of the post-war judgment by the Allies. As discussed in chapter one, this argument has gathered growing consensus among historians in recent years. Historian MacGregor Knox has arguably made the strongest case for this explanation of the Italian refusal to hand Jews over. According to Knox, the fact that Ambrosio’s order to prevent the shipment of foreign Jews from the Italian zone to the Gurs camp was issued almost simultaneously to the IVth Army’s opposition to the expulsion of

⁷⁷ Ibid., 128.

⁷⁸ AN, AJ/41/1182, Avarna to Platon, (961) 25 March 1943. In a note dated 7 April, the French government asked the Italian authorities to provide evidence for their accusations before granting their request concerning Juillard, but the outcome of the dispute remains unclear. AN, AJ/41/2315, d. XXI.E Violences, agressions, cambriolages, vols commis en France par les troupes italiennes d’opération, Platon to Avarna, (1190-DN/SL) 7 April 1943; ADAM, 616W/242, d. Arrestation de Juifs anglais et américains per les autorités italiennes.

British and American citizens from the Italian zone to Lyons ‘makes it also clear that the Italian benevolence had its roots in strategic considerations.’⁷⁹

Although unquestionably plausible, Knox’s argument overlooks some important details that must be taken into consideration when assessing the influence of the broader political and military context of the war on fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. First (and foremost), the argument regarding the importance of the post-war reckoning omits the fact that, during the negotiations that led to the armistice agreement with the Allies of September 1943, the Badoglio government made no reference to the Italian ‘protection’ of the Jews⁸⁰. Secondly, to my knowledge, a direct and overt link between the treatment of Jews in the occupied territories and future post-war reckoning can be found only in a dispatch from the Foreign Ministry dated 19 August⁸¹ – whose content shall be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Moreover, if we focus on the specific case of southern France, Knox’s explanation for the Italian decision concerning Britons and Americans betrays a lack of knowledge of the Italian security policy in that context. The official protest lodged in mid-March 1943 by the US State Department through the Swiss Legation in Rome, which opposed the lamentable life conditions endured by the American nationals interned in the Sospel concentration camp⁸², diverges from the alleged efforts of the Comando Supremo to curry favour with the Allies. Furthermore, the fact that the fascist rulers would have been liable for measures (against Jews or other subjects) ordered by the Nazis and carried out by the French authorities, albeit in the Italian zone, is open to question⁸³.

⁷⁹ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 66 ff. [quotation from p. 88]. The very same argument was already put forward in the late 1970s by Lévy, ‘La 4^a Armata’, 47.

⁸⁰ Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, 364. Incidentally, this also disproves Rodogno’s claim that the fascist rulers did not hand over the Jews because they ‘would have been a useful bargaining counter in the event of negotiations with the Allies’ (Ibid.).

⁸¹ Augusto Rosso, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs, to Vittorio Castellani, liaison officer with the IInd Army Command, (25675PR) 19 August 1943. Reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 851, doc. 680.

⁸² ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Foreign Ministry (A.G.IV) to DAGR and other recipients, (34R/2898) 31 March 1943; AN, AJ/41/432, d. Comportement italien – Arrestations.

⁸³ In this regard, it is worth noticing that at some point the IVth Army Command expressed the view that the measures towards Jews with French citizenship should be left to the French authorities. *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943, reproduced in USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 2 (Allegati) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 306-10, doc. 102. Copy of the memorandum in YV, 031/4-4.

To be clear, this thesis does not dispute the well-established fact that, from the winter of 1942/1943 onwards, the chief fascist leaders, including Bastianini and Ambrosio, were increasingly pessimistic regarding the Axis prospects for victory. Pietromarchi wrote plainly in his diary on 5 February: ‘That the war is lost is now crystal clear to everybody’ (*Che la guerra sia perduta è ormai a tutti evidente*)⁸⁴. Likewise, on 20 January, Ciano reported in his diary the content of a conversation with Ambrosio and Vercellino, writing that ‘these two generals, both worthy and honest men ... are very anxious about what is about to happen. Convinced as they are that Germany will lose the war, and that there is nothing left for us but destruction, death, and disorder, they ask how far we intend to go.’⁸⁵ Moreover, since April 1943, Bastianini repeatedly tried to persuade Mussolini to grant him permission to establish contacts with the Allies to explore a way for Italy to exit the war, but to no avail⁸⁶.

What I am calling into question is the too great explanatory value that, in recent years, historians have credited to the fact, itself not surprising, that since roughly the winter of 1942/43 the fascist rulers made efforts to avoid total ruin (both at personal and national levels) in light of the increasingly gloomy scenario of the Italian war. For one thing, H. James Burgwyn has pointed out that Pietromarchi ‘to the end opposed any effort to seek a “diplomatic solution” by signing a separate peace with the Allies ... Honor and the integrity of the state required that Italy fight to the finish.’⁸⁷ More widely, even if we allowed that the fascist rulers’ decisions regarding the fate of the Jews were justified by their concerns for the impending post-war judgment by the Allies, it would not necessarily follow that a humanitarian component was not operative at the same time. In fact, the presence of a sincere humanitarian motive in Bastianini’s plea to the duce, to prevent foreign Jews falling

⁸⁴ ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 5 February 1943.

⁸⁵ G. Ciano, *Diary 1937-1943* (New York: Enigma Books, 2002), 582 entry 20 January 1943.

⁸⁶ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 89.

⁸⁷ H.J. Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini’s conquest of Yugoslavia 1941-1943* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005), 307. To this, one can add that, if it is true that Pietromarchi’s diary reveals that the experienced diplomat was very attentive to the Allies’ declarations of future punishment for those responsible for war crimes, as Knox rightly stresses (‘Das faschistische’, 86-87), it is equally true that during a conversation presumably held on 22 April with the Italian industrialist Alberto Pirelli, Pietromarchi said that the Anglo-American ‘intentions to put the culprits to death are ridiculous’ considering their alliance with the Soviet Union and the crimes committed by the latter in Poland. ASFLE, Fondo Luca Pietromarchi, Sez. I Diario 1 gennaio–3 settembre 1943, entry 22 April 1943.

into French (thus Nazi) hands, seems equally plausible – and perhaps it is also in the sense of a moral and ethical responsibility, rather than in terms of a purely legal one, that Bastianini's reference to the Italian responsibility in the killing of Jews should be understood. The best evidence in support of my argument is the fact that all scholars upholding the sabotage thesis identify the awareness of defeat as an additional motive for the fascist rulers' decision to rescue Jews.

In this sense, the major weakness of the argument that stresses the fascist rulers' fear of impending post-war judgment is that it is cast in the same 'Holocaust-based conceptions of genocide'⁸⁸ as the humanitarianism thesis. Like the latter, the former rests upon the (false) assumption that anti-Semitism and humanitarianism are mutually exclusive. This, in turn, is strictly linked with the tendency of both those explanations to understand the Italian refusals to hand Jews over in isolation from the other components of fascist Jewish policy in southern France, namely the internment of Jews and the closure of the Italian zone's border. The result is a mono-dimensional analysis of the complex fascist Jewish policy which is reduced to the sole, although certainly crucial, refusal to hand Jews over and, therefore, is purely understood as a reaction. To put it another way, the fear of post-war judgments (or humanitarianism) can help explain the refusals to hand Jews over, but they nonetheless fail to account for the parallel decisions to intern Jews and close the border between the German and the Italian zones.

To fully grasp Ambrosio's and Bastianini's action in March 1943 (but also fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France as a whole) we need therefore to adopt a more comprehensive analytical approach. The internment of Jews (together with enemy aliens) and the refusal to hand them over cannot be analysed separately. Similarly, Jewish policy cannot be understood in isolation from the broader *contexts* of the occupation, the war, and the diplomatic relations with the German ally and the French enemy. In this regard, Bastianini's plea to Mussolini not to let the French authorities send Jews in the Italian occupation zone to their death, and the concurrent proposal to subject those same Jews to a persecutory measure, such as their internment, were consistent with the Jewish policy adopted by the Army and the Foreign Ministry since December 1942. But they appear also as two coherent

⁸⁸ D. Moshman, 'Conceptual constraints on thinking about genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research* 3:3 (2001), 432.

decisions when seen from *within* the fascist perspective on the ‘Jewish problem’ and its non-genocidal solution to it, as emerged by the reconstruction of the events occurred in Italian-occupied southern France between December 1942 and March 1943. At the same time, the events retraced in this chapter have further confirmed that this ideological difference with Nazi Germany alone would not be enough to justify the Italian refusals to hand over the Jews. Accordingly, Bastianini’s confirmation of the Foreign Ministry’s order from 29 December 1942 to prevent non-Italian Jews from crossing into the Italian zone, not only was consistent with the military need to free the Italian occupation zone of suspected civilians, but also with the Foreign Ministry’s policy of non-interference in the German sphere⁸⁹. Likewise, Ambrosio’s demands to the Vichy government to refrain from taking any measures against Jews was linked with the Italian claim to full authority in the territories under the control of the IVth Army. Both Ambrosio and Bastianini were resolved, in turn, not to collaborate (even indirectly) in the murder of harmless people.

Yet there is something more. The consequences of Bastianini’s successful effort to convince Mussolini to transfer Jewish policy to the Italian Police instead of leaving it to the French Police were potentially double-edged. If Bastianini assured that the fascist government retained full sovereignty over Jewish matters in southeastern France, this came at the expense of the Foreign Ministry’s capacity to directly shape Jewish policy which, at least in that specific context, was now in the hands of the fascist Police.

⁸⁹ Italian Foreign Ministry to German Embassy in Rome, 9 March 1943, reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X, 132, doc. 96.

Chapter 7. Shifting grounds? The ‘Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police’ in Nice and the order to hand Jews over to the Nazis

This final chapter discusses a contested issue in scholarship regarding fascist Italy’s policy towards the Jews in the Italian-occupied territories during the Second World War, namely the significance of the actions taken by Police General Inspector Guido Lospinoso, as the officer responsible for Jewish policy in southeastern France between March and September 1943.

The chapter investigates Lospinoso’s actions as head of the *Regio Ispettorato di Polizia Razziale*, or Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police, that was created following Mussolini’s decision to transfer Jewish policy in southeastern France to the fascist Police. Similar to many other Italian protagonists within the events related to the fascist government’s refusals to hand over foreign Jewish refugees to the Nazis, Lospinoso has long been praised for his contribution to the Italian rescue of Jews from the ‘final solution’¹. However, in recent years, Lospinoso has become an increasingly controversial figure. Michele Sarfatti’s discovery of a document (dated 15 July 1943) from the new Chief of Police, Renzo Chierici, to Lospinoso, whereby he was ordered to surrender German and former Austrian Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone to the Nazis, was a watershed. Particularly, Sarfatti argued ‘that before 25 July Lospinoso had begun to carry out the orders he had received from Rome’ which then tainted the latter’s established image as rescuer of Jews².

This chapter re-examines Lospinoso’s actions in southeastern France from March through mid-August 1943. It will attempt to answer the following questions: first, was Mussolini’s decision to transfer the enforcement of Jewish policy in

¹ Daniel Carpi, who is the author of the most detailed account of Lospinoso’s activities in southeastern France to this day, argued that Lospinoso’s main goal was to rescue foreign Jews from falling into the hands of the Nazis. D. Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler: The Jews and the Italian Authorities in France and Tunisia* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 1994), 137-38 and 140.

² M. Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy and German Jews in south-eastern France in July 1943’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3:3 (1998), 318-28. Quotation from p. 321.

southeastern France from the Army to the Police in March 1943 the first step in a coherent path towards the July 1943 decision to surrender German and former Austrian Jews to the Nazis – a decision ultimately without consequences? Secondly, should we understand Chierici's order as an indication that fascist Italy, in the summer of 1943, was finally willing to accede to the German requests concerning the handover of *all* foreign Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied territories? Thirdly, what does Chierici's order reveal about the dynamics and development of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France within the larger context of fascist anti-Jewish persecution?

Mussolini's orders to Lospinoso

As mentioned in the previous chapter, on the evening of 19 March 1943, Lospinoso was summoned at the Palazzo Venezia, the Roman headquarters of Benito Mussolini³, to confer directly with the duce. Unfortunately, there is no record of the content of Lospinoso's meeting with Mussolini⁴. The absence of official records explains why scholars have relied on Lospinoso's two post-war testimonies to glean the nature of Mussolini's orders, but these testimonies are problematic sources. Lospinoso produced the first testimony to refute the accusations in the first half of 1946 about his wartime collaboration with the Italian Social Republic⁵. Lospinoso's portrayal of his actions, *inter alia*, as head of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police needs, therefore, to be regarded as highly suspicious by virtue of its obviously self-serving and defensive nature. The second testimony is even more problematic. The Italian daily *Il Tempo* invited Lospinoso to write a newspaper article around the time of the Eichmann trial (1961)⁶. Beside the fact that Lospinoso described events that

³ ACS, SPD, Udienze, b. 3157, f. Udienze del duce gennaio-luglio 1943, Friday 19 March 1943. Appreciation to Giorgio Fabre, who kindly pointed me towards this source.

⁴ The only record is about the timing of the meeting, which took place at 8:12pm, immediately after the duce and the Comando Supremo had met between 7.55 to 8.12pm. Ibid.

⁵ 'Extract from Lospinoso's defence before the *Commissione di Epurazione*, 1946', reproduced by J. Rochlitz, *The Righteous Enemy. Document Collection* (Rome: unpublished, 1988) [hereinafter *Rochlitz Documents*], Lospinoso Papers, F-2, 58.

⁶ The article was published in two parts on 3 and 4 June 1961. G. Lospinoso, 'Ho avuto ordine da Mussolini di salvare migliaia di ebrei', *Il Tempo*, 3 June 1961 and Ibid., 'Mussolini mentì ad Hitler per salvare migliaia di ebrei', *Il Tempo*, 4 June 1961. A copy of the article in AUSSME, L-3, b. 248bis, f. 12 La deportazione degli ebrei, naufragio dei profughi ebrei nel 1940. A draft of the article is reproduced in *Rochlitz Documents*, Lospinoso Papers, F-1, 49-57.

had taken place eighteen years before, possibly undermining the accuracy of his retelling, his dramatic references to Auschwitz and 'Eichmann's cunning move' to get hold of Jewish refugees in the Italian zone exposed the self-serving nature of Lospinoso's narrative, as it attempted to magnify his role as rescuer. In consequence, this chapter will use Lospinoso's post-war testimonies only if, and when, these prove 'contextual plausibility'⁷ in light of other contemporary sources. But, first of all, who was Guido Lospinoso?

Lospinoso was born in Bari, in the southern region of Apulia, on 20 September 1885. He joined the Police in 1912, well before Mussolini's rise to power. As fascism penetrated the Police apparatus inherited from Liberal Italy in the second half of the 1920s⁸, Lospinoso soon adjusted to the new political-ideological agenda of the regime. In the mid-1920s, Lospinoso participated in establishing the fascist security services at the Franco-Italian border. He was later transferred to Fiume, although his specific tasks in that context remain unclear. According to his personal file, Lospinoso spoke French fluently, and had a good knowledge of English and Russian. Presumably, his language skills contributed to his appointment at the Emigration Office of the Italian General Consulate in Nice in early 1928. As discussed in chapter four, this appointment was but a smokescreen devised by the fascist Political Police to allow Lospinoso (who assumed his new post on 2 April 1928), and later Barranco, to infiltrate and strictly control the large Italian anti-fascist colony living within, or passing through, the region. Historian Mauro Canali's examination of the Political Police Division files has revealed that Lospinoso managed to establish his own extensive network of informants throughout the Côte d'Azur, enabling him to perform his political police duties zealously and successfully⁹. Canali's findings are corroborated by a letter of recommendation written by the head of the Political Police at the time, Michelangelo Di Stefano, which recommended Lospinoso for the title of 'Commendatore nell'Ordine della Corona d'Italia' in September 1934. Di Stefano described Lospinoso as a

⁷ C.R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 67.

⁸ M. Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2004).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 136-37 and 595.

‘distinguished, intelligent officer, very attached to duty’ who had performed ‘important political police services’ for the regime¹⁰.

Lospinoso served in Nice for eleven years before being recalled to Rome in April 1939¹¹ and being replaced by Commissario Barranco¹². Klaus Voigt has revealed that, from January 1940 onwards, Lospinoso was one of the Police General Inspectors that the Interior Ministry entrusted with locating potential areas across Italy for concentration camps intended to intern enemy aliens, foreign Jews and other categories of supposedly dangerous civilians, in the event of Italy’s entry into the war¹³. Later, Lospinoso was entrusted with other inspectorial duties by the Interior Ministry¹⁴. Among these, there certainly were tasks involving ‘measures towards the Jews’, although it is not clear what those were precisely¹⁵.

