

LIVES UNDER COVER: A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF FASCIST AND NAZI SPIES,  
1927-1945

A Dissertation

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by

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This dissertation is a comparative and transnational history of Fascist and Nazi spies from the creation of the Fascist secret police in 1927 to the end of the Second World War in 1945. Who spied for the totalitarian dictatorships and why? How does a history of these largely unknown figures reorient scholarship on the period? I conceptualize totalitarianism from the bottom up: through in-depth microhistorical analysis of the motives and milieux of more than fifty spies, “Lives Under Cover” depicts the inner workings of the Fascist and Nazi bureaucracies of terror. While previous historiographies have concentrated on the police chiefs and political leaders rather than on their agents in the field, I renovate our understanding of totalitarianism, by tracking the infiltration of networks of political opponents by Fascist and Nazi agents and comparing their activity in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Nazi Austria, and Vichy France.

Drawing on a variety of archival sources, such as Fascist police records and court trials of convicted Nazi spies, I explain how the secret police spies at times enforced and at times disrupted the totalitarian system of repression. Scholars provide us with insight into the institutional structures of the Fascist and the Nazi secret police. Nevertheless, we are left with the misleading impression that these police services were perfectly functioning machines of terror controlled by a small number of powerful people. I build on this scholarship by moving the focus to the individuals who were tasked with enforcing these systems. My research contributes to the history of authoritarian repression in that I introduce a new point of view by exploring the liminal state

between prosecutors and victims that the spies inhabited. Fascist and Nazi surveillance systems needed to incorporate some of the very groups they excluded and dominated, such as gay and Jewish people. I argue that these surveillance systems depended on individuals from these groups to gain access to marginal spaces that they could not otherwise infiltrate. At the same time, however, relying on informers made these systems more fragile, because the spies pursued their own agendas and were, at times, both targets and actors of the totalitarian repression.

## Biographical Sketch

Benedetta Luciana Sara Carnaghi was raised in the town of Cameri in the north of Italy. She received a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Padua in 2011, two Masters of Arts in the History of International Relations from the Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne in 2012 and 2013, a Diploma in History from the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 2015, and a Master of Arts in History from Cornell University in 2017. As a historian of modern Italy, France, and Germany, she explores the history of totalitarian surveillance from below, focusing on how the actors at the bottom of the Fascist and Nazi chains of command chose to enforce or disrupt authoritarian repression.

This dissertation was supported by several grants and fellowships from the following institutions: at Cornell, the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, the Society for the Humanities, and the Cornell Institute for European Studies; elsewhere, the Chateaubriand Fellowship Program, the Lemmermann Foundation in Rome, Trinity College’s Cesare Barbieri Endowment, the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD).

Previous versions of two chapters from this dissertation appeared as journal articles: “Betraying Your Own: Jewish Spies and the Deportation of Jews during the Second World War” in *S:I.M.O.N. Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (2020): 50-65; and “Three Layers of Ambiguity: Homosexual Spies and International Intrigue in Fascist Italy” in *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945*, Vol. 13, 2017, “International Intrigue: Plotting Espionage as Cultural Artifact.” Her work has also appeared in *Les Cahiers Sirice*, the *Hoover Digest*, the *Bulletin de l’Institut Pierre Renouvin*, and *l’impegno*.

“Lives Under Cover” was awarded the 2021 Messenger-Chalmers Prize for the Best Dissertation on Human Progress & the Evolution of Civilization at Cornell University.

*Acknowledgments*  
**The American Dream and the Beauty of Rejection**

New York City, April 2014. My parents called me and told me that they had just spoken on the phone with a polite professor from Cornell University, Enzo Traverso. “Really?!” I asked. I had received a rejection from Cornell. I had also received rejections from pretty much every American Ph.D. program I applied to, so I was in a bit of a “to hell with America” mood. After a semester as an exchange student at Columbia University, I was hoping for a better outcome. “He is Italian! He is in the Romance Studies Department,” explained my parents. “He says that the History Department forwarded your application to Romance Studies, and that you could do a Ph.D. in Italian Studies. He would be very interested in working with you.”

I knew Enzo’s work, of course. I am not sure it’s possible to study the history of twentieth-century Europe without knowing it. His books on Nazi violence and totalitarianism were in the bibliography of my Master’s thesis. After a few Google searches, I was amazed. Not only is Enzo Italian, but he earned a Ph.D. in France and taught there for many years before coming to Cornell. I applied to Ph.D. programs in the United States while I was a Master’s student in France. The biggest challenge I faced was trying to decode an academic system that was completely different from the French one: Enzo appeared to be in a unique position to understand my background and the strengths and weaknesses of my previous education. He was absolutely perfect.

The “American dream,” as I call it—this idea that studying in America would have been a dream—was actually my father’s, before mine. An avid reader of John Steinbeck and Philip Roth, he attached a quasi-magical meaning to the “New World.” In 1960s Italy, his parents were poor, so they sent him to a technical high school, fearing that they would not have the money to pay for his university studies. By the time he had finished high school, they had found the necessary funding to pay for his college tuition, but, because of the kind of high school diploma he had, he

could only choose between scientific majors. He would have preferred the humanities. His barely legible handwritten stoichiometry book is a metaphor for the experience he had, studying chemistry at the University of Milan: stern and bleak, with little interaction between students and professors, and few opportunities. He got his degree, but more than half of his fellow students dropped out of the program. He wanted me to have what he could not have. In 2007, he organized an exchange between my Italian high school and an American one, St. Mary Academy Bay View in Riverside, Rhode Island, and accompanied me on the trip. It's quite ironic to think that, during our stay at the school, we were treated to an entire English literature unit on the failure of the American dream, including discussions of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Yet, we persevered in our version of the dream. During that stay, we also visited Brown University and MIT. Accessible professors, colorful labs, international team projects: my father was amazed by the resources he could see that those institutions had. He encouraged me to pursue these opportunities as soon as I could.

But the road was bumpier than expected. Applying to American Ph.D. programs from a non-anglophone background proved quite challenging: no matter the quality of my previous education, it was hard to convey its strength within the framework of different requirements. And, as I now know, the outcome of these applications is mostly out of our hands, because there are many factors that we cannot control. Yet, rejection was a blessing, and the purpose of these acknowledgments is to thank those who made it so. That initial rejection gifted me with twice as many friends as others have, because I felt I belonged to two departments instead of just one. It gave me the necessary thick skin to laugh at the many rejections to come. But most importantly, it taught me that in life, it's good to be adventurous and embrace the unexpected.

## **Thank You, Wonderful Committee**

So, I turned my eyes away from my European opportunities and embraced the idea of coming to Cornell. Enzo was not on campus when I visited, but our paths crossed in New York City, when he came back from a conference in Colombia. I remember meeting him in a café with Federico Finchelstein—an alumnus of Cornell’s History Ph.D. program, now Professor of History at the New School for Social Research—who spoke of Cornell as a wonderful environment for grad school. Enzo immediately removed any formality: “ci diamo del tu.” Despite being one of the highest ranked professors at the university, with a constantly growing list of important publications, he treats his graduate students like colleagues. Most of all, he likes to interact with his students in person—the “Mediterranean” way. I am incredibly grateful for his support throughout these seven years of grad school—from our stimulating intellectual conversations, to his patience with my VERY LONG emails and bureaucratic upheavals, to his sense of humor. I am still laughing at what he labeled with disdain my “chronometrical vision of intellectual production,” because I dared compare the dissertation to a marathon. And yet here I am, at the finish line! Just kidding, Enzo...

When it came to choosing the other members of my committee, I had no doubt that I wanted them to be women. As I mentioned, I made the decision to come to Cornell while I was spending a semester at Columbia University as a visiting fellow from the *École Normale Supérieure* in France. I had the chance to ask some of the professors at Columbia about Cornell’s History faculty, and one of the wonderful things they told me was: there are women around! Women are a large component of the History faculty at Cornell. Since one of the biggest issues in the academic world remains gender parity, I have to say that hearing that was really encouraging for me.

I met Claudia Verhoeven and Isabel Hull when I visited the Cornell campus for the first time.

Claudia took me to the Green Dragon café and immediately put me at ease, explaining that, even if I was in the Romance Studies Department, I could take all the history courses I wanted. She gave me very helpful guidance about how to navigate the Ph.D. program, making it much easier for me to start on the right track and with a clear understanding of my future steps. During our conversations leading up to the A exam, she patiently faced the *very, very difficult* task of making me—probably the least intellectual-history-inclined graduate student who crossed her path—appreciate intellectual history. Always approachable and available, she has since nurtured my written work with helpful suggestions, insightful comments, and encouraging calls for greater rigor. But if you ask any graduate student in the program to define Claudia, they will answer: “She is simply the best.” Over the course of my graduate career, she was twice Director of Graduate Studies (the second time during a pandemic!), a role in which she utterly excels. Despite her extremely busy schedule, she always has time for students. Moreover, she treats all students equally, helping them regardless of whether she is their direct advisor or not. If I ever have the chance to become a professor, I will model my commitment to students after hers. I did not have the chance to take classes with her, but this anonymous reviewer on Rate My Professor reinforces my suspicion that she is the coolest teacher: “Brilliant professor, brilliant class. Professor Verhoeven’s half-crazed rants and colorless sweaters will forever remain in my Sovietized heart.”

I was incredibly lucky to meet Itsie (not to mention be in time to catch her last years before retirement!). She was technically on leave, but she happened to be on campus when I visited. Previous conversations with students and faculty had conveyed the idea that she was this somewhat legendary professor, incredibly sharp, but most importantly not to be messed with. Unfortunately, I was quite exhausted when I met her, so I proceeded to do what you ought not to do with Professor Hull: I launched myself into a lengthy, incoherent word-vomit about my Master’s thesis, seasoned

with occasional digressions about plans for grad school, and God knows what else. She did not cut me off. She actually did not say a single word while I was speaking, but when I was done, she told me that she was happy to take on a new graduate student, as long as I knew that she was probably going to retire during my graduate career. Many colleagues have stated what a brilliant scholar she is. But what people don't know well enough is what a fantastic listener and advisor she is for her students. Professor Hull is, in fact, a stripping away of the inessential: I'd go to her office with a convoluted problem and exit with a clear solution. Sadly, I see from the page I've already reached with these acknowledgments that I have not picked up any of her concision, but I'll keep trying. I also had the privilege of taking many of her courses and seeing firsthand what an excellent lecturer she is. I am very grateful for everything that she taught me, from her inspiring work ethic to her strong approach to research to her extraordinary ability to unpack the most complex of arguments.

Finally, I added to my committee as ad hoc member Alya Aglan from the Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne. Alya supervised my second Master's thesis, and, from our first meeting, I decided that I was going to involve her in pretty much all of my projects (or as many as I can!). The preface of her bestseller *Le Temps de la Résistance* starts with the words “Je ne suis pas née ici.” She was not born in France, but in Egypt, so she has a certain critical distance towards the history of the French Resistance that she studies. But she also understands the challenging nature of being a foreigner in France: from day one, she was an unwearied ally, supporting me in all aspects of my experience at the university, whether bureaucratic or intellectual. She is also a great believer in collaborative work, so she encourages her students to work together. In 2018, she put me in touch with two other Ph.D. students she supervises, Guillaume Pollack (also at Paris 1) and Vincent Houle (in joint supervision between Paris 1 and the Université de Montréal), and we organized a conference for the SIRICE laboratory at Paris 1. The conference resulted in the

publication of the collective work “Frontières. Circulations, vie quotidienne, illégalités” (“Borders. Circulations, daily life, illegalities”) in *Les Cahiers Sirice*, which I co-edited with Guillaume and Vincent. Alya’s own advisor, Jean-Pierre Azéma, used to take her out for lunch and dinner all the time, so she shows equal generosity to her students. I have not yet been able to offer her a single meal—not even a coffee. She says that when I am hired as a professor, she’ll let me do so. I told her that, given the state of the job market, it’s a terrible investment, but she does not budge.

### **Thank You, Department of Romance Studies**

I am extremely grateful to the Department of Romance Studies for giving me the opportunity to come to Cornell, and in particular to a few people who deserve special mention. Rebecca Davidson and Christina Alario, graduate field assistant and administrative assistant respectively when I arrived, were literally the first people I met on campus and conveyed a great impression with their kindness and helpfulness. Christina also hosted me a couple times in her beautiful house in Cayuga Heights. Timothy Campbell, Department Chair when I arrived, and with whom I had also had a long conversation on the phone, was always very helpful and patient. Mostly, I thank him for not hanging up on me when I asked him if I could do two Ph.D.s in a row, first in Italian Studies and then in History... if only I knew how much work one was!

Of course, I need to acknowledge my wonderful cohort—Katryn Evinson, Jack Frost, Magdala Jeudy, Conall Cash, Nick Huelster, and Richard LeBlanc! Our gatherings were always a lot of fun. Katryn and Jack are also very skilled community builders, so they have been brilliant allies in all our collaborative endeavors. With them, Nick, and a few more friends—Nate Boling, Patrick Kozey, Romain Pasquer, Adam Schoene, Lia Turtas, and Yen Vu—we organized a successful graduate conference titled “Ideas of South,” which brought to campus an incredible group of international researchers with whom we are still in touch. I also learned a lot from Karen

Pinkus's course on Federico Fellini's cinema and Mary K. Redmond's Methodology of Romance Language Learning and Teaching, and I greatly enjoyed teaching a semester of Italian I with Flaminia Cervesi and Valentina Fulginiti.

However, I was integrating the program in Italian Studies with my own purpose of becoming a historian, and ultimately realized that this unusual situation implied some constraints, including not getting any training in teaching history. So, I requested a transfer to the History Department. Surprisingly, everyone was extremely supportive, including the new Department Chair, Marilyn Migiel, and the then Director of Graduate Studies, Edmundo Paz-Soldán, who skillfully negotiated the conditions of my transfer. I want to stress very clearly that my decision was in no way based on my experience with the Department of Romance Studies, which had been nothing but extremely generous in letting me pursue my interests. It was simply a matter of time management and of coherence in the direction of my studies. And even when I moved "next door," I continued to make frequent excursions to all the activities, conferences, talks, and workshops organized by Romance Studies (not to mention the unforgettable Romance Studies Reading Nights!). Most importantly, the friendships I had acquired remained intact.

### **Thank You, Department of History**

I am equally grateful to the Department of History for welcoming me with open arms. I first discussed my potential transfer with Rachel Weil, who was Director of Graduate Studies at the time. She told me something along the lines of: "We will do our best to see if you can transfer to History. If that is not possible, we will provide you with the best historical education possible." It was very encouraging to hear those words. Rachel has been very supportive on many levels throughout all my years in grad school. I also had the opportunity to be a teaching assistant for her course "The Making of Modern Europe," and I truly enjoyed collaborating with her and Nate

Boling, my co-TA. Nate, together with Amanda Bosworth, Sean Cosgrove, Lauren Jackson, Nick Myers, Annie Tomlinson, and Hoang Minh Vu, was also part of my History cohort. From the very first course we took, the introduction to the graduate study of history, these historians in training have been a wonderful source of support!

For their interesting courses, and advice on papers, teaching, fellowships, and job application materials, I would like to thank Ed Baptist, Ernesto Bassi, Judith Byfield, Holly Case, Ray Craib, Cristina Florea, Durba Ghosh, Larry Glickman, Sandra Greene, Tamara Loos, Mostafa Minawi, Mary Beth Norton, Camille Robcis, Aaron Sachs, Robert Travers, and Stephen Vider. Holly Case and Camille Robcis left Cornell during my graduate career, but I was very grateful to catch some of their teaching, and benefit from their wonderful skills at community building and the many initiatives they organized (including Holly Case's "Iron Circle"! ). Tamara Loos and Ray Craib deserve singling out because as Chair and Director of Graduate Studies, respectively, they had the difficult task of leading the History Department through the Covid-19 pandemic. They both devoted extraordinary attention and care to graduate students' issues, working hard to find alternative funding for the students who had seen their research and travel plans disrupted by the pandemic. Tamara was very receptive to the change that George Floyd's murder and the other racial violence incidents called for, and encouraged the department to organize initiatives to educate ourselves about those issues. I greatly enjoyed the discussions with our little group, including—in addition to Tamara and me—Sarah Meiners, Aimée Plukker, and Samantha Wesner.

Aaron Sachs also deserves special mention. I had the great fortune of taking the department's graduate research seminar with him. Aaron created a wonderful collaborative environment, and I benefitted enormously from his contribution, help, and encouragement, and that of the other seminar participants—which included Jessy Price, Molly Reed, and Rebecca Townsend, in

addition to my cohort mates Amanda Bosworth and Hoang Minh Vu. The paper I wrote in the seminar, titled “Mussolini’s Four Would-be Assassins: Emergency Politics and the Consolidation of Fascist Power,” was awarded the 2020 Sidney Tarrow Paper Prize of the Cornell Institute for European Studies. In due course, I also discovered that Aaron was the sponsor of a group called “Historians Are Writers!” (HAW!). I share the group’s beliefs that writing history does not only entail getting the historiography straight and all the sources in place, but also rests on our skill as writers and storytellers. This dissertation is, in fact, all about meaningful stories! So, I have been enthusiastically engaged in the group’s activities since my first year on campus, greatly enjoying our evenings of laid-back discussions, snacks, and drinks at each other’s houses. I should also say that when I arrived at Cornell, I wasn’t very talkative in the classes I took, because I had to overcome the fear of saying something stupid. In Europe, our classes are not particularly interactive. The system may be slightly changing now, but when I was a student in Italy and France, the professor essentially came in and lectured for one or two hours. At the end, we could ask a couple of questions or request clarifications, if necessary (and they’d better be good nitpicking questions, otherwise we were clearly told that there was no point wasting everybody’s time!). So, I credit Aaron and HAW! for helping me develop the necessary confidence to share my ideas more during our meetings. In the last two years, with my friend Kelsey Utne, I also coordinated the group’s activities. We weren’t too lucky, since the pandemic forced us to move to Zoom meetings (clearly, not as fun as the in-person ones!), but we persevered, and we were happy to keep the group going.

