On the use of Nazi sources for the study of Fascist Jewish policy in the Italian-occupied territories: The case of south-eastern France, November 1942–July 1943

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Abstract

This article discusses the use of Nazi sources for the study of Fascist policy towards Jews in 1940–43. By exposing the gap between the Nazi perception of and the reality of the Fascist policy towards Jews in Italian-occupied south-eastern France, the article demonstrates that Rome's refusal to hand over Jews for deportation did not contradict the fundamental anti-Semitic nature of its Jewish policy in that context. Thus, the article highlights the risks for historians to read Fascist Jewish policy through Nazi lenses and thereby fall prey to stereotypical characterizations of the Italians as insubordinate, scheming and driven by what an SS official disparagingly labelled a 'Jewish-friendly attitude'. At the same time, the article shows that, when combined with Fascist sources, Nazi sources can help shed light on the conceptual divide that

underpinned the Axis partners' disagreement over the means by which the 'Jewish problem' should be 'solved', thereby exposing the analytical limitations of the current prevailing understanding of the Fascist refusal to hand over the Jews as purely the outcome of 'pragmatic' opportunistic considerations.

Italian Abstract

Questo articolo discute l'uso delle fonti naziste per lo studio della politica fascista verso gli ebrei tra il 1940 e il 1943. Esso analizza lo scarto tra la percezione nazista e la realtà della politica fascista verso gli ebrei nella Francia sudorientale e così facendo dimostra che la decisione del governo fascista di non consegnare gli ebrei per la deportazione non contraddiceva la natura antisemita della politica fascista verso gli ebrei in quel contesto. L'articolo evidenzia dunque i rischi per gli storici di accogliere acriticamente la lettura nazista della politica fascista verso gli ebrei in Francia, con ciò cadendo in una descrizione stereotipata degli italiani come insubordinati, inaffidabili e guidati da quello che un ufficiale delle SS definì spregiativamente 'un atteggiamento filoebraico'. Allo stesso tempo, però, l'articolo sostiene che, se affiancate a fonti fasciste, le fonti naziste possono aiutare a fare luce sulle ragioni concettuali del disaccordo tra Roma e Berlino sui mezzi con cui 'risolvere' la 'questione ebraica', in tal modo mostrando i limiti delle recenti interpretazioni che individuano nell'opportunismo politico la sola ragione del rifiuto fascista di consegnare gli ebrei nella Francia sudorientale.

Bio

Luca Fenoglio is Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow in the School of History, Politics and International Relations of the University of Leicester working on a

project on Fascist violence in the occupied territories. This project expands on Luca's doctoral research on Fascist policy towards the Jews in southeastern France, which was awarded jointly the Spadolini Prize Nuova Antologia XXI in 2017. Luca is currently working on turning his doctoral thesis into a book. Luca is the author of *Angelo Donati e la «questione ebraica» nella Francia occupata dall'esercito italiano* (Turin: Silvio Zamorani, 2013), which was based on his Master's dissertation, and of 'Between Protection and Complicity: Guido Lospinoso, Fascist Italy and the Holocaust in Italian-occupied Southeastern France', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (forthcoming).

Keywords

Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Vichy France, Holocaust, Italian military occupations

Introduction

In 1998 Michele Sarfatti published an article in this journal¹ about the order issued by the Fascist chief of Police Renzo Chierici on 15 July 1943 to hand over to the Nazis the German Jews who lived in the territories of south-eastern France that the Italian Army had occupied since 11 November 1942. The order was given to police inspector-general Guido Lospinoso, who the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini had appointed as head of a Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police to deal with the 'Jewish problem' in south-eastern France on 19 March 1943.

Sarfatti's discovery called into question the dominating narrative of the Italian authorities' rescue of Jews in Croatia and France because they refused to hand them

¹ Sarfatti's findings were originally published in the article "“Consegnate gli ebrei”" that appeared in the Italian daily *l'Unità* on 27 April 1996.

over to the Nazis for deportation to the death camps. It did so also by shedding light on a set of Nazi documents from the summer of 1943 that concerned Lospinoso's reaction to Chierici's order. Léon Poliakov had published these documents as early as 1946 (126–30), but before Sarfatti's discovery historians had either explained them away (e.g. Carpi 1994, 183–85) or ignored them (e.g. Steinberg 2002; Voigt 1996, 293–334). Sarfatti explained that, upon receiving the order to hand over German Jews, Lospinoso gave some lists of Jews who lived on the French Riviera to the SS in Marseille. Subsequently, following Mussolini's arrest on 25 July and the ensuing creation of a new government under the leadership of Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Lospinoso retrieved the lists, without surrendering any Jews. By cross-referencing German and Italian sources, Sarfatti convincingly concluded that 'before 25 July Lospinoso had begun to carry out the orders he had received from Rome' (1998, 321).