Lospinoso’s long and successful career in the ranks of Liberal and later fascist Italy’s Police apparatus therefore reveals that, by the time he was summoned to the Palazzo Venezia on 19 March, he was a trusted, experienced and reliable officer. However, it is the events that occurred in Menton following Lospinoso’s meeting with Mussolini that we need to look at to infer the nature of Mussolini’s orders.

In the early afternoon of 21 March¹⁶, Lospinoso met with the IVth Army Command in Menton. Accompanying him was Colonel Cesare Cremese, the head of the Office for General Affairs (Ufficio Affari Generali) of the Comando Supremo. Cremese’s task was to relay Mussolini’s decisions regarding the supervision of Jewish policy in southeastern France to the IVth Army Command, on behalf of General Ambrosio. A memorandum, dated 3 April 1943, from the Comando Supremo reveals that Cremese conveyed the contents of a telegram signed by

¹⁰ Also the title of ‘Cavaliere dell’Ordine di SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro’ was bestowed upon Lospinoso on 8 June 1937. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso.

¹¹ However, it appears that Lospinoso left Nice earlier in February 1939. Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 7, 53, 56 and 58.

¹⁴ In 1940, Lospinoso was appointed by the Interior Ministry to the commission charged with identifying Italian nationals (i.e. anti-fascists), who had fought in the French Army during the *drôle de guerre*, and who were now held by the German authorities as POWs. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso.

¹⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Cat. annuali 1941, b. 1941, f. Razzismo, sottof. Razzismo Francia, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, (23591) 28 July 1941.

¹⁶ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 20 to 31 March 1943.

Mussolini¹⁷. Cremese highlighted, in particular, the ‘criteria’ regarding the duce’s measures towards the Jews to the IVth Army Command:

1. To save the Jews (*‘Salvare gli ebrei’*) residing in the French territory occupied by our troops, whatever their nationality: Italian, or French or foreign.
2. The military Authority does not concern itself anymore with the Jewish question that passes into the hands of the Italian Police, although the aforementioned Authority will facilitate the Police in carrying out their task¹⁸.

Notably, only the second decision, namely to transfer Jewish policy to the Police, can be also found in Mussolini’s telegram¹⁹. Nevertheless, it is apparent from the memorandum that the order to rescue all Jews residing in the Italian zone was consistent with the duce’s instructions (or, at least, was consistent with the way Ambrosio understood the duce’s instructions). Therefore, it is rather curious that those historians who so firmly reject the thesis of a humanitarian protection of the Jews have completely ignored this document²⁰. Yet, in my opinion, we have no apparent reason to question the nature of the Comando Supremo memorandum.

What about Lospinoso? Was he also concerned by Mussolini’s order to save the Jews in southeastern France? One may agree with Daniel Carpi that, since Lospinoso was present at the meeting, he ‘knew these orders from the outset, first-hand, and in every detail.’²¹ However, it must be stressed that in Lospinoso’s post-war testimonies, he never made reference to the order to save Jews²², nor did he mention such an order while presenting the instructions he had personally received from Mussolini to the IVth Army Command. According to the Comando Supremo

¹⁷ Mussolini’s telegram was attached to the memorandum from the Comando Supremo. It was intended for General Vercellino and the Italian Armistice Commission with France. However, it is unclear whether Vercellino was present at this meeting, though it was certainly attended by the IVth Army Chief of Staff, General Trabucchi. *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943, reproduced in USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 2 (Allegati) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 306-10, doc. 102. Copy of the memorandum in YV, 031/4-4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ D. Rodogno, *Fascism’s European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 393-400; D. Rodogno, ‘La politique des occupants italiens à l’égard des Juifs en France métropolitaine. Humanisme ou pragmatisme?’, *Vingtième Siècle* 93 (2007), 63-77; M. Knox, ‘Das faschistische Italien und die “Endlösung”, 1942/43’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 53-92.

²¹ Carpi, *Between*, 138.

²² See footnotes 5 and 6.

memorandum, Lospinoso limited himself to announcing that Mussolini had ordered him ‘to intern, by the end of March [1943], all Jews residing in the French territory occupied by our troops.’ To achieve this, Lospinoso had to choose ‘localities at least 100 kilometres from the [Mediterranean] coast, for instance in [the department of] Haute-Savoie.’²³

As far as Lospinoso was concerned, the only certainty is therefore that Mussolini’s orders involved a clear instruction to complete as soon as possible the internment operations began by Barranco a month previously. A report on Lospinoso’s action, which he sent to Senise’s replacement as Chief of Police, Renzo Chierici, on 28 April, confirms this assessment²⁴. The report also indicates that there were two major differences with Lospinoso’s task than that entrusted to Barranco in early January. First, Lospinoso was to intern Jews in the northern area of the Italian occupation zone; secondly, Lospinoso was to target only those Jews who resided on the Mediterranean coast, namely in the Alpes-Maritimes, Var, and the strip of territory of the Bouches-du-Rhône department under Italian rule²⁵. Accordingly, Jews living (or hiding) in the interior of the Italian occupation zone were not to be targeted by the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police. Also apparent from the sources is the fact that Mussolini’s decision to entrust Lospinoso with this task was due to Lospinoso’s familiarity with the French context, as well as to his specific expertise in the realm of internment operations.

At the same time, it must be stressed that Lospinoso’s appointment regarded only the specific task of evacuating Jews from the coast. Barranco and his unit remained in charge of arresting and interning other categories of dangerous civilians. They also continued their collaboration with the SIM. Yet, while Barranco still was subordinate to both the IVth Army Command and Senise (and later Chierici), Lospinoso responded solely to the Chief of Police; therefore, he could act independently of the military authorities who, however, were to provide him with logistical support and intelligence²⁶. Moreover, as Lospinoso, an officer of the fascist civilian Police, had

²³ *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943.

²⁴ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46 Campi di concentramento in territorio francese, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 April 1943. In his report, Lospinoso only mentioned Mussolini’s order to evacuate Jews from the coast, without any reference to their rescue.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943.

no jurisdiction over French territory, from March 1943 onwards the IVth Army Command also conveyed his demands to the Vichy authorities. The IVth Army Command continued therefore to be responsible for dealing with the Vichy government.

The agreement of 26 March for the control of the border between the German and Italian zones

Soon after Lospinoso's arrival on the Côte d'Azur²⁷, an important decision was taken regarding Jewish policy within the Italian occupation zone. Davide Rodogno has argued that

on 26 March an Italo-German agreement was signed in regard to French or foreign Jews attempting to move from the German to the Italian occupation zones: they were to be temporarily interned while awaiting consignment to the German or French authorities, if this was requested²⁸.

The message Lospinoso sent on 5 April to inform the soon-to-be ousted Senise about the agreement, revealed that both the Italian authorities and French Police could arrest Jews who entered the Italian zone after 26 March. Lospinoso also explained that in the event of an arrest by the French Police 'we reserved ourselves the right to control' its legitimacy 'by means of interrogating the person arrested, as well as by inspecting his documents.'²⁹

Despite Lospinoso's clarifications, the exact nature of the agreement remains largely unclear. In particular, we do not know who on the Italian side negotiated the agreement. Klaus Voigt has argued that it was Lospinoso himself who reached the agreement with the Germans, as his alleged orders included stopping the inflow of

²⁷ After the meeting at the IVth Army headquarters in Menton, Lospinoso travelled directly to Nice, where he arrived in the early evening of 21 March. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 20 to 31 March 1943.

²⁸ Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 398.

²⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime S11, b. 248, f. 87, sottof. 37 Accordo circa evasione ebrei dalla zona occupata dai tedeschi nella zona occupata dagli italiani, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 5 April 1943. The document bears the annotation: 'Visto dal Duce' (Viewed by the duce).

foreign Jewish refugees in the territories under the IVth Army control³⁰. However, as previously mentioned, there is no record that Lospinoso ever received such order. Furthermore, we know that Lospinoso visited Chambéry³¹, the capital of the Savoie department, on 25 March, whereupon he presumably met with his deputy, the vice-Questore (deputy Police Commissioner), Tommaso Luceri³². Therefore, Michele Sarfatti's argument, that the Italian military authorities were the ones who signed the agreement, is more convincing³³. This would be consistent with the IVth Army Command's reassurances to the Army General Staff that measures were being undertaken to prevent the arrival of Jews in the Italian zone, as discussed in the past chapter. At the same time, though, it is unclear whether the Italians reached such agreement with the French authorities or the Nazi allies specifically. Lospinoso did not reveal this in his message to Senise and there is no trace of the agreement in either the available French and German documentation. Nor is it clear how exactly the agreement was supposed to operate: how could the Nazi authorities have requested the extradition of arrested Jews to their occupation zone? Were the Italian (military or Police?) authorities meant to inform them of every arrest they made? The present state of research does not permit answers to these questions.

Consequently, the extent to which (if at all³⁴) the Italian authorities implemented the agreement remains unclear. Evidence discovered by Rodogno at the Italian Army

³⁰ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 312; see also L. Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati e la «questione ebraica» nella Francia occupata dall'esercito italiano* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2013), 109-10.

³¹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 20 to 31 March 1943.

³² There is a significant lack of contemporary evidence regarding Luceri's activities between March and September 1943. Luceri was born on 23 April 1880 and, like Lospinoso, joined the Police before fascism seized power (1910). Also similar to Lospinoso, Luceri progressively attuned to the political-ideological values of fascism. Between 1926 and the early 1930s, Luceri served as a police officer attached to the Italian General Consulate in Chambéry, where he was responsible for the same political police duties as those of Lospinoso in Nice. He also became a member of the Fascist National Party in May 1930. Subsequently, Luceri was appointed to the Casellario Politico Centrale, or Central Political Record Office, of the Division for General and Confidential Affairs in 1932. Apparently, Luceri did not perform well in his new post. In this sense, it is possible that Senise's choice to appoint Luceri as Lospinoso's deputy was due to the lack of more appropriate officers. At the same time, however, it is clear that Senise took into account Luceri's acquaintance with the region of Savoie, which made him the ideal right-hand man to assist Lospinoso's complex task. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 19ter, f. Luceri Tommaso; Canali, *Le spie*, 52 and 114.

³³ M. Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 359 endnote 363.

³⁴ Regarding Italian-occupied southeastern France, Rodogno's argument that 'many other Jews were driven back, expelled, even directly surrendered to the German authorities' is far from proven. D. Rodogno, 'La politique des occupants italiens à l'égard des Juifs en France métropolitaine. Humanisme ou pragmatisme?', *Vingtième Siècle* 93 (2007), 77.

Archives exposed the experiences of the parents of Eva Zussman, who entered the Italian zone after 26 March. According to these documents, Zussman's parents were to be interned in enforced residence 'while awaiting consignment, if requested, to the German and French authorities.'³⁵ Moreover, a report from the Var department's prefect, dated 1 April, revealed that the Italian troops surveyed the railway lines 'day and night' between Nice and the coastal town of Bandol, located exactly on the demarcation line between the Italian and German zones³⁶. At the same time, Angelo Donati explained in his testimony that it was very difficult for the Italian authorities to ascertain whether a Jewish refugee in the Italian zone had arrived before or after 26 March, since most carried false identity papers. Moreover, once informed by the Italian authorities of the agreement of 26 March, the Refugees Relief Committee of boulevard Dubouchage in Nice began to anticipate *ad hoc* the dates of arrivals written in the registries of the hotels which sheltered Jews³⁷. But the major obstacle for the Italian authorities in implementing the agreement of 26 March was arguably the fact that they were meant to patrol a demarcation line that stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the French-Swiss border. Considering the shortage of troops affecting the IVth Army, it was understandable why, despite the agreement of 26 March, foreign Jews still managed to cross into the Italian zone.

Two such cases of Jews who managed to pass into the Italian zone after 26 March were those of the Hornsteins, a Romanian family of five, and the Russian Jewish refugee, Boris Levinson. At the end of April 1943, unable to provide for their family, Esro Hornstein and his wife Eugénie decided to relocate from the town of Buzançais, in the Indre department in central France, to Nice, where they had been reassured that the local Jewish Committee (presumably the Comité Dubouchage) could support their family. Soon thereafter, Levinson escaped from the 412 Foreign Workers Unit in Ille-sur-Têt, in the Pyrénées-Orientales department, and moved to Nice to seek Italian protection. Both the Hornsteins and Levinson were later assigned to enforced residences by the Italian authorities³⁸. Why were they not handed over to

³⁵ Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 398 footnote 108.

³⁶ AN, F/1cIII/1194, prefect of Var to head of government, 1 April 1943; AN, F/1cIII/1200, regional prefect of Marseilles to head of government, 10 April 1943.

³⁷ CDJC, CCXVIII-22, Exposé de Monsieur Donati (undated), 2.

³⁸ ADHS, 41W/38, d. Étrangers et juifs étrangers, s.d. Ressortissants roumains, 'Hornstein Esro' and s.d. Ressortissants russes, 'Levinson Boris'.

the German authorities? Possibly, because of the order to the IVth Army to rescue Jews within the Italian occupation zone. But these two cases do not necessarily signify that the 26 March agreement was simply a scheme to fool the Germans. Instead, it is once again necessary to differentiate the Italian *intention* from its *outcome*. The former was indubitably meant to prohibit the inflow of foreign Jews into the Italian occupation zone, as announced by Bastianini to the Reich Foreign Office on 9 March; conversely, the latter was influenced by the objective complexity of the task, as described by Donati, as well as the overall increasingly difficult context of the occupation in early 1943. In other words, it is possible that the Italians did not hand over the Hornsteins and Levinson simply because it was not possible to ascertain whether they had entered the Italian zone before or after 26 March.

Lospinoso: the ‘talented and cunning’³⁹ rescuer of Jews?

Lospinoso’s appointment had repercussions for the relationship between the Axis partners. The Nazi leadership welcomed Mussolini’s decision to transfer the enforcement of Jewish policy in southeastern France from the Army to the Police. At the same time, however, afraid of another situation like the one in Croatia, where despite Mussolini’s ‘nulla osta’ no Jew had yet been surrendered, they wanted to make sure that this time the duce’s decisions were actually followed up by action. So, while Lospinoso was setting up his headquarters in Nice⁴⁰, the Chief of Police, Senise, was busy preparing for the private visit of the head of the Gestapo, Heinrich Müller. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Himmler was responsible for suggesting the second option for the solution of the ‘Jewish problem’ in southern France (presented by Mackensen to Mussolini on behalf of Ribbentrop), namely to entrust the matter to the Italian Police. Once he was informed that Mussolini had opted for his solution, he ordered Müller to discuss the ‘Jewish question’ in Italian-

³⁹ Carpi, *Between*, 185.

⁴⁰ It is unclear when precisely Lospinoso created the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police. In a post-war report on the Italian occupation of southeastern France, the former officer of the *Servizio Informazioni Esercito* (Army Intelligence Service) in Nice, Mario Brocchi, stated that the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police was created in May 1943 (ACS, Archivi di famiglie e di persone, Leone Cattani, b. 1, f. 1 Relazione Brocchi sull’occupazione italiana della Provenza [February-March 1945], 45. My appreciation to Michele Sarfatti, who kindly pointed me towards this source). Regardless, Lospinoso installed the headquarters of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police in the Surany Villa, in Cimiez, a northeastern neighbourhood of Nice. J.-L. Panicacci, *L’occupation italienne. Sud-Est de la France, juin 1940-septembre 1943* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 171 and 201.

occupied southeastern France with Mackensen and Senise in Rome⁴¹. Müller arrived on the evening of 26 March and met with Senise the following morning. The head of the Fascist Political Police, and Müller's 'personal friend', Guido Leto, probably participated in the meeting. Later that day, Müller, Senise, Leto and another Italian official attended a working lunch at the German Embassy. Müller departed Rome on 29 March⁴².

Apart from the record of Müller's schedule, there is no other Italian contemporary evidence of his conversations with Senise. However, the message Müller sent to Knochen on 2 April revealed that Senise informed his guest of the recent dispatch of Lospinoso and Luceri, along with other personnel⁴³, to the French territories under Italian occupation. According to Müller, the task of Lospinoso and his unit was 'to bring the Jewish problem ... to a solution in the German sense (*'im deutschen Sinne'*) and in close collaboration (*'in engster Zusammenarbeit'*) with the German Police and, where necessary, with the French Police as well.' We have no apparent reason not to trust the veracity of Müller's account of what Senise told him regarding Lospinoso's task. In fact, it was Müller who did not fully trust Senise's words; indeed, he ordered Knochen to 'immediately contact' Lospinoso to find out what his orders were⁴⁴.

Far from fostering the close collaboration between Lospinoso and the Nazi security services in France that Müller had announced, Knochen's efforts to contact Lospinoso soon resulted in another bitter intra-Axis misunderstanding over Jewish policy in southeastern France. In early March, Knochen contacted the Italian Embassy in Paris to request information about Lospinoso's arrival in Paris. The Embassy responded that it was not aware of any such arrival and neither was the IVth Army Command in Menton. Infuriated with the Italians, who repeatedly violated their commitments, Knochen complained to Müller immediately. Hereupon, a great deal of correspondence was exchanged between the SiPo-SD office in Paris,

⁴¹ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-43, Müller to the head of the SiPo-SD in Paris, (59803) 2 April 1943; S. Klarsfeld, *Vichy-Auschwitz: Le rôle de Vichy dans la solution finale de la question juive en France. 1943-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 259.