While Kelsey will obviously be featured in a later section devoted to friends, this is the place where I thank her for being a staunch ally in my endeavor of making the department a more collaborative place and creating a sense of community among the grad students—an endeavor we

pursued through all the activities we organized on behalf of HAW! and the Graduate History Association (GHA). I would also like to thank the other friends who contributed to this effort: the previous HAW! coordinators with whom we crossed paths, Mattias Fibiger, Joe Giacomelli, Amy Kohout, and Molly Reed; Lewis D'Avigdor and Kwelina Thompson, who were GHA co-officers with us; and all the students who have been on the Graduate Colloquium Committee with me over the years—Jennifer Begakis, Spencer Beswick, Nate Boling, Amanda Bosworth, Kelsey Jennings Roggensack, Craig Lyons, Michael Miller, Nate Norris, Marcos Perez Canizares, Aimée Plukker, and Samantha Wesner. When I left Ithaca for my two years of archival research in Europe, Craig basically single-handedly sustained the Graduate History Association, for which we are all very grateful. More recently, Sarah Meiners and Austin Raetz took over, and helped us maintain a sense of community during the pandemic.

Last but not least, it would be a crime not to thank the department's lovely staff, without whom we are perfectly aware that it would be impossible for the department to function. Barb Donnell has been incredibly helpful on all aspects of grad school, making sure we were able to take advantage of our funds for the Graduate History Association and the Graduate History Colloquium. Judy Yonkin helped us with all aspects related to teaching. Michael Williamson and Claire Perez also helped us with our graduate students' activities. Claire greatly contributed to improving the department's online presence, and, thanks to her advertising skills, our activities saw a great increase in attendance.

### **Thank You, Knight Institute**

Last year, right before the beginning of the pandemic, I started working as a tutor for the Graduate Writing Service of Cornell's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines, under Tracy Hamler-Carrick's wonderful leadership. I could not possibly have made a better

decision, because, when the pandemic stripped us of most human interaction and I found myself forced to work alone, some of my fellow tutors—in particular, Carol-Rose Little and Tamar Gutfeld—and the initiatives we organized together provided me with the support I needed.

Carol-Rose and I started doing a “tandem” exchange, and we read each other’s work on Zoom. Tamar was organizing Zoom write-ins for her friends with the Pomodoro technique, so I joined a few of them, and found that they greatly helped me stay focused. This system was clearly very effective, so Tamar reached out to Tracy to see if it was possible to transform it in an official program. Thanks to Tracy’s support, and to the support of Michelle Cox, Director of the English Language Support Office (ELSO), in June 2020, Tamar’s idea became the Write Together at Home (WTAH) program: four weeks of online graduate writing support, including writing groups, write-ins, and tutoring for over a hundred master’s and doctoral students from across the university. When the program ended, a few of us decided to carry on in DIY mode. The program was so successful that we are doing a second edition of it in June 2021. With Tamar, Tracy, Michelle, and Leigh York (another fellow tutor and co-facilitator of the program) we are also writing a chapter about the WTAH for an edited volume about emergent teaching and learning through emergencies.

I am very grateful to all of them for this brilliant initiative and for their belief in collaborative work. Tracy and Michelle, in particular, are staunch advocates for the graduate students: they make sure that we are properly compensated for our work, and they encourage us to maintain a healthy life-work balance. And, of course, I am grateful to all my fellow co-writers for their virtual company! Finishing a dissertation is already a difficult task in normal times. Imagine during a pandemic! So, thank you Luisa Cortesi, Tuvshinzaya Amarzaya, Astara Light, Jacy Tackett, Alyssa Kaganer, Mary Maroney, Ewan Robinson, Simon Posner, Chenyun Li (Montse), Tiffany Darabi, Breanne Kisselstein, Alexandra Cooperstock, Rebekah Ciribassi, Lisa Avron, Tiên Dung

Hà, and many, many others—for making writing a less lonely process!

### **Thank You, Cornell, and Thank You, Ithaca**

I would like to thank all the institutions and programs at Cornell from which I benefitted and whose activities I attended. I would like to mention, in particular, the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, skillfully directed by Matthew Evangelista during the time of my engagement, whose graduate fellowship and lunchtime seminar series was one of the highlights of my 2016–17 academic year. With that year’s group of fellows—including Michael Allen, Amanda Bosworth, Lincoln Hines, Stephen Roblin, Kelsey Utne, and Katherine Welch, and led by Debak Das—we also organized a fun graduate conference titled “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Peace and Conflict.”

Over the course of my years at Cornell, I felt supported in many ways across campus, and I am grateful to the people who helped me build some non-academic experience within the constraints of my status as a foreign student. I greatly enjoyed helping with the organization of the 2017 migration workshop for the Cornell Institute for European Studies, with Christopher Way, Jason Hecht, and Claire Swensen. I also enjoyed occasionally being an “undergrad under cover.” They usually get to do the fun activities, while us—grads—are supposed to hit the library and read, so I figured I’d steal some of the fun. I volunteered for two programs of the Cornell Public Service Center. The purpose of one of them—called Youth Outreach Undergraduates Reshaping Success (Y.O.U.R.S.)—is to provide tutoring and mentoring for underprivileged children living in mobile home parks in the outskirts of Ithaca. If the children we mentored through the program have the chance to win scholarships and go to college, we will be very proud of our work. The other program, called Translator-Interpreter Program (TIP), provides free translation and interpretation services for non-English speakers in the Ithaca area. I have been translating and interpreting in

Italian and French. I also run around campus and the town, covering events and interviewing people for the *Cornell Daily Sun* and then the *Ithaca Voice* (for which I thank Jeff Stein, Eliza LaJoie, and Jolene Amendarez, among others).

Ithaca felt a bit narrow and isolated at times, but I appreciated it more in my second life here, when I came back after my two years of research in Europe. I had taken up running, so I could take advantage more of its natural beauty. And I also have to admit that it was the perfect place to spend the pandemic, since the lack of urban density kept the infection rates low, and nature provided an escape from the long hours spent in front of the screen.

### **Thank You, Dissertation Funding**

In addition to Cornell's Sage Fellowship, I was incredibly lucky to receive several grants and fellowships to fund my dissertation research. I would like to acknowledge the following institutions: at Cornell, the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies for its Jesse F. and Dora H. Bluestone Peace Studies Fellowship; the Society for the Humanities for its travel grant and dissertation writing group grant; and the Cornell Institute for European Studies for its Michele Sicca Research Grant; elsewhere, the Chateaubriand Fellowship Program for four months of funded research in France; the Lemmermann Foundation in Rome for its scholarship award; Trinity College's Cesare Barbieri Endowment for its research grant; the Hoover Institution at Stanford University for funding to participate in its 2018 Workshop on Authoritarianism and Democratic Breakdown; the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies for its Junior Fellowship; the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah for its doctoral fellowship; and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) for its short-term research grant.

This funding allowed me to devote two entire years exclusively to research abroad—what I now know was an extraordinary privilege, especially after witnessing how the pandemic disrupted

many of my fellow graduate students' research plans. The research stays at many of these institutions were also wonderful occasions to meet scholars from all over the world and engage in collaborative work.

In Paris, I want to thank Marie-Pierre Rey, the Director of the SIRICE laboratory at the Paris 1 University, for supporting my application for the doctoral fellowship of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah (FMS) and for welcoming me into the lab. I also want to thank Dominique Trimbur, FMS Project Manager, for his advice on the project and for all his work organizing the biennial meeting of the FMS fellows in January 2020.

The six months I spent at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies were simply wonderful. The institute is a vibrant intellectual community of scholars coming from all over the world, so we had the possibility to do our own individual research, but we also engaged with our colleagues' work in seminars and lectures. The wonderful collegial environment of the institute—where we did not feel that any hierarchical distinctions exist, regardless of the stage we were at in our academic career—completed the sparkling magic of the city of Vienna. And so many people to thank! Among others: the Institute's Director Béla Rásky, the Academic Programs' Director Éva Kovács, research associates Marianne Windsperger and Philipp Rohrbach, archivist René Bienert, research assistant and web specialist Sandro Fasching, librarian Barbara Grzelak, press officer Jana Starek, and the entire team at the institute. And of course, all the fellows who shared the experience with me: my wonderful office mates—Kate Brackney, Jonathan Kaplan, and Justyna Majewska—and our next-door neighbors—Daniel Cohen, Beate Kutschke, Thomas Chopard, Diana Dimitru, Michal Frankl, Devrim Sezer, Anne-Lise Bobeldijk, Alina Bothe, László Csósz, Florian Zabransky, Ion Popa, and Michala Lônčíková.

In Berlin, I want to thank Sebastian Conrad for welcoming me at the Friedrich-Meinecke-

Institut of the Freie Universität, and for letting me attend the Global History seminar series that he organized.

Finally, the Workshop on Authoritarianism and Democratic Breakdown at the Hoover Institution was also a wonderful collegial experience. Methodological insights from professors Stephen Kotkin, Lisa Blaydes, and Paul Gregory were fundamental for the development of the project. I also want to thank the other participants— Theocharis Grigoriadis, Yi Lu (Louis), Liudmila Lyagushkina, Jennifer Yip, Brandon Williams, Carrie Barnett, William Keniston, Carl Forsberg, and Drew Kinney—for our fun dinners and excursions, especially Louis, who organized many of them and greatly contributed to building our little summer community!

### **Thank You, Librarians and Archivists**

All the history grads know that it is impossible to write a good dissertation without the help of librarians and archivists, who are usually the ones who know where what we need is. At Cornell, I would especially like to thank Virginia Cole and Sarah How. Virginia has a Ph.D. in History and is basically a surrogate advisor for all of us. We are also grateful for her regular attendance at our Graduate History Colloquium and many of our graduate students' activities. Sarah is the European Studies Librarian, so a go-to for anyone who researches European History. She also led library sessions and created wonderful library guides for both of the first-year writing seminars that I taught. For the first one, we put together an Information Literacy Assignment Sequence titled "Spying on Your Own Text: Digital Surveillance in Freshmen Writing." The sequence had two benefits: Sarah became a fan of the tv series *The Americans*, but most importantly... we won a prize!

I am very grateful to the archivists of all the institutions where I conducted research. The list is so long that it's a daunting task to try to acknowledge them all. I would like to thank: in Rome,

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### **Thank You, Friends**

During my time at Cornell, I have established wonderful friendships, which I credit for many of my accomplishments. I am one of those people who work better in good company, so I am deeply grateful to all of my friends for their presence, insights, physical and virtual support, and for making grad school a more collaborative endeavor.

From the early years, I am very grateful to Amanda Bosworth, Lauren Jackson, and Jessica Price for breaking with the stereotypical and nonsensical view that grad students are only supposed to work and be miserable. The mind needs to recharge with some fun! Lauren organized the first Thanksgiving party I ever attended, and it was fabulous! She also threw some memorable Super Bowl and Halloween parties. All together, we went to one Grad Ball, and with Amanda and Jessy I also went to a fun Harry Potter-themed night at Risley Hall.

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During my two years of research in Europe, I had the chance to reunite with old friends and make new ones. I am deeply grateful to what I call my Parisian family. We met during our years at the *École Normale Supérieure*, and since then, we have been inseparable, and we always try to see each other as often as possible. Louison Arnault, Pedro Lippmann, Federico Mogavero, Pauline Julien, and Laura Favreau were still around *la Ville Lumière* for my last research stay. Pedro helped me find lodging at the wonderful *Centre International d’Accueil et d’Échanges des Récóllets*, and I have to say that having him as neighbor again was fantastic. We resumed organizing parties and picnics, going to concerts, eating good food (Monsieur Lippmann knows where to go for that!), and experiencing Paris in the best possible way. Marie Kondrat and Samuel Harvet moved to Lyon, but I visited them a couple times (one of which included a memorable detour to Geneva for the marathon that Samuel and I ran together!). Floris and Philipp De Vries were living in Münster, so they visited me when I was in Berlin. I can’t possibly convey in a concise way how much they all mean to me, but they know.

My experience in Vienna was made perfect by the wonderful Lisa Lehner, who helped me find an apartment, showed me around her city, and facilitated every aspect of my stay. She also introduced me to the lovely Magdalena Eitenberger who, in turn, introduced me to Kristina Satori. Kristina agreed to give me German lessons and came to the archives with me to help me decipher

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## List of Abbreviations

ACS	Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Italy
ADS	Archives Départementales de la Savoie, Chambéry, France
AFLF	Archivio Storico Francesco Luigi Ferrari, Modena, Italy
AN	Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France
ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma, Rome, Italy
BAB	Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, Germany
BDIC	Archives de La Contemporaine, Nanterre, France
BStU	Archiv der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin, Germany
DÖW	Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands, Vienna, Austria
IKG	Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Vienna, Austria
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin, Germany
MS	Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, France
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA
SHD	Service Historique de la Défense, Vincennes, France
StAWü	Staatsarchiv Würzburg, Germany
VWI	Archiv des Wiener Wiesenthal Instituts für Holocaust-Studien, Vienna, Austria
WStLA	Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Vienna, Austria

***Introduction***  
**Totalitarianism from Below:  
Spies in Fascist and Nazi Europe**

**Abstract**

The goal of this dissertation is to conceptualize totalitarianism from the bottom up, shifting the focus from the great architects of terror in the Fascist and Nazi regimes to the people at their service: the spies. By looking at police spies as both targets and actors of the repression, I also show that many of them occupied a *gray zone*—an indefinite space between the category of the persecuted and persecutors. My contribution to the existing literature rests in highlighting the specific role that the spies played in the Fascist and Nazi “proactive” terror state. The regimes’ strategy involved taking advantage of spies who came from the very spaces and communities they were targeting to acquire inside knowledge and access to their networks. This introduction situates my work within the existing scholarship on terror and surveillance. I employ a methodology that draws on both comparative histories of the Fascist and Nazi regimes as well as social history of the individual spies.

\*\*\*

There is no all-seeing eye. Dictators dream of omnipresent surveillance, but their regimes are no panopticons.<sup>1</sup> They rely on other human eyes to enforce the rule, discipline subjects, and punish opponents. In the Fascist and Nazi dictatorships, to be a seeing eye was to be simultaneously seen in a never-ending interaction between the spies and the spied upon.

**The Topic**

*Who*, my dissertation asks, *were the Fascist and Nazi spies, infiltrators, and double agents?* I shift the focus from institutional stories of police to a detailed analysis of police informers. This shift allows me to conceptualize totalitarianism from the bottom up and show how terror was an everyday experience. My work fits within Lucien Febvre’s concept of “histoire vue d’en bas et

---

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon: Or, the Inspection-House* (Dublin: Thomas Byrne, 1791); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

non d'en haut"<sup>2</sup> and E. P. Thompson's "history from below."<sup>3</sup> My argument about spies shifts the focus from the great architects of terror in the Fascist and Nazi regimes—namely, the police chiefs Arturo Bocchini and Heinrich Himmler—to the obscure individuals at their service. The emphasis of this dissertation is also on the people (the spies) and not espionage as a practice or more general category.

By conceptualizing police spies as both targets and actors of the repression, I seek to undo the dichotomy that previous historiography has established between the importance of repression and dictatorship as a popular regime, proving that these two sides actually come together in a similar way in the spies' lives.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lucien Febvre, "Albert Mathiez: Un tempérament, une éducation," *Annales* 4, no. 18 (1932): 573–76, <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1932.1357>.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Palmer Thompson, "History from Below," *Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966; Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: V. Gollancz, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> If we take Nazi Germany as an example, the importance of repression in the regime was emphasized in the historiography produced right after the end of the Second World War. There was a consensus in these works that Nazi Germany was a police state. I am thinking in particular of Karl Dietrich Bracher's view that the Third Reich's principal characteristic was the total destruction of civil freedoms and the rule of law, expressed in his book *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970). This historiography put Hitler at its centre in what came to be known as the *intentionalist* approach to the study of Nazi policy, in which things were seen to have happened because the Nazi leader wanted them to. From the late 1960s onwards, however, this interpretation was pushed aside as a new generation of historians began to explore the inner contradictions and instabilities of the Third Reich's system of rule. Local and regional histories uncovered a wide and changing variety of popular attitudes towards the Third Reich and its policies. This research emphasised by implication ordinary Germans' relative freedom of choice whether to resist, and thus restored an element of voluntarism to their relationship with the Nazi regime. See in particular the following works: Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000); John Hiden, *Explaining Hitler's Germany: Historians and the Third Reich* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1983); Franz L Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1942); Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (London: Longman, 1981); Jeremy Noakes, "The Oldenburg Crucifix Struggle of November 1936: A Case Study of Opposition in the Third Reich," in *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, ed. Peter D. Stachura (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 210–33; and Timothy W. Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the "National Community"*, ed. Jane Caplan (Oxford: Berg, 1993). Historians' emphasis on the popular nature of the dictatorship later increased. In the 1990s, the American historian Eric Johnson and the German sociologist Karl-Heinz Reuband conducted a survey of elderly Germans and claimed that a majority of those they questioned admitted to being "positive" or "mainly positive" about Nazism at one time or another during the regime. The authors argued that Hitler and National Socialism were so popular among the German population that intimidation and terror were rarely needed to enforce loyalty; see Eric A Johnson, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany: An Oral History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basic Books, 2005). Another proponent of the Nazi regime's popularity is historian Robert Gellately, in his works *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1935–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) and *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

My focus is on surveillance as an instrument of terror, by which I mean the subtle perception that people in the Fascist and Nazi regimes were under constant surveillance. Spies are an element of the universe of terror that the Fascist and Nazi regimes carefully built. In such a universe, submission to terror was an element of normality. Detlev Peukert argues that the consequence of terror in Nazi Germany was the atomization of everyday life; most of the Germans passively accepted the prevailing order and retreated into their private sphere. By the end of the Third Reich, the fictitious *Volksgemeinschaft*, the *national community*, had been replaced by “a society in ruins—ruined not only in a material sense [...] but psychologically, morally and in respect of its social bonds.”<sup>5</sup> By regarding police spies as the ambiguous and enabling forces of this universe of terror, I seek to identify where the Fascist and Nazi regimes first succeeded and then failed: at keeping a hold on their people.