In addition to casting light on a momentous decision, Sarfatti's discovery raised a methodological question about the reliability of Nazi sources in retracing the Fascist government's policy towards Jews in the Italian-occupied territories and its underlying rationale. Sarfatti himself mentioned the problem when he pointed out the 'opposite' (1998, 324) descriptions that Lospinoso and his Nazi colleagues made to their superiors of their initial approach on 10 July 1943, which led to Chierici's order to hand over the German Jews five days later. While Lospinoso reported to Rome the German request to surrender the Jews, the commander of the SS unit in Marseille depicted Lospinoso as unreliable and the Italian authorities more generally as being

driven by their '*judenfreundliche Einstellung*', or Jewish-friendly attitude (Poliakov 1946, 112–14; Klarsfeld 1985, 302).²

Despite arguments to the contrary (Cavaglion 2005, 440), there was in fact no doubt about the nature of Chierici's order and Lospinoso's partial implementation of it (in Sarfatti's words, a 'step that condemned Jews to death ... even if it was not put into effect due to the events of 25 July 1943' [1998, 320]). Yet, at the same time, the question of the connection between the earlier opposition of the Fascist government to the deportation of Jews in south-eastern France and the description of Fascist policy towards Jews in that context as benevolent and even amicable that emerged from Nazi sources still requires explanation. This study picks up where Sarfatti left off.

Combining Fascist and Nazi sources, the article proves that the latter misrepresented Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France (and the rationale underpinning it). At the same time, the article argues that, if read more carefully, Nazi sources can help shed light on the different conceptions of the 'Jewish problem' by the Axis partners in their respective spheres of interest. Thus, the article demonstrates that the Fascist government's refusal to hand over Jews did not contradict the fundamental anti-Semitic nature of Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France. In so doing, the article shows that this refusal was not only an opportunistic decision dictated by the circumstances of the occupation, but reflected in fact the Italian authorities' perception of Jews in south-eastern France as an overall minor threat to their military security.

² Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC)/XXVa-334,335/SS-Sturmabführer and commander of the SiPo-SD *Einsatzkommando* in Marseille to commander of security services in Paris (office IV-B), 10 July 1943.

Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France

On 11 November 1942 the Wehrmacht and the Italian Army invaded 'free France' or the Unoccupied Zone. After the French surrender to Nazi Germany and the latter's occupation of the Northern half of the country in June 1940, these expressions designated the southern half of the French metropolitan territory that had remained under the authority of a French collaborationist government based in Vichy. In October 1940, the Vichy government autonomously launched its own persecution of the Jews. Then, from the summer of 1942 onwards its leaders began collaborating in the Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews, the 'final solution of the Jewish question', by rounding-up non-French Jews in the German-occupied North and the Unoccupied South in anticipation of their deportation 'to the east' (Seibel 2016).

The Axis partners' decision to take over the Unoccupied Zone was due to the Anglo-American landings in French Morocco and Algeria on 8 November. The landing of an Allied expedition force in North Africa meant that the Axis forces needed to defend themselves against a possible attack of the Allies on southern Europe. While the Italian Seventh Army Corps occupied Corsica, the Italian Fourth Army commanded by general Mario Vercellino was entrusted with defending the coastline from the Franco-Italian border up to east of German-occupied Marseille. From the coast, the territories occupied by the Fourth Army stretched northward to the Savoie region and included ten partially or completely occupied French departments to the east of the Rhône.

From the beginning of the occupation, Vercellino's troops, the Centre for Counterespionage (which was answerable to the Military Intelligence Service) and the political police unit led by police officer Rosario Barranco (which was answerable to the Political Police Division of the Police Directorate-General of the Interior

Ministry) each carried out arrests of potential ‘fifth columnists’ who might operate in the Fourth Army’s rear in the event of an Allied landing.³ Subsequently, about three weeks after the invasion, Mussolini extended the remit of Italian security policy by ordering the immediate arrest of dangerous enemy aliens and the internment of Jews in the French metropolitan territory. Mussolini’s decisions addressed ‘concerns’ raised by the German military and were communicated to the German High Command of the Armed Forces by the Italian Supreme Command of the Armed Forces on 3 December 1942 (USSME 1999, 951; Rodogno 2006, 394). Apparently, the Supreme Command’s message to the German High Command did not specify when the internment of Jews would be carried out (Voigt 1996, 297; Sarfatti 2017).⁴

In south-eastern France, the execution of Mussolini’s orders was entrusted to a newly formed police unit led by Barranco. The unit operated under the jurisdiction of the Fourth Army Command with the support of the Centre for Counterespionage and the local representatives of the Foreign Ministry.⁵ The operations against dangerous enemy aliens, including French nationals, began in Monaco on 29 December 1942.⁶ Once apprehended, dangerous enemy aliens were interned in the concentration camp that the Fourth Army established in the outskirts of the French village of Sospel,

³ Archivio centrale dello Stato (ACS)/Ministero dell’interno (MI)/Gabinetto/Ufficio Cifra (UC) Arrivo/raccolta1942-34/Barranco to police chief and head of political police division, 12 November 1942; Archives Nationales (AN)/AJ41/439/sous-dossierA.II.