⁴² ACS, MI, DGPS, Segreteria del Capo della Polizia, Fascicoli correnti 1939-43, b. 55, f. 2523 Heinrich Müller.

⁴³ According to Klaus Voigt (*Il rifugio*, 312), Lospinoso's unit comprised around ten men, including Luceri.

⁴⁴ See footnote 41.

the Gestapo headquarters and the Reich Foreign Office, in Berlin. The subject was always identical: to obtain information about Lospinoso's arrival and whereabouts. Despite all the efforts, it seemed impossible for the Nazi authorities to keep track of Lospinoso, or even to know whether he was in France. Thus, on 24 May, two months after Lospinoso had first arrived in Nice, Knochen still complained to Müller that his office had received no information about Lospinoso's presence or activity in France⁴⁵. But why was this important?

In Lospinoso's testimony, published as newspaper articles in *Il Tempo* in 1961, he stated that after his arrival in Nice, when he had already begun the transfer of foreign Jews from the coast to the interior, he received a visit from a German officer of the SiPo-SD unit in Marseilles. The officer (whose name Lospinoso failed to mention in his testimony) invited Lospinoso to visit his Unit Commander in Marseilles in order to plan the measures for a permanent solution ('*sistemazione definitiva*') of the Jewish problem. Curious to discover this solution, Lospinoso accepted the invitation. A few days later, he went to Marseilles where he met another unnamed German senior officer. This officer told Lospinoso that, in view of the upcoming visit Eichmann expected from Lospinoso in Vichy, he could only give him general information about a plan to arrest and deport Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone to Drancy and Auschwitz. This terrible revelation, as Lospinoso described it, left him in shock for a few seconds. Nevertheless, Lospinoso soon managed to compose himself. He politely replied to his host that, at that moment, he was very busy relocating Jews to the interior and, therefore, had to delay his visit to Vichy for a few days. Then, Lospinoso returned to Nice where he began to ponder the content of the meeting in Marseilles. He eventually decided to avoid any further contacts with the Germans. Consequently, when he received Chierici's order to hand over German and former Austrian Jews to the Nazis in mid-July, Lospinoso stuck to his resolution and ignored it, instead continuing his rescue activities until the crisis of 8 September⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Daniel Carpi (*Between*, 146-52) has offered a detailed survey of such correspondence. See also Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 259 ff. and L. Poliakov, *La condition des Juifs en France sous l'occupation italienne* (Paris: Éditions du centre, 1946), 79 ff.

⁴⁶ See footnote 6.

Drawing on the aforementioned German correspondence and Lospinoso's testimony, several historians have taken Lospinoso's rescue of the Jewish refugees in the Italian occupation zone at face value. According to some, Lospinoso deliberately and voluntarily avoided his Nazi colleagues, because he knew of their murderous goals⁴⁷. One scholar even went as far as labelling the preceding circumstances as 'brief comedy'⁴⁸, meaning that Lospinoso's goal during his tenure as officer in charge of the 'Jewish question' in southeastern France was to fool the Nazis and save the Jews all along.

Despite the fact that Lospinoso did not travel to Paris to meet with the Nazi security services, these explanations do not reflect the historical record. First, Lospinoso's proposed chronology of events, especially regarding his meeting with the Nazi officers, is questionable. The only trace of Lospinoso making the journey to Marseilles was on 16 July, well-beyond the time frame indicated by the General Inspector in his 1961 testimony⁴⁹, and after, *not* before, he received Chierici's order. Moreover, as shall be discussed in detail below, Lospinoso's purpose in Marseilles was the opposite of that claimed in his testimony. In this sense, it is also noteworthy that Lospinoso did not mention the episode of the earlier meeting with the Germans in his first post-war testimony, as a way to justify his decision to ignore Chierici's order. Such an omission is suspect, especially if we consider that Lospinoso produced the testimony to refute the post-war charges against him regarding his collaboration with the Italian Social Republic⁵⁰. In my opinion, this is circumstantial evidence that, in his 1961 testimony, Lospinoso deliberately inverted the episodes of Chierici's order and his meeting with the Nazi officers in Marseilles, in order to bolster his role as rescuer of Jews.

It follows that Knochen's difficulty to trace Lospinoso's whereabouts was not due to Lospinoso's cunning plan to foil (or continue foiling) the Nazi's 'final solution' in southeastern France. So, why then did the two high-ranking officers not meet in

⁴⁷ Poliakov, *La condition*, 34-35; M. R. Marrus and R. O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 318; J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 129; Carpi, *Between*, 158-59; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 312.

⁴⁸ S. Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 86-7.

⁴⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 1 to 31 July 1943. This document also proves wrong Carpi's argument (*Between*, 159) that Lospinoso's meeting with the Nazi officials in Marseilles took place at the end of May/early June 1943.

⁵⁰ See footnote 5.

Paris? Although Knochen maintained his inability to find Lospinoso proved the Italian will to hinder Nazi Jewish policy, that inability was, in fact, the result of Knochen's misinterpretation of Müller's message of 2 April. Upon receiving news of Lospinoso's appointment and the alleged resulting collaboration between the Italian and German Police, Knochen assumed that Lospinoso would soon contact him and/or Carl Oberg, the Supreme Head of the SS and Police in France, to coordinate Jewish policy in southeastern France. Yet, as Carpi has correctly pointed out, this idea was 'the product of Knochen's imagination.'⁵¹ This also explains why the Italian Embassy in Paris and the IVth Army Command were unaware of Lospinoso's arrival. On 5 April, ambassador Buti requested information, on behalf of SS Command, about Lospinoso and Luceri's impending journey to Paris to confer with the Germans⁵². Two days later, the Foreign Ministry replied that the Interior Ministry 'has categorically denied' (*ha smentito in modo tassativo*) that the two Police officers had ever been ordered to contact the German authorities with regards to the treatment of Jews in the territories under Italian control. Moreover, the Foreign Ministry confirmed to the Ambassador that the measures concerning Jews within the Italian occupation zone were within the exclusive competence of the Italian authorities⁵³. The Foreign Ministry's cable, therefore, proves that Lospinoso's cunning plan to evade the Germans and save the Jews never existed. The (stereotypical, as much as imaginary) delaying tactics that Lospinoso allegedly employed during his tenure in southeastern France, which have been so often simplistically used by historians to justify his actions between March and September 1943, were both the products of Knochen's distrust for the Italians and Lospinoso's self-serving post-war testimony.

Regardless, it is necessary to question Senise's claim to Müller during their meeting on 27 March regarding the close collaboration between Lospinoso and the Nazi security services in France. Canali has revealed that, from late 1942, Senise was convinced that the Italian war was doomed and, therefore, that Mussolini must be deposed. He began manoeuvring in concert with the Minister of the Royal House,

⁵¹ Carpi, *Between*, 148.

⁵² ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7 Sionismo, Buti to Foreign Ministry, (10620 PR) 5 April 1943.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, the Foreign Minister's chief of cabinet, Francesco Babuscio Rizzo, to Italian Embassy in Paris, (11751/210 PR) 7 April 1943.

and the most intimate counsellor of King Vittorio Emanuele III, Pietro Acquarone. However, Mussolini was informed of Senise's plans and, according to Canali, this influenced his decision to replace Senise with Chierici on 14 April. Nonetheless, even after Senise's removal, he continued working for the ousting of the duce⁵⁴, so it is plausible that Senise double-crossed Müller in an attempt to prevent Italian involvement in Nazi Jewish policy through Lospinoso's Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police in view of future changes at the top of Italian politics. At the same time, it must be stressed that even after Chierici took over as new Chief of Police, the fascist government continued to evade German requests for a meeting between the Nazi security services in Paris and Lospinoso. By 10 May or thereabouts, the Italian Foreign Ministry replied to the numerous German requests by stating that Lospinoso 'received his orders directly from the duce.' Therefore, the Foreign Ministry asked the German authorities 'to leave to the Italians the care of deciding further whether a conversation with the German representative was in fact necessary.'⁵⁵ Beyond the possibly self-serving additional motives that compelled Senise and other fascist rulers to deny the German requests for meeting with Lospinoso, I believe that this decision was consistent with the fascist government's firm resolve to avoid any German interference in its Jewish policy in southeastern France.

Lospinoso's 'Jewish policy'

The Foreign Ministry's reply also referred to the fact that Lospinoso had just begun to carry out his orders⁵⁶. In fact, at that point, Lospinoso had already accomplished a great deal of work to fulfil the complex task entrusted him by Mussolini.

During the meeting at the IVth Army headquarters on 21 March, Lospinoso explained that the first step towards the expulsion of all foreign Jews from the portion of Mediterranean coast under Italian rule should have been to take a census of those who had not yet been interned⁵⁷. However, this would have been an impossible task to carry out for Lospinoso's small unit. Lospinoso bypassed the issue by taking advantage of the IVth Army Command's request of 25 February 1943 to

⁵⁴ Canali, *Le spie*, 471-72.

⁵⁵ Carpi, *Between*, 150-51 [quotation from p. 151].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁷ *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943.

the Vichy government to obtain information on enemy aliens and foreign Jews residing in the Italian zone from the prefects⁵⁸. Lospinoso obtained some lists of Jews living in the Alpes-Maritimes department from Ribière that he required to begin the operations of transferring Jews to the interior⁵⁹. These lists only included Jews who were citizens of countries at war with, or occupied by, the Axis, however. For other Jews, including French Jews, the Vichy government replied that it could not accede to the IVth Army request⁶⁰.

While General Avarna was conducting another diplomatic battle with the Vichy government to acquire ‘complete information’ about ‘all Jews, both French and foreign’ residing in the Italian occupation zone⁶¹, the committed and proactive Lospinoso successfully negotiated with the Comité Dubouchage. The members of the Comité agreed to regularly submit lists of Jews willing to be transferred to enforced residence to Lospinoso’s Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police⁶². Needless to say, this deal presented Lospinoso one great advantage: the lists from the Comité Dubouchage supplemented the official French lists with names of Jewish refugees who lived in the Italian occupation zone as illegals⁶³. In this regard, it is worth noting Lospinoso’s ability to convince the members of the Comité Dubouchage to give him – the head of the fascist racial police in France – the names of their co-religionists. Angelo Donati’s and Ignace Fink’s post-war testimonies reveal that Lospinoso

⁵⁸ See ch. 6.

⁵⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 April 1943.

⁶⁰ AN, F/7/15347, Bousquet to Platon, 3 March 1943; AN, AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens, Note addressed to the Military Liaison Section, (4018/DSA/7) 13 March 1943; AJ/41/1179, d. Le Commandement Italien et ressortissants des pays ennemis et Juifs étrangers et français, vice-Admiral Bourrague, director of the Armistice Services, to Avarna, (997/DN/SL) 20 March 1943.

⁶¹ AN, AJ/41/1179, AJ/41/1186 and AJ/41/1182, Avarna to Bourrague, (1000) 29 March 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 258. In this note, Avarna stressed also that the Comando Supremo’s claims to exclusive Italian authority over Jewish policy were to be interpreted by the French government as orders and not as requests.

⁶² ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 49, f. 59 Provvedimenti presi nella zona occupata dalle truppe italiane in Francia, Copy of a report by Lospinoso entitled ‘Measures towards the Jews residing in the zone occupied by the Italian troops in France’, 12 August 1944; AN, AJ/41/1179, Fiche de renseignement – Biweekly report from Colonel Bonnet, 4 June 1943. This method was possibly already used during the first phase of the transfers under Barranco’s supervision, although the sources are not clear on this point.

⁶³ CDJC, CCXVI-61, Témoignage de Mr. Wolf Toronczyk (undated).

successfully presented himself before the Comité as a well-intentioned but unprepared officer and, therefore, in need of assistance to accomplish his task⁶⁴.

Of course, this was only a stratagem to obtain the highly desirable collaboration of the Comité Dubouchage⁶⁵. Lospinoso informed Chierici that the number of Jews due to be 'evacuated' amounted to around 25,000 people, comprising 5,000 foreign Jews and 20,000 French Jews⁶⁶ (in a later meeting with the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department on 21 May⁶⁷, Lospinoso estimated instead that 14,000 Jews resided in the department, including approximately 8,000 foreign Jews and 6,000 French Jews⁶⁸).

Upon his arrival on the Côte d'Azur, Lospinoso not only located the Jews to be expelled from the coast, but also immediately began to look for localities suitable for establishing enforced residences. Initially, Lospinoso accepted the IVth Army proposal that Jews be evacuated to the Drôme department, as this was far removed from the IVth Army lines of communication and supply⁶⁹. (Parenthetically, this proposal should give pause to those who claim that the Italian military authorities were expelling Jews from the coast to the interior in an attempt to put them at safe distance from the Nazi authorities.) In addition, Lospinoso planned to deal with those Jews who were still to be interned in the first place. Those Jews who were already interned by the IVth Army in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments would be transferred to new enforced residences more in the interior once the first task was accomplished⁷⁰.

Shortly thereafter Lospinoso discarded the IVth Army's suggestion, however, and returned to his original idea to expel Jews to the Savoie region. As mentioned, on 25 March, Lospinoso visited Chambéry for a few days. Lospinoso met with the prefect

⁶⁴ Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*, 114-16.

⁶⁵ As confirmed by a report on Lospinoso's activity that he sent to Chierici on 28 April. Lospinoso assured the Chief of Police that 'by persuasion, by threats and by force, when needed, I strive to implement the orders that I received.' ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 April 1943.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ ADAM, 616W/125, d. Intendant Police Nice [Paul] Duraffour, prefect of Alpes-Maritimes department to Chief of Police, 24 May 1943.

⁶⁸ AN, AJ/41/1179, Fiche de renseignement – Biweekly report from Colonel Bonnet, 4 June 1943.

⁶⁹ *Promemoria* from the Comando Supremo, 3 April 1943.

⁷⁰ Ibid. However, some Jewish sources suggest that Jews were transferred to the enforced residences in Saint-Martin-Vésubie even after Lospinoso took charge of the internment operations. These sources report that, in Saint-Martin-Vésubie, there were 700 Jews in April and June, 900 in July and 1,250 in August 1943. Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 317.

of the Savoie department and requested that a number of hotels in the town of Aix-les-Bains⁷¹ be made available for future use. Meanwhile, around that time and presumably in agreement with Lospinoso, Luceri also went to Aix-les-Bains to carry out a preliminary inspection⁷². Yet, the prefect opposed Lospinoso's request on the grounds that Aix-les-Bains was a renowned spa, which made it unsuitable for transferring Jews. Instead, the prefect offered him 'all the hotels' in the fashionable Alpine resort of Megève. Notably, Megève was not in the Savoie department, but in Haute-Savoie. Clearly, the prefect's proposal intended to protect his department from Jews transferred from the coast. Nonetheless, Megève did correspond to Lospinoso's needs. Located some 40 kilometres southeast of the departmental capital of Annecy and some fifteen kilometres away from the Italian border, Megève had a well-developed hotel infrastructure and was easily accessible. Most importantly, Megève was over 200 kilometres from the coast. For these reasons, Lospinoso accepted the offer⁷³.

The transfers from the coast began right after Lospinoso returned to Nice on 27 March⁷⁴. A platoon of twenty-nine Carabinieri from the Third Company of the Xth Battalion arrived in Megève on Friday 2 April. Luceri accompanied the platoon and established his headquarters in Megève⁷⁵.

Hence, in early April 1943, the evacuation of foreign Jews from the Alpes-Maritimes department to Megève began to take place under the supervision of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police⁷⁶. According to historian Jean-Louis Panicacci,

⁷¹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 April 1943.

⁷² ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 19ter, f. Luceri Tommaso, sottot. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 20 to 31 March 1943.

⁷³ See footnote 71.

⁷⁴ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottot. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 20 to 31 March 1943.

⁷⁵ AUSSME, N1-11, b. 989, f. Comando Decimo Battaglione Carabinieri Reali, Diario storico militare (marzo, aprile 1943), entry 2 April 1943; AUSSME, L-13, b. 41, carte del XX° Raggruppamento alpini sciatori, 207 Compagnia to Comando di Brigata Alpini sciatori, (434) 2 April 1943, and note signed by Commander Ugo Amelotti, (8/Op) 4 April 1943; ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 19ter, f. Luceri Tommaso, sottot. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period April 1943.