Spies are my primary object of inquiry, but my research is framed and informed by a comparison between the activity of Fascist spies in Italy—mostly affiliated with the OVRA—and the activity of Nazi spies in Germany, Austria, and France.<sup>6</sup> Spies carried out the bidding of these totalitarian regimes, sometimes enforcing and at other times disrupting Fascist and Nazi repression.

### Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, I will be talking interchangeably about spies, double agents, and

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<sup>5</sup> Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 241.

<sup>6</sup> The name OVRA is still an enigma. Often presented as an acronym for *Organizzazione per la Vigilanza e la Repressione dell'Antifascismo* (*Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism*), *Opera Volontaria per la Repressione dell'Antifascismo* (*Voluntary Work for the Repression of Anti-Fascism*) or *Organo di Vigilanza dei Reati Antistatali* (*Organ for the Vigilance of Anti-State Crimes*), the term has been subject to numerous interpretations. Guido Leto, second head of the OVRA, wrote in his book that the name wasn't an acronym, but a sort of psychological bluff Mussolini chose to raise questions and a sense of terror; Cf. Guido Leto, *OVRA: Fascismo-antifascismo*, 2nd ed. (Rocca San Casciano, Italy: Cappelli editore, 1952), 52.

informers. I am aware the people these terms refer to do not always perform the same task, but I do so mostly to improve the text's flow and not to repeat the same words over and over. I would also like to point out that there is no direct English equivalent of the Italian and German terms. OVRA spies were called *fiduciari* (something like *confidential informers*). In most cases they were given a pseudonym and a number with which they signed their reports, but they did not receive any technical training or possess any specialized or physical skills like the ones we imagine for careers in intelligence. Nazi spies were called *Vertrauensmänner*, VMs, or V-men (literally *men of confidence*).<sup>7</sup> We will learn more about them in the first chapter. Once found by the Nazi services, VMs were tested and trained by their handlers who gave them their missions, paid them, and received their written or oral reports. When officially confirmed, VMs received a registration number from a central register called "Z" in Berlin as well as an official pseudonym, various nicknames, fake IDs, and the necessary equipment.<sup>8</sup> We will see in the sixth chapter that these privileges did not apply to Jewish spies as they would not be listed among the *Vertrauensmänner*. They were considered "second-rate spies"; they had no special status and were not formally hired by the Gestapo. They received only temporary protection for as long as the Gestapo needed their services.

There was a high level of secrecy around the *Vertrauensmänner*. In February 1937, Reinhard Heydrich ordered that they be registered as secret, and that all the files concerning them and the reports they produced be stamped *Geheime Reichsache* (Secret Reich case). All Nazi police informers were later grouped together into one department within the Gestapo, known as *Referat*

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<sup>7</sup> There is a long history of thinking about confidence in history and literature. See, for example Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*, ed. Elizabeth Sophia Foster (New York: Hendricks House, 1954).

<sup>8</sup> Fabrice Grenard, *La traque des résistants* (Paris: Tallandier, 2019), 12.

*Nachrichtendienst, Referat N, or Gestapo IV N.*<sup>9</sup>

### **The Origins of the OVRA**

The OVRA was neither the first nor the only Fascist police, just as the Gestapo (an abbreviation of *Geheime Staatspolizei; Secret State Police*) was neither the first paramilitary wing nor the only secret service of the Nazi Party. The reason they have remained in the collective consciousness more than their predecessors or parallel services is that they were assigned to stop anti-fascist and anti-Nazi activities and infiltrated every aspect of domestic life. They were very complex instruments of terror.<sup>10</sup>

The pioneering phase, as OVRA historian Mimmo Franzinelli defined it, of the police machine's Fascist transformation began with Emilio De Bono's appointment as the police *intendente generale (general intendant)* on November 11, 1922. De Bono assumed the functions previously assigned to the general director of public security.<sup>11</sup> From this moment onwards, the official police was subjugated to the interests of the Fascist regime, targeting any enemy of the Fascist party as an enemy of the nation. This was clarified in De Bono's circular to the prefects of December 15, 1922: "I don't believe in paying special attention to the communists compared to the republicans or the popolari. The State can have dangerous enemies even among the men who display the most devotion to the State itself and to the homeland."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Claire M. Hall, "An Army of Spies? The Gestapo Spy Network 1933–45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 2 (2009): 256.

<sup>10</sup> Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent? Gestapo, Society and Resistance," in *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945*, ed. David F. Crew (London: Routledge, 1994), 166–96. Mallmann and Paul show that this image of the Gestapo is a myth originally propagated by the Gestapo leaders themselves.

<sup>11</sup> Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Circular n. 33526 of the general director of the Public security to the prefects, December 15, 1922, cited in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 5: "Non credo di indicare per speciali attenzioni i comunisti piuttosto che i

On June 10, 1924, the kidnapping and assassination of socialist Deputy Giacomo Matteotti, who had accused the Fascist party of electoral fraud, proved that secret Fascist police existed which the journalists called Fascist Ceka (in imitation of the Soviet political police). This organization, derived from the Fascist squads (*squadristi*), had been “elected” in January 1924 as a parallel police force at Mussolini’s disposal.<sup>13</sup> Because of the scandal stirred up by Matteotti’s assassination, Mussolini forced De Bono to resign and replaced him with Francesco Crispo Moncada. Moncada was prefect of Trieste and chosen especially because of his “comforting” long administrative career, in opposition to De Bono, leader of the March on Rome and a man of action. De Bono’s forced resignation was just a temporary phase that allowed Mussolini to prepare his coup d’état and drop every pretense of democracy with his famous speech to the Chamber of Deputies of January 3, 1925. I linger on this speech because not only was it a masterpiece of political deceit, but it is also extremely relevant to the point I am trying to make about Mussolini’s strategy. At its beginning, Mussolini seemed to deny the existence of an Italian Ceka and his connection with it:

It has been said that I founded a Ceka. Where? When? In what way? Nobody could say so. Indeed there was a Ceka in Russia, which executed without trial between 150,000–160,000, according to quasi-official statistics. There was a Ceka in Russia, which employed terror systematically against the whole middle class and against the individual members of the bourgeoisie, a Ceka that claimed to be the red sword of the revolution. But the Italian Ceka never existed. Nobody has, until today, denied these three qualities of mine: a moderate intelligence, a lot of courage and a supreme disdain for vile money. If I had founded a Ceka, I would have founded it according to the criteria that I have always put to the protection from that violence that cannot be expelled from history. I have always said, and here those who followed me in these five years of harsh fighting remember it, that violence, to be decisive, needs to be surgical, intelligent, chivalrous. Now the actions of this supposed Ceka have

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repubblicani o i popolari. Lo Stato può avere nemici pericolosi anche fra gli uomini che più ostentano devozione allo Stato stesso e alla Patria.”

<sup>13</sup> Franzinelli, 7–10.

always been unintelligent, messy, stupid.<sup>14</sup>

In light of this apparent denial of any connection with an Italian Ceka whose very existence he put into question, Mussolini's sudden acknowledgment of responsibility for the crimes and the terrorist actions that the Fascists are accused of sounds extremely abrupt:

Well, I declare here, before this assembly and before all the Italian people, that I, and I alone, assume the political, moral, historical responsibility for all that has happened. If the more or less distorted sentences are sufficient to hang a man, bring out the pole and bring out the rope! If Fascism has only been castor oil and truncheon, and not instead a superb passion of the best Italian youth, the fault is mine! If Fascism has been a criminal association, if all the acts of violence have been the result of a certain historical, political, and moral climate, well, the responsibility for this is mine, because I have created this historical, political and moral climate with a propaganda that goes from the intervention to today.<sup>15</sup>

The ambiguity of the speech was crucial. Mussolini declared himself to be behind the crimes attributed to the Fascist secret police but wanted to convey the idea that this police force did not exist or, rather, was a distorted image of the larger Fascist plan to strengthen the Italian state by purifying it of its enemies—those who did not have the nation's best interests at heart. Historiography has failed to point out the importance the secret police takes on in Mussolini's

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<sup>14</sup> Mussolini's speech to the Chamber of Deputies of January 3, 1925 in Benito Mussolini, *Discorsi del 1925–1930*, vol. 1 (Milan: Alpes, 1926), 9–10: “Si è detto che io avrei fondato una Ceka. Dove? Quando? In qual modo? Nessuno potrebbe dirlo. Veramente c'è stata una Ceka in Russia, che ha giustiziato senza processo, dalle 150 mila alle 160 mila persone, secondo [quanto] attestano le statistiche quasi ufficiali. C'è stata una Ceka in Russia, che ha esercitato il terrore sistematicamente su tutta la classe borghese e sui membri singoli della borghesia, una Ceka, che diceva di essere la rossa spada della rivoluzione. Ma la Ceka italiana non è mai esistita. Nessuno mi ha negato fino ad oggi queste tre qualità: una discreta intelligenza, molto coraggio ed un sovrano disprezzo del vile denaro. Se io avessi fondato una Ceka, l'avrei fondata seguendo i criteri che ho sempre posti a presidio di quella violenza che non può essere espulsa dalla storia. Ho sempre detto e qui lo ricordano quelli che mi hanno seguito in questi cinque anni di dura battaglia che la violenza per essere risolutiva deve essere chirurgica, intelligente, cavalleresca. Ora i gesti di questa sedicente Ceka sono stati sempre inintelligenti, incomposti, stupidi.”

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14: “Ebbene, io dichiaro qui al cospetto di questa assemblea e al cospetto di tutto il popolo italiano che assumo, io solo, la responsabilità politica, morale, storica di tutto quanto è avvenuto. Se le frasi più o meno storpiate bastano per impiccare un uomo, fuori il palo e fuori la corda! Se il Fascismo non è stato che olio di ricino e manganello, e non invece una passione superba della migliore gioventù italiana, a me la colpa! Se il Fascismo è stato un'associazione a delinquere, se tutte le violenze sono state il risultato di un determinato clima storico, politico e morale, a me la responsabilità di questo, perché questo clima storico, politico, morale io l'ho creato con una propaganda che va dall'intervento ad oggi.”

speech; it is the specter that triggers his acknowledgment of responsibility and therefore allows his dictatorship to begin.

The opposition, or what was left of it, failed to adequately address this speech. Many socialists, liberals, and moderates tried to boycott the Parliament in response to Matteotti's assassination by withdrawing from the Chamber of Deputies in the so-called Aventine Secession. After Mussolini's speech, members of these groups embarked on long discussions about whether they should return to the Parliament. This deliberation gave Mussolini time to reinforce his strategy to definitively suppress all opposition parties. Once again, the role of the secret police was crucial.

There was a series of failed assassination attempts on Mussolini between November 1925 and October 1926. These attempts were instrumental in allowing the Fascist regime to create a state of emergency or exception<sup>16</sup> and to capitalize on a fabricated demand for crisis management. They fundamentally structured the conditions for the regime's consolidation of power, including a vast expansion of laws that dismantled the liberal state and established the Fascist dictatorship. The Fascists achieved this result through *agents provocateurs* and police informers. The tension became a paroxysm with the fourth assassination attempt, allegedly perpetrated by 15-year-old anarchist Anteo Zamboni on October 31, 1926. This last attempted murder allowed Mussolini to enact a swath of repressive legislation; while the Blackshirts devastated all associations and organizations opposed to the Fascist regime, the Fascist majority in Parliament ratified the forfeiture of the 120 deputies of the opposition, who lost every parliamentary guarantee. As Lyttelton put it, "the one party-state had been formally established."<sup>17</sup> On November 25, 1926, the

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<sup>16</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship: From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle*, trans. Michael Hoelzl (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2014); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–1929*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 268.

new *Legge di Difesa dello Stato* (*State Defense Law*) restored the death penalty and instituted a *Tribunale Speciale* (Special Tribunal) to try those accused of being “enemies of the State.”<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, Moncada was forced to resign. He was replaced by Arturo Bocchini, whose role was central to the police force’s organization and rather symmetrical to Heinrich Himmler’s in terms of his relationship to the dictator and the pivotal role he occupied in the regime.

Guido Leto, whom Bocchini later appointed head of the OVRA, described the man as a nearly mythical figure:

I was at Bocchini’s side for more than 14 years until the day of his death—November 19, 1940; therefore, I believe I have known him enough, not in his intimate life, to which—always—I deliberately kept myself extraneous, but in his activities as head of the police and, in general, as politician, because, on many occasions, his figure overcame the bureaucracy and set the tone of national situations [...]

When Bocchini was appointed head of the police he was 46 and had an extremely brilliant and fast-rising administrative career behind him. He was a bachelor, wealthy, a lover—maybe too much—of the fairer sex and even more so of good food, cheerful company, and worldly pleasures.

He was not exceptionally cultured, but his intelligence was strong and the quickness of his intuition and learning ability really extraordinary. He had a prodigious memory—a quality that always helped him in the exercise of his functions—and spoke extremely easily: in private he often used the Neapolitan dialect, but in public or when he had the occasion of giving actual speeches he proved to be an articulate, sophisticated, and very pleasant orator. He was a mine of anecdotes, jokes, and puns: his conversation was always sparkling and left lasting and agreeable impressions on his interlocutor.<sup>19</sup>

At the time of the March on Rome, Bocchini was an obscure functionary of the Ministry

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<sup>18</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 24–25.

<sup>19</sup> Leto, 31–32: “Io fui accanto a Bocchini fino al giorno della sua morte—19 novembre 1940—per più di quattordici anni; credo, quindi, di averlo conosciuto abbastanza, non nella sua vita intima, alla quale—sempre—deliberatamente mi mantenni estraneo, ma nella sua attività di Capo della polizia ed, in genere, di uomo politico, perché, in molte occasioni, la sua figura si elevava al di sopra della burocrazia e dava tono a situazioni nazionali [...] Quando Bocchini fu nominato Capo della polizia aveva 46 anni e dietro a sé una brillantissima e rapida carriera amministrativa. Era scapolo, agiato, amante—forse un po’ troppo—del bel sesso e più ancora della buona tavola, dell’allegra compagnia e dei piaceri mondani in genere. La sua cultura non era affatto eccezionale, ma l’ingegno era vivido e la prontezza dell’intuizione e dell’assimilazione veramente straordinaria. Aveva una memoria prodigiosa—qualità questa che gli fu sempre di grande aiuto nell’esercizio delle sue funzioni—e la parola facilissima: nell’intimità utilizzava spesso il dialetto napoletano, ma in pubblico o quando aveva occasione di pronunciare veri e propri discorsi si rivelava oratore facondo, forbito e piacevolissimo. Era una miniera di aneddoti, di barzellette, di calembours: la sua conversazione era sempre scintillante e lasciava nell’interlocutore impressioni durature e simpatiche.”

of Interior. He gained visibility with his appointment as prefect of Brescia on December 31, 1922, after which he was transferred to Bologna on December 16, 1923, and then to Genoa on October 24, 1925. Bocchini was finally appointed Chief of Police on September 23, 1926. The police force was structurally reorganized under his administration and became his personal domain. The new Code of Laws Concerning Public Security (*Testo Unico delle Leggi di Pubblica Sicurezza*, often abbreviated as TULPS), enacted in 1926 and revised in 1931, specifically mentioned a Department of Political Police. This department's aim was to rationalize the control of political dissent through informers who collected information on the so-called "subversives." The Communist Party, whose members had tried to reorganize themselves in a number of underground cells, was the main target. Later on, the Department of Political Police came to be known as OVRA. Its existence remained secret until December 1930 when the official press agency Stefani, following Mussolini's directions, released a statement identifying the OVRA as a special police section that had discovered an undercover organization against the regime. The OVRA was probably kept secret at first because its main targets were the *fuoriusciti*—the anti-fascists who had left Italy for other countries, especially France. It was easier to track down the *fuoriusciti* if they did not know that a special section of the Fascist police was monitoring their every move. The December 1930 announcement seems to have been intended as propaganda or intimidation, citing the OVRA as another example of the regime's efficacy in suppressing opponents.

On May 26, 1927, Mussolini made another speech at the Chamber of Deputies. A large portion was devoted to the "police," valued as an instrument of civilization:

Gentlemen: it is time to say that the police must not only be respected, but also honored. Gentlemen: it is time to say that man, before feeling the need for culture, felt the need for order. In a certain sense it is possible to say that the policeman preceded, in history, the professor, because if there isn't an armed wing of healthy handcuffs, the laws are despised and go unheeded. Obviously the fascist courage is necessary to speak in these terms [...] I

calculate that the regime has in total a hundred thousand men acting as the police force. It is an impressive number [...] when the police are in plain clothes and cannot be controlled through uniforms, the police must be chosen, that is it must be composed of irreproachable, zealous, and silent citizens.<sup>20</sup>

These selected “irreproachable, zealous, and silent citizens” were the members and informers of the OVRA, whose incubation period between 1927 and 1930 is characterized by the police structure’s modernization under Bocchini’s supervision. Evidence of this process and the police’s increased activity can be found in the increase in personal files in the Casellario Politico Centrale: a special archive where all personal information about known “subversives” was dutifully compiled, including each subject’s education, culture, and habits, down to minute details about personal character and sexual orientation.<sup>21</sup>

The first seed of the OVRA was the *Ispettorato speciale di polizia* (Special Police Inspectorate), founded on May 27, 1927 in Milan and masked as the *Società anonima vinicola meridionale* (Southern Wine Limited Company). Bocchini appointed Francesco Nudi as head of this inspectorate, whose jurisdiction extended to Lombardy, Piedmont, the Aosta Valley, Liguria, Veneto, and the Julian Venetia—the areas of largest anti-fascist presence. Nudi was appointed by the Ministry of the Interior in 1900. He was in Germany during the Hamburg uprising of October 1923 and had studied its repression. He was therefore the most suitable candidate to guide the secret police force in its operations against the anti-fascists. Nudi directed the OVRA until 1936,

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<sup>20</sup> Benito Mussolini, *Discorsi del 1925–1930*, vol. 3 (Milan: Alpes, 1926), 99–100: “Signori: è tempo di dire che la polizia va, non soltanto rispettata, ma onorata. Signori: è tempo di dire che l’uomo, prima di sentire il bisogno della coltura, ha sentito il bisogno dell’ordine. In un certo senso si può dire che il poliziotto ha preceduto, nella storia, il professore, perché se non c’è un braccio armato di salutarì manette, le leggi restano lettera morta e vile. Naturalmente ci vuole il coraggio fascista per parlare in questi termini [...] Io calcolo che il regime ha un complesso di centomila uomini come forza di Polizia. È un numero imponente [...] quando la polizia è in borghese e non controllabile attraverso l’uniforme, deve essere scelta, cioè deve essere composta di cittadini irreprensibili, zelanti e silenziosi.”