⁴ CDJC/I-33,XLVIIIa-10/German Embassy in Paris to various addressees, 16 December 1942.

⁵ ACS/MI/Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza (DGPS)/Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati (DAGR)/Massime/busta (b.)110/fascicolo (f.)16.1.46/Foreign Ministry to various addressees, 22 December 1942.

⁶ ACS/MI/Gabinetto/UCArrivo/raccolta1942-39/Barranco to police chief, 29 December 1942.

north-east of Nice and close to the Italian border. Due to the low capacity of the camp, it was decided that only the enemy aliens deemed ‘most suspect and dangerous’, that is, those deemed politically hostile to Fascist Italy, would be interned in Sospel.⁷ Among them was also an unknown number of foreign Jews.⁸ The other ‘less dangerous’ enemy aliens would be placed in compulsory residence far from the coast and militarily sensitive areas.⁹

It was only after the internment of the ‘most suspect and dangerous’ enemy aliens in Sospel had begun that Barranco started planning the internment of foreign (i.e. other than Italian and French) Jews. Barranco’s plan included their evacuation from the coast to villages in the interior where they would be subject to compulsory residence under the surveillance of the *Carabinieri*, the Italian military police. Thus, Barranco envisaged for the vast majority of foreign Jews the same measure foisted upon the enemy aliens deemed less ‘suspect and dangerous’ (but dangerous nonetheless). This plan, which was approved by the Fourth Army Command, meant that although Jews *qua* Jews were treated as potentially dangerous for Italian security, they were not considered by the Italian authorities the most immediate threat. In early January 1943, Barranco estimated the number of Jews in the Alpes-Maritimes department at around 3,500.¹⁰ In fact, data collected by the French authorities in that same period offered the highly approximate figure of 15,000 Jews living in the Nice

⁷ ACS/MI/DGPS/DAGR/Massime/b.110/f.16.1.46/Police chief to Supreme Command, 27 December 1942.

⁸ ACS/MI/Gabinetto/UCArrivo/raccolte1943-1,3/Barranco to police chief, 14 and 27 January 1943.

⁹ See endnote 7.

¹⁰ Archivio storico-diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE)/Affari Politici 1931-1945 (AP)/Francia/b.80/f.7/Barranco to consul general in Nice Alberto Calisse, 6 January 1943.

region alone (Poznanski 2001, 357). The internment of the ‘less dangerous’ enemy aliens and foreign Jews in compulsory residences began on 20 February 1943 (or shortly thereafter).¹¹

The Nazi perception of Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France

Between early December 1942 and late February 1943, the Italian Army, Foreign Ministry and police coordinated and implemented, at Mussolini’s behest, a vast security policy that involved the neutralization of enemy aliens and foreign Jews residing inside the Italian occupation zone by means of internment in Sospel or compulsory residences, depending on their perceived degree of dangerousness. This, however, was not how the Nazi authorities viewed Fascist security policy.

The Nazi perception of the Fascist attitude towards Jews and the ‘Jewish problem’ in south-eastern France was crucially shaped by the clash between Rome and Vichy over the expulsion of Jews from the Italian to the German zone that occurred between the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943. Some ten days before Barranco carried out the first arrests of enemy aliens in Monaco, when no concrete steps had apparently been taken by the Italian authorities towards interning Jews, the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department Marcel Ribière ordered all non-French Jews who had entered his department after 1 January 1938 – altogether 1,400 people – to relocate to the Drôme and the Ardèche departments within three days.¹² On 29 and 30 December 1942 the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Supreme Command instructed their

¹¹ Archivio dell’Ufficio storico dello Stato Maggiore dell’Esercito (AUSSME)/N1-11/b.1100/Allegato 39.