⁷⁶ This is confirmed by a telephone conversation wiretapped by the French authorities on 1 April, in which an unknown speaker from Gap informed a member of the *Union générale des israélites de France* (UGIF – General Association of Jews of France) in Nice that the Italian authorities intended to stop assigning people to the enforced residences in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments, because of issues regarding placement and food supply. Instead, they had decided to send 1,300 people to Megève. According to this source, the first transport was due to take place on

the first groups of Jews arrived in Haute-Savoie on 8 and 9 April⁷⁷. Unfortunately, we have no precise data on the number of foreign (i.e. other than Italian and French) Jews assigned to enforced residences in Megève in early April 1943. On the 13th, Barranco informed Senise, the IVth Army Command and Calisse that 1,783 Jews had been ordered to reach their enforced residences by 10 April; some 1,404 had already reached their assigned locality, whereas the remaining 379 would do so in the next few days⁷⁸. However, Barranco did not indicate where and when these Jews had been, nor where they were to be interned. Thus, the only figure that relates specifically to Megève is that from Ignace Fink, who by that time had become one of leading members of the Comité Dubouchage, who reported to the Italian authorities that 430 Jews were interned by 29 April⁷⁹.

Regardless, it is worth stressing that between 21 March and 9 April (less than three weeks) Lospinoso had obtained adequate manpower from the IVth Army Command, hotels from the French authorities, and the collaboration of the Comité Dubouchage. This, clearly, was not nearly enough to meet the German requests for an immediate removal of all Jews from the French coast under Italian rule. Yet, Lospinoso's action in the early weeks of his tenure as officer in charge of Jewish policy proves that the difficulty to accomplish the impossible task set by Mussolini had nothing to do with his alleged carelessness or his imaginary tactics to delay or sabotage his orders and/or his alleged attempts to fool the Germans (we need to keep in mind that the French authorities estimated in 15,000 the number of Jews scattered across the Nice region alone⁸⁰). Instead, once again, it was linked with the concrete and complex reality of the Italian occupation.

Monday 5 April. Every transport would include forty people. ADAM, 166W/10, d. Troupes italiennes d'occupation: assignations à résidence (en particulier d'israélites) mars-avril 1943, Secret excerpt from wiretap n. 1208, 1 April 1943.

⁷⁷ Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 208.

⁷⁸ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Cat. perm. A16 Ebrei stranieri 1933-44, b. 5, f. C14 Francia. Barranco attached also a table reporting the statistics about the nationality, sex and age of the internees. See Appendix 1.

⁷⁹ Note for [the Carabinieri] Captain [Claudio] Salvi signed by Ignace Fink, 29 April 1943. *Rochlitz Documents*, Comité Dubouchage file, F-17, 82. Fink's figure was confirmed in the monthly report the regional prefect of Lyons sent to the Vichy government on 9 May. The prefect reported the figure of 400 Jews interned in Megève. AN, F/1cIII/1200, regional prefect of Lyons to head of government, (1926 Cab/R) 9 May 1943.

⁸⁰ R. Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), 357.

The dispute with the Vichy government over Jewish policy continues

Among the obstacles that Lospinoso had to overcome to fulfil his orders, was that of the Vichy government's ongoing claim to full sovereignty over the territories under Italian rule. Around ten days after the transfers from the coast began, the Vichy government lodged a formal complaint with the IVth Army Command about Lospinoso's decision to concentrate Jews in Megève. The Vichy government intended to use those same hotels where Lospinoso and Luceri were housing foreign Jews to shelter about 2,000 children evacuated from the suburbs of Paris due to air raids⁸¹. This time, the IVth Command believed it was necessary to yield to Vichy's request. As Lospinoso explained to Chierici in his report of 28 April, the Italian military authorities feared that opposing the Vichy government's plans could have a negative impact on French public opinion, whereby many would believe the Italians preferred to accommodate Jews instead of helping children in need. Consequently, in agreement with the IVth Army Command, on 17 April Lospinoso visited Megève to meet with a representative of the Vichy government, Mr. Lepouroux. In the next three days, a deal was reached: Lospinoso informed Chierici that the French authorities would obtain the 'best hotels in Megève', while, in exchange, Lospinoso's unit had permission to maintain 'the concentration camp already established [there] and that can house a little more than a thousand people'⁸². Moreover, to compensate for the loss of accommodation for Jews, Lospinoso made arrangements to have hotels in the bordering towns of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains, Combloux and Sallanches (all within a ten kilometres distance from Megève) allocated for his future use, before returning to Nice on the 21st⁸³.

The compromise that Lospinoso and Lepouroux reached regarding Megève should not be considered a sign of an agreement between Rome and Vichy over Jews' treatment. On the contrary, around that same period, a new dispute arose

⁸¹ AN, AJ/41/1185, d. 74, Note addressed to the Secretary of State for Health and Family, 14 April 1943.

⁸² ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 April 1943.

⁸³ Ibid.; ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 1 to 25 April 1943. The terms of the deal were later confirmed in a message (dated 24 April) from the IVth Army Command to the Vichy government. AN, AJ/41/1179, AJ/41/1185, d. 74, and AJ/41/1183, d. Lettres adressées par le Général Avarna représentant à Vichy le Commandant Suprême Italien, Tenente Colonnello (Lieutenant Colonel) Armando Mola to Lieutenant Colonel de Bardies, (1328) 30 April 1943.

between General De Castiglioni, Commander of the Pusteria Division, and the prefect of Isère, Raoul Didkowski. It was provoked by the Nazi authorities' demand that Didkowski select 100 stateless people between the ages of 18 and 55 who resided in his department for labour in the Organisation Todt. However, Jews were also among those 100 people who had been gathered in Grenoble. As a result, De Castiglioni demanded that Didkowski delay their departure and then asked the IVth Army Command for instructions, while also proposing that the Italian authorities remove Jews from the group and intern them. As the Foreign Ministry had been consulted for its opinion, around 19 April it informed the Comando Supremo that it agreed with the removal of Jews from the group assigned to the Organisation Todt. The Foreign Ministry also pointed out that the transfer of people from the Italian occupation zone to the Organisation Todt should be dependant on the Italian need for manpower⁸⁴. Furthermore, on 27 April, General Avarna relayed the Comando Supremo's third notification to the Vichy government that Jewish policy exclusively lay within the responsibility of the Italian occupation authorities⁸⁵. In the following weeks, the Italian divisional and unit commanders notified Ambrosio's demand to the French local authorities⁸⁶.

Meanwhile, the repression of civilians deemed 'dangerous' to the security of the IVth Army troops continued. In fact, from the spring of 1943, the security policy across the Italian occupation zone intensified. From 26 April onwards, this included also the almost complete closure of the Franco-Swiss border located within the

⁸⁴ AUSSME, L-3, b. 59/13 Problema ebrei francesi nei territori occupati dalla IVa Armata (Francia); USSME, *Diario Storico del Comando Supremo*, vol. IX, tomo 1 (Diario) (Rome: USSME, 2002), 921, entry 11 April 1943, 1010, entry 19 April 1943, and 1043, entry 23 April 1943; ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 80/7, Comando Supremo to Foreign Ministry, (11461 PR) 12 April 1943.

⁸⁵ AN, AJ/41/1182, AJ/41/1179, AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens, AJ/41/2316, d. XXI.L, Avarna to General Bridoux, Secretary of State for Defence, (1276) 27 April 1943. The Comando Supremo's message was in response to the French argument that the Italian claims of full authority over Jewish policy infringed the Hague Convention (see ch. 6, footnote 35). Avarna informed the Comando Supremo about the Vichy government's argument on 29 March. The Comando Supremo's response was dated 22 April. AUSSME, L-3, b. 59/13; AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (marzo-aprile 1943), allegato (enclosure) 70. Avarna's and Ambrosio's messages are reproduced by D. Schipisi, *L'occupazione italiana dei territori metropolitan francesi (1940-1943)* (Rome: USSME, 2007), 733-34. On Avarna's message on 29 March see also USSME, *Diario Storico*, tomo 1, 789, entry 29 March 1943.

⁸⁶ ADS, 1372W/48, d. Rapports du Commandant la Section française de liaison de Chambéry, Report n. 308/CH, 15 May 1943; AJ/41/2315, d. XXI.B, Prefect of Savoie to head of government and other recipients, 20 May 1943; AN, AJ/41/1179, Tenente Colonnello Giuseppe Gelich, Chief of the Italian control and liaison unit in Draguignan, to Captain Fatavier, (61/02) 6 May 1943.

Italian zone⁸⁷. A testimony given in Paris in January 1945 by Mr. Tehertold, a former Jewish internee in the Sospel concentration camp, revealed that, among the fifty Jews in the camp between March and May 1943, twenty-one (including him) had been arrested by the Italians or the Swiss border Police as they attempted to cross into Switzerland⁸⁸. Furthermore, the IVth Army created two new concentration camps near the towns of Modane, in the Savoie department, and at Embrun, in the Hautes-Alpes department, in May 1943. There is evidence that at least one Dutch national with a 'Jewish background' was interned in Embrun, while eight Jews (or half-Jews) were interned in Modane⁸⁹.

As mentioned, the vast majority of foreign Jews residing on the Mediterranean coast were assigned to enforced residences in Haute-Savoie. Another four transports, each carrying forty-six Jews, departed for Megève between 30 April and 6 May⁹⁰. However, another problem soon arose. Also on 6 May, General Avarna (on behalf of the IVth Army Command) demanded that the Vichy government lift the ban against Jews in the department of Haute-Savoie and some communities of the Savoie department, whereby Jews could not sojourn in those areas for more than five days (or three weeks in exceptional cases)⁹¹. Avarna's demand was as a result of Lospinoso's plan, which was based on the hope that lifting the ban would allow Jews currently living on the coast to move to the Savoie region 'voluntarily, although always under Italian surveillance', and, thereby, expedite the process as well as

⁸⁷ On 24 April, the Comando Supremo ordered that all traffic between the Italian zone and Switzerland would pass through the route between the French town of Annemasse and Geneva. Notably, this decision was prompted by a set of measures to curb the clandestine crossing of Jews, dissidents and suspect civilians over the Franco-Swiss border that General Vercellino submitted to the Comando Supremo on 8 April. AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, 'Comando della IV Armata, Stato Maggiore – Diario storico e allegati (marzo-aprile 1943)', entry 8 April 1943 and allegato 54, and entry 25 April and allegato 68.

⁸⁸ CDJC, Fonds Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France, CCXVII-35.

⁸⁹ J. R. White, 'Embrun' and 'Modane'. These are two draft entries for a forthcoming volume of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos. Thanks go to Joseph Robert White and Geoffrey Megargee of the USHMM in Washington, DC, for kindly providing me with this information. The order to create 'one or more concentration camps, at least 100 kilometres distant from the coast', in view of the measures likely to be taken in the immediate future against 'communists dangerous for the military security', was given by General Trabucchi on 7 April. Trabucchi specified that the new camp(s) should have a capacity of 5,000 inmates. AUSSME, N1-11, b. 1218, Trabucchi to *Intendenza* of the IVth Army, (3537/I) 7 April 1943.

⁹⁰ *Rochlitz Documents*, Comité Dubouchage file, F-17, 82.

⁹¹ AN, AJ/41/1183 and AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens, Avarna to Bridoux, (1397) 6 May 1943.

facilitating the task for his Royal Inspectorate⁹². But once again the Chief of the French Police, Bousquet, seized the opportunity to reassert French sovereignty over the territories under Italian occupation. On 15 May, Bousquet rejected the Italian demand to lift the ban⁹³. It must be remembered that the Vichy government was also still refusing to provide the lists of French Jews, which forced Lospinoso to delay their evacuation from the coast.

Avarna was officially notified of Bousquet's objection on, or immediately after, 21 May⁹⁴. However, by then Lospinoso and the IVth Army Command were growing impatient with the Vichy authorities. In addition to the issue of Jews, the Italian military authorities also blamed the French Police for the attack that killed one Italian officer and seriously injured two others in Nice on 27 April⁹⁵. Avarna immediately requested a meeting with Bousquet, which took place on the morning of 25 May⁹⁶. During their 'private exchange of views', Bousquet proposed to terminate further transfers of Jews to the Savoie region, so that the French government could instead send French evacuees. In exchange, Bousquet proposed to find suitable localities within the Italian occupation zone to evacuate Jews living on the coast, which would replace those initially chosen by the Italian authorities⁹⁷.

Upon receiving Chierici's permission⁹⁸, Lospinoso travelled to Vichy to meet Bousquet in early June. Lospinoso was determined to not get caught in Vichy's bureaucratic red tape. He wanted to personally verify the concrete value of Bousquet's proposal so that the transfers of Jews currently underway were not interrupted⁹⁹. Eventually, he accepted Bousquet's proposal, whereby Jews would be

⁹² ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 May 1943.

⁹³ AN, AJ/41/1186, d. 79/Arrestation des Juifs par les Italiens, Bousquet to Mr. Guérard, General Secretary *auprès* the head of government, (2327/Pol.Cab) 15 May 1943.

⁹⁴ Ibid. and AJ/41/1179, Bridoux to Avarna, (1716/DN/SL) 21 May 1943.

⁹⁵ ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-13, Barranco to Chief of Police, (12169) 2 May 1943. See also Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 221-23.

⁹⁶ AN, AJ/41/1179, Confidential report on the meeting between Bousquet and Avarna on 22 May 1943 at 10.45am, (88) 22 May 1943. This report, however, only listed the topics that were discussed during the meeting. Among these was the 'possibility that, without touching on matters of principle, Jews be evacuated from the Mediterranean coast.' The other two topics were the 'attack in Nice' on 27 April and the 'relationship between the French Police and the Italian Police in the Italian occupation zone.'

⁹⁷ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, 28 May 1943.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Chief of Police to Lospinoso, (451/13975) 6 June 1943.

⁹⁹ See footnote 97.

sent to a number of alternative localities, presumably still within the Italian occupation zone¹⁰⁰. Also in this case we lack, however, the details of the agreement. The only certainty was that Chierici wanted Lospinoso to complete the evacuation of foreign Jews from the Côte d'Azur as soon as possible. Consequently, Lospinoso was requested to fix a deadline for the completion of operations in light of the new deal with the French authorities. However, should any problem arise in the implementation of the deal, Chierici requested the Comando Supremo to impart orders to the IVth Army Command to assist Lospinoso in fulfilling his task by force, if necessary¹⁰¹.

Life in the enforced residences

The transfer of foreign Jews from the Côte d'Azur to the Haute-Savoie department continued pending the implementation of the deal with the French government. By June, just over 600 Jews were interned in Megève¹⁰². How was life in the enforced residences, including those previously established by Barranco in the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments?

The mainstream view in historical scholarship is that Jews in enforced residences were housed in the finest resorts¹⁰³, and Megève was one such case. This assertion, in turn, is usually held as evidence of the Italian humanitarian rescue of foreign Jews in southeastern France. However, this chapter has revealed that the decision to transfer Jews to Megève and later Saint-Gervais-les-Bains was not the result of Lospinoso's humanitarian rescue plan. In fact, by arguing this, then it would also be necessary to conclude that the prefect of Savoie, who proposed Megève as a solution for the internment of Jews to Lospinoso, was acting to protect the Jews. This is clearly incongruent with the evidence. However, the assertion that the decision to

¹⁰⁰ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Chierici to Comando Supremo, (500/15361) 26 June 1943. The existence of a deal with Bousquet was confirmed in a cable Lospinoso sent to Chierici on 15 July. The cable read thus: 'In the imminence of implementing the new deal with the French government for the internment of Jews I request that Police clerk (*applicato P.S.*) Villani Vincenzo be sent here on a mission for some time from the Imperia Police Headquarters to assist in the creation and management of an archive.' ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-18, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, (17224) 17 July 1943.

¹⁰¹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Chierici to Comando Supremo, (500/15361) 26 June 1943, and Leto to Lospinoso, (500/15362) 26 June 1943.

¹⁰² Poznanski, *Jews*, 409.

¹⁰³ Steinberg, *All or Nothing*, 7.

provide Jews subjected to enforced residences with acceptable living conditions, including those transferred by Barranco to the Alpes-Maritimes and Basses-Alpes departments, was only due to pragmatic considerations (i.e. the need to find a place to transfer them) would be equally simplistic. As discussed in chapter five, such pragmatism is an ideal type. Moreover, there is evidence that the Italian occupation authorities were actually concerned with the living conditions of the Jews assigned to enforced residences¹⁰⁴.

To answer the question we need to bear in mind the specific purpose of the enforced residence system: from the second half of February 1943 onwards, foreign Jewish refugees residing on the Côte d'Azur were assigned to enforced residences because the Italian authorities considered them a potential, though minor threat to their military security. The Italian authorities regarded the localities chosen for transferring Jews as concentration camps of a sort¹⁰⁵. Jews who were subjected to enforced residence were treated as inmates, as proved by the internment regulations approved by the IVth Army Command. These prescribed that, upon arrival in their assigned residences, Jews were to surrender their identity papers to the local Carabinieri unit for filing. Jews were ordered to report three times a day to the Carabinieri, observe a curfew, and were prohibited from leaving their assigned locality. They could not own a radio, engage in any political or commercial activity, and were only allowed to read Italian and French newspapers. Their (incoming and outgoing) mail was censored and only clothes and food could be sent or received. Any visits had to be authorised by the local Carabinieri unit. Those who transgressed these regulations could be placed under house arrest for up to twenty-days or, in the most serious cases, could be transferred to an Italian concentration camp¹⁰⁶.