<sup>21</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 63. According to Franzinelli, at the end of 1927 there were 100,000 recorded citizens in the Casellario. The main targets were the Communist Party and *Giustizia e Libertà* (*Justice and Freedom*, the anti-fascist Resistance movement founded by Carlo Rosselli).

when he was replaced by Guido Leto.

### **The Origins of the Gestapo**

Hermann Göring formed the Gestapo unit in 1933, several years after the OVRA. The conditions under which this secret police force emerged mirror the “state of emergency” in which the Fascist police machine found its legitimacy. Everything began with the burning of the Reichstag building on February 27, 1933. As had happened with Matteotti’s assassination and the failed assassination attempts on Mussolini, the burning of the Reichstag allowed the Nazis to suspend “until further notice the guarantees of personal liberty as stipulated in the Weimar constitution.”<sup>22</sup>

Anson Rabinbach questioned the idea that the fire was a Nazi conspiracy; this theory first appeared in the *Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror*, published in Paris in August 1933 by the Czechoslovakian communist Otto Katz. The *Brown Book* suggested that Marinus van der Lubbe, the young Dutch council communist and unemployed bricklayer caught at the scene of the Reichstag fire, did not act alone, but that the Nazis instead set fire to the building as part of their plan. There has since been a significant historical debate about the matter. Even if the Nazis did not plan the fire, it is undeniable that they exploited the state of emergency generated by the situation; the Reichstag fire provided the political police with “a new ‘legal’ basis.”<sup>23</sup> Rabinbach wrote that Göring arrived at the Reichstag while the building was still burning and immediately called the fire “a communist plot, a signal for the insurrection.”<sup>24</sup> Adolf Hitler told Franz von Papen: “This is a God-given signal, Herr Vice Chancellor! If this fire, as I believe, is the work of

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<sup>22</sup> Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Anson Rabinbach, “Staging Antifascism: The Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror,” *New German Critique*, no. 103, “Dark Powers: Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in History and Literature” (Winter 2008): 99.

the Communists, then we must crush out this murderous pest with an iron fist.”<sup>25</sup>

Göring, future commander of the Luftwaffe and the Number Two man in the Nazi Party, was put in charge of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior as part of the deal by which Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. This gave Göring command of the largest police force in Germany and allowed him, by a law of April 26, 1933, to set up the *Geheime Staatspolizei* (Secret State Police Office) or Gestapa—predecessor of the Gestapo. Located at No. 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse in Berlin, the Gestapa’s purpose was “to deal with political police tasks in parallel with or in place of the normal police authorities.”<sup>26</sup> The Ministry of the Interior remained the authority for political police matters until November 30, 1933, when the Gestapo was constituted as an autonomous branch of the administration and the Gestapa itself took over the functions the Ministry of the Interior had carried out.<sup>27</sup> The Gestapo’s first commander and Göring’s protégé, Rudolf Diels, was best known as Marinus van der Lubbe’s primary interrogator.

During the winter of 1933–34, Heinrich Himmler succeeded in gaining control of the political police in all the German Länder beginning with Bavaria and with the exception of Prussia and Schaumburg-Lippe.<sup>28</sup> On April 20, 1934, Himmler was officially appointed chief of all German police outside of Prussia. Two years later, on June 17, 1936, Hitler decreed the unification of all police forces in the Reich and named Himmler Chief of German Police.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the Gestapo became a national state agency rather than a Prussian one.

The Gestapo underwent a structural reorganization under Himmler’s direction in the same way the OVRA had under Bocchini’s rule. Himmler centralized the police within a week of his

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<sup>25</sup> Rudolf Diels, *Lucifer ante portas: zwischen Severing und Heydrich* (Zurich: Inter Verlag, 1949), 194, cited in Rabinbach, “Staging Antifascism: The Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror,” 99.

<sup>26</sup> Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Germany, *Anatomy of the SS State* (New York: Walker, 1968), 146.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>29</sup> Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, 41.

promotion, creating national headquarters for its various branches. The most important of these was the unified Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei* or *Sipo*) under Heydrich's direction, which combined the Political and the Criminal Police. We will see in the first chapter that the Nazi police services were very extensive; they went well beyond the Gestapo and all of them used spies.

### **A Common Target: A Fight Against the Communists**

The reading of the Reichstag fire as a communist plot suggests that the Nazis were united with the Fascists in the fight against a common enemy—the communists—who were presented and perceived by both as the antithetical political force to annihilate. According to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Marxism was a strategy of “Jewish international finance” to subjugate Germany and the world.<sup>30</sup>

Even if the Italian Fascist ideology did not initially target the Jews or identify them with communists as the Nazis did, Mussolini did employ what I call the strategy of the confusion of concepts. Here is part of the first speech he made to the Chamber of Deputies on June 21, 1921:

I know the communists. I know them because some of them are my sons.... to be clear... spiritually [...] and I acknowledge with a sincerity which may seem cynical, that I for one infected these people, when I introduced into the circulation of Italian socialism a little bit of Bergson mixed up with a lot of Blanqui.

There is a philosopher among the ministers and he certainly teaches me that the neo-spiritualist philosophies, with their constant swaying between metaphysics and lyrics, are extremely dangerous for little brains.

The neo-spiritualistic philosophies are like oysters: very tasty to the palate.... but you need to digest them! [...]

These enemies of mine ate Bergson when they were 25-years-old and hadn't digested him when they were 30.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Mussolini's speech to the Chamber of Deputies of June 21, 1921 in Benito Mussolini, *Scritti e discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 2, *La rivoluzione fascista* (23 marzo 1919–28 ottobre 1922) (Santa Cristina Gela: Edizioni librarie siciliane, 1992), 179–80: “Conosco i comunisti. Li conosco perché parte di loro sono i miei figli.... intendiamoci .... spirituali [...].... e riconosco con una sincerità che può parere cinica, che io per primo ho infettato codesta gente, quando

This confusion of concepts seems to be the counterpart strategy of the state of emergency at the level of ideas. George Lichtheim explained that the Fascist seizure of power “had already brought into question some of the principles with which Socialists and Communists [...] approached the political problem: that is to say, the problem of power.”<sup>32</sup> Mussolini was “a former Socialist converted to nationalism in the course of World War I [...] equipped with a pseudo-socialist ideology in large part inherited from the prewar Syndicalists.”<sup>33</sup> While socialists and communists in Italy should not be confused,<sup>34</sup> the Fascist ideology was “a weird attempt to combine socialism with imperialism” and “its intellectual antecedents in part went back to Sorel.”<sup>35</sup> Mussolini’s strategy was to use that ideology against the communists so as to convey the idea that they were also wrong in their theoretical plans. His operation was facilitated by the collapse of any alternative to the Fascist regime, including socialists, who proved to be unable to “come forward as a national force with a solution to the country’s problems.”<sup>36</sup>

United in an ideological and physical fight against the communists, the Fascist and Nazi regimes needed to create or exploit occasions to prove communist guilt and justify the abolition of

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ho introdotto nella circolazione del socialismo italiano un po’ di Bergson mescolato a molto Blanqui. C’è un filosofo al banco dei ministri, ed egli certamente m’insegna che le filosofie neo-spiritualistiche, con quel loro ondeggiare continuo fra la metafisica e la lirica, sono perniciosissime per i piccoli cervelli. Le filosofie neo-spiritualistiche sono come le ostriche: gustosissime al palato.... ma bisogna digerirle! [...] Codesti miei nemici hanno mangiato Bergson a venticinque anni e non lo hanno digerito a trenta.”

<sup>32</sup> George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), 264.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Helmut Gruber, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin: A Documentary History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 239–40. The Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was founded on January 21, 1921 in Livorno by a group seceding from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Amadeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci led the split. According to Helmut Gruber, the Italian situation was particularly complicated with respect to the two parties’ relationship with the Comintern. Cf. Helmut Gruber, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin. A Documentary History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 239–240: “The Comintern’s support of this split in the Italian party fragmented one of its most significant sections and created a variety of anomalies. Both the PSI and the PCI declared their loyalty to the Comintern and agreed to abide by the Twenty-One Conditions. Neither of them conformed to the standards for communist parties of the Comintern: the former retained the reformists in its ranks and the latter was dominated by Amadeo Bordiga, who was close to the Dutch anarcho-syndicalists and opposed parliamentary participation.”

<sup>35</sup> Lichtheim, 265.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 301.

normal laws and the police intervention. The direct consequence of the Reichstag fire was the “Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State” of February 28, 1933 (*Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat*), which, very similarly to the Fascist *Legge di Difesa dello Stato* of November 25, 1926, nullified German citizens’ civil liberties while being presented as “a defensive measure against Communist acts of violence that endanger the state.”<sup>37</sup> Hermann Göring echoed the Decree in his March 3, 1933 directives to the Prussian police authorities.

On January 23, 1937, Himmler made a speech to the Officer Corps of the Wehrmacht in which he detailed the organization and obligations of both the SS and the police:

I now turn to the Police and its structure. Today the Police is divided into two branches, namely civil and security police; the civil police wears a uniform. The security police is composed of the criminal police and of the Secret State Police [Gestapo]. We can certainly state without exaggeration that in 1933 we took over a wild confusion, a Police the decent elements of which were humiliated; for the sword had been taken away from the officers and a rubber truncheon had been given to the men. The police was permeated by persons with criminal records and by absolute Marxists; it did not dare to actually take a stand against any crime because at once the League for Human Rights, the Peace Society and similar societies intervened, and because absolute glorification of crime was in vogue. This was the method of planned intellectual Bolshevization.<sup>38</sup>

According to Himmler’s version of the facts, the communists managed to permeate the police before his intervention. He presented them not only as the target of the police’s action, but also the reason that action was ineffective before the Nazi takeover.

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<sup>37</sup> “Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat,” February 28, 1933, <https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Reichstagsbrandverordnung>: “Auf Grund des Artikels 48 Abs. 2 der Reichsverfassung wird zur Abwehr kommunistischer staatsgefährdender Gewaltakte folgendes verordnet [...]”

<sup>38</sup> “Heinrich Himmler’s Speech to the Officer Corps of the Wehrmacht,” January 23, 1937, <http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Germany/Himmler%20Jan%2037%20Speech.htm>.

## The Time Frames

My inquiry starts in 1927, with the genesis of the first OVRA nucleus.

During my preliminary research at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome in my first summer as a graduate student, I started analyzing the series of files K/R - OVRA (1927–1943), devoted to the surveillance of communists. The inventory of this series mentions a note from the head of police to the cabinet of the Ministry of the Interior dated December 23, 1927, which sketches a brief analysis of the situation of the Communist Party in Italy. The note mentions that “the general direction of public security [...] equipped a streamlined and exceptionally agile executive body flanked by a few very carefully chosen trustees”<sup>39</sup> whose purpose was to take away the task of executing police operations from the peripheral organs, i.e. prefects and police commissioners. This body was the OVRA nucleus, which still did not have this name in 1927; the name appears only in 1931 in the archival documents. My focus is on the OVRA nucleus’ “very carefully chosen trustees”: the police informers.

While the OVRA’s actions have been overshadowed by the magnitude of those of the Gestapo, both organizations’ origins and initial targets are interestingly similar. Historiography has largely acknowledged the analogies between the two regimes’ ideological premises; however, it has neglected the role of the secret police services and their spies as catalyzing agents of the regimes’ action against dissent and consolidation of their power.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, Sezione I: K/R OVRA, 1927–1944, inventory, note from the head of the police to the cabinet of the Ministry of the Interior, dated December 23, 1927: “La direzione generale della pubblica sicurezza [...] attrezzò un organo esecutivo snello e quanto mai mobile affiancato da pochissimi e sceltissimi fiduciari.”

<sup>40</sup> All previous histories of the police focus on its institutional structure. George C. Browder’s *Hitler’s Enforcers: The Gestapo and the SS Security Service in the Nazi Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) provides an excellent argument that explains how “ordinary people” participated in and accepted the everyday violence of the regime but does not focus on how this violence was orchestrated by the Nazis’ *agents provocateurs*. Browder argues that the Gestapo was radicalized because it was subjected to Himmler’s leadership and its ranks were infiltrated by a growing number of S.S. personnel lacking traditional police training and ethos and thus much more inclined to violent unprofessionalism. However, he gives us no insight into the motives of the Gestapo informers. Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, in their *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press,

The Fascist and Nazi regimes used spies as tools to infiltrate their enemies' networks, often recruiting individuals whose life circumstances made them ideal collaborators. By analyzing these circumstances, it is often possible to get at the spies' motives; they were victims of unfavorable childhoods, threatened into collaboration, offered impunity if they accepted to serve the regimes (even impunity for charges of "immorality" in the case of queer spies), or they were lacking anti-fascist ideals. Unraveling the personal stories of these spies—both instruments and targets of police governments—allows us to understand the inner workings of the regimes and why they ultimately failed. My inquiry will therefore end in 1945 with the collapse of the Fascist and Nazi regimes, and consequently of their secret police forces.

### **The Interrelated Arguments**

This dissertation makes three interrelated arguments:

1. There is a pattern in how the Fascists and the Nazis enforced their repression. Their proactive terror state involved taking advantage of the very spaces and communities it was targeting. The main target, of course, was the Resistance and any form of political opposition. Both the Fascist and Nazi regimes considered turning Resistance members—thus making them traitors—an effective way to infiltrate networks of political opponents. This strategy also fostered a further atmosphere of terror and distrust, one where spies were spied upon by other spies, both undertaking and undergoing surveillance.

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2014), are more successful at debunking the myth that the Gestapo was omnipresent and incredibly powerful, but they do not tie their argument to an analysis of why the police spies' surveillance was imperfect. Robert Gellately insists that Nazi repressive and racial policies obtained consensus among the German population [see *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1935–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990)], arguing that most people who ended up in the Gestapo—outside of its main headquarters—were not previously connected to Nazism. However, Gellately is more interested in the motives of police denouncers than of the informers.

2. Many of these spies occupied a *gray zone* and were in an indefinite space between persecuted and persecutors. While I feel uneasy about using the concept of gray zone since Italian Holocaust survivor Primo Levi coined the term in reference to life in the concentration camps,<sup>41</sup> it indeed seems to apply to many of these informers, who were first threatened into collaborating with the Fascists and the Nazis but then shifted to the side of the persecutors when they agreed to do so.

Levi defined the gray zone as a zone of *indistinction* in which the boundaries between persecutors and victims were suddenly blurred and the victims were compelled to act as persecutors. This way, they could obtain some personal advantages could also act against themselves. This state of indistinction dramatically shaped their minds and identities. This model applies to some of the cases I analyze. Fascist and Nazi surveillance systems needed to incorporate some of the very groups they excluded and dominated, such as gay men and Jewish people. I argue that using individuals from these groups gave these surveillance systems access to marginal spaces that they could not otherwise infiltrate. However, relying on informers made these systems more fragile because the spies often pursued their own agendas. I only use the concept of gray zone as an analytical category and not as a form of moral judgment or general philosophical assessment.

3. The similarities and differences between Nazi and Fascist espionage systems fit within already-studied distinctions between Italian Fascism and Nazism. Fascism aimed at building a totalitarian state. The Fascist party was absorbed by the state bureaucratic apparatus and a bureaucratic machine that was stronger than the party. Fascist spies acted within this political system. In the Nazi system, conversely, the party was stronger and more autonomous. The

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<sup>41</sup> The concept of *gray zone* was originally developed by Primo Levi in *I sommersi e i salvati* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986).

role and power of Nazi spies must be considered in the context of a state which was increasingly dismantled as a juridical institution, since the Nazis usually viewed the state as a means and not an end of their politics and worldview.

Emilio Gentile argued that, in Fascist Italy, “the party machine remained a muddled bureaucratic apparatus with both military and educational propaganda functions, which were largely discredited in the eyes of public opinion.”<sup>42</sup> The limited scope of the OVRA and the reports that its spies wrote bear the marks of this bureaucratic apparatus in that the spies conformed to its language and rules. Gentile further argued that “[e]ven in [the] last phase of its history, the function of the National Fascist Party was conceived by the fascists as subordinate to and circumscribed within the sphere of the state.”<sup>43</sup> Historians have also debated the issue of extreme ideological racism typically seen as a crucial point of distinction between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Starting in the mid-1990s, a new generation of Italian historians including Angelo Del Boca,<sup>44</sup> Filippo Focardi,<sup>45</sup> Michele Sarfatti,<sup>46</sup> and Alberto De Bernardi,<sup>47</sup> began to question the notion that the Fascists merely followed the Nazis in their racist plans. Emilio Gentile and Enzo Collotti have argued that Fascist “anti-Jewish thought and action either emerged naturally from the inner logic and dynamics of the Italian dictatorship, which sought to create a ‘New Man’ through all-encompassing social mobilization and ideological radicalization” or happened “as a backlash of Italian colonial rule

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<sup>42</sup> Emilio Gentile, “The Problem of the Party in Italian Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 2 (1984): 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente? Un mito duro a morire* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, “The Question of Fascist Italy’s War Crimes: The Construction of a Self-Acquitting Myth (1943–1948),” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 330–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571042000254755>.