¹² Archives départementales des Alpes-Maritimes (ADAM)/616W242.

representatives on the ground to demand the withdrawal of the expulsion order. The security measures towards Jews of any nationality within the Italian zone, including their internment, lay in the exclusive competence of the Italian authorities.¹³ Despite initial resistance, the Vichy government eventually conceded to the Italian demands.¹⁴

The ramifications of the Fascist government's opposition to Ribière's expulsion order soon reached beyond the French borders. By opposing the French anti-Jewish measures, the Italian authorities not only shielded Jews from French aggression, but effectively saved them from deportation to the Nazi death camps. The Nazi authorities were acutely aware of this. Ribière's instructions to expel Jews came directly from the Vichy Interior Ministry, which acted in turn on instructions from the SS.¹⁵ The latter envisaged the evacuation of all Jews from the coast and the internment of 'deportable' Jews in departments in the interior as a way to facilitate the restart of the transports 'to the east' in 1943. Consequently, the SS (and Nazi diplomats) considered the Italian Army's opposition to the French internment of Jews inland to be in glaring contradiction to the internment of Jews that the Italian Supreme Command had announced the Italian Army would carry out to the German High Command in early December 1942 (Klarsfeld 1985, 195–97, 203, 205–6; *ADAP* 1978, 132–33).¹⁶

¹³ ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.64/f.8/Foreign Ministry to head of liaison office with Fourth Army Command et al., 29 December 1942; ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.80/f.7/Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano to head of liaison office with Fourth Army Command et al., 2 January 1943; AUSSME/L-13/b.41/f.Segreto-Atti/General Alessandro Trabucchi, Fourth Army chief of staff, to unknown addressees, [30?] December 1942.

¹⁴ ADAM/616W242.

¹⁵ To my knowledge, no document bearing the instructions that the SS gave to the Vichy government has yet surfaced, although references to the instructions are found in subsequent German documents.

¹⁶ CDJC/XXVa-257a/Martin Luther to German Embassy in Paris, 31 January 1943.

The Nazi government's grievances were conveyed in a memorandum that the German Embassy in Rome submitted to the Italian government on 3 February 1943. The memorandum stressed that the French measures arose from a specific request by the German authorities and were motivated by the need to purge the French coastline of all elements hostile to the Axis forces. Accordingly, the Nazi government expressed its strong wish that the Italian Army reverse its decision and assist the French authorities in the implementation of its anti-Jewish measures, while also carrying out the announced internment of the Jews. Finally, the memorandum called for enhanced collaboration between German and Italian authorities to prevent Jews in the German zone from crossing into the Italian zone (MAE 1946, 28–9; Klarsfeld 1985, 204).

The Foreign Ministry responded a few days later. Senior Italian diplomats confirmed to their German colleagues that Rome opposed any French interference in Jewish policy within the Italian zone. They also pointed out that, to their knowledge, the announced internment of Jews was well underway (MAE 1946, 28; Carpi 1994, 105–6, 112, 283–84 endnotes 10–1; Klarsfeld 1985, 214–15).¹⁷ This was confirmed on 16 February, when the Fourth Army Command informed the German military authorities in France that many of the Jews perceived as 'more dangerous' had already been interned, and that the evacuation of the other 'less dangerous' Jews to compulsory residences was impending (Poliakov 1946, 72).¹⁸ It should also be

¹⁷ CDJC/XLVIIIa-13/German Embassy in Paris to *SS-Obersturmführer* Heinz Röthke, 8 February 1943.

¹⁸ CDJC/XLVIIIa-14,I-39/*Oberbefehlshaber West*'s chief of staff to SS and Police Supreme Commander in France [Carl Oberg], 17 February 1943.

stressed here that, already on 29 December, the Foreign Ministry had explicitly informed the Italian authorities on the ground that the passage of ‘undesirable elements’, namely non-Italian Jews, from the German into the Italian zone was to be discouraged (although the Nazi authorities presumably were unaware of these instructions).¹⁹

All this, however, was by no means the end of the matter. In fact, German requests to the Fascist ally to arrest and hand over to the Nazi security services any Jews who tried to cross from the German into the Italian zone, and concurrently allow the French authorities to expel Jews in the opposite direction, soon reached the highest levels of government. On 25 February the Reich Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop held the first of four meetings with Mussolini during his visit to Rome on 24–28 February.²⁰ On this occasion, Ribbentrop personally handed to the Italian dictator a memorandum prepared by the German Embassy in Rome detailing the aforementioned German requests (*DDI* 1990, 83). However, according to the German notes about the meetings that I consulted, during the actual talks the question of how to handle the Jews was discussed only once, on 25 February, and, despite a brief exchange between the two leaders about the recent events in southern France, only in the terms of general policy (Carpi 1994, 115–19; *ADAP* 1978, 286–306: 296–97, 302–3; Klarsfeld 1985, 228).²¹

¹⁹ ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.64/f.8/Foreign Ministry to head of liaison office with Fourth Army Command et al., 29 December 1942.

²⁰ ACS/Segreteria particolare del duce/Udienze/b.3157/f.Udienze del duce gennaio-luglio 1943.

²¹ A second-hand Italian report of the meetings indicated, however, that the question of Jews in Croatia was also discussed (Steinberg 2002, 113; Rodogno 2006, 385).