However, some reports from the French Police units stationed in the localities with enforced residences reveal that the IVth Army Command's regulations were not

¹⁰⁴ After receiving Barranco's plan for the internment of Jews residing in the Alpes-Maritimes department in early January 1943, Consul Calisse pointed out to the Commissario that the choice of localities for the convenient transfer and housing of Jews did not resolve all the logistical issues linked to their internment. For Calisse, also the issue of Jews' food requirements once within enforced residences needed to be taken into account. ASMAE, AP 1931-45, Francia 1943, b. 68/2 Nizza, Calisse to Bonarelli and other recipients, (159R) 23 February 1943. See also ch. 4.

¹⁰⁵ ADAM, 166W/10, Report from the French Police unit in Saint-Martin-Vésubie, (2/4) 7 April 1943.

¹⁰⁶ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Massime M4, b. 110, f. 16/46, Copy of the regulations for the internment in localities in the French territory, forwarded by the Political Police to the DAGR, (500/7187) 12 March 1943. The copy of the regulations bears the seal of the IVth Army Command General Staff.

always implemented. For example, a report dated 27 March from the French Police unit in Vence indicated that only two rules were followed: those regarding the headcount, which took place twice a day, and the requisition of Jews' identity papers. The reason for this, however, was not Italian carelessness and/or benevolence towards the Jews, but the shortage of men in the IVth Army. As the French report noted, only two Carabinieri officers were available to monitor the 110 inmates in Vence¹⁰⁷.

Also the censorship of inmates' mail proved difficult for the local Carabinieri units in charge of surveillance. Initially, the local French postal offices refused to grant the Italian requests to submit the mail for perusal¹⁰⁸. In this regard, it is also worth stressing that, at least in the region of Nice, the French authorities intercepted the mail of Jews whom the Italians had placed in enforced residences¹⁰⁹. Therefore, the IVth Army Command demanded that the Vichy government deliver to the appropriate Carabinieri units the mail of anyone under Italian surveillance, Jews and non-Jews, including those interned in the Sospel camp. The IVth Army Command proposed that it provide the French authorities with name lists of those people, in order to smooth the way for collaboration¹¹⁰. Due to the absence of any further exchange of messages in the French files between Avarna, who was in charge of negotiations, and the Vichy government, it is likely that a deal was reached eventually¹¹¹.

The major problem for the Italian authorities was to guarantee food supplies for the people in enforced residences. The internment regulations prescribed that inmates without means would receive, if entitled, a living allowance from the Italian occupation authorities¹¹². However, contemporary reports from Jewish organisations reveal that many inmates lived in destitution¹¹³. To prevent further hardship, on at least one occasion the Italian authorities managed to obtain food supplies from the

¹⁰⁷ ADAM, 166W/10, Police Superintendent in Vence to Nice regional prefect, (1427) 27 Mrch 1943.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ ADAM, 166W/10.

¹¹⁰ AN, AJ/41/1185, d. 71, s.d. Censure de la correspondance des internés.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See footnote 106.

¹¹³ ADAM, 166W/10; Panicacci, *L'occupation*, 208; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 318-20.

French authorities¹¹⁴. However, the easiest solution for the Italian authorities was to allow the Jewish organisations, such as the Comité Dubouchage or the General Association of Jews of France, to provide care for those inmates. These organisations were accordingly free to operate in the enforced residences. Barranco and later Lospinoso tolerated the creation of self-administered schools, canteens and infirmaries within the ‘Jewish communities’ in the enforced residences in the Alpes-Maritimes and the Haute-Savoie departments¹¹⁵.

Overall, one may agree with Susan Zuccotti that ‘enforced residence was not necessarily unpleasant.’¹¹⁶ For many Jews, it represented a (temporary) safe haven. The Carabinieri units in charge of surveillance were adamant about prohibiting any contact between *their* inmates and the French Police, which also resulted in sheltering illegal Jews from French anti-Jewish measures. This was the case for the aforementioned Boris Levinson, who was held in an enforced residence in Saint-Gervais-les-Bains in April 1943. Three months later, the Italian authorities prevented the local French Police unit from arresting Levinson because he was under Italian ‘protection’¹¹⁷. However, the ‘concentration camps’ established by Barranco and Lospinoso were not ‘symbolic’ or ‘imaginary’, as averred by one scholar¹¹⁸. Such an argument misapprehends (and misrepresents) the nature and scope of enforced residences in Italian-occupied southeastern France and, consequently, fascist Jewish policy in that context. As Lospinoso expressed to the director of the French *Section d’enquête et de contrôle pour la zone sud*, or Division of investigations and inspections in the southern zone, during a meeting in Nice on 21 July, ‘the Italian government wishes to respect the basic principles of humanity, but this is not tantamount to complete benevolence towards the Jews currently residing in the

¹¹⁴ In April 1943, the internees in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie received 40 kg of pasta and 40 kg of vegetables from the French authorities. Panicacci, *L’occupation*, 208.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 209; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 318-20; Poznanski, *Jews*, 409-10.

¹¹⁶ Zuccotti, *The Italians*, 84.

¹¹⁷ ADHS, 41W/38, s.d. Ressortissants russes, ‘Levinson Boris’. Alberto Cavaglione (‘Foreign Jews in the western Alps (1938-43)’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10: 4 (2005), 444-46) and Jean-Louis Panicacci (*L’occupation*, 209-10) mention two similar cases that took place in the enforced residences of Saint-Martin-Vésubie and Castellane, respectively. The document reproduced by Cavaglione is in ADAM, 166W/10.

¹¹⁸ Cavaglione, ‘Foreign Jews’, 435.

Mediterranean region.’¹¹⁹ Lospinoso’s declaration, and the generally decent living conditions in the enforced residences, further confirm that the Italian officers in charge of Jewish policy in southeastern France abided by the regime’s declared intention to ‘discriminate, but not persecute’ the Jews. However, this cannot conceal the fact that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France, including the enforced residence system, was persecutory in nature and scope.

From Rescuer to Collaborator? Lospinoso’s implementation of Chierici’s order to surrender German and former Austrian Jews in July 1943

The Italian evasions of the requests to arrange a meeting between Lospinoso and the Nazi security services in Paris did not weaken the German resolve to bring a solution *im deutschen Sinne* to the ‘Jewish problem’ in the Italian occupation zone. By the time that Bousquet and Lospinoso agreed to evacuate foreign Jews from the Mediterranean coast to the interior, the Nazi security services in France had managed to finally locate Lospinoso’s headquarters and acquire some details about his action. At the end of May, a cable from the SiPo-SD unit in Marseilles informed the SS-Obersturmführer Heinz Röthke, head of the *Judenamt* (Jewish office) within the RSHA Paris office, that the Italian Interior Ministry had installed a Commissariat for the Jewish question in Nice. The director of the Commissariat was Lospinoso. The cable announced that the Italians planned to evacuate all the Jews from a fifty-kilometre-wide strip of territory along the Mediterranean coast within three months. It was reported that, up to 25 May, some 2,400 Jews had been evacuated from Nice and its surroundings towards Saint-Martin-Vésubie, Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, Megève, Saint-Gervais-les-Bains and Combloux¹²⁰.

¹¹⁹ CDJC, Fonds Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, XXXVI-223, Report on the meeting between Lospinoso and the director of the Division of investigations and inspections in the southern zone that was held on 21 July 1943; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 311-13.

¹²⁰ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-50, SS-Obersturmführer Moritz to Röthke, (3978) 26 May 1943; Poliakov, *La condition*, 99-100, doc. 28, and 159-60. As Daniel Carpi (*Between*, 153-54) has pointed out, the information that the SiPo-SD unit in Marseilles sent to Röthke came from an anonymous French report entitled ‘General Reflections on the Jewish Problem in Southern France’. The report stated that the Italians had evacuated 2,400 Jews from the coast ‘up to 25 May’. The French report is reproduced by Poliakov, *La condition*, 101-05, doc. 29; German translation: CDJC, Fonds Gestapo Allemagne, I-51.

Upon receiving this information, Röthke forwarded it to Knochen¹²¹ who, however, at that point was still hoping that Lospinoso would go to Paris to discuss the measures intended towards the Jews in the Italian occupation zone. Therefore, Knochen was greatly surprised to learn from Bousquet during two meetings on 22 and 23 June that Lospinoso had visited Vichy to discuss Jewish policy. Oberg was also present at the two meetings with Bousquet. According to the reports Knochen and Oberg sent to Berlin on 23 June and 1 July, respectively, Bousquet recounted that Lospinoso had informed him of his continued action to concentrate several thousand (6,000 in Knochen's report, 7,000 in Oberg's) foreign Jews in Megève. Lospinoso also noted that the Italian troops would perform this operation without the involvement of the French Police, to which Bousquet responded by repeating what he had already told to General Avarna: he opposed Lospinoso's plan and added that the measures against the Jews should have been taken by the French Police alone.

Notably, neither Knochen's nor Oberg's reports mentioned the Lospinoso-Bousquet agreement, which indicates that Bousquet preferred to omit that detail, and for good reasons. By contrast, Oberg's report mentioned Lospinoso's remark that Nazi Jewish policy was harsh and French Jewish policy was even harsher, but that the Italian authorities intended to provide a 'humane solution' to the 'Jewish problem'¹²². Clearly, Bousquet's partial report was consistent with the (successful) French tactic to use Jewish policy to drive a wedge between the Axis partners. This was achieved. Both Knochen and Oberg expressed their astonishment and discontent with Lospinoso to their superiors in Berlin. Lospinoso's behaviour undermined the Axis unity vis-à-vis the Vichy government. Oberg, in particular, lamented that such behaviour would jeopardise the German efforts to convince the Vichy government to pass a law that would strip of their citizenship Jews who had been naturalized as French since August 1927, which meant they too could be deported eastward at once.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Knochen to Müller, 23 June 1943, and Oberg to Reichsführer SS and Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Chief of the RSHA, 1 July 1943. Reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 296 and 299-300. Oberg's original German message in CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVII-22.

Knochen, for his part, announced that he would again attempt to locate Lospinoso through the SiPo-SD unit in Vichy¹²³.

The first Nazi officers who actually managed to contact Lospinoso were, as it happens, from the SiPo-SD unit in Marseilles. On 10 July, the unit commander, Rolf Mühler¹²⁴, informed Knochen that a meeting with Barranco had recently been scheduled to discuss Jewish policy in the Italian occupation zone. This meeting was intended for 7 July, but was cancelled by the Commissario at the last moment. Barranco explained that a 'special racial police', headed by General Inspector Lospinoso, had recently been created. Therefore, explained Mühler, a meeting was arranged by phone with Lospinoso. However, when two of Mühler's men arrived in Nice sometime between 8 and 10 July, they could not meet with Lospinoso, who, according to his Mission abroad expenses claim form for July 1943, departed Nice for Megève on the 8th¹²⁵. Instead, Luceri met the Nazi officers and immediately informed them that he could not make any decisions on Jewish matters. As a result, Lospinoso's presence in a second meeting 'that will take place shortly' would be necessary. As for the activity of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police, Luceri informed the two Nazi officers about the transfers to the Haute-Savoie department that were currently under way. Jews 'classified as dangerous, that is, those actively engaged in politics', were interned in the Sospel concentration camp.

Unsurprisingly, Luceri's description of the anti-Jewish measures adopted by the fascist racial police failed to impress the two Nazi officers. In fact, in Mühler's report to Knochen, he did not fail to stress sarcastically that 'the choice of the most renowned spas such as Megève, Saint-Gervais-les-Bains and Castellane as places of enforced residence typifies the Italian stance vis-à-vis Jewry.' It was, however, the Italian authorities' display of their good relationship with the Jews that troubled Mühler the most. From his perspective, enemy propaganda could easily exploit the difference in the Nazi and fascist approaches to the 'Jewish question' 'as evidence of

¹²³ Ibid. On the negotiations between the Nazi authorities in France and the Vichy government over the denaturalisation of Jews became French since 10 August 1927 see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy*, 323-29.

¹²⁴ Mühler was transferred from the SiPo-SD unit in Lyons to Marseilles on 1 January 1943, where he remained until June 1944. I. Levendel and B. Weisz, *Hunting Down the Jews: Vichy, the Nazis and Mafia Collaborators in Provence 1942-1944* (New York: Enigma Books, 2011), 325.

¹²⁵ ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 1 to 31 July 1943.

the supposed beginning, or rather of the presence of very strong discord within the Axis camp.’¹²⁶

The visit by Mühler’s men to Nice, however, was not entirely ineffective. When Lospinoso returned to Nice from Megève on 10 July¹²⁷, he was immediately informed that two Nazi officers sent by Mühler wanted ‘to discuss the consignment by us of the German Jews currently living either under forced domicile [*residenza forzata*] or at liberty in the zone occupied by our troops.’¹²⁸ Apparently, the German request was made ‘in reciprocity given that the Italian Jews resident in the German occupied zone are as is known handed over to out authorities for repatriation.’ However, since Lospinoso’s office had previously treated ‘German subjects in the same way as other foreign subjects’, he requested that Chierici grant him ‘instructions as to how [he] should respond to the request.’¹²⁹ On 15 July Chierici responded to Lospinoso’s request for instructions: ‘please comply with the request from the German Police for the handing over of German Jews.’¹³⁰

As mentioned, after the war, Lospinoso repeatedly stated that he ignored Chierici’s order¹³¹. The truth is that on 16 July, Lospinoso was travelling to Marseilles, a circumstance that is difficult to consider a mere coincidence. After two days in Marseilles, he returned to Nice on the 18th¹³². At this point, the unfolding of events becomes unclear. According to Lospinoso’s August expenses claim form, after his return to Nice on 18 July, he left the city another three times that August: from 14th to 18th in Megève, from 24th to 26th in Annecy, finally returning again to Marseilles on 28/29 August¹³³. These dates do not match with the chronology of events that is evidenced in the only documents regarding Lospinoso’s implementation of Chierici’s order available to historians. The documents were two

¹²⁶ CDJC, Fonds Gestapo France, XXVa-334/335; Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 302.

¹²⁷ See footnote 125.

¹²⁸ Unless we assume that Mühler’s and Lospinoso’s men had a second meeting sometime between 7 and 10 July (or even that Mühler’s men met with Lospinoso himself), it is apparent that the request to hand over German Jews was made to Luceri, who then relayed it to Lospinoso.

¹²⁹ Quoted by Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy’, 323. Original document: ACS, MI, Gab., UC Arrivo, b. 1943-17, Lospinoso to Chief of Police, (16935) 10 July 1943.

¹³⁰ Quoted by Sarfatti, ‘Fascist Italy’, 324. Original document: ACS, MI, Gab., UC Partenza, b. 1943-46, Chief of Police to Lospinoso, (45361) 15 July 1943.

¹³¹ See footnotes 5 and 6.

¹³² ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 168, f. Guido Lospinoso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim form for the period 1 to 31 August 1943.

¹³³ Ibid.

cables Mühler sent to Knochen on 19 and 28 August, respectively. In the first cable, Mühler informed Knochen that

on 18 August 1943 at the request of Lospinoso ... a meeting was held in our offices here [in Marseilles]. Lospinoso explained that the recent unofficial discussions with the chief of the Toulon delegation that had resulted in an agreement were no longer binding because of the change of government in Rome. It had previously been agreed that all German and formerly Austrian Jews in [the Italian] zone should be handed over to our Kommando. It was also proposed that the orders of the RSHA on measures regarding the Jews in the German occupied territories should be applied equally in the zone occupied by the Italians.¹³⁴

Based on the aforementioned figures reported by Barranco to Senise on 13 April, there were 111 former Austrian, 51 German and 46 former German Jews (208 people in total) who had been confined in enforced residences until 10 April¹³⁵. Hence, it is fair to conclude that the agreement between Lospinoso and Mühler involved at least 200 people, and possibly more.

Knochen was 'astonished' at the news. He therefore requested from Mühler a 'detailed report.'¹³⁶ On 28 August, Mühler replied:

Lospinoso communicated to my service a little while ago some lists of Jews living on the Côte d'Azur, saying expressly that he would not want the lists to be returned to him. In the meantime he must have received another order from his superiors, because he now asked me to return the lists to him. He vaguely promised to let me have the lists again after his journey to Rome.¹³⁷

Two further messages between Knochen and Mühler confirm the content of the 28 August cable¹³⁸. On 18 August, Lospinoso managed to retrieve the lists of Jews that *his* office¹³⁹ had given to the Nazi unit in Marseilles and, therefore, the handover to

¹³⁴ Mühler to Knochen, (6450) 18 August 1943; reproduced and translated in English by Sarfatti, 'Fascist Italy', 325-26.