<sup>46</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini’s Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Alberto De Bernardi, *Una dittatura moderna: Il fascismo come problema storico* (Milan: B. Mondadori, 2001).

in Africa and its strong racial underpinnings on the Metropolitan areas.”<sup>48</sup> I do not personally believe that the Fascist racial laws and persecution plans against the Jews were independent of the Nazi agenda, but I do think that one should look at the interconnections and mutual influences between the two regimes. If Fascism paved the way for Nazi racism, the Nazis transformed that racism into a full-fledged extermination plan. I agree with Patrick Bernhard’s argument: “The two regimes worked together internationally in persecuting their enemies and social outcasts.”<sup>49</sup> The networks of Fascist and Nazi spies and the patterns of espionage that my dissertation traces in four countries—Italy, France, Germany, and Austria—prove such a point.

## **Engagement with the Existing Scholarly Literature**

### *The Absence of the Comparative Approach*

There is no book about Fascist and Nazi spies that takes into account case studies from different European countries. The comparative dimension is a way of expanding the existing historiography—of bringing out national specificities as well as broader networks.

Mimmo Franzinelli and Mauro Canali wrote the most exhaustive accounts of the trajectory of the Fascist police but neither extensively compared Fascist and the Nazi police spies from their origins to their activities outside of Italy. Their focus remained anchored to the Italian peninsula.<sup>50</sup>

The historiography on German police forces presents the same national focus. Alf Lüdtke’s work on the Prussian police offers an understanding of the repressive side and violent methods of

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<sup>48</sup> Patrick Bernhard, “Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany,” *Fascism* 6, no. 2 (December 8, 2017): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00602001>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>50</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*; Mimmo Franzinelli, *Guerra di spie: I servizi segreti fascisti, nazisti e alleati, 1939–1943*, 1st ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 2004); Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

the Prussian and German states since the middle of the nineteenth century, but does not look at international comparisons.<sup>51</sup> Robert Gellately's more recent book on the Gestapo relegated the question of the comparison between Fascist and Nazi police to a footnote.<sup>52</sup> Gellately insisted on the *self-policing* aspect of the Nazi state—i.e., its reliance on denunciations.<sup>53</sup> While Nazi terror was deeply rooted within the population, the Nazis considered the *Vertrauensmänner* essential; these individuals were considered élite informers and “sent on official missions which sometimes took them outside Germany.”<sup>54</sup> I believe that stripping the Gestapo of its essential role in the Nazi proactive approach to the persecution of the regime's enemies has dangerous implications. While the Gestapo was no Stasi, its direct action against the Resistance and all political opponents of the regime was what enabled the Nazi universe of terror to last as long as it did. Some studies—Walter Otto Weyrauch's, for example<sup>55</sup>—have looked specifically at the *Vertrauensmänner*. Most historians, though, have chosen to focus on the institutional structure of the police (especially the Gestapo) and on the German population's complicity,<sup>56</sup> and have neglected to look at the informers in depth. The most recent work in this genre is by Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle. The authors correctly debunk the myth that the Gestapo was omnipresent and incredibly powerful, but only devote one chapter the Gestapo's activity in Europe—that is, outside of Germany.<sup>57</sup>

The subject was only recently treated in French historiography by Fabrice Grenard, but his work has no comparative dimension and concerns only Nazi spies' activity in France.<sup>58</sup> Previously,

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<sup>51</sup> Alf Lüdtke, *Police and State in Prussia, 1815–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, 254.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Gellately, “Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic,” *The Journal of Modern History*; *Chicago* 68, no. 4 (December 1996): 931–67.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, “An Army of Spies?,” 257.

<sup>55</sup> Walter O. Weyrauch, *Gestapo V-Leute: Tatsachen und Theorie des Geheimdienstes* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1989).

<sup>56</sup> Browder, *Hitler's Enforcers*; Eric A Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Dams and Stolle, *The Gestapo*.

<sup>58</sup> Grenard, *La traque des résistants*.

the main reference for this activity was ex-policeman and Resistance fighter-turned-historian Jacques Delarue's work, full of historical inaccuracies and rather dated.<sup>59</sup> As I explain in the first chapter, the access to most archival holdings in France on the subject of WWII police activities was previously restricted—only by a decree of December 24, 2015 were they opened up for consultation—so this explains the lack of studies on this topic.<sup>60</sup>

As far as the Austrian case is concerned, Franz Weisz, Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer have published in-depth studies of the Gestapo's activity in Vienna, which also present valuable information about the role of the *Vertrauensmänner*.<sup>61</sup> Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer point out that the Nazis employed “intensified interrogations”—a euphemism for a broad repertoire of torture methods, from solitary confinement to the threat of being sent to a concentration camp or of being executed—to coerce the Resistance members into betraying their comrades.<sup>62</sup> Traitors were problematic for the Resistance's reputation, fueling long-lasting controversies about its unity and authenticity. Only a comparative history of Fascist and Nazi spies in different countries can highlight the intersection and imbrication of induced repression and spontaneous collaboration that lie at the very basis of totalitarian regimes.

OVRA and Gestapo scholars have given us an excellent understanding of the structure of the Fascist and Nazi secret police but have neglected to illuminate their imperfect human tools in a comparative fashion. This creates the misleading impression that these police services were

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<sup>59</sup> Jacques Delarue, *Histoire de la Gestapo* (Paris: Fayard, 1962); Jacques Delarue, *Les Nazis sont parmi nous* (Paris: les Éditions du Pavillon, 1968); Jacques Delarue, *Trafics et crimes sous l'Occupation* (Paris: Fayard, 1968).

<sup>60</sup> “Arrêté du 24 décembre 2015 portant ouverture d'archives relatives à la Seconde Guerre mondiale” (2015), <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000031691149/>.

<sup>61</sup> Franz Weisz, “Die Gestapo in Wien,” *Archiv. Jahrbuch des Vereins für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 8 (1992): 210–22; Franz Weisz, “Die V-Männer der Gestapoleitstelle Wien: Organisation, Personalstruktur, Arbeitsweise,” *Zeitgeschichte* 6, no. 40 (2013): 338–57; Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945*, 190.

perfectly-functioning machines of terror in the hands of a few powerful individuals. My dissertation is an immersion into everyday life in the Fascist and Nazi regimes and an attempt to give this bureaucracy of terror a human face. One may only grasp that terror is a double-edged sword by looking at how repression acts on ordinary human beings, which spies ultimately were.

### *Engagement with the Scholarship on Terror*

In the case of Fascist Italy, there is more work on violence than terror, notably on the role of violence in the rise of fascism (especially with the *squadristi*),<sup>63</sup> the seizure of power,<sup>64</sup> the so-called Fascist revolution,<sup>65</sup> ordinary violence during the Fascist regime,<sup>66</sup> and in the framework of the Italian Social Republic.<sup>67</sup> The existing secondary literature also underlines the link between violence, Fascist ideology<sup>68</sup> (as expressed by Mussolini himself in his writings<sup>69</sup>), and Fascist colonial brutality.<sup>70</sup> My contribution consists in moving the focus to the concept of Fascist terror. I highlight the explicit role that the spies played in channeling such a concept as both victims and perpetrators. I prefer to refer to terror in this context, because the concept better captures the omnipresent psychological nature of the fear that the regime generated, conveying the idea that the Fascist state was constantly watching everyone—including the spies!

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<sup>63</sup> Giulia Albanese, *The March on Rome: Violence and the Rise of Italian Fascism*, trans. Sergio Knipe (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019); Manlio Cancogni, *Storia dello squadristo* (Milan: Longanesi, 1959); Mimmo Franzinelli, *Squadristi: Protagonisti e tecniche della violenza fascista, 1919–1922* (Milan: Mondadori, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*.

<sup>65</sup> Giorgio Alberto Chiurco, *Storia della rivoluzione fascista* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1929).

<sup>66</sup> Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Camilla Poesio, "Violenza, repressione e apparati di controllo del regime fascista," *Studi Storici* 55, no. 1 (2014): 15–26.

<sup>67</sup> Toni Rovatti, *Leoni vegetariani: La violenza fascista durante la RSI* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2011); Renato Sasdelli, *Fascismo e tortura a Bologna: La violenza fascista durante il regime e la RSI* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2017).

<sup>68</sup> Alfredo Bonadeo, *Mussolini e la politica del sacrificio* (Rome: Aracne, 2009); Chiara Ferrari, *The Rhetoric of Violence and Sacrifice in Fascist Italy: Mussolini, Gadda, Vittorini* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>69</sup> Benito Mussolini, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* (Worcester, Mass.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education, 1935).

<sup>70</sup> Sáska László, *Fascist Italian Brutality in Ethiopia, 1935–1937: An Eyewitness Account* (Trenton, N.J.: The Red Sea Press, 2015).

There is extensive work on terror in Nazi Germany. In addition to more general assessments,<sup>71</sup> the most specific ones pertain to concentration camps,<sup>72</sup> prisons,<sup>73</sup> specific events,<sup>74</sup> locations,<sup>75</sup> or the persecution of specific groups, such as Jewish and Christian people,<sup>76</sup> gay people,<sup>77</sup> Resistance members,<sup>78</sup> Allied airmen,<sup>79</sup> or families in Nazi Germany<sup>80</sup>. There are also collections of printed sources,<sup>81</sup> exhibition catalogues,<sup>82</sup> and memoirs<sup>83</sup> that deal with terror. I focus on the previously-mentioned works that link terror to the police.<sup>84</sup> My contribution to this literature rests in spotlighting the specific role that spies played in enforcing the Nazi terror. Eric

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<sup>71</sup> Brigitte Berlekamp and Werner Röhr, *Terror, Herrschaft und Alltag im Nationalsozialismus: Probleme einer Sozialgeschichte des deutschen Faschismus* (Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1995); Patrick Gensing, *Terror von Rechts: die Nazi-Morde und das Versagen der Politik* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 2012); M. Patricia Marchak, *Reigns of Terror* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Friedrich Pohlmann, *Ideologie und Terror im Nationalsozialismus* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1992).

<sup>72</sup> Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Dachau and the Nazi Terror 1933–1945* (Dachau: Dachauer Hefte, 2002); Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, and Angelika Königseder, *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* (München: Beck, 2005); Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel, and Angelika Königseder, *Terror ohne System: Die ersten Konzentrationslager im Nationalsozialismus 1933-1935* (Berlin: Metropol, 2001); Paul Martin Neurath, *Die Gesellschaft des Terrors: Innenansichten der Konzentrationslager Dachau und Buchenwald*, Originalausg., 1. Aufl. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Nikolaus Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>74</sup> Anthony Read, *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Night of Terror* (New York: Times Books, 1989).

<sup>75</sup> Markus Sebastian Braun, Wolfgang Benz, and Paul Spiegel, *Spuren des Terrors: Stätten nationalsozialistischer Gewaltherrschaft in Berlin* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Braun, 2002).

<sup>76</sup> Pontus Rudberg, *The Swedish Jews and the Victims of Nazi Terror, 1933–1945* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2015); Nechama Tec, *Resistance: Jews and Christians Who Defied the Nazi Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> Burkhard Jellonnek and Rüdiger Lautmann, eds., *Nationalsozialistischer Terror gegen Homosexuelle: verdrängt und ungesühnt* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002).

<sup>78</sup> Lore Cowan, *Children of the Resistance: The Young Ones Who Defied the Nazi Terror* (London: Frewin, 1968); Sidney Iwens, *How Dark the Heavens: 1400 Days in the Grip of Nazi Terror* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1990).

<sup>79</sup> Kevin T. Hall, *Terror Flyers: The Lynching of American Airmen in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Robert Loeffel, *Family Punishment in Nazi Germany: Sippenhaft, Terror and Myth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>81</sup> Dirk Erb, *Gleichgeschaltet: der Nazi-Terror gegen Gewerkschaften und Berufsverbände 1930 bis 1933; eine Dokumentation* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001); Hans L Grabowski, *Das Geld des Terrors: Geld und Geldersatz in deutschen Konzentrationslagern und Gettos 1933 bis 1945: Dokumentation und Katalog basierend auf Belegen der zeitgeschichtlichen Sammlung Wolfgang Haney sowie aus weiteren Sammlungen und Archiven* (Regenstauf: Battenberg, 2008); Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit Berlin, *Terror und Widerstand, 1933–1945: Dokumente aus Deutschland und dem besetzten Europa* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1966).

<sup>82</sup> *Nazi-Terror gegen Jugendliche: Verfolgung, Deportation und Gegenwehr in der Region Freiburg: Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Heidelberg: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2016).

<sup>83</sup> Halina Birenbaum, *Hope Is the Last to Die: A Coming of Age under Nazi Terror* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); Pierre Seel, *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>84</sup> Johnson, *Nazi Terror*; Dams and Stolle, *The Gestapo*.

Johnson supports Gellately's thesis of a Nazi self-policing society. The main conclusion of his study of the Gestapo in Krefeld, North Rhine-Westphalia, is that they relied heavily on the civilian population as source of information.<sup>85</sup> Given that the information the Gestapo acquired in Germany seldom came from paid informants, I argue that is important to highlight the role of the V-men abroad, in occupied countries, and among the circles of political opponents—locations where the Gestapo had less reach. Additionally, denunciations were certainly an effective source of information, but sometimes the Gestapo needed spies to effectively act on them.

*Broader Engagement with the Scholarship on Surveillance and Totalitarianism*

This dissertation is spurred by an engagement with Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*<sup>86</sup> and *The History of Sexuality*.<sup>87</sup> Foucault's reflections on coercion and control as well as the dichotomy he established between *assujettissement* and *subjectivation* as peculiar forms of the *technology of the self* (in the present study, the spy's self) inform my understanding of what it means to be a spy. I also consider Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* a milestone in the study of the police's fundamental role in totalitarian regimes.<sup>88</sup> The official state was but the outward façade of totalitarianism; it served to represent the country with respect to the non-totalitarian world. What was truly important was the *state within a state*, the secret police, that lay "above the state and behind the façades of ostensible power, in a maze of multiplied offices," and was "superefficient" and "supercompetent."<sup>89</sup> Propaganda and police were connected; the hunting down of all opponents was supported by a population re-education process, during which

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<sup>85</sup> Johnson, *Nazi Terror*.

<sup>86</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>87</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

<sup>88</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

neighbors gradually became very dangerous enemies, and resistance in any form was liquidated. I, with Arendt, seek to explain how the secret police's spies acted as *agents provocateurs* and facilitated this process. Arendt also underlined how in totalitarian regimes, victims and perpetrators can at any time switch places.

In my focus on the spies' profiles, I also engage with debates about intention and ideology in totalitarian regimes, and the functionalist and intentionalist schools of thought.<sup>90</sup> Dominick LaCapra's argument that "there *is* no singular key to the explanation of the Holocaust"<sup>91</sup> (and therefore the legitimate approach falls somewhere between the functionalist and the intentionalist ones) can be exported to the study of totalitarianism as a whole; spies, both targets and actors of the repression, are the best proof that we need to undo the dichotomy between popular dictatorship and repressive totalitarianism. As I mentioned before, spies lived in a gray zone of blurred agencies and conflicting incentives. They became police informers because of a complex number of factors, and not necessarily for ideological reasons.

Previous historical works on police cooperation also refer to Max Weber's theory of bureaucratic autonomy as their main theoretical guide.<sup>92</sup> I argue that a specific *bureaucracy of terror* dictated the spies' actions as they struggled between considerations of personal gain and moral concerns.

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<sup>90</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, "Perpetrators and Victims. The Goldhagen Debate and Beyond" and "Functionalism, Intentionalism, and the Concept of Scapegoating," in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), ebook edition, 150–175 and 199–206. Daniel Goldhagen (interpreter of an extreme form of intentionalism) argues that the Germans were the principal perpetrators of the Holocaust because of "the long-incubating, pervasive, virulent, racist, eliminationist antisemitism of German culture"; Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 419. Christopher Browning (who is moderately functionalist, or who, according to LaCapra, has evolved to a neither functionalist nor intentionalist position in more recent years) argues instead that the genocide of the Jews had not been entirely planned out in the 1920s as Goldhagen dates it; see Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 199.

<sup>92</sup> Mathieu Deflem argues that police cooperation became possible through the development of a formal bureaucratic autonomy in the cooperating police forces of different states in Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12–26.

## Fascist and Nazi Spies as Ideal Types

Is it possible to define an *ideal type* of the Fascist and Nazi spy? And would such a spy be different from a Soviet spy or a spy of the Allied counterespionage services?

The notion of ideal type first appeared in Max Weber's paper "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy."<sup>93</sup> Weber was responding to economist Carl Menger, refuting his claims that naturalistic laws can be established in the cultural sciences and "that such exact laws are conditioned psychologically, that is, in the case of theoretical economics, on the egoistic, or acquisitive drive."<sup>94</sup> Weber argued that "the propositions of abstract economic theory are a special case of a kind of concept construction which is peculiar to the cultural sciences" and that "economic theory does not express a law, but presents a model."<sup>95</sup> He called this model *ideal type*, defining it as "an ideal picture of events on the commodity-market under conditions of a society organized on the principles of an exchange economy, free competition and rigorously rational conduct."<sup>96</sup> In short, an ideal type is an analytical construct that serves the investigator as a tool to ascertain similarities in a specific series of cases.

Weber further developed the concept in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, where we can see, for example, the ideal type of the *capitalistic entrepreneur*:

He avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as conscious enjoyment of his power, and is embarrassed by the outward signs of the social recognition which he receives. His manner of life is, in other words, often, and we shall have to investigate the historical significance of just this important fact, distinguished by a certain ascetic tendency, as appears clearly enough in the sermon of Franklin which we have quoted [Weber here alludes to Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, and specifically the final passage from *Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich* and the *Advice to a Young Tradesman*]. It is, namely, by no

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<sup>93</sup> Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," in *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edward Albert Shils (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949), 49–112.