The events that occurred in the Italian-occupied departments of Savoie, Haute-Savoie and Drôme concurrently with Ribbentrop's visit to Rome brought the question of the Jews in southern France back on the discussion table soon enough. On his return to Germany (or soon thereafter), Ribbentrop learned that the Italian Army had again opposed the French authorities' expulsion of 'deportable' non-Italian Jews, alongside British and American citizens, from the Italian to the German zone and even demanded the release of Jews who had already been arrested or interned.²² Also in this case, the French measure was prompted by the SS and pursued the deportation of the Jews involved (Klarsfeld 1985, 225). Ribbentrop reacted immediately. On 9 March he cabled the German ambassador to Rome, Hans Georg von Mackensen, clear-cut instructions to approach Mussolini at the earliest possible opportunity and formally request that the Italian Army be excluded from dealing with the 'Jewish problem' in south-eastern France. For Ribbentrop, the request was warranted by the fact that the Italian military authorities were inexplicably opposing the purge from the Italian zone of Jewish and other fifth columnists, thereby culpably undermining the Axis defences against a possible Allied landing in southern France. More importantly, the actions of the Italian military contradicted Mussolini's own stand on the matter (Klarsfeld 1985, 235–37; *ADAP* 1978, 368–73).

Mackensen carried out Ribbentrop's instructions on 17 March (Klarsfeld 1985, 243–46; *ADAP* 1978, 413–14). Meanwhile, Ribbentrop received the Italian Foreign Ministry's response, dated 9 March, to the aforementioned memorandum of the German Embassy of 25 February. Though in a conciliatory tone, the Fascist diplomats

²² AUSSME/N1-11/b.1127/Allegato 56; ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.80/f.7/Supreme Command to Fourth Army Command et al., 1 March 1943; AN/AJ41/1182/General Carlo Avarna di Gualtieri, Supreme Command representative, to Vichy government, 2 March 1943.

reaffirmed the principle that the security measures inside the Italian occupation zone, including those due to be taken against Jews, lay in the exclusive competence of the Italian occupation authorities. The latter would, therefore, attend to those measures independently. With regards to the German request to prevent the crossing of non-Italian Jews into the Italian zone, the Foreign Ministry pointed out that orders to that effect had already been issued in late December 1942, and that these orders had been confirmed (*DDI* 1990, 132).

Far from appeasing Ribbentrop, the Foreign Ministry's note further enraged him. In Ribbentrop's view, the note proved that the Italian Foreign Ministry was implicated in sabotaging Nazi Jewish policy in France (Klarsfeld 1985, 238–40). Parenthetically, it should be mentioned here that the Nazi authorities' efforts to obtain the Jews who lived inside the Italian-ruled areas in Croatia had also been frustrated (Rodogno 2006, 374–85).

However, upon closer inspection it is apparent that Ribbentrop's accusations against the Italian Army, which were based on reports from the Nazi security services in France (Klarsfeld 1985, 225–27; Carpi 1994, 116–17), lacked substance. The assertion that the Fourth Army was lax about security policy was false. In mid-February 1943, 110 people were interned in Sospel.²³ Soon thereafter the camp reached full capacity (250–300 people), thereby forcing the Fourth Army Command to establish two new concentration camps in the spring of 1943.²⁴ Meanwhile, starting

²³ ACS/MI/DGPS/DAGR/Massime/b.110/f.16.1.46/Army General Staff memorandum, 16 February 1943.

²⁴ AUSSME/N1-11/b.1218/Intendenza IV Armata, Diario storico-militare (marzo-aprile 1943)/Allegato 40.

on 20 February, 1,404 foreign Jews had been sent to compulsory residences, while another 379 Jews had been notified of their impending interment, resulting in a total of 1,783 people interned (or due to be interned soon) by 10 April 1943.²⁵

Another conspicuous mistake was Ribbentrop's assertion that the Supreme Command's (and Foreign Ministry's) opposition to the expulsion of Jews from the Italian to the German zone in early March 1943 contradicted Mussolini's orders (Voigt 1996, 308). The order to block the French measure, in fact, stemmed from the Italian dictator (USSME 2002, 306–10: 306). Likewise, the earlier decision to give precedence to the arrest of dangerous enemy aliens – among them, as mentioned, also some Jews – over the generalized internment of Jews was the result of the orders that Mussolini himself had given in early December 1942 and that the Supreme Command had announced to the German High Command.

