





The “Jewish Question”  
in the Territories Occupied by Italians

1939-1943

*edited by*

*Giovanni Orsina and Andrea Ungari*

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# Contents

Preface	7
GIOVANNI ORSINA, ANDREA UNGARI Introduction	9
<i>I. The Italian Approach to the “Jewish Problem”</i>	
ESTER CAPUZZO Italian Jews from Unity to Fascism	15
GIUSEPPE PARLATO Renzo De Felice and the “Jewish Question” in Fascism	23
ROBERTO D’ANGELI The Italian Social Republic and the Declaration of War on the “Jewish Race”	37
GIANNI SCIPIONE ROSSI Italian Intellectuals, Anti-Semitism and the Case of Attilio Tamaro	59
FILIPPO VIGNATO Italian Military Occupations and Jews in the Military Documents of the Archives of the AUSSME: A Guide to the Sources	75
<i>II. European Occupations</i>	
DANIELE CAVIGLIA Latin Sisters at War: France in Mussolini’s Diplomatic Strategy	91
EMANUELE SICA The Italian Invasion of France in November 1942	103
LUCA FENOGLIO Fascist Policy towards Jews in South-Eastern France, 1942-1943: Some Remarks on the Events and Methodology	117

MARIA TERESA GIUSTI		
The Behaviour of Italian Troops in the USSR: Guerrilla Warfare and Counterinsurgency, 1941-1943		135
NATALIA TEREKHOVA		
Italian Policies Regarding the Jewish Population during the Military Occupation of Soviet Territories		155
 <i>III. Mediterranean Occupations</i>		
LUCA MICHELETTA		
The Mediterranean in Fascist Foreign Policy (1936-1940)		169
LUISA NATALE		
The Jews in Libya: A Quantitative Picture		183
ANNA PIZZUTI		
Giulia Cohen Tells Her History. From Benghazi to Bergen Belsen, Passing through Italy (1942-1944): Testimony, History		197
MARCO CLEMENTI		
The End of the Rhodes Jewish Community		215
 <i>IV. Balkan Occupations</i>		
MASSIMO BUCARELLI		
An Unavoidable Conflict? The Italian-Yugoslav Confrontation in the Adriatic Sea and the Balkans		233
SANJA PETROVIĆ TODOSIJEVIĆ		
The Escape of Jewish People from the Territory of the German Occupation Zone in Serbia, 1941-1944		249
OLGA MANOJLOVIĆ PINTAR		
Escaping, Surviving and Telling the Truth about the Holocaust		271
SHABAN SINANI		
The Italian Policy Regarding the Admission of Jews into Albania		285
VALENTINA DUKA		
Albanian Historiography and the Holocaust		299
TOMMASO DELL'ERA		
The Italian Occupation of Albania: Fascist Albania and the Persecution of the Jews (1939-1943)		309
Index of Names		333

## Preface

This volume is a further stage of the project on “Italy and the Deportation of Jews in the Occupied Territories during the Second World War”, approved and funded by the European Union, a project that gave Rome’s Jewish Community Historical Archive the chance to cooperate with several high-profile academic and research institutions. Let me just mention, among them, the Institute for the Recent History of Serbia, Sapienza University of Rome, Roma Tre University and the Institute for Democracy, Culture and Media of Tirana. The results achieved in this context accentuate just how far international cooperation can go to stitch together deep rooted scars still present in Europe today. As a matter of fact, this volume has counted on the combined effort of numerous scholars from a variety of universities and research projects, both Italian and abroad, and it is an example of how any examination of the “Jewish question” in the territories occupied by the Italians from 1939 to 1943 can be far easier by working together.

This research project highlights a phenomenon that concerned the whole of Europe and the Western world, if not all of it: nationalism. Very often, the ideology behind a nation-state with all its implications is based on racist ideals: racism is, so to say, the other side of the coin of almost any nationalism. In itself, nationalism denies the existence of, and erases any concept of, a “human race”. Supremacist deviations of social Darwinism and biological anthropology led to the division of humans into different races, and put Caucasians on top. This way, between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, anti-Semitism emerged from this racist view of human relationships as a new occurrence, but with roots dug deep in anti-Judaic Christianity. Jews moved from being “Christ-killers” to being “biologically diverse” from other European peoples.

Guilty of a crime they had not committed, Jews, in both newly conquered and already colonised lands, were rooted out, persecuted and exterminated. Along with her other allies, Fascist Italy took part in this process. This was the case both home and abroad, and it hangs as an albatross on Italy’s neck.

This volume invites us to reflect on the historical situation, the chain of events, and even on some individual characters in those far off lands that until now have had no relevant role in the elaboration of the trauma of the Holocaust and in its memory. And the essays collected here deserve credit for bringing to the light the lesser known fates of countless Jews in areas about which many know little, or are ignorant of, with reference to the Second World War.

Some of those Jews deported from Libya and Greece, along with many refugees expelled from Libya in the mid-Sixties, decided to find a new home in Rome. Their choice to join us has deeply enriched our Jewish community. It is also for this reason that unraveling what they lived through, and examining how Fascism treated Jews during the “parallel war”, is for us a moral necessity, to which this work responds.

*Ruth Dureghello*  
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