<sup>94</sup> Werner J. Cahnman, "Ideal Type Theory: Max Weber's Concept and Some of Its Derivations," *The Sociological Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1965): 268.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," 89–90.

means exceptional, but rather the rule, for him to have a sort of modesty which is essentially more honest than the reserve which Franklin so shrewdly recommends. He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well.<sup>97</sup>

I believe that the concept can be fruitfully applied to the spies. The ideal type of the Fascist and Nazi spy is a spy for self-interest; the individuals whose profiles and motives I analyze in this dissertation were more motivated by financial gain than by ideology. If they had been blackmailed or coerced into spying, they were also motivated by the desire to save themselves. They usually came from humble beginnings, and spying for the Fascist and Nazi regimes often allowed them to improve their social status. Nazi spies underwent some professional training, but it was not remotely comparable to the training that the spies of the Allied counterespionage services received. The Nazi spies also did not exhibit the sense of duty that communist (*Stasi*) spies displayed.

Stasi informers also were much more numerous. Robert Gellately states that “on December 31, 1989, the last date for which reliable statistics appear to have survived, there were as many as 170,000 ‘Unofficials’—but these figures continue to be revised upward.”<sup>98</sup> Gellately notes that “there was an enormous variety in the ranks of these ‘Unofficials’ and the nature of their involvement changed over time.”<sup>99</sup> However, the use of them was absolutely central to the activity of the Stasi and “the IM was the most important weapon against the enemy.”<sup>100</sup>

IM stands for *inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* (unofficial collaborator). During the Cold War, Timothy Garton Ash, a young Englishman studying at Oxford, went to Berlin to work on a thesis about the city under Hitler. However, Garton Ash became interested in contemporary Berlin; instead of researching the Third Reich, he ended up working as a journalist for British, American,

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<sup>97</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33.

<sup>98</sup> Gellately, “Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany,” 955.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

and German periodicals, reporting on the decline of Soviet-communist Europe.<sup>101</sup> Garton Ash moved to East Berlin 1980, but kept working mostly from West Berlin, often passing through East Germany on his way to Poland. He attracted the attention of the East German Security Service during his journeys, and in 1981 the Ministry for State Security (Stasi) opened an operational file on him, stating that “there are grounds for suspecting that G. [Garton Ash] has deliberately exploited his official functions as research student and/or journalist to pursue intelligence activities.”<sup>102</sup> A series of IMs were deployed for his surveillance.

Garton Ash, like many other targets of the Stasi, had the opportunity to later see his own file. Comparing the data he found with notes he had taken in a diary, he set out to identify the IMs who informed on him and managed to find some of them. He called them, made appointments, and asked them the crucial question: Why did you do it? “Michaela,” one of the IMs tasked with his surveillance, did not hesitate to answer that “One was obliged to [cooperate] in my position.”<sup>103</sup> Garton Ash notes that “she [talked] in a rather matter-of-fact, outwardly self-confident way,” but was also concerned about what he had been told and to whom he would report the information she shared. She herself was also watched but did not apply to see her own file. Garton Ash further notes that “she [seemed] halfway to seeing herself as an object of Stasi surveillance, almost as a dissident.”<sup>104</sup> And, as she talked more, she “[revealed] rather vividly the mixture of motives that made her collaborate”:

Some residual belief in the system. The sense that it was an official duty: “in that position one was obliged to...” Then there was the hope of using the Stasi as a player in the bureaucratic game. For her own purposes too: through Dürer to America! Also, Georg and Litzki thought I really was a spy and, after all, there was a war on, wasn’t there? A Cold War between her system and mine.

And fear?

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<sup>101</sup> John Mapother, “The File: A Personal History,” *History: Reviews of New Books* 26, no. 3 (1998): 160.

<sup>102</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History* (New York: Random House, 1997), 14.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

“Yes, of course, underneath one was shit-scared of them.” So one tried to disarm any suspicion, to show how cooperative one was, by chatting away, giving all sorts of harmless detail. “And this is what comes out...”<sup>105</sup>

From this description, one can infer that there was self-interest even in the case of Stasi spies, but also a sense of duty and a belief in the system that I encountered less in the case of Fascist and Nazi spies.

I also believe that *types* should be taken as flexible and fluid models due to the performative nature of the spy’s task. Sociology may be helpful to refine this approach. For instance, Georg Simmel has defined, throughout his body of work, a series of types: the renegade; the adventurer; the mediator; and the foreigner. For Simmel, the social relationship with other characters contain certain behavioral expectations can be attributed to these types. The types only exist within a specific form of relationship—a principle of action/reaction that he calls *Wechselwirkung*. *Wechselwirkung* is a real “commitment to studying the relations between individuals or collective actors.”<sup>106</sup> In an unfinished autobiographical note, Simmel “declares that scientific activity consists in dissolving what seems to be fixed and stable into the fluidity of its dynamic relations.”<sup>107</sup> Society for him cannot be defined as “a fixed unity; rather, it refers to dynamic and gradual processes of ‘sociation’, *Vergesellschaftung*, resulting in ‘more or less society.’”<sup>108</sup> I would apply this logic to the spies; they only exist in a fluid and dynamic space that determines the shifts in their performance. It is only by looking at the dynamic and gradual processes they are involved in that one can elicit an accurate picture of the very nature of surveillance and repression.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 114–15.

<sup>106</sup> Birgitta Nedelmann, “The Continuing Relevance of Georg Simmel: Staking Out Anew the Field of Sociology,” in *Handbook of Social Theory*, ed. Barry Smart and George Ritzer (London: SAGE, 2001), 68.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

## Research Methodology and Primary Sources

My research methodology fuses a comparative history of the Fascist and Nazi secret police forces with a microhistory and social history of their spies. By *microhistory*, I mean a specific investigation of the individual lives of some spies. Just as Carlo Ginzburg examined the life and worldview of Italian miller Menocchio in his famous *The Cheese and the Worms*,<sup>109</sup> I study these spies' profiles and the context in which they performed their roles. By *social history*, I envision a study of the inner workings of the secret police machine from its lower, everyday wheels: the spies. Vandana Joshi, has focused on women in her *Gender and Power in the Third Reich: Female Denouncers and the Gestapo (1933–45)*, in particular how ordinary women could and did “gain a share in the apparatus of power” by denouncing husbands, neighbors, and colleagues at work.<sup>110</sup> In a similar way, I aim to examine spies' experiences, highlighting how they were ordinary people made extraordinary by the bureaucracy of terror of the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

My research started in the Fascist sources at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome. I have focused on the 622 OVRA informers, the complete list of whom was published as an addition to the “Gazzetta Ufficiale” n. 145 of July 2, 1946 and appears in the appendix of Franzinelli's book.<sup>111</sup> The list is not completely reliable; not all the informers were included, and many of those who were filed an appeal to be removed from it. That is no proof of their innocence. Rather, some of those whose appeal was successful were among the most cunning OVRA informers. One such example was the lawyer Bruno Cassinelli.<sup>112</sup> Expelled from the Socialist Party, he quickly became

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<sup>109</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

<sup>110</sup> Vandana Joshi, *Gender and Power in the Third Reich: Female Denouncers and the Gestapo (1933–45)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xi.

<sup>111</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 643–86.

<sup>112</sup> Cassinelli's files in ACS, Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, Box 261 and Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 1155, as well as his reports signed “Brucassi” in Giuseppe Giulietti's file in Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 2457 prove his Fascist espionage activity. His appeal can be seen in ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l'Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell'OVRA (1946–1949), Box 13, Dossier 214.

an instrument of the Fascist regime. His role was fundamental in the consolidation of the Fascist dictatorship. Cassinelli was appointed to “defend” (to fool) the ex-socialist deputy Tito Zaniboni, whose attempt to assassinate Mussolini was largely instigated by the regime in order to suggest an emerging terrorism and facilitate the increasing authoritarianism of Il Duce’s politics. Cassinelli—who signed his informer’s reports as *Brucassi*—continued to provide the dictatorship with precious services. But even though he was one of the most active and effective informers and indisputable proof of his collusion existed, his appeal to be removed from the informers’ list was successful and he was rehabilitated in 1947. I looked for the OVRA informers’ names in different collections: most prominently *Polizia Politica (Fascicoli Personali and Materia)*, *Casellario Politico Centrale*, and *Commissione per l’Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell’OVRA*. The latter contains all the material from the aforementioned appeals. Some influential informers also managed to build a network of *subinformers* (in Chapters Three and Five for instance, we will meet Bice Pupeschi, whose case was noteworthy because her network included a few high-ranked Vatican prelates). I also conducted research at the Archivio di Stato di Roma, where I consulted the court trial documents of Bice Pupeschi<sup>113</sup> and Filippo Tagliavacche<sup>114</sup> from the Corte D’Assise, which has jurisdiction to try all crimes carrying a maximum penalty of at least 24 years in prison. I also consulted the dossier that included the court trial documents of Luigi Fogar,<sup>115</sup> one of the high-ranked prelates who served as a Fascist spy and whose case I treat in the fifth chapter.

My research on the Nazi *Vertrauensmänner* started in France. The scale of the Nazi surveillance system is obviously much larger than that of the Fascist system, so I could only look at a very small proportion of these Nazi spies. In France, the Nazis engaged *Vertrauensmänner*

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<sup>113</sup> ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Pupeschi, Bice.

<sup>114</sup> ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 120, Tagliavacche Filippo.

<sup>115</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 513, Fogar, Luigi.

shortly after the French defeat of 1940. Affiliated with various Nazi police services and not just the Gestapo, the VMs constituted thousands of double agents whose main task was to infiltrate the French Resistance networks. I started by looking for some of the names that Patrice Miannay had listed in his *Dictionnaire des agents doubles dans la Résistance*—which includes a short biographical notice about several spies as well as a list of archival sources, in the holdings of the French National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.<sup>116</sup> I reviewed the Z6 series in particular, where most court proceedings against the VMs are collected. Some of the boxes were devoted to specific spies, others to a specific KdS which contained folders about many spies. KdS stands for *Kommando des Sipo-SD* and many of them were installed in the occupied territories. For example, one of them concerned the activity of the Gestapo of avenue Foch.<sup>117</sup> I also looked for some of Miannay's names in the holdings of the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes: the archives of the French armed forces which also contain trial records and documents about the wartime activity of former spies. Furthermore, I conducted research at La contemporaine (previously Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine) of Nanterre, which contains former Resistance-member-turned-historian Jacques Delarue's research materials on Nazi activities in France. Here I homed in on the material of the Flora Operation<sup>118</sup> and Klaus Barbie's trial,<sup>119</sup> which I treat in the second chapter. The Flora report is the first of three secret reports prepared by Ernst Dunker, one of the leaders of the Gestapo in Marseille. It talks about one of the deadliest and most effective operations of repression the French Resistance suffered. Finally,

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<sup>116</sup> Patrice Miannay, *Dictionnaire des agents doubles dans la Résistance* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2005).

<sup>117</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 766/BIS, Dossier 5575/1 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch; Box 766/TER, Dossier 5575/2 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch; Box 766/QUARTER, Dossier 5575/3 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch.

<sup>118</sup> BDIC, F delta res, Box 0888, Flora Operation, 1940–1977.

<sup>119</sup> BDIC, F delta res, Box 0933, Klaus Barbie, 1971–1997.

for my last chapter on Jewish spies, I conducted research at the Mémorial de la Shoah, focusing on the digitized archival holdings of the *Institut d'étude des questions juives (Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions)* and on the archival holdings that the Mémorial acquired at the Dépôt Central d'Archives de la Justice Militaire at Le Blanc. The latter are incredibly extensive, so I chose to focus on the ones concerning René Hardy's case<sup>120</sup> and the activity of the Gestapo gang located at rue de la Pompe.<sup>121</sup>

I continued my investigation of Nazi spy activity in Germany at the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, the Landesarchiv Berlin, and the Stasi archive (whose full name is Archiv der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik). In these three locations I ended up paying particular attention to the court trial documents of Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn<sup>122</sup> and Rolf Isaaksohn,<sup>123</sup> whose cases I examine in the third and last chapters. I also conducted research at the Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen in Duisburg, the Landesarchiv in Speyer, and the Staatsarchiv Würzburg, where the remaining Gestapo informers' personal files that the Nazis did not succeed in destroying are located. I ended

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<sup>120</sup> MS, DACJM Collection, Hardy's Case, Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossiers 01–07.

<sup>121</sup> MS, DACJM Collection, Gestapo Paris series, Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 05, Rue de la Pompe, Arrests in Ivry, August 14, 1944; Dossier 07, Rue de la Pompe, Jewish Organization of Combat, July 17–19, 1944; Dossier 08, Rue de la Pompe, S/Dossier L, Assassinations of Bois de Boulogne, August 16, 1944; Dossier 09, Rue de la Pompe, Dossier N, Berger Gang's Activity, Est of France, September and October 1944; Dossier 13, Rue de la Pompe, T.M.P. of Paris, Regulation.

<sup>122</sup> These are the most relevant documents I examined: BAB, Series DO/1, Box 4060, Isaaksohn born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid; Karteikarte 4/290/54, Isaaksohn born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid, February 16, 1950; LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1854, Handakte Band 4, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1987; Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960; Box 1856, Band 5, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1972–1992; Box 2486, Band 2, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1957; Box 2487, Band 3, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1957–1963; Box 2487, Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler, married Schellenberg (1922–1994), 1956; BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Band 4, Teil 2, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol; Band 6, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol; Band 8, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol; Band 10, Teil 1, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol; Band 12, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol.

<sup>123</sup> BAB, Series R/58, Box 9684, Isaaksohn, Rolf Israel.

up not using these files in the dissertation since they are more about the victims of police denunciations and less about the *Vertrauensmänner*.

My research in Austria happened in the framework of a six-month fellowship at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Given time constraints, I focused almost exclusively on Jewish spies. I searched for their traces in the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (the archive devoted to the Austrian Resistance), the Stadt- und Landesarchiv, and the archive of the Wiesenthal Institute in Vienna, the latter of which also contains the digitized documents of the Viennese Jewish community (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*). The historians of the Gestapo in Vienna described how its “news section” (*Nachrichtenreferat*) created a specific “requirement profile” which, depending on the activity or task to be undertaken, called for *Vertrauensmänner* to belong to the social environment or milieu they were ordered to infiltrate—a requirement that forced them to betray their peers. Between 1938 and 1945, 400 to 600 spies worked for the Gestapo in Vienna. Their traces are hard to find in the Austrian archives because V-men were not allowed to testify against their victims in court; the Gestapo only provided written evidence to the courts lest their informers be “burned.” Also, after the bombing of the Vienna Gestapo headquarters at the end of World War II, the Gestapo there still managed to destroy almost all their records by burning them in the boilers of Morzinplatz and then in the atrium of the building at Riemergasse No. 7.<sup>124</sup> However, like the French case, some of the V-men’s names appear in the post-war trials. For instance, 59 spies of the Gestapo in Vienna are listed in the undated 53-page transcript of Lambert Leutgeb’s interrogation at his trial in front of the Belgrade military court.<sup>125</sup> Leutgeb was the head of the Gestapo “news section,” which he had been instrumental in establishing. Some of those 59 spies were tried by the *Volksgerichte*—the people’s courts that were

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<sup>124</sup> Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945*, 191.

<sup>125</sup> DÖW, 51840, Lambert Leutgeb’s Verhörprotokoll.

set up in post-war Austria to punish Nazi crimes—so it is possible to see the documents issued from their court trials.

I also conducted two weeks of research at the archives of the Hoover Institution at Stanford in the framework of the 2018 Summer Workshop on Authoritarianism and Democratic Breakdown. The documents that I ended up looking at most thoroughly were copies of Klaus Barbie's pre-trial records. The rest were mostly scattered documents that provided contextual information but did not specifically concern the spies. Taken together, these documents provide insights into how the Gestapo operated at different stages of the institution: for instance, Ferdinand Eduard von Bredow's *Tagebuch* from 1932–1933 includes typescript Gestapo memoranda from the chancelleries of Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher (Bredow, along with Schleicher, was murdered in the famous “Night of the Long Knives” of June 30, 1934); in the Louis Paul Lochner collection there is an account of the beginnings of the Gestapo by Rudolf Diels (head of the Gestapo in 1933–34); and, in the same collection, there is a document about the indictment of Richard Schmid (February 11, 1939), a man from Stuttgart who is accused of complicity in a treasonable plot. There are also documents concerning various arrests carried out by the Gestapo, as well as the persecution of the Jews and deportations to Nazi concentration camps. I also found several lists of Gestapo agents operating in France, reports by the Gestapo on relations between the Vichy government and German administration in France, and several extracts from letters written by various Gestapo offices.

In all of these archives, I often reviewed records of court trials of convicted spies. I tried to be mindful of their subjective nature. Analyzing documents issued from these court trials presents further complications related to the nature of retributive justice. Tony Judt argued that in the immediate post-war period, everyone sought to identify with the winners—the Allies and those

who had sided with them before the final victory—while rushing to hunt down war criminals.<sup>126</sup> But how to find the criminals that were not well-known leaders and official party members? Judt asked how “you punish tens of thousands, perhaps millions, of people for activities that were approved, legalized, and even encouraged by those in power[?]”<sup>127</sup> He went on to explain that “[m]ost of the acts of retributive punishment happened before the occupied countries had been liberated, or else at the very moment of that liberation, before formal or official tribunals had been set up to pass judgment.”<sup>128</sup> Justice also happened outside of the courts: “Two of the functions of retributive jurisprudence—the administration of natural justice and the canalization of private violence—had been co-opted and largely dispatched before legitimate postwar institutions came into force.”<sup>129</sup>

The new governments in France and Austria emphasized “the need to reduce to the minimum the number of convictable and convicted persons, selecting a few symbolic criminals and traitors.”<sup>130</sup> In Italy, the matter was further complicated by the post-armistice mess; on which side should Italy say it had fought? And regardless of its relationship with Germany, how could the country come to terms with its own domestic totalitarianism? Ultimately, it did not; the purges ended very soon. Judt gave us some numbers: “As late as 1960, 62 of the 64 prefects of the Italian Republic had been functionaries under Fascism, and this was also true of *all* 135 police chiefs!”<sup>131</sup>

Judt borrowed Enzensberger’s phrase to state that Western Europeans essentially settled for some 25 years into a comforting *collective amnesia*, “resting their half of the continent on a number

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<sup>126</sup> Tony Judt, “The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, no. 87 (1996): 36–69.