Why, then, were the SS and Nazi diplomats so blind to the reality of the Fascist approach to the 'Jewish problem' in south-eastern France? Underpinning the intra-Axis disagreements about Jewish policy in southern France was a conceptual issue: while in early 1943 the Nazi authorities understood the internment of Jews purely as a means to the end of extermination, at that point the Fascist government still dealt with the internment of Jews as an end in itself. This does not mean that other options were unthinkable to Mussolini or the top Fascist officials. Chierici's instructions in July 1943 ordering German Jews in the Italian zone to be turned over to the Nazis proved precisely that. Nor should we assume that the top Italian leaders were necessarily all in agreement about this issue. Instead, it means that in March 1943 the Fascist government's official stand on the matter of Jews who lived inside the Italian zone

²⁵ ACS/DGPS/DAGR/Categorie permanentiA16/b.5/f.C14.

was to oppose their deportation (while leaving non-Italian Jews in German-occupied territories to their destiny).²⁶ Consequently, none of the Italian assurances or even proof about the internment of Jews in south-eastern France could satisfy the Nazis for the simple reason that the Fascist government did not consider handing them over – whether directly or through the French authorities – for deportation and thus extermination (Bartikowski 2013, 176).

It was therefore true, as repeatedly lamented by the Nazi authorities and noted by Daniel Carpi (1994, 146), that Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France departed from Nazi Jewish policy in fundamental ways. Equally true was that the Fascist government's claim to exclusive authority over policy towards Jews, and its resulting opposition to French (or German) encroachment in that domain within the territories under the Fourth Army's rule, damaged Nazi extermination policy, not least because other governments, including Vichy, used Italy's position as an excuse to deliberately delay amidst growing German pressure to deport the Jews (Klarsfeld 1985, 225–27; Carpi 1994, 104–5, 111). In early 1943, that damage was even greater, as Fascist Italy's stance undermined the Nazi leadership's efforts to use other countries' involvement in the extermination campaign as a means to dissuade potential defections from the Axis camp (Longerich 2010, 374–75).

Yet, the fact that the Fascist government opposed the deportation of Jews residing in the Italian zone did not *per se* signify that the Italian leaders and authorities held a friendly attitude towards Jews, or that we should dismiss the Foreign Ministry's defence of internment and refoulement of Jews as adequate measures to solve the 'Jewish question' in the Italian zone as 'meaningless arguments and excuses' (Carpi

²⁶ ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.80/f.7/Supreme Command to general Avarna and Foreign Ministry, 8 March 1943; AN/AJ41/1182/General Avarna to Vichy government, 17 March 1943.

1994, 125). Only a few days after the Foreign Ministry submitted its response to the German Embassy, the recently appointed undersecretary of state to foreign affairs, Giuseppe Bastianini, briefed the Supreme Command and the police about the outcomes from the recent talks with German officials about Jewish matters. Bastianini reaffirmed the principle that the security measures against foreigners and Jews within the Italian occupation zone were the sole responsibility of the Italian authorities. At the same time, Bastianini instructed the Army and the police to take urgent measures to prevent non-Italian Jews from crossing into the Italian zone. Bastianini stressed that these orders came directly from Mussolini.²⁷ As a result, on 26 March, general Vercellino sent instructions down the chain of command to the effect that, as part of the forthcoming introduction of a patrolling service along the demarcation line between the Italian and German occupation zones, it would be possible to stop the inflow of non-Italian Jews from the German-ruled areas. In the meantime, Jews who entered the Italian zone starting that day, 26 March, were to be arrested and handed over to the German authorities, if the latter requested the Jews and after having ascertained the date of the Jews' arrival in the Italian zone.²⁸ To render these instructions more effective, a deal was reached, presumably with the French authorities, which allowed the French police to arrest and expel Jews who arrived in the Italian zone after the cut-off date set by Vercellino, although the Italian authorities reserved for themselves the right to check the validity of the French measures.²⁹

²⁷ ASMAE/AP/Francia/b.80/f.7/Bastianini to Supreme Command et al., 13 March 1943.

²⁸ AUSSME/M3/b.476/ff.3126(3121),3127/Vercellino to unknown addressees, 26 March 1943.

²⁹ ACS/MI/DGPS/DAGR/Massime/b.248/f.103.37/Lospinoso to police chief, 5 April 1943.

No proof of the implementation of Vercellino's instructions has yet surfaced. It should be pointed out, however, that in Nice French police could in fact expel Jews who had entered the Italian zone after 26 March without reporting it to the local Italian military command.³⁰

Vercellino's instructions and the orders that prompted them prove that the Fascist leaders and the Italian authorities on the ground took security policy, including the measures against Jews, very seriously; yet that policy had different priorities than the corresponding Nazi security policy. More specifically, albeit Jews *qua* Jews were treated as posing a real danger to the Italian troops, they were not regarded as the greatest and most immediate threat – and this irrespective of their actual degree of dangerousness.³¹ Jews in the German zone were no more dangerous than in the Italian zone, yet the Nazis hunted them down and killed them. This indicates that the Italian decision to not hand over Jews was not only the result of the local circumstances of the occupation, but reflected a fundamental conceptual divide with the Axis partner on how vigorous the fight against the Jewish enemy in the pursuit of final victory should be. Consequently, from Rome's viewpoint, there was no contradiction at all between interning Jews in a concentration camp or within compulsory residences, while simultaneously rejecting to send them to their death.