¹³⁵ See footnote 78.

¹³⁶ Knochen to Mühler, 26 August 1943; reproduced and translated in English by Sarfatti, 'Fascist Italy', 326.

¹³⁷ Mühler to Knochen, (6730) 28 August 1943; reproduced and translated by Ibid., 326-27.

¹³⁸ Knochen to Mühler, 1 September 1943, and Mühler to Knochen, (6951) 2 September 1943. Reproduced by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 340-41.

¹³⁹ Luceri probably gave the lists of Jews living on the Côte d'Azur to Mühler's office. This happened during Luceri's journey to Marseilles that, according to his Mission abroad expenses claim form for

the Nazis of German and former Austrian Jews did not occur. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that Lospinoso's decision to retrieve the lists had no influence whatsoever on the fact that Mühler's office failed to copy them. This circumstance should not be credited to Lospinoso¹⁴⁰, for it stemmed exclusively from the incompetence and naïveté of the Nazi officers.

Despite (and beyond) the chronological discrepancies between the sources, there is no apparent reason not to trust the content of Mühler's cables. Therefore, it is fair to concur with Sarfatti that 'before 25 July Lospinoso [began] to carry out the orders he had received from Rome.'¹⁴¹ The explanation that those lists were given as part of what has been called 'the strategy of postponement'¹⁴² is not convincing. This thesis had proved that Lospinoso never employed such delaying tactics to foil the German deportation plans.

At the same time, it is impossible to verify to what extent, if at all, Lospinoso and Luceri were aware in the summer of 1943 that by handing over the Jews, they played an indirect role in their murder. To assert that Lospinoso was ready to hand over to the Nazis certain categories of Jews as per Chierici's order does not mean that he was deliberately collaborating in the 'final solution'. Nonetheless, Lospinoso's wish for instructions from Chierici on how to respond to the German request, as well as Mühler's cables, further disprove Lospinoso's post-war accounts whereby he undertook his own personal fight against the Nazis to save the Jews from deportation in southeastern France. Lospinoso's actions in the second half of July 1943 also call into question the mainstream image of the alleged Machiavellian and insubordinate Italians, who reinterpreted the orders they were given to suit their own noble intentions. The truth is that Lospinoso was a faithful servant of the fascist regime, who respected the internal hierarchy and who, consequently, acted in accordance with the instructions that he had been given. Similarly to Barranco, Lospinoso used his proactivity to *serve* the regime and its Jewish policy. If the regime ordered him to intern Jews while avoiding contact with the Nazis, he did. However, he proved

August 1943, occurred on 11/12 August. Apparently, that was the only occasion whereby Luceri left Nice in July and August 1943. ACS, MI, DGPS, DPPS (1890-1966), vers. 1959, b. 19ter, f. Luceri Tommaso, sottof. Indennità di missione, Mission abroad expenses claim forms for the period July and August 1943.

¹⁴⁰ As done by Klarsfeld, *Vichy*, 102.

¹⁴¹ Sarfatti, 'Fascist Italy', 321.

¹⁴² Cavaglioni, 'Foreign Jews', 440.

equally ready for the task to surrender many of those Jews. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Lospinoso's actions was demonstrated on 21 July, only a few days after he had agreed with Mühler to handover German and former Austrian Jews, when Lospinoso concurrently asserted to the director of the Division of investigations and inspections in the southern zone that 'the Italian government wishes to respect the basic principles of humanity' in the treatment of Jews. Lospinoso's later decision (it is unknown whether on orders from higher authorities or on his personal initiative) to withdraw from the agreement and retrieve the lists of Jews does not undermine this conclusion; on the contrary, assuming that such a decision can be attributed entirely to Lospinoso's humanitarian qualms, this only reinforces my conclusion that Lospinoso was willing to defy his own personal moral and ethical codes to serve the regime.

Collaborating in the 'final solution'? Chierici's order and fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France

The discussion about Lospinoso's implementation of Chierici's order comprises only a portion of the larger historical issue represented by the fascist government's intentions vis-à-vis foreign Jews in southeastern France (and possibly in the other European territories occupied by the Italian Army) in the summer of 1943. This issue, in turn, can be divided into three sub-questions:

1. Was Mussolini's decision to transfer Jewish policy in southeastern France from the Army to the Police in March 1943 the first step in a coherent path towards the July 1943 decision to surrender German and former Austrian Jews to the Nazis – a decision ultimately without consequences?
2. Should we understand Chierici's order to hand over German and ex-Austrian Jews as an indication that the fascist government, in the summer of 1943, was finally willing to accede to the German requests concerning the handover of *all* foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France?
3. What does Chierici's order tell us about the dynamics and development of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France as a whole?

Let us start with the first question. Despite extensive research in Italian archives, I was unable to find any other Italian documents besides those published by Sarfatti in the mid-1990s to shed light on the decision-making process behind Chierici's order. For Sarfatti, 'it is hard to imagine that the Chief of Police made this decision ... all by himself, without asking the consent – even in general terms – of the Undersecretary of the Interior Umberto Albini or of the Minister of the Interior Benito Mussolini.'¹⁴³ Indeed, it is certainly possible that Chierici discussed the German request with Mussolini during one of the four meetings they had between 10 and 14 July¹⁴⁴. Equally plausible is that Chierici's order was the result of anticipatory obedience¹⁴⁵. However, it is an earlier decision by Chierici that we must look at in order to answer our first question.

In the spring of 1936, the fascist Police and the Nazi Police reached a secret agreement to exchange information on Italian and German political opponents living in each other's country, particularly communists, Freemasons and migrants. One clause of the agreement stipulated that the fascist and the Nazi Police could extradite Italian and German nationals to their respective countries. Initially, Jews were not included in the agreement. However, after the outbreak of the war, the Gestapo managed to progressively widen the scope of the original agreement to encompass other categories of people, such as citizens of countries occupied by the Wehrmacht. From July 1942 onwards, the Nazi authorities requested that the Italian Police extradite some foreign (i.e. non-Italian) Jews living in Italy. At that point, the Italian Foreign Ministry intervened and, during a meeting held on 10 December, obtained from the Police – whose Chief at the time was Senise – that, in the event of a German request to transfer Jews, it would 'always' ask the Foreign Ministry's 'prior consent' before agreeing¹⁴⁶. Furthermore, at the end of March or the beginning of April 1943, the Foreign Ministry spoke against extending such extradition agreements to the French territories under Italian occupation, with the exception of

¹⁴³ Sarfatti, 'Fascist Italy', 321; see also Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 161.

¹⁴⁴ From 11:32am to 12am on 10 July; from 12:10 to 12:25pm on 11 July; from 5:55 to 6:20pm on 12 July; from 5:55 to 6:18pm on 13 July; from 7:05 to 7:20pm on 14 July. Chierici was received by Mussolini also on 15 July (from 8 to 8:12pm), but after the order to comply with the German request had already been dispatched. ACS, SPD, Udienze, b. 3157, f. Udienze del duce gennaio-luglio 1943.

¹⁴⁵ Knox, 'Das faschistische', 79.

¹⁴⁶ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 365 ff. The minutes of the 10 December meeting in ACS, MI, PS, AGR, R/G, b. 11, f. Massima.

people accused of serious political crimes¹⁴⁷. The Foreign Ministry retained veto power over German requests for extradition of Jews (in Italy) and other subjects (including Jews, in southeastern France). However, in early May 1943, Chierici decided to overturn the earlier agreement with the Foreign Ministry. From that moment on, the Foreign Ministry could no longer veto the Nazi authorities' requests to have surrendered German citizens, citizens of countries occupied by Nazi Germany, and/or foreign Jews living in Italy¹⁴⁸. Although Chierici's decision technically related only to foreign Jews in Italy, I think that it set the precedent for the subsequent decision to accede to the request concerning German and formerly Austrian Jewish refugees in southeastern France in July 1943¹⁴⁹. *If this interpretation is correct, then it follows that there was not direct causation between Lospinoso's appointment and Chierici's order.*

This brings us to the second question. Alberto Cavaglion has argued that the timing of Chierici's order forces us to be very cautious, for 'no hasty conclusion can be drawn, especially if ... these events are situated in the general context of the chaotic fifteen days preceding 25 July 1943.' Due to the turning points of the Allied landings in Sicily on 10 July, and the Italian failures to resist, which subsequently led to the collapse of the regime two weeks later, Cavaglion has suggested that Chierici's order should be interpreted as an impromptu decision and not necessarily representative of larger tendencies within the Italian establishment. He has argued that Chierici's order could, in fact, represent another episode of the Italian rescue policy in disguise¹⁵⁰. On the other side of the spectrum is Michele Sarfatti, who has situated Chierici's order within the context of the sudden radicalisation of fascist policy towards Italian and foreign Jews in the peninsula in June/July 1943. Sarfatti has recounted that, in June 1943, the Minister of Corporations, Cianetti, and Chierici, on orders from Mussolini, attempted to concentrate those Italian Jews, who had been previously selected for forced labour, into 'camps'. On 14 June, the Directorate of

¹⁴⁷ USSME, *Diario Storico*, tomo 1, 833, entry 2 April 1943.

¹⁴⁸ ACS, MI, PS, AGR, R/G, b. 11, f. Massima; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 383-85.

¹⁴⁹ MacGregor Knox ('Das faschistische', 78-79) seems to point at the same link, although I find inaccurate his argument that Lospinoso's 'willingness to collaborate' with the German security services 'increased' following Chierici's appointment as new Chief of Police in April 1943.

¹⁵⁰ Cavaglion ('Foreign Jews', 440) argues that 'read with greater objectivity, the documents [published by Sarfatti] probably indicate an extreme attempt at stalling: a final display of the strategy of postponement that had produced favourable results in terms of the number or lives saved in the preceding months.'

the Fascist National Party enquired to Mussolini whether foreign Jews residing in Italy ‘who cannot justify their presence in Italy’ be instead expatriated to their home country¹⁵¹. Most importantly, on 25 July – the same day Mussolini was arrested – the Chief secretariat of the Interior Ministry submitted a request to Chierici that the 2,000 inmates (mostly foreign Jews) of the Ferramonti di Tarsia camp, in the southern region of Calabria, be transferred to Bolzano, on the border with the German Reich. According to Sarfatti, this last request concealed “‘an unspeakable’ act: the handing over of foreign Jews to Nazi Germany ... or, possibly, the establishment of a “reserve” to hold detainees who might be used to ransom Italian prisoners or as bargaining chips for the future safety of high Fascist officials themselves.’¹⁵² Within this context, Sarfatti concluded that Chierici’s order ‘reinforces the hypothesis that the disposition of 25 July to transfer the foreign Jewish internees from ... Ferramonti to Bolzano ... was intended as a first step to their being handed over to the Germans.’¹⁵³

Overall, Sarfatti’s arguments are more compelling. After all, this thesis has gone to great lengths to demonstrate that the Italians did not systematically use delaying tactics as a means to sabotage or even hinder the ‘final solution’. By contrast, evidence suggests that Mussolini, Albini and Chierici, were all involved to some degree in the decision-making processes behind the decisions concerning the fate of German Jews in southeastern France and foreign Jews in Ferramonti between 10 and 25 July¹⁵⁴. This said, Cavaglion’s emphasis on the impact of the turning point of the Allied landings in Sicily upon the Italian political scenario complements rather than opposes Sarfatti’s arguments. It is possible that the quick collapse of the Italian inner front in the wake of the Allied landing played a role in exacerbating tensions and radicalising intentions vis-à-vis Jewish policy within part of the fascist establishment. In this regard, Chierici’s order aligned, although only indirectly, with the larger tendency of part of the fascist establishment to advocate or endorse harsher measures towards the Jews living in the peninsula in the early summer of 1943¹⁵⁵. Chierici’s order represented the most radical edge of that tendency, because, unlike

¹⁵¹ Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 149-50.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 143-44.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 161. See also Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 389-90.

¹⁵⁴ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 389-91.

¹⁵⁵ Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 79.

the request to concentrate foreign Jews in Bolzano, it overtly prescribed the handover of two specific categories of Jews to the Nazis.

At the same time, however, it does not necessarily follow that fascist Italy had decided to hand over to the Nazis *all* foreign Jewish refugees in southern France, in the process effectively retracting the earlier decision to rescue all Jews within the Italian occupation zone. No documentation has been found to support this conclusion¹⁵⁶. In particular, nothing is known about the extent to which, if at all, the Foreign Ministry and the Army knew about Chierici's order, or Lospinoso's implementation of the order. We are therefore forced to suspend judgement, while being aware that Chierici's order would have put fascist Italy on the slippery slope. In this sense, one may agree with MacGregor Knox that the Allies and the Red Army 'saved Italy from itself' in July 1943¹⁵⁷.

Although Chierici's order may not answer the second question, it nonetheless provides clarity in relation to the third question. It demonstrates that the earlier rejection by the Foreign Ministry and Army of handing Jews over (which was possibly still in place in July 1943) was far from being the necessary result of the anti-Jewish persecution undertaken by the regime since 1938. Instead, Chierici's order embodies Donald Bloxham's argument that 'what a regime "should" stand for is self-evidently in the eye of the beholder.'¹⁵⁸ While Ambrosio urged Mussolini on 14 and, again, on 15 July, to find a way to remove Italy from the conflict, lest the Germans use the Italian peninsula 'as the outer defence of the Reich'¹⁵⁹, Chierici signed an order that sealed the fate of some hundred Jews. However, this thesis has revealed that the difference between Chierici and Ambrosio (and Bastianini) was *not* only between fanatics and opportunists. In fact, one could argue that those who refused to hand Jews over were just as fascist as those who willingly acceded, as refusals to surrender Jews were consistent with the regime's declared intention to

¹⁵⁶ On 26 August, in response to Mühler's cable regarding the aforementioned agreement with Lospinoso for the handover of German and former Austrian Jews, a surprised Knochen flatly asserted that 'no signed agreement has been concluded at this point with the Italians regarding issues relating to the Jewish question.' Knochen to Mühler, 26 August 1943, reproduced and translated by Sarfatti, 'Fascist Italy', 326.

¹⁵⁷ Knox, 'Das faschistische', 92.

¹⁵⁸ D. Bloxham, 'Organized Mass Murder: Structure, Participation, and Motivation in Comparative Perspective', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22: 2 (2008), 216.

¹⁵⁹ M. Michaelis, *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy 1922-1945* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1978), 338-39.

discriminate, but not persecute the Jews. Therefore, Chierici's order indicates that such a difference was *also* a manifestation of a difference between two conceptions of Jewish policy within the fascist leadership, thereby again exposing the limitations of arguments which perceive fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France uniquely as a story of protection, or of political calculations, or of a progressive alignment to the Nazi-driven 'final solution' (although, admittedly, this last argument goes a long distance in describing the dramatic month between mid-July and mid-August 1943).

Lospinoso's actions between mid-March and mid-August 1943 mirrored the complexity of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. In that period, Lospinoso zealously participated in a policy that, although persecutory in its ideological and practical premises, nonetheless *de facto* sheltered Jews from deportation to the Nazi exterminatory camps. He later proved equally zealous in laying the groundwork for the implementation of the order to surrender some of those same Jews. If anything, Lospinoso's actions are further proof that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France escapes strict categorisation.

The end of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France

Whether the result of orders from Lospinoso's superiors or of his personal choice, Lospinoso's decision to withdraw from the agreement for the surrender of German and former Austrian Jews to the Marseilles SiPo-SD unit reflected the new Italian political scenario following the collapse of the fascist regime. According to Sarfatti, it was the crisis of 25 July that prevented the handover of German and former Austrian Jewish refugees in southeastern France, as well as of foreign Jews concentrated in the Ferramonti camp, to the Nazis¹⁶⁰. Initially, indeed, it seemed that this was the only, albeit certainly not minor, effect that the formation of a new government, led by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, had upon fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. After all, during the forty-five days of the Badoglio government, the fascist racial laws remained essentially confirmed¹⁶¹. Moreover, Mussolini's 19 March decision to evacuate foreign Jews to the French interior while under the supervision of Lospinoso's Inspectorate was not cancelled outright.

¹⁶⁰ Sarfatti, *The Jews*, 161.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

It was only after the Comando Supremo's decision to withdraw the IVth Army from the French territories occupied in November 1942 that the transfer from the Côte d'Azur was terminated¹⁶². On 15 August, Italy's decision to withdraw the IVth Army and reduce Italian troop numbers in the Balkans was announced to its (still) Nazi ally during a meeting held in Bologna. It was later decided that the Italian troops would nonetheless retain control of a small portion of French territory between the Var and Tinea rivers to the west, and the Franco-Italian border to the east, whereby Nice would remain under Italian rule¹⁶³. Clearly, the Italian establishment was not ready to relinquish its territorial claims on France.

By the time of the Bologna meeting, the decision to seek a separate peace with the Allies had also been made. On 12 August, General Ambrosio sent General Giuseppe Castellano to Lisbon on a secret mission to begin negotiations with the Allies that eventually led to the armistice agreement on 3 September¹⁶⁴.

Within this context, Jewish policy in the occupied territories acquired an entirely new meaning for the Foreign Ministry. The need to gain favour with the Allies brought the 'pragmatic' side of Jewish policy to the fore. As the new Secretary General for Foreign Affairs, August Rosso, pointed out to the liaison officer with the IInd Army Command, Vittorio Castellani, on 19 August:

The racial policy implemented by Italy never prevented our observance of those humane principles (*principi di umanità*) [that belong to] our ineradicable spiritual heritage. Such observance is all the more imperative in the present day. However, it is important that, also from a political point of view, this fact would be opportunely valued and acknowledged.¹⁶⁵

It would be wrong, however, to justify the Italian rulers' decisions regarding Jewish refugees in the occupied territories during the forty-five days of the Badoglio government only through the lenses of political expediency. The best evidence of

¹⁶² Comando Supremo to Army General Staff and other recipients, reproduced in Schipsi, *L'occupazione*, 735. This document is dated 20 August, but it referenced a previous cable (fonogramma) dated 10 August. The Comando Supremo's decision was communicated to the Army General Staff and the Foreign Ministry on 10 or 11 August.

¹⁶³ Ibid.; Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 324; Carpi, *Between*, 170-71.

¹⁶⁴ E. Agarossi, *A Nation Collapses: The Italian Surrender of September 1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 74 ff.

¹⁶⁵ Augusto Rosso to Vittorio Castellani, (25675PR) 19 August 1943, reproduced in DDI, Nona Serie, vol. X (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1990), 851, doc. 680.

this is the negotiations that occurred between the Foreign Ministry and the Interior Ministry in August to solve the ‘issue’ of foreign Jewish refugees in the French territories who were awaiting evacuation by the IVth Army. Count Vidau raised the issue during an intra-departmental meeting held at the Foreign Ministry on 11 August to discuss the forthcoming withdrawal of the IVth Army. In addition, Amedeo Giannini¹⁶⁶, Leonardo Vitetti¹⁶⁷, Pietromarchi and Rosso attended the meeting. Vidau proposed that, ‘since it would not be appropriate to abandon [the foreign Jews] to their fate’, arrangements should be made with the Interior Ministry to ‘turn a blind eye’ (*chiudere un occhio*) to the illegal entry of those people (15,000 units, according to Vidau) to Italy. It should be stressed that Vidau’s proposal was linked with the pressure that, since the Allied landing in Sicily, Angelo Donati had exerted on the Foreign Ministry and some prelates in the Vatican, in order to obtain the Italian government’s authorization to allow Jewish refugees in southern France entry into Italy. Nonetheless, the manner Vidau’s proposal was expressed indicated that a sincere humanitarian component was also present in his action.

Vitetti, Giannini, Pietromarchi and Rosso, and later the new Foreign Minister, Raffaele Guariglia, all approved Vidau’s proposal. However, during a subsequent inter-ministerial meeting on 23 August at the Foreign Ministry the Police opposed the entry of foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France into Italy, owing to concerns about accommodating them within already overcrowded Italian camps. Notably, it was also reported that Badoglio had personally objected to Vidau’s proposal, which again calls into question the alleged link between Jewish policy and fear of future post-war judgment. Eventually, a compromise was reached on the issue of foreign Jewish refugees in southern France. During a third meeting of the highest echelons of government at the Interior Ministry on 28 August, Guariglia, Senise (who Badoglio had recalled as Chief of Police after 25 July) and a Comando Supremo representative agreed that those foreign Jews who wished to move, could use their own means to relocate into the territory that was to remain under Italian rule

¹⁶⁶ Giannini was director of the Commercial Affairs Directorate (Direzione Generale degli Affari Commerciali).

¹⁶⁷ Vitetti was director of the European and Mediterranean General Affairs Directorate (Direzione Generale degli Affari dell’Europa e del Mediterraneo).

between the line Var-Tinea and the Italian border. Also, it is important to stress that this solution was adopted in connection to an ambitious (and unrealistic, in retrospect) plan, conceived by Donati, to transfer all those Jews from the Italian enclave to North Africa by boat. Equally noteworthy, however, is the fact that during the meeting, it was clearly stated that foreign Jews ‘were absolutely forbidden from crossing into Italian territory’ (*‘É fatto loro assoluto divieto di entrare in territorio italiano’*)¹⁶⁸. This last proviso not only confirmed that the Italian rulers’ decisions regarding Jews were also overdetermined during the forty-five days of the Badoglio government, but also that the anti-Semitic agenda pursued by fascism since 1938 influenced the highest echelons of the Italian State even after the collapse of the regime.

According to figures provided by Lospinoso in 1944, by August 1943 there were 5,320 foreign Jews assigned to enforced residences: 2,820 were interned either in the Basses-Alpes or in Haute-Savoie, therefore, outside of the territory eventually retained by the IVth Army¹⁶⁹. Jewish sources cited by Klaus Voigt suggest instead that between 4,000 and 4,150 Jews were in enforced residences at the end of August¹⁷⁰. Regardless, General Eisenhower’s announcement of the armistice between Italy and the Allies on 8 September brought Donati’s project to a dramatic end. Without orders and leadership, the IVth Army swiftly dissolved, leaving Jews without protection and the Nazi security services free to finally bring the ‘final solution’ to southeastern France¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁸ Fenoglio, *Angelo Donati*, 126 ff. Conversely, Italian Jews, including those naturalised as French after 1938, had been granted permission to repatriate at the beginning of August.

¹⁶⁹ ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 49, f. 59, Copy of a report by Lospinoso entitled ‘Measures towards the Jews residing in the zone occupied by the Italian troops in France’, 12 August 1944. See Appendix 2.

¹⁷⁰ According to these sources, there were 1,250 Jews in Saint-Martin-Vésubie and between 850 and 1,200 Jews in Saint-Gervais-les-Bains in August 1943. Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 317-18.

¹⁷¹ Reports on the round-ups carried out by the Nazis in Nice and its surrounding areas after 8 September are in CDJC, Fonds Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France, CCXVIII-19 and CCXVII-7. See also S. Klarsfeld, *Nice, Hotel Excelsior: Les rafles des juifs par la Gestapo à partir du 8 septembre 1943* (Paris: Association “Les Fils et filles des déportés juifs de France”, 1993).

Conclusions

The goal of this thesis has been to explain the rationale behind the fascist government's decisions concerning the fates of foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France between November 1942 and mid-August 1943. The ten months of Italian rule over southeastern France, which ended abruptly and dramatically on 8 September 1943, witnessed five key moments in fascist Jewish policy: first, the Comando Supremo's decision to intern foreign Jews and arrest enemy aliens in early December 1942, which marked the beginning of a distinctively Italian Jewish policy in southeastern France; second, the fascist government's refusal to allow the French authorities to hand over to the Nazis some 1,400 foreign Jewish refugees in the Alps-Maritimes department at the end of December 1942 (a similar stance was taken in March 1943 with the deportation of Jews from Savoie, Haute-Savoie, Drôme and Isère); third, Mussolini's decision to transfer Jewish policy from the Army to the fascist Police in March 1943 and the subsequent creation of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police in Nice led by Police General Inspector Lospinoso; fourth, Chierici's order to surrender German and formerly Austrian Jewish refugees in the Italian zone to the Nazis in mid-July 1943; and finally, Mussolini's downfall on 25 July, which led to both the rescinding of Chierici's order and the Badoglio government's decision to stop the internment of Jews, thereby ending fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France.

Accordingly, this thesis has sought to answer two key questions: (a) Why did the fascist government repeatedly refuse to hand over foreign Jewish refugees in southeastern France to its Nazi ally? (b) Why, in the days immediately preceding Mussolini's downfall, did the fascist Chief of Police Chierici partially reverse that refusal?

The answers to these two questions are as simple as they are complex. They are simple because the reconstruction of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France reveals that many, if not most, of the fascist rulers who were responsible for deciding whether to hand Jews over between November 1942 and the summer of 1943, simply did not wish to participate (directly or indirectly) in their murder. The Foreign

Ministry officials stated this in a memorandum to Mussolini on 22 September: ‘the deportation to Poland ... is a step not in tune with Italian racial policy, which starts out from the concept of distinguishing and separating the Jews ... , without however going as far as persecution.’¹ Although this stance was initially adopted only in relation to the Nazi government’s request to deport Italian Jews residing in the German western occupied territories, I argue that the refusal to collaborate with the Nazis’ exterminatory policy was later extended also to foreign Jewish refugees under Italian rule in southern France at the end of December 1942. Subsequently, during Bastianini’s meeting with Mussolini on 18 March, whereby he attempted to convince the duce not to transfer Jewish policy into French hands, the undersecretary for Foreign Affairs stated that the Italian rulers could not permit that ‘the old, women and babies’ be murdered ‘with their connivance.’² Three days later, Army Colonel Cremese plainly announced in the presence of the IVth Army Command and Lospinoso that the transfer of Jewish policy from the Army to the Police had the goal ‘to save the Jews residing in the French territory occupied by our troops, whatever their nationality.’³

Yet, all the available documentation also points to the fact that in the summer of 1943, the fascist government was prepared to surrender German and ex-Austrian Jewish refugees in the Italian zone to the SiPo-SD unit in Marseilles. This evidence moreover indicates that the handover did not occur, but I believe that this fact does not diminish the significance of a decision that, *if* it had been carried through, would have made the fascist government complicit in the deportation of the Jews and, consequently, in their murder. That the fascist rulers did not want to kill those Jews within their occupation zone, but that they were ready to abandon those outside of it, and eventually to collaborate in the deportation eastward of some categories of Jews in July 1943, leads us to contemplating the deep complexity of the answers to my questions.

As far as the first question is concerned, this thesis has shown that the fascist rulers’ decision not to hand over the Jews was only one portion of a larger Jewish policy whose aims and goals were independent from, although certainly influenced

¹ See ch. 2, footnote 63.

² See ch. 6, footnote 74.

³ See ch. 7, footnotes 17 and 18.

by, the Nazi request for collaboration in the 'final solution'. The second chapter revealed that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France developed within the larger framework of the security policy that the Italian military and Police authorities implemented immediately after the German-Italian invasion of the Unoccupied Zone on 11 November 1942. The Comando Supremo's decision to intern Jews, along with the apprehension of enemy aliens, at the beginning of December 1942, predated the French and German efforts to deport foreign (i.e. other than Italian and French) Jewish refugees in the Italian zone. More importantly, that decision was grounded in anti-Semitic prejudices, because it addressed the Italian military authorities' concerns to neutralise the Jewish 'danger' as part of the IVth Army's preparations for a possible invasion of Allied troops. In chapter five, I traced the Italian-fascist perception that Jews were dangerous elements back to what Salvatore Garau has dubbed the 'twin roots of Italian anti-Semitism', namely nationalist and religious (i.e. Roman Catholic) anti-Semitism. The nationalist roots inspired the idea of the superiority of the Italian 'race' among the officials of the Foreign Ministry and military elites, while the religious roots provided them with a plethora of anti-Jewish stereotypes that depicted Jews as treacherous, greedy, manipulative and essentially alien to the Italian national community. In other words, in the eyes of the Italian diplomats and military men, Jewishness equated anti-fascism⁴, which, in turn, was synonymous of anti-Italian sentiments.

At the same time, however, chapter four revealed that, within the framework of security policy in southern France, the Italian military and civilian authorities considered Jews a secondary and, in every respect, minor threat compared to other non-military enemies, such as communists or enemy aliens. The decision to prioritise the arrest of enemy aliens over the internment of foreign Jews epitomised this approach. The Italian occupation authorities decided that internment in the Sospel concentration camp was to be reserved only for the most dangerous civilians (including dangerous Jews). By contrast, all other Jews (that is, the vast majority) were to be held in enforced residences in areas within the French interior.

⁴ M. Sarfatti, 'Autochthone Antisemitismus oder Übernahme des deutschen Modells? Die Judenverfolgung im faschistischen Italien', in L. Klinkhammer, A. O. Guerrazzi and T. Schlemmer (eds), *Die „Achse“ im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 238-39.

The decision to confine Jewish refugees within the Italian zone in enforced residences, and the subsequent refusal to send them to their deaths, while simultaneously leaving the others in French or German hands, were all commensurate with the degree of danger that foreign Jews supposedly posed to the Italian authorities. Accordingly, the thesis has argued that at the heart of the fascist government's refusals to hand over the Jews in southern France, and consequently to participate in their extermination, was the fact that the 'Jewish problem' was not as central to the fascist worldview (and, consequently, its occupation policies) as it was for the Nazis⁵. Jews may have posed a real threat to the Italian rulers; yet, the battle against them did not represent the cornerstone of the fascist worldview as it did instead for the Nazis, who perceived the *Judenfrage* as the origin of all problems besetting Germany. The Italian military and civilian leaders simply perceived no sense (and no benefit) in killing people who could be easily neutralised by placing them under surveillance in the interior of French territory, or keeping them at bay in the German occupation zone.

In this regard, it is interesting to set the relatively marginal position of the 'Jewish problem' within the fascist worldview against the specific evolution of racist policies in Italy during the 1930s. The findings presented in this thesis acquire some interest when put in relation with Nicola Labanca's suggestion that we should understand fascist anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic policies in relation with fascist colonial racism and racist practices⁶. In particular, when compared to the brutal policies inflicted on local populations, for example, in Ethiopia after 1935-36, the moderate – for lack of a better word – treatment of Jews by the Italian authorities in southeastern France suggests that large sections of the Italian-fascist establishment acted in accordance with a 'traditional', if compared to Nazi 'redemptive anti-Semitism', Eurocentric

⁵ In this sense, this thesis has substantiated the conclusion reached by Davide Rodogno (*Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation During the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40) and MacGregor Knox ('Das faschistische Italien und die "Endlösung", 1942/43', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55:1 (2007), 92). See also R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 318, although I find Bosworth's remark about the 'lenience in racial practice in Italian territories' inaccurate. Michael A. Livingston has reached a similar conclusion in his study of the writing and subsequent enactment of the 1938 fascist racial laws. M.A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 117.

⁶ N. Labanca, 'Il razzismo istituzionale coloniale: genesi e relazioni con l'antisemitismo fascista', in M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci and E. Traverso (eds), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. 1 (Turin: UTET, 2010), 193-96.

racism. At the same time, however, this argument should not be pressed too far, as clearly proven by the anti-Slavic policies that Fascist Italy enacted in the Balkans both before and during the Second World War⁷. Within the scope of this thesis it can nonetheless be argued that, rather than proving that the Italian ‘protection’ of the Jews was devoid of any humanitarian motive⁸, the perpetration of war crimes by the Italian Police and Army in Africa and the Balkans and their simultaneous refusal to participate in the ‘final solution’, confirm instead that the Italian-fascist conceptions of their non-military and ‘racial’ enemies were fundamentally different from the corresponding Nazi conceptions.

What is certain is that none of the aforementioned decisions concerning Jews in southeastern France, including the objections against involvement in their deportation eastward, were the result of secret resistance to Mussolini and fascism. The opposite was true. The Italian rulers’ approach to the ‘Jewish problem’ in southeastern France, including their refusals to hand Jews over, was consistent with both the goals and methods of the racial policy implemented by the fascist State domestically since 1938, *as the Italian rulers and officers on the ground perceived those goals and methods*. This was particularly evident in the case of the Foreign Ministry officials. Indeed, one could argue that the decisions taken in December 1942 and March 1943 to close the border between the German and Italian zones to prevent foreign Jews from crossing were a manifestation of the long-term goal of fascist Jewish policy, whereby all Jews would eventually be expelled from the Italian peninsula⁹. Calisse’s, Barranco’s and Lospinoso’s efforts to provide Jews with acceptable living conditions in the enforced residences, and Calisse’s and Lospinoso’s references to the humane treatment of Jews in Italy, are also proof of their adherence (both practical and ideological) to the fascist approach to the ‘Jewish problem’. By contrast, the Italian Army’s perception of the ‘Jewish problem’ was

⁷ E. Collotti, ‘Sul razzismo antislavico’, in A. Burgio (ed.) *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d’Italia 1870-1945* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1999), 33-61.

⁸ E.g. Knox, ‘Das faschistische’, 66 and 70-71.

⁹ In this sense, Davide Rodogno’s argument that ‘[a]fter conquest of the [Italian] *spazio vitale*, there would have been no place in the *nuovo ordine* for either the Italian Jews or the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean’ appears plausible in principle, although I could not find any documentary or indeed factual proof to validate it. Rodogno, *Fascism’s*, 407 and 416. The same argument also in *Ibid.*, ‘L’Italia fascista potenza occupante in Europa’, in M. Flores, S. Levis Sullam, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci and E. Traverso (eds), *Storia della Shoah in Italia. Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. 1 (Turin: UTET, 2010), 485 and 487.

less transparent, both within its highest echelons and the IVth Army Command. There is no doubt that the Comando Supremo, the Army General Staff and General Vercellino's staff were directly involved in Jewish policy in southeastern France. Furthermore, the internment of foreign Jews as a solution to the threat they supposedly posed to the IVth Army troops, which originated by the Comando Supremo in December 1942, replicated those anti-Jewish measures taken domestically as early as 1940. However, due to the lack of evidence, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the nature of the involvement of the Command of the IVth Army and, therefore, any underlying ideological premises. Regardless, the Italian decision-makers and those responsible for the enforcement of Jewish policy abided by the anti-Semitic principles of the regime. This is not tantamount to arguing that all fascist rulers and the officers on the ground were committed anti-Semites. Rather, we can apply Donald Bloxham's observation, which was made in relation to the administrators involved in the 'final solution' in Belarus, whereby 'whether or not these men would self-identify as racists, they were acting as racists because they had imbibed the regime's goals.'¹⁰ By agreeing to intern Jews because of their Jewishness, and by taking measures to prevent the crossing of foreign Jews in the Italian zone, the Foreign Ministry officials, the military commanders and the Police officers were implementing the fascist racial agenda. For this reason, this study is entitled 'ordinary fascists'. In this sense, the term 'ordinary' does not denote the social background of those in charge of Jewish policy in southeastern France. Instead, this study's application of the term 'ordinary' cannot be separated from the term 'fascists'; indeed, I argue that Italian leaders, such as Bastianini and Ambrosio, deliberately avoided participating in the deportation of the Jews not because they were anti-fascists or a-fascists, but precisely because they were fascists. To put it another way, it is my understanding that the Italian leaders refused to participate in the killing of Jews not against fascism and its anti-Jewish policy, but in accordance with the distinct Italian-fascist outlook on the 'Jewish problem'. Obviously, this conclusion does not and should not obscure the fact that some of those same leaders were simultaneously responsible for ordering the closure of the border between the Italian and German occupation zones, thus effectively condemning thousands of

¹⁰ D. Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 295.

Jews to deportation. Yet the task of the historian is to understand and explain the past, not to judge it¹¹. In this regard, the term ‘ordinary’ also serves not to lose sight of the qualitative and quantitative difference that existed between fascist persecution and Nazi extermination of the Jews before 8 September 1943.

However, just as the hatred of Jews alone cannot fully explain Nazi exterminatory policy¹², fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France also cannot be explained only through the lens of fascist anti-Semitism. For instance, the refusal to hand Jews over is a clear example that the aforementioned goal of fascist anti-Semitic persecution to free Italy of Jews (and potentially its sphere of interests) was only one component of the Italian rationale to deal with the ‘Jewish problem’ in southeastern France. In this sense, that refusal indicated that other reasons for the border closures of the Italian zone can also be found in military concerns to protect the safety of the Italian troops, as well as appease the German ally. Similarly, chapter four revealed that the decision to detain Jews in enforced residences, instead of interning them in concentration camps, was due primarily to logistical constraints associated with the impossible transfer of several thousand people to the overcrowded concentration camps in Italy. Chapters three and five revealed that the Italian refusals to expulse foreign Jews to German-occupied territories in December 1942 and March 1943 were the combined result of the fascist government’s will to assert its sovereignty over the territories where the IVth Army was stationed, to defend the prestige of its Armed Forces, and to disallow harmless people to be sent to their death. Similarly, chapters five and six demonstrated that the Nazi efforts to force the Italian allies into the ‘blood pact’ to fight until the bitter end, which eventually resulted in Mussolini’s decision to transfer Jewish policy to the fascist Police, were countered by the fascist rulers’ determination to oppose any German encroachment on Italian sovereignty over their French occupation zone. However, this last point needs further qualification.

To argue that the fascist government’s refusal to hand over the Jews was also predicated upon the need to reassert Italian authority is not tantamount to considering that decision as merely a ramification of conflicting interests, for example, over the

¹¹ On the tendency in some Holocaust scholarship to judge rather than to explain see R.J. Evans, ‘History, Memory and the Law: The Historian as Expert Witness’, *History and Theory* 41:3 (2002), 326-45 [especially 344].

¹² See ch. 5.

seizure of French war materials or the exploitation of French factories¹³. First, there is very little documentary evidence attesting to that link. Secondly, this explanation falls in the trap of analysing the refusal to hand Jews over in isolation from the other Italian anti-Jewish measures. Additionally, we need to separate the issues of Italian sovereignty and Italian prestige. The former was mainly, though not exclusively, as we just mentioned, a Franco-Italian issue. This thesis has shown that the Italian military and civilian authorities' efforts to assert Italian sovereignty was synonymous with asserting the Italian approach to the 'Jewish problem'. Hence, any attempt to establish a causal hierarchy between the two is impossible. Instead, the issue of prestige was an intra-Axis matter, which played an important role. However, when we discuss prestige, we must not think of it exclusively in terms of specific material realities, but rather as an idea(1). In this sense, Aristotle Kallis' interpretation of Mussolini's decision to introduce the 1938 anti-Jewish legislation as 'an awkward attempt to reclaim the limelight of international publicity and re-establish his regime's radical credentials' vis-à-vis other fascist movements in Europe¹⁴ might hint at part of the answer. By refusing to hand over the Jews, the fascist government reaffirmed its status as a founding partner of the Axis alliance and an autonomous actor in reshaping Europe's future geopolitical framework, not only vis-à-vis Germany, but also – and perhaps most importantly – vis-à-vis the Hungarian, Romanian, Croatian and, of course, French governments. In addition to this, but not inconsistent, was the fact that as Italy's war-time prospects became increasingly gloomy, growing concerns about future post-war judgments from the Allies also began to influence Italy's choices, although, in chapter six, we have seen that the impact of those concerns should not be overemphasized.

What, then, was the relationship between the specific ideological standpoint of the Italian rulers towards the 'Jewish problem' and the other factors that contributed to shaping fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France? Humanitarian concerns, (geo)political agendas, German-Italian rivalry, military rationales and, to some extent, even personal interests were complementary rather than contradictory

¹³ On the Italian attempts to exploit the French economy see Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 248-57, and D. Grillère, 'Entreprises françaises et occupation italienne: une politique économique de l'Italie fasciste au service des buts de guerre?', *Entreprises et histoire* 62:1 (2011), 95-106.

¹⁴ A. Kallis, 'Fascism and the Jews: From the Internationalisation of Fascism to a 'Fascist Antisemitism'', *Holocaust Studies* 15:1-2 (2009), 26.

elements *within* the framework of the fascist understanding of, and consequent solution to the ‘Jewish problem’ in southeastern France. This does not create a hierarchy; it means that the fascist rulers in charge of Jewish policy were not acting within an ideological vacuum. The motto ‘discriminate, not persecute’ provided, in particular, both the Italian rulers and mid-level structures involved in Jewish policy with what Moishe Postone has called ‘a horizon of meaning.’¹⁵ That motto was consistent with the specific position that the ‘Jewish question’ held within the larger fascist worldview, as well as with the Italians’ self-image as humane, in contrast to the perception of the Germans as fanatic and brutal¹⁶. As a result, ‘discriminate, not persecute’ provided political guidelines and a common self-perception to the Italian diplomats and civil servants vis-à-vis the barbaric Nazi ‘persecution’, ultimately binding together the understanding, aims and praxis of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France into a coherent whole.

As long as the fate of Jewish refugees in southeastern France remained in the hands of the Foreign Ministry and top military authorities, the result was, therefore, a policy in which their murder was considered to be politically inexpedient and morally unacceptable, but which nonetheless was persecutory in nature¹⁷. Here again, I think that any efforts to establish a hierarchy of importance between *intent* and *outcome* are of little *analytical* value¹⁸. After all, Hitler and the Nazis’ reasons to kill millions of Jews are just as important as how they achieved it. To paraphrase A. Dirk Moses, whether the intent behind fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France is

¹⁵ Quoted by Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 294.

¹⁶ R. Ben-Ghiat, ‘A Lesser Evil? Italian Fascism in/and the Totalitarian Equation’, in H. Dubiel and G. Motzkin, *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices* (London: Routledge, 2004), 139.

¹⁷ In this sense, I concur with Guri Schwarz’s analysis that Fascist Italy ‘cultivated its own different, autonomous, persecutory plan, which [was] harmonized with the need to safeguard precise national interests also in the management of the territories occupied by its own army.’ G. Schwarz, *After Mussolini: Jewish Life and Jewish Memories in Post-Fascist Italy* (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2012), 134.

¹⁸ Indeed, such distinctions usually lead to partial accounts of the events, like those provided by Cavaglion in his analysis of Chierici’s order (see ch. 7) or by Rodogno when, against all evidence to the contrary, he writes that ‘[t]he rescue of certain foreign Jews [in Italian-occupied territories] remains to be proven.’ (D. Rodogno, ‘Histoire et historiographie de la politique des occupants italiens à l’égard des juifs dans les Balkans et la France métropolitaine (avril 1941-septembre 1943)’, *Revue d’Histoire de la Shoah* 204 (2016), 280.)

more significant than the outcome is ultimately a political and moral, rather than a historical question¹⁹.

Initially, the take over by the fascist Police to enforce Jewish policy left that outcome unaltered. However, Chierici's order to Lospinoso to hand over German and formerly Austrian Jews to the Nazis on 15 July 1943 dramatically changed the scenario. In chapter seven, I contended that Chierici's order should be interpreted within the three underlying contexts of the progressive extension of the German-Italian Police agreement of 1936, the sudden radicalization of domestic fascist Jewish policy in June and July 1943, and the fascist regime's crisis after the Allied invasion of Sicily on 10 July. At the same time, however, the answer to the second question this thesis sought to answer – Why did Chierici order the handover to the Nazis of German and ex-Austrian Jews? – remains open to debate. In my opinion, there is no evidence to support the argument that fascist Italy was ready to surrender all Jewish refugees in southeastern France to the Nazis in the summer of 1943.

Nonetheless, the question is still important as it forces us to consider fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France as a process²⁰, rather than the result of rigid uniformity in intent and strict consistency in its development. Chierici's order demonstrated that Jewish policy could be negotiated and adjusted. It revealed that there were different, or even competing, opinions on how to solve the 'Jewish problem' within the fascist leadership. The fact that those views came to the fore only in the spring of 1943 makes it difficult, however, to assess whether Chierici's order was the outcome of deep-seated ideological divergence within the fascist leadership regarding the 'Jewish problem', or the desperate attempt by some to win Nazi support by conceding on the issue of Jews. In other words, it is hard to say whether the decision to hand over German and ex-Austrian Jews should be read as an effort to push Italy towards a Nazi-like anti-Jewish path and make Italy *judenrein*, or as the will to use Jews as bargaining chips²¹. Regardless, it should be stressed that the division within the fascist leadership was not between anti-Semites and philo-

¹⁹ Moses' original argument considered the alleged uniqueness of the Holocaust. 'Whether the similarities [between the Holocaust and other genocides] are more significant than the differences is ultimately a political and philosophical, rather than a historical question' Quoted by Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 317.

²⁰ On my understanding of history as a process, I follow Bloxham, *The Final Solution*, 330-31.

²¹ As suggested by Rodogno, *Fascism's*, 364.

Semites. Fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was not a battle between light and darkness²², as many who were supposedly on the 'light' side were simultaneously persecuting Jews. Rather, the division was between two different views of how central and vigorous the fight against the 'Jewish enemy' should be²³.

Particularly noteworthy, in this respect, are Lospinoso's contradictory actions between mid-July and mid-August 1943. Lospinoso's prompt execution of Chierici's order, epitomized by the transfer of some lists of Jews living on the Côte d'Azur to the Gestapo, followed by his subsequent decision to retrieve them, typify the complexity of the Italian case. This is not to say that fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France cannot be adequately explained. I have tried to illustrate complexity, which is not the same as ambiguity. This thesis has gone to great lengths to prove that the fascist government's decision not to hand over all, or even some Jews, was predicated upon clear and distinct ideological and/or political motivations. Complexity signifies that the rationale behind the fascist rulers' decisions cannot be reduced to a single over-riding narrative. Such narratives capture only part of the multifaceted wartime relationship fascist Italy had with the 'Jewish problem' and Nazi exterminatory policy.

Accordingly, the answer to the question 'Did fascist Italy resist the "final solution" in southeastern France?' cannot be straightforward either. Fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France was a combination of an *action* developed along the ideological lines of the fascist racial persecution as well as a *reaction* to the complex reality and political ramifications of Nazi Jewish policy. The fascist rulers casted their own racial vision onto the French territories under Italian rule, while simultaneously resisting *involvement* in the 'final solution'. Against this backdrop, Chierici's order was a watershed of which the consequences were frustrated by the collapse of the fascist regime and whose 'meaning' remains, therefore, open to debate.

²² As Jonathan Steinberg admits when, contradicting the very metaphor he uses in his introduction, he compellingly argues that '[t]he story of Italian anti-semitism, like the story of Italian attempts to save Jews, is not one of good versus bad but of better and worse, of mixed motive and equivocal action'. J. Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-1943* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 6-7 [for the light/darkness metaphor] and 129 [for the quotation].

²³ In this sense, my analysis of the motivations underlying the differing approaches to the 'Jewish problem' within the fascist leadership in the summer of 1943 differs from that proposed by K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 394-96.

In conclusion, I concur with Christopher R. Browning that ‘the behavior of any human being is ... a very complex phenomenon, and the historian who attempts to “explain” it is indulging in a certain arrogance.’²⁴ This thesis does not provide a definitive and overarching response to the controversial question of the fascist government’s refusal to collaborate in the ‘final solution’ before 8 September 1943. This would have also required the detailed study of fascist Jewish policy in the Balkans, which was beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this study has proposed a new analytical pattern. It has attempted to assess the impact of the distinct Italian-fascist approach to the ‘Jewish problem’ to explain the fascist government’s refusal to participate in the ‘final solution’ in southeastern France, while simultaneously contextualising that refusal within the larger occupation policy and intra-Axis relations regarding the common military effort. This thesis has argued that an explanation that acknowledges Italian humanitarianism does not necessarily contradict other explanations that recognize other political and ‘material’ rationales. Ultimately, by transcending the false dichotomy of humanitarianism and pragmatism, this thesis has provided a dynamic and multi-layered portrait of fascist Jewish policy in southeastern France. In this regard, this study of fascist Jewish policy during the Second World War has further confirmed Richard J. B. Bosworth’s argument that ‘Italy’s road to Auschwitz was not just twisted, but studded with detours.’²⁵

²⁴ C. R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 188.

²⁵ Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 278.

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Appendix 1

Number of Jews who the Italian occupation authorities assigned to enforced residences by 10 April 1943.

I. <u>Nationality</u>		II. <u>Sex</u>	
1. Poles	876	Men	763
2. Stateless	153	Women	671
3. Greeks	142	Youngsters	349
4. Former Austrians	111	<i>Total</i>	<i>1,783</i>
5. Rumanians	104		
6. Hungarians	96	III. <u>Age</u>	
7. Germans	51	Youngsters aged below	257
8. Russians	50	17	271
9. Former Germans	46	from 17 to 30 y.o.	946
10. Belgians	41	from 30 to 50 y.o.	309
11. Turks	34	over 50 y.o.	<i>1,783</i>
12. Luxembourgers	30	<i>Total</i>	
13. Bulgarians	13		
14. Dutch	11		
15. Lithuanians	8		
16. Latvians	5		
17. Portuguese	4		
18. Spanish	4		
19. Lebanese	2		
20. Egyptians	1		
21. Palestinians	1		
<i>Total</i>	<hr/>		
	<i>1,783</i>		

Source: ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Cat. perm. A16 Ebrei stranieri 1933-44, b. 5, f. C14 Francia.

Appendix 2

Distribution of Jews in the enforced residences according to a report signed by Lospinoso entitled 'Measures towards the Jews residing in the zone occupied by the Italian troops in France', 12 August 1944.

<u>Town</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Number of Jews</u>
Saint-Martin-Vésubie	Alpes-Maritimes	2,000
Berthémond [sic]	Alpes-Maritimes	50
Vence	Alpes-Maritimes	250
Venanson	Alpes-Maritimes	200
Castellane	Basses-Alpes	200
Moustiers-Sainte-Marie	Basses-Alpes	60
Barcelonnette	Basses-Alpes	60
Saint-Gervais-les-Bains	Haute-Savoie	2,000*
Megève	Haute-Savoie	500*
	Total number of Jews	5,320

* As Klaus Voigt rightly noted, Lospinoso's figure for Megève is certainly underestimated, while that for Saint-Gervais-les-Bains is probably overestimated. In addition, Sallanches and Combloux do not figure in the chart, possibly because Lospinoso considered both as part of either Megève or Saint-Gervais-les-Bains (K. Voigt, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996), 317).

Source: ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, A16 Ebrei stranieri, b. 49, f. 59.