<sup>127</sup> István Deák, Jan Gross, and Tony Judt, *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 286.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 288–89.

of crucial ‘foundation myths.’”<sup>132</sup> We will see that some of the spies’ court trials challenged these myths, such as in the case of René Hardy in France. Despite having been brought to trial twice (in 1947 and again in 1950) and acquitted in both cases, Hardy could not shake the charge that he had betrayed Jean Moulin, the French Resistance’s most famous leader, to Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo “butcher” of Lyon. The endless debate on this case cast doubt on the Resistance’s unity and purity, highlighting how the stigma of treason affected its memory.

The challenge that this dissertation faces therefore is to give a nuanced depiction of the spies’ profiles as the court documents sometimes placed them in the aforementioned gray zone of blurred agencies and conflicting incentives. By focusing on the spies and disentangling their struggles between considerations of personal gain and moral crises, I ultimately aim to change the perspective with which scholars approach the issue of surveillance itself. It is only by looking at the actors who do the watching—and not at their means—that one can gain insight into the way state control functions, even today. These spies, and the secret police forces they belonged to, enabled the onset of authoritarianism; they are central to how the Fascist and Nazi dictatorships came to power. Mussolini and Hitler put the final touches on a preexisting “democratic breakdown” with a “state of emergency” either produced on purpose or carefully exploited using agents provocateurs and police informers. These spies made it possible for those regimes to rewrite the existing law. However, a system whose premise, outcome, and loyalty rest on terror and constant surveillance can only go so far. In this respect, the similarity with the Stasi in the German Democratic Republic is striking. Even the very extensive surveillance put in place through the Stasi ultimately disintegrated. And once it did, people were left to deal with the apparent “banality” of this relentless surveillance.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 290.

## The Selection of Cases and the Chapter Breakdown

I chose to organize the dissertation thematically in three parts and focus on a few representative cases.

The first part revolves around Fascist and Nazi espionage and the subversion of political allegiance.

The first chapter illustrates how Fascist and Nazi spies were mainly tasked with targeting anti-fascist and anti-Nazi militants and dismantling Resistance networks across Europe. Most of the spies I treat in the first chapter volunteered for the job.

In contrast, the second chapter centers on the anti-Nazi and anti-fascist militants who switched sides and became Nazi and Fascist spies, often because of threats and moral crises. I argue that some of these cases put into question the Resistance's reputation itself, highlighting how the stigma of treason has affected how the Resistance is remembered. Both the Fascist and Nazi regimes identified traitors as useful tools for infiltrating networks of political opponents.

The second part looks at espionage and the subversion of gender norms. George Mosse clarified how the Fascist and Nazi regimes advertised a narrative of morality and respectability, of which Il Duce and the Führer were supposed to be the embodiments and greatest realizations.<sup>133</sup> In practice, however, matters were different.

The third chapter analyzes the stories of five female spies who stole the scene from their more numerous male colleagues. By looking at the public accounts and trial records of these women, this chapter shows how they subverted the stereotypes linked to the roles women were supposed to occupy in totalitarian regimes. The latter expected them to be mothers and

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<sup>133</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Hans Mayer, *Outsiders: A Study in Life and Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982).

housewives, not spies and informers. But totalitarian regimes were willing to bend the rules for people who served their purpose and enforced their system of repression. So, these women agreed to spy for the Fascists and Nazis, but, while they subverted and betrayed the Resistance, they also fought against and asserted their power over a male-dominated world, highlighting the contradictions between the regimes' propaganda and practice.

A similar dynamic was at play in the case of homosexuality. For the Fascist police, homosexuality became a tool for controlling individuals and turning them into spies at its service—still another example of the contradictions between totalitarian narrative and practice. The fourth chapter illustrates this example with a close reading of the documents related to two foreign queer spies in Fascist Italy, the Swiss Roberto Hodel and the German Gerhard Dobbert. Their cases prove that the Fascist regime cultivated a dual relationship with gay men; it exploited them for their contacts but persecuted them as “enemies of the new man” who undermined the Fascist understanding of morality.

The last part of the dissertation deals with espionage and the subversion of religious values: I focus on spies who subverted the values of their own religious community by betraying it to the Fascists and the Nazis.

The fifth chapter shows that there were Fascist spies among the high-ranked prelates in Italy. While the archival material makes the prelates' guilt difficult to deny, the Vatican exerted pressure to have their names taken off the official list of Fascist spies published in the “Gazzetta Ufficiale” n. 145 of July 2, 1946. Priests were also deployed as Nazi spies in France during the Second World War. These cases reinforce my argument about spies as the embodiment of the totalitarian system of terror. Priests—closer to people's secrets than other individuals are—made the perfect spies, reinforcing the feeling of constant insecurity that nourishes totalitarian regimes. Spies within the

Catholic Church also bring into question its role as a limiting factor in the power of the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

The sixth and last chapter dives into the sensitive topic of Jewish spies, offering cases from Austria, Germany, Italy, and France. In the first three countries, the Nazis and the Fascists took advantage of Jewish informers who betrayed their own people, with traumatic consequences for their individual sense of identity and that of their community. No spies were needed to arrest Jewish people under normal circumstances, but spies were essential for finding Jews who had gone into hiding in large cities. The Nazis found it more convenient in France to delegate the task of implementing anti-Jewish policies to the Vichy government and its institutions, which had significant ties to the intelligence services of the Germany embassy and Theodor Dannecker, Paris chief of section IV J of the Gestapo, directly responsible for the “Jewish question.”

**PART ONE:**  
**Espionage & the Subversion of Political Allegiance**

# *Chapter One*

## **Targeting the Resistance: The Fascist and Nazi Secret Human Weapons**

### **Abstract**

This chapter illustrates how Fascist and Nazi spies went about their main task of dismantling Resistance networks across Europe, offers examples of Fascist spies abroad and Nazi spies in France, and investigates the connection between espionage and political allegiance. The Fascist and Nazi regimes took advantage of the various Resistance networks' inner fragility and pre-existing political divisions. Spies' effectiveness rested on their reliability. They fit well within each environment they infiltrated, hiding behind their apparent desire to contribute to the networks' activities and increase their reach. The spies appeared to be more motivated by financial gain than ideological proximity to the Fascist or Nazi regime. Espionage allowed them to increase their income and social status even if the benefits did not last forever, and some of them paid a high price at the end of the Second World War.

### **Main Characters**

#### *FRANCE*

- Boemelburg, Karl ~ 1885–1946: *SS-Sturmbannführer* (major) and head of the *Kommando des Sipo-SD* (KdS) located in Paris, at 11, rue des Saussaies.
- Bonny, Pierre ~ 1895–1944: Corrupt French police officer who became a collaborator and joined the Gestapo of rue Lauriston in Paris under Henri Lafont's direction. He was executed by firing squad on December 26, 1944, alongside Lafont.
- De Gaulle, Geneviève ~ 1920–2002: General de Gaulle's niece and member of the *Défense de la France* network, she was deported to Ravensbrück because of Marongin's espionage activity. She survived deportation.
- Desoubrie, Jacques ("Jacques Leman," "Jean Masson," "Pierre Boulain," "Captain Jacques") ~ 1922–1949: Nazi VM<sup>134</sup> in France responsible for dismantling several Resistance networks, including the Comet escape line.
- Gaveau, Albert ~ 1901–?: Nazi VM in France responsible for dismantling part of the *Musée de l'Homme* Resistance network.
- Lafont, Henri ~ 1902–1944: French criminal who headed the Gestapo of rue Lauriston in Paris. He was executed by firing squad on December 26, 1944, alongside his second-in-command, Pierre Bonny.
- Marongin, Émile ("Elio") ~ 1919–1946: Former Resistance member turned Nazi spy. He worked for the Bonny-Lafont gang in Paris and was responsible for dismantling the *Défense de la France* Resistance network.
- Tillion, Germaine ~ 1907–2008: Ethnologist and member of the *Musée de l'Homme* Resistance network. She was arrested by the Nazis and deported to Ravensbrück. She survived deportation.

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<sup>134</sup> *Vertrauensmann*; double agent.

- Viannay, Philippe ~ 1917–1986: French journalist and founder of the Défense de la France Resistance network.
- Vildé, Boris ~ 1908–1942: Linguist and ethnographer who founded the Musée de l’Homme Resistance network. He was executed by the Nazis at Fort Mont-Valérien.

*ITALY—OVRA spies abroad*

- Bazzi, Giovanni ~ 1885–1945: Journalist and OVRA informer, he reported from Switzerland with the number 290. Partisans shot him.
- Consani Alessandro (“Tirteo”) ~ 1889–?: Socialist exile turned Fascist spy in France, reporting with the number 51.
- Huetter, Helmut ~ 1889–?: OVRA spy in Germany from 1928 to the outbreak of the Second World War, reporting with the number 143 and directing a network of sub-informers.
- Neri, Cesare (“Cesarino”) ~ 1903–?: Journalist and OVRA informer, reporting from Paris with the number 430.
- Nuvoli, Artidoro (“Artidoro”) ~ 1879–?: Arrested for possession of weapons, he agreed to become an OVRA agent to avoid prison. Alvisè’s father.
- Nuvoli, Scipio, better known as Alvisè (“Esopo”) ~ 1899–?: OVRA agent in Paris, using anti-fascist propaganda as his cover. He reported with the number 169. Artidoro’s son.
- Roda, Graziella ~ 1914–?: Zamboni’s girlfriend, then wife, and OVRA informer in Switzerland.
- Segre, Dino (“Pitigrilli,” “Pindaro,” “Pilli,” “Pericle”) ~ 1893–?: Writer and OVRA informer in France.
- Soncelli, Aldo (“Giove”) ~ 1879–?: OVRA informer in Switzerland with a significant network of sub-informers, he signed his reports with the number 37.
- Zamboni, Assunto (“Ortenzio”) ~ 1906–?: Brother of Anteo Zamboni, who allegedly perpetrated a failed assassination attempt on Mussolini and was lynched on the spot; first an anarchist, he became an OVRA informer because of a plot devised by his girlfriend, then wife, Graziella Roda.

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On May 3, 2013, I traveled to Saint-Siffret sur Uzès (Gard, France) to interview a 92-year-old lady, Aline Dumon-Ugeux, who sadly has since passed away.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Hanna Diamond, “Micheline Dumon Obituary,” *The Guardian*, December 12, 2017, sec. World News, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/12/micheline-dumon-obituary>.



*Figure 1: Aline Dumon-Ugeux*<sup>136</sup>

At the time, I was working on a master's thesis that told the story of Virginia d'Albert-Lake, an American woman who was involved in the Comet network: an escape line that helped downed Allied airmen return to Britain during the Second World War. While Virginia was deceased, her fellow Resistance member Aline was still alive, a precious witness of these events.

Several times during our interview, Aline mentioned a Nazi spy named Jacques Desoubrie (whom she knew by the pseudonym "Jean Masson"). The Nazis had discovered the entire Comet escape line and many others because of this double agent's work; these lines were then compromised by many arrests and deportations to concentration camps. Desoubrie was incredibly effective. Was he part of a system? I wondered.

So, I applied for and obtained a special authorization (*dérogation*) after a couple of months from the French National archives to access the court proceedings against Jacques Desoubrie.<sup>137</sup> The file was incredibly rich. It concerned not only Desoubrie but also his lover, Marie-Thérèse

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<sup>136</sup> Photographed by me in Saint-Siffret sur Uzès, France, May 3, 2013.

<sup>137</sup> Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine [hereafter AN], Series Z6, Boxes 818–20, Dossier 5688 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Jacques Desoubrie.

Verger,<sup>138</sup> and one of his collaborators, Maurice Grapin.<sup>139</sup> The dossier contained documents from the different French cities where Desoubrie was active and where the trials were held—Paris, Soissons, Compiègne, Marseille, Angers, Lyon—as well as several trials held in absentia. There are also the verbal proceedings and depositions of witnesses who recognized Desoubrie’s picture shown by the police chief, told him how Desoubrie had contacted them and/or the people they knew, and revealed the VM’s various pseudonyms. The most interesting part of the dossier was the *exposé des motifs*: the presentation of the reasons why Desoubrie was convicted, including a summary of all the evidence collected against him and an account of his activity in every Resistance network.

Desoubrie was but one of many Nazi spies deployed in France. Because their files were not openly accessible and were still subject to the *derogation* process, which took considerable time, I thought I would not be able to further pursue the topic. On May 8, 2015, a stroke of luck occurred; alerted by several historians to the difficulty of accessing certain historical sources of the Second World War, the then President of the French Republic François Hollande gave a speech about these archives and requested that they be opened.<sup>140</sup> An official decree in December 24, 2015 made this decision a reality.<sup>141</sup> Many holdings were opened up for free consultation, including police archives from 1939 to 1945 and from 1945 to 1960 for cases relating to acts of war which occurred between the previous range of dates.

The first questions I asked myself in consulting these sources were: Who am I looking at?

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<sup>138</sup> Marie-Thérèse Verger was born on October 10, 1916, in Tourcoing, France. She was accused of intelligence with the enemy. On July 20, 1949 she was sentenced to five years of prison and national degradation.

<sup>139</sup> Maurice Grapin was born on April 12, 1915, in Boulogne-sur-Seine, France. Also accused of intelligence with the enemy, on July 20, 1949 he was sentenced to five years of hard labor, the forfeiture of his possessions, and national degradation.

<sup>140</sup> “Ouverture des archives de la Seconde Guerre mondiale,” FranceArchives, January 8, 2016, <https://francearchives.fr/fr/actualite/44055>.

<sup>141</sup> “Arrêté du 24 décembre 2015 portant ouverture d’archives relatives à la Seconde Guerre mondiale,” December 24, 2015, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000031691149/>.

Who are these Nazi spies? As I mentioned in this dissertation's introduction, it appears that the German authorities somehow systematized treason after the French defeat, even before the first Resistance movements appeared; they set up the *Vertrauensmänner* system (literally system of *men of confidence*, VMs, or V-men), recruiting double agents whose main task was to infiltrate groups that represented any form of opposition to the Nazi occupation. Most of these agents were identified, tried, and condemned after the war. After the Liberation, the French authorities based judicial action against them on the following articles of the penal code: Article 75, which defines the infraction of intelligence with the enemy for French citizens; Article 79, which defines the violation of the exterior security of the state for French and foreign citizens; Article 81, which defines the secrecy of defense; and Article 83, which specifies that in times of war the offenders of Articles 79 and 81 will be punished with forced labor. And yet, France was officially a collaborationist state, so many of these agents attempted to defend themselves against charges of treason by arguing that they had simply obeyed their convictions in the spirit of "collaboration." They wanted to be tried for making a political mistake, not for having deliberately harmed the French state.<sup>142</sup>

Hitler had himself been a VM of sort. In July 1919, he was appointed *Verbindungsmann* (intelligence agent) of an *Aufklärungskommando* (reconnaissance unit) of the *Reichswehr* (the German armed forces), with the task of infiltrating the German Workers' Party (DAP).<sup>143</sup> Party Chairman Anton Drexler was very impressed with him. On the orders of his army superiors, Hitler applied to join the party; he was accepted as a member within a week. The Nazi *Vertrauensmänner* infiltrated Resistance networks in a similar way.

After his rise to power, Hitler adopted the Gestapo secret police model and entrusted the

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<sup>142</sup> Patrice Miannay, *Dictionnaire des agents doubles dans la Résistance* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2005), 17–18.

<sup>143</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).

*Reichsführer* of the *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron or SS), Heinrich Himmler, with its control. Hitler decided to form an autonomous intelligence organization within the SS in 1932, called *Sicherheit Dienst* (SD), and again placed Himmler at its head. The Gestapo became Section IV of the SD and was placed under Reinhard Heydrich's direction. The SD equally created a new section, *Ausland* (the future section VI), with 2,500 agents operating abroad—500 of them in the French Empire—with 20,000 foreign informers at their disposal forming what was known as the Fifth Column. In 1936, Himmler became the supreme head of all the police services of the Reich, and the *Sicherheit Polizei* (Sipo) was created next to the SD. Heydrich directed both organizations, and the Gestapo was given to Heinrich Müller, Berlin's former police chief.<sup>144</sup>

In 1939, all aforementioned intelligence services were centralized in the seven sections of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (the Reich Main Security Office). Its task, under Himmler's control, was to fight all enemies of the Reich inside and outside Germany. German intelligence was therefore divided into two principal bodies: on the one side, the *Abwehr* (the military intelligence service), which had a certain autonomy from the political power; on the other side, the *Sicherheit Dienst* (SD) and its Section IV, the Gestapo, which were totally subordinate to the Nazi party. All systems operated simultaneously and were often in competition. All recruited and used *Vertrauensmänner*. In 1939, the Gestapo supplied the model for the formation of the Wehrmacht's counterespionage organization called the GFP. The SD started sending double agents to France with the German army under this organization. These agents constituted the *Kommando des Sipo-SD* (KdS) located in Paris, first at 11 rue des Saussaies, under the control of *SS-Sturmbannführer* Karl Boemelburg and *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Kurt Lischka, and then at avenue Foch, under the control of the *Befehlshaber der Sicherpolizei und des Sicherheitsdienst* (BdS), Colonel Helmut

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<sup>144</sup> Miannay, 24–25.