The Nazi pursuit of Angelo Donati

³⁰ ADAM/616W261/French note on the 'Questions asked by the Italian military command', 31 March 1943.

³¹ Here my analysis departs from that of Davide Rodogno (2007, 67; 2010, 496) who considers the Italian refusal to hand over Jews in south-eastern France to be, *inter alia*, a mere reflection of their actual harmlessness. For a recent discussion of Rodogno's arguments see Emauele Sica (2016, ch. 10).

The fundamental difference between the Nazi and Fascist Italy's conceptions of the Jewish danger, and thus of the means by which to tackle it, emerged again, ironically but not paradoxically, in the wake of Mussolini's decision to exclude the Italian Army from dealing with the 'Jewish problem' in southern France and entrust it to the Italian civilian police. As mentioned, two days after hearing Ribbentrop's complaints from Mackensen on 17 March, Mussolini appointed police inspector-general Guido Lospinoso to the head of the Royal Inspectorate of Racial Police in charge of Jewish policy in south-eastern France. The task of Lospinoso's Inspectorate was to intern foreign Jews, including French Jews, at least one hundred kilometres away from the coast by the end of March 1943 (USSME 2002, 306–10: 307). On 21 May, exactly two months after his arrival in Nice,³² Lospinoso informed the prefect of the Alpes-Maritimes department that 4,000 Jews had already been evacuated from the coast to compulsory residences in the interior (this figure comprised the Jews interned during the first phase of the evacuations under Barranco and the Fourth Army's supervision).³³

Meanwhile, news of Mussolini's decision to entrust Jewish matters to the Italian police had reached Berlin and, thereafter, the Nazi security services in Paris. The SS immediately tried to establish contacts with Lospinoso to coordinate Jewish policy, but to no avail (Carpi 1994, 146–54). The reason for the SS' failure in reaching Lospinoso shall not concern us here. Suffice to say that the reason did not lie in

³² ACS/MI/DGPS/Divisione del Personale di Pubblica Sicurezza

(DPPS)/versamento 1959/b.168/f.Guido Lospinoso/Mission abroad expenses claim form for March 1943.

³³ AN/AJ41/1179/Biweekly report from Colonel Bonnet, 4 June 1943; ADAM/616W125/Prefect of Alpes-Maritimes to chief of Vichy police, 24 May 1943.

Lospinoso's efforts to rescue Jews from the Nazis (Fenoglio, forthcoming). Instead, let us focus on how the Nazi services perceived the nature of Lospinoso's actions.

As the SS chased Lospinoso in April and May 1943, they began to receive information from French sources about the Italian Jewish banker Angelo Donati and his role in assisting Jews to cross into the Italian zone as well as facilitating their ensuing internment in compulsory residences. This information was not necessarily wrong. Donati did help Lospinoso in evacuating Jews from the coast and the importance of his action at the local level should not be underestimated. However, the reports that arrived on the SS officers' desks went a step further. They portrayed Donati as Lospinoso's closest and very influential advisor, to the extent that the internment of foreign Jews in Haute-Savoie was said to be the result of Donati's own decisions (Poliakov 1946, 81, 99–105, 138–40; Klarsfeld 1985, 350).³⁴ These reports corresponded with the Nazi authorities' ideas about the perfect harmony that existed between the Italian authorities and the Jews, and the latter's efforts to undermine the Axis from within by spreading defeatist propaganda among Italian troops (Klarsfeld 1985, 218–20).³⁵

To the SS, the information about Donati made perfect sense, so much so that they planned his abduction, before eventually backpedalling, wary of the repercussions that such an action might have on the intra-Axis relations. However, despite all the

³⁴ CDJC/XXVa-293/French report about the 'Italian Unit for the Jewish question' (forwarded to the SS), 20 May 1943.