Knochen. Eventually, the SD installed 11 KdSs in the occupied territories, while a delegation of German police forces was placed in Vichy, directed by SS captain Geissler.<sup>145</sup>

Thus, while the Fascist regime had just one secret police force—the OVRA—the Gestapo was but one section of the growing number of Nazi police organizations, all of which used spies and all of which were part of the universe of terror that this dissertation seeks to describe.

This chapter deals specifically with Fascist and Nazi infiltration of the Resistance. The Nazi *Vertrauensmänner* are at the root of most of the cases that led to the Resistance networks' downfall. Historian Fabrice Grenard explains that the VMs' motivations for agreeing to serve the Nazis in France vary. Some, belonging to pro-Nazi groups, did so out of ideological commitment. Others acted for gain, mostly because of the high salaries and material benefits they received (such as lodging, a car, and priority in terms of supplies). The Nazis also employed pressure tactics to force some of these VMs into the job; they hired petty delinquents arrested for different types of offenses (black market, thefts) and promised them immunity. If they refused to cooperate, they risked deportation to Germany.<sup>146</sup>

*Vertrauensmänner* were of all genders and nationalities (though according to Grenard, not German in France). I found German VMs in Germany. Many VMs were young people, somewhat idle, with the advantage of having mastered the French language and the country's customs and traditions (this was certainly the case for Desoubrie). These VMs were tasked with forging links with groups of Resistance fighters in any way possible (at their place of work; within their personal networks; by frequenting strategic places such as bars, stations, and hotels; etc.). They often pretended to be foreign refugees in France and were therefore likely to pass for anti-Nazi

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 26–27.

<sup>146</sup> Fabrice Grenard, *La traque des résistants* (Paris: Tallandier, 2019), 11.

militants.<sup>147</sup>

The Nazis also recruited agents among criminal gangs: for example, the French Gestapo of rue Lauriston led by Henri Lafont and Pierre Bonny<sup>148</sup> and the Gestapo of the rue de la Pompe of Frederich Berger.<sup>149</sup>

Once recruited by the Nazi services, VMs were tested and trained by their handlers, who gave them their missions, paid them, and received their written or oral reports. When officially confirmed, VMs received a registration number from the Berlin Z file as well as an official pseudonym, various nicknames, fake IDs, a license to carry a weapon, a personal weapon, and, depending on the case, a company car or even an apartment. Once VMs had all the members of a Resistance network arrested thanks to the information they provided, they targeted a different network using a different alias. To maintain their cover during arrests, they could even be imprisoned with the Resistance fighters they betrayed, then released by pretending to escape or because of apparent lack of evidence against them.<sup>150</sup>

The first part of this dissertation is devoted to the connection between espionage and the subversion of political allegiance. I find this to be a productive avenue to compare the activity of Fascist and Nazi spies abroad. The Fascist secret police—the OVRA—also sent many of its spies to track down anti-fascist exiles abroad. Since the OVRA preceded the Nazi services, I will start with an analysis of its spies' activity. I have chosen to focus on a few emblematic examples whose

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>148</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 3 & 3 BIS, Dossier 22 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Pierre Bonny and Henri Chamberlin Called Lafont; Service Historique de la Défense de Vincennes [hereafter SHD], GR 28 P9 883, Dossier on the Bonny-Lafont Gang.

<sup>149</sup> Mémorial de la Shoah [hereafter MS], DACJM Collection, Gestapo Paris series, Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 05, Rue de La Pompe, Arrests in Ivry (August 14, 1944); Dossier 09, Rue de La Pompe, Dossier N, Berger Gang's Activity, Est of France (October 1944); Dossier 07, Rue de La Pompe, Jewish Organization of Combat (July 17, 1944); Dossier 08, Rue de La Pompe, S/Dossier L, Assassinations of Bois de Boulogne (August 16, 1944); Dossier 13, Rue de La Pompe, T.M.P. of Paris, Regulation (no date).

<sup>150</sup> Grenard, 12.

files I found in different collections at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome: most prominently, their reports in *Polizia Politica* and their personal files in *Casellario Politico Centrale* (the office of the General Directorate of Public Security).

The anti-fascist exiles were an easy target. They were all divided into many movements, and this fragmentation meant political weakness for them and ease of infiltration for the spies. The reason for the exile groups' fragmentation is that they all believed themselves to have the prerogative of ideological purity: the communists were antithetical to any other movement, the socialists were split between maximalists and reformists, the anarchists often argued against each other, and the Giustizia and Libertà movement (literally Justice and Freedom, the movement founded in Paris in 1929 by the Italian refugees Carlo Rosselli, Emilio Lussu, Alberto Tarchiani, and Ernesto Rossi) was somewhat frowned upon by every other group. Often, the exiles accused each other of being Mussolini's agents, with harmful effects on the overall credibility of antifascism.<sup>151</sup>

This atmosphere of distrust and conflict provided favorable conditions for the OVRA spies. The latter, in addition to spying on the exiles, also exercised some control over the personnel of embassies, consulates, and legations, reporting any cases of interest in Italy. The Fascist agents on a foreign mission were usually paid through the Bank of Italy's headquarters where the Ministry of the Interior had an account; these payments were the responsibility of a marshal assigned to the OVRA under the supervision of Commendatore Aldo Fornaciari, Head of Financial Operations and Foreign Relations.<sup>152</sup>

OVRA historian Mimmo Franzinelli estimated that the OVRA spies operating abroad

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<sup>151</sup> Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999), 180.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

actually numbered in the order of several hundred, including sub-confidants and informants, who—coordinated by officials of the Italian Public Security, usually disguised as vice consuls—provided the Fascist regime with an impressive volume of reports.<sup>153</sup>

There was no meeting of any importance within anti-fascist networks without the presence of at least one double agent taking minutes for the Ministry of the Interior. The infiltration did not concern only the high ranks but also extended to broader and lower network circles thanks to the availability of fourth-rate informers. For a low wage or in exchange for small favors from the consulate, these informers reported the identity of those who attended the anti-fascist gatherings. Like the Nazis, the Fascist police force was careful not to burn its spies and avoided directly acting on information that would have pointed to the source; except in special cases, the reports were used to update the personal files of the Casellario Politico Centrale where the activity of all so-called “subversives” was recorded.<sup>154</sup> In this same Casellario, one can find folders on all the spies spied upon by other spies; in the atmosphere of distrust that totalitarian regimes fomented, no one was exonerated from surveillance and everyone was both actor and target of constant monitoring.

### **Fascist Spies in Switzerland**

Switzerland was a strategic node for the Fascist police for: international espionage networks traditionally hatched in the Confederation; the presence of leading exponents of communist, socialist, and republican outcast groups; and independent personalities such as the former Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti, who had gone into exile in Zurich.

Aldo Soncelli was the most dynamic OVRA agent in Switzerland. He carried out his intelligence duties with considerable commitment and, along these lines, set up a large network of

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 182.

sub-confidants. Soncelli collected an impressive amount of news and was usually able to satisfy his superiors when they raised questions about the identity of this or that subversive. He also monitored the anti-fascist movements in France, Belgium, England, and Spain, profiting considerably from the payments sent to him for the maintenance of his complex information structure. However, he had the bad habit of inflating the number of his sub-confidants. In the long run his game was discovered and challenged, as demonstrated by this reaction to one of his reports:

This report by number 37 is a Russian salad. The informant has paired names of individuals of various kinds: anarchists, communists, former liberals, convicted offenders, etc. and created the showpiece! There is nothing to do because they are all elements that have precedents in the Casellario.<sup>155</sup>

In his book's appendix, Franzinelli reproduced a document from the Office for Sanctions Against Fascism (*Ufficio Sanzioni contro il Fascismo*) concerning Giovanni Gatteschi's appeal rejection to be taken out of the published list of OVRA spies. It appears that, although Gatteschi's reports were impossible to find, the office justified their absence by mentioning the example of Soncelli's fake reports, which gives us an insight into how he operated:

A typical example is the reports of the group leader Soncelli Aldo (no. "37") who had more than a hundred sub-confidants at his service scattered throughout the various countries of Europe. The numerous reports from him and his informants are always marked with only n. 37. Only when the Police, sensing the scam perpetrated against them by Soncelli, invited him to assign a number to his informants and to reproduce it on the reports of the informers themselves, could they identify the authors of the reports and discover how Soncelli had indicated as informants non-existent people, and this for the sole purpose of profit.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma [hereafter ACS], Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 34, Dossier Meetings of Antifascists and Intellectual Exiles (no date): "Questa relazione del 37 è un'insalata russa. L'informatore ha appaiato nomi di individui di varia natura: anarchici, comunisti, ex liberali, pregiudicati ecc. ed ha creato il pezzo forte! Non c'è niente da fare perché sono tutti elementi che hanno precedenti al Casellario."

<sup>156</sup> Franzinelli, 705" "Tipico esempio sono le relazioni del capogruppo Soncelli Aldo (n. "37") il quale ebbe al suo servizio più di un centinaio di subconfidenti sparsi nei vari paesi d'Europa. Le numerosissime relazioni sue e dei suoi informatori sono contraddistinte sempre col solo n. 37.

Soltanto quando la Polizia, intuendo la truffa perpetrata ai suoi danni dal Soncelli, lo invitò ad assegnare un numero d'ordine ai suoi informatori ed a riprodurlo sulle relazioni degli informatori stessi si poté identificare gli autori delle relazioni e scoprire come il Soncelli facesse figurare come informatori persone inesistenti e ciò al solo scopo di lucro."

Soncelli also used his network to spy on socialist exiles and the Italian League of Human Rights' (*Lega Italiana dei Diritti dell'Uomo* or LIDU; an anti-fascist organization) activity on British soil.<sup>157</sup>

Another OVRA spy operating in Switzerland was Giovanni Bazzi. Expelled in 1922 from the canton of Ticino, he moved to Milan, where he worked as a journalist. He was the director of the periodicals *Il Tricolore* (of Varese) and *Italia e Suisse* (of Chiasso). Bazzi was able to return to Lugano in 1928, where he combined his Fascist espionage activity with his work as correspondent for the *Cronaca Prealpina* of Varese. He reported with the number 290 and was paid a fixed monthly fee.

Bazzi was described as follows in one of the reports contained in his folder of the Casellario Politico Centrale:

[...] he lives on his wits and has no qualms about making money. Although he poses as a patriot and very Italian, he has never had a very clear political line. He is defined as an ambiguous individual, a braggart, who claims to have adhesions and friendships with high-ranking people that in fact he does not have at all. He approaches individuals from every party and is suspected of playing the double role of informant of the fascists and anti-fascists.<sup>158</sup>

Bazzi was originally included on the list of OVRA informers, but his family appealed to have his name removed from the list since partisans shot him on April 28, 1945. The appeal

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<sup>157</sup> Soncelli's reports can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 49, Dossier 2, England–Ireland; Dossier 3, England–Italian Embassy; Dossier 4, England–Antifascists and 'Fuoriusciti'; Dossier 5, England–Canada; Dossier 6, England–Religion; Dossier 7, England–Independent Labour Party; Dossier 8, England–Italian Colonies; Dossier 12, England–Antifascist Propaganda; Dossier 13, England–Civil Aviation; Dossier 14, England–Economic Situation; Dossier 15, England–Internal Politics and Parties; Dossier 18, England–Italian Socialists; Dossier 19, England–Anarchists (all dossiers are dated 1932–1934).

<sup>158</sup> Report of the Ufficio situazione del commando regionale RR. CC., December 1927, in ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 422, Bazzi, Giovanni: "vive di espedienti e non ha scrupoli pur di far denari. Nonostante si atteggi a patriota ed italianissimo, non ha mai avuto una linea di condotta politica ben chiara. Viene definito individuo ambiguo, millantatore, che afferma di avere aderenze ed amicizie con persone altolocate e che invece non ha affatto. Accosta individui di ogni partito e si sospetta faccia la doppia parte di informatore dei fascisti e degli antifascisti."

succeeded.<sup>159</sup>

I mentioned in my introduction that there was a series of failed assassination attempts on Mussolini between November 1925 and October 1926. These attempts were instrumental in allowing the Fascist regime to create a state of emergency and to capitalize on a fabricated demand for crisis management. The last of these attempts was allegedly perpetrated by the 15-year-old anarchist Anteo Zamboni on October 31, 1926, who was lynched on the spot.<sup>160</sup> Zamboni's brother, Assunto, became an OVRA spy because of his girlfriend, Graziella Roda.



*Figure 2: Graziella Roda*<sup>161</sup>

Driven by ambitions of social ascent and monetary gain, Roda—only 18-years-old at the time of her first espionage actions—organized some of the most insidious actions against anti-

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<sup>159</sup> ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l'Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell'OVRA (1946-1949), Box 11, Dossier 175, Bazzi, Giovanni.

<sup>160</sup> ACS, Segreteria particolare del duce, carteggio riservato, binder 65, press release of the Agenzia Stefani, "Attentato Del 31 Ottobre 1926, Bologna: Zamboni Anteo e Famiglia: Processo" (October 31, 1926).

<sup>161</sup> Source: Archivio di Stato del Canton Ticino, [https://m3.ti.ch/DECS/dcsu/ac/asti/cff/index.php?p=immagine&id\\_immagine=21707&i=80](https://m3.ti.ch/DECS/dcsu/ac/asti/cff/index.php?p=immagine&id_immagine=21707&i=80). Portrait dated 1932.

fascist exiles in Switzerland. While I explore her case here because she was part of the OVRA spy network in Switzerland, we will also see in Chapter Three that female spies were rare, especially in a patriarchal regime such as Fascist Italy.

Born in Milan in 1914, Roda moved to Lugano with her father and started a relationship with the then-anarchist Assunto Zamboni. Her father, a fascist sympathizer, disapproved of their relationship. Determined to separate her from her lover, Roda's father took her back to Italy in December 1931 where, according to her version of the events, he ended up giving up on her. Entrusted to the care of the police commissioner Fernando Diaz, who specialized in the control of the refugees in Lugano, Roda was employed to manoeuvre Zamboni and his companions. Flattered by the prospect of a quick enrichment, she bent her lover to the police's wishes, luring him to espionage with the prospect of gaining the release of his family members who had been in jail since November 1926.<sup>162</sup>

Roda took advantage of Zamboni to target the republican Randolfo Pacciardi, a person of interest to the police because of his role as reference point for the republican refugees. In the summer of 1932, Roda participated in an attempt to arrest Pacciardi as a terrorist which was supervised by police commissioner Diaz. The fascist police had set up an explosives facility near Merano. The confidants had to convince the Swiss authorities that Pacciardi was joining the ranks of the dynamite conspiracy from Lugano. Roda, having agreed on the plan with the head of the Political Police Division Di Stefano, returned to Switzerland in August after a staged arrest at the border post. This arrest was staged to paint her as an exile persecuted by the Fascists. Roda reported the following, while also suggesting allowing Zamboni's sick father to see a doctor in order to win his son's goodwill:

I happily arrived in Lugano and Zamboni welcomed me with great joy. Tomorrow Sunday

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<sup>162</sup> Franzinelli, 193. Biographical information about Roda can be found in Footnote 73.

my sensational arrest in Ponte Tresa will be published in *Libera Stampa*. Do you see that everything is fine? It must be a star that protects me. On Sunday the 28th I will go to Bellinzona with Zamboni for a conference where there will also be a certain Bertoni. Pacciardi has not yet returned from Paris [...] Your design will be executed, and I endeavor to make Zamboni yours, but follow my advice, alleviate the pains of Zamboni's father, give him a doctor and make sure that he conveys the news to his son; this is my plan, but it will reach Zamboni's heart and our purpose.<sup>163</sup>

Having bewitched Zamboni, Roda had no restraint in proposing risky operations to the police, thinking that she could have many anti-fascist exiles arrested beyond Pacciardi:

Do you want Pacciardi? When Zamboni has had his father's freedom and a good sum to become independent, he will deliver him to you. Do you want to make Lussu, Bassanesi, De Rosa disappear? I will get it done. Because anarchists hate them, because they say that if they governed them in Italy, they would be bad for anarchists.<sup>164</sup>

Zamboni agreed to betray his brother Anteo's memory and become OVRA informer n. 497.<sup>165</sup> Roda denounced Pacciardi to the Swiss authorities, but things did not go according to her plan. Her story of Pacciardi's alleged participation in a bomb attack did not stand up to investigation; she was arrested on November 8, 1932 together with her accomplices. She was extradited at the end of December 1932. After the repatriation she married Zamboni, and they settled in Milan.

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<sup>163</sup> Graziella Roda's report, August 24, 1932, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 79, Dossier Explosives Facility in Merano (1932–1934): "Sono giunta felicemente a Lugano e Zamboni mi ha accolto con gioia vivissima. Domani domenica verrà pubblicato su "Libera Stampa" il mio clamoroso arresto a Ponte Tresa.

Vede che va tutto bene? È una stella che mi protegge. Domenica 28 andrò a Bellinzona con Zamboni per una conferenza vi sarà anche un certo Bertoni. Pacciardi non è ancora ritornato da Parigi [...] Il vostro disegno sarà eseguito ed io mi impegno di farvi Zamboni dei vostri, ma seguite il mio consiglio, alleviate le pene del padre di Zamboni, dategli un medico e fate in modo che esso ne dia notizia al figlio, ciò è un mio piano, ma raggiungerà il cuore di Zamboni ed il nostro scopo."

<sup>164</sup> Graziella Roda's memorial for the Political Police, no date, in *ibid.*: "Volete Pacciardi? Zamboni quando avrà avuto la libertà di suo padre e una buona somma per rendersi indipendente ve lo consegnerà. Volete far sparire Lussu, Bassanesi, De Rosa? Io lo farò fare. Perché gli anarchici detestano costoro, perché dicono che se governassero loro in Italia andrebbero male per gli anarchici."

<sup>165</sup> ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 5500, Zamboni, Assunto.

## Fascist Spies in Germany

Until the advent of Nazism, the Fascist police spent little energy in setting up information services in Germany. The few informers active during the Weimar Republic were, generally speaking, adventurers and second-rate figures who turned to espionage as