³⁵ CDJC/I-38/Dr Helmut Knochen [commander of Nazi security services in France] to Heinrich Müller [Gestapo chief], 12 February 1943; CDJC/XXVa-297/Secret report from head of the High Command of the Armed Forces' Special Staff for Trade War and Economic Military Action to Reich Foreign Office et al., 21 May 1943.

good connections that Donati had with Italian officials, the image that the Nazi authorities had of Donati's influence on Lospinoso was highly exaggerated. First of all, Barranco was the official who had initially approached Donati and involved him in the internment process in early 1943. This meant that there was no relation at all between Donati's involvement in the Italian anti-Jewish measures and the SS' difficulties in establishing contacts with Lospinoso. Second, the internment of Jews in Haute-Savoie was Mussolini's idea (USSME 2002, 306–10: 307). Finally, as it had previously been the case with the internment process under Barranco's supervision, Lospinoso was the one making decisions at all times, not Donati. Lospinoso himself offered irrefutable proof of this after the war, when he stated that Donati was left in the dark about Chierici's order to surrender German Jews on 15 July 1943 and (although Lospinoso 'forgot' to mention this detail) his handover of lists of Jews to the Nazis in the following weeks (Fenoglio 2013, *passim*). Similar to Ribbentrop's accusations against the Italian Army, the narrative of Donati as the mastermind of Fascist internment reflected the highly distorted Nazi perspective by which any deviation from the Nazi approach to the 'Jewish question' was perceived as lack of comprehension of the 'problem' or was perceived as even direct fraternization with the Jewish enemy.

Conclusions

The episodes of Chierici's order and of the lists that Lospinoso gave to the SS in Marseille in the summer of 1943 that Michele Sarfatti elucidated twenty years ago highlighted the importance for the historian to use Italian sources to retrace and analyse Fascist Jewish policy. This study has taken a step forward. It has illustrated the analytical trap of reading Italian actions (and sources) through Nazi lenses (e.g.

Seibel 2016, 185–216) and, with it, the risk for historians to fall prey to the same stereotypes about the invariably humane, undisciplined yet scheming Italians that prevented the Nazis from recognizing the anti-Semitic nature of Fascist Jewish policy in south-eastern France (e.g. Steinberg 2002). Donati's case illustrates this point clearly. Donati's involvement in the evacuation of Jews from the coast revealed that Barranco and Lospinoso were indeed astute; yet, both officers collaborated with Donati not to help the Jews, but to more easily carry out the anti-Semitic measure (i.e. the internment of Jews) that their superiors had entrusted upon them.

At the same time, if it is true that the Nazi sources analysed in this article misrepresented Fascist policy towards Jews in south-eastern France, it is equally true that profound differences between the Fascist and the Nazi Jewish policies in that context existed – an aspect that historians should not overlook (Gordon 2009, 314; Roberts 2009, 531). Donati's case exemplifies this. His actions occurred by virtue of the fact that the internment measures in southern France, similar to Italy between the summer of 1940 and September 1943, did not entail physical or moral abuse (Voigt 1996, 590–91; Sarfatti 2006, 142–3).³⁶ This does not make the internment of Jews in compulsory residences any less anti-Semitic. Instead, it proves that anti-Semitism does not automatically lead to extermination. Thus, even though practical considerations help explain Barranco's and later Lospinoso's decision to involve Donati in the internment process (Voigt 1996, 314, 322), this argument fails to consider the 'horizon of meaning' (Moishe Postone in Bloxham 2009, 294) within which the two high-ranking police officers operated between November 1942 and July 1943. Barranco's and later Lospinoso's decision to collaborate with Donati

³⁶ See endnote 5.

resulted from the interplay of the Fascist perception of Jews *qua* Jews as a real but minor threat in the context of total war *and* the practical, daily circumstances of the occupation. Accordingly, a more sophisticated analysis of Nazi sources certainly validates historians' recent efforts to move beyond the image of the 'good Italian', but it also exposes the analytical limitations of the concurrent characterization of the Italians as 'pragmatists' purely driven by opportunistic considerations in their policy towards the Jews as opposed to the 'ideological' Nazis purely driven by their Jew-hatred (e.g. Rodogno 2006, ch. 11; Bartikowski 2013, 170, 176; Seibel 2016, 212). When combined with Fascist sources, Nazi accounts of Fascist Jewish policy can help shed light on the ideological viewpoint from which Fascist Italy understood and consequently approached the 'Jewish problem' and thereby account for *both* similarities and differences in the Axis partners' treatment of Jews within their respective spheres of interest.

But exposing the Nazi perception of Fascist policy towards the Jews is not enough. We must also assess how that perception influenced Nazi actions towards its Fascist ally and the latter's reactions. The French case offers another interesting example in this regard. Although the responsibility for the decision to hand over German Jews in July 1943 lay exclusively with Chierici, and possibly with Mussolini himself (Sarfatti 1998, 321), it is worth noticing that the chain of events that eventually led to Chierici's order was initiated by the Nazis and, at least partially, by their misreading of the nature of Lospinoso's orders and actions. In this sense, a fine-grained analysis of Nazi sources can help investigate the complex dynamic between the Axis partners in Jewish policy in 1940–43.

Acknowledgements

My gratitude to Chelsea Sambells for her comments and help with editing. Thanks also to Annalisa Capristo, Ernest Ialongo and Natalia Indrimi for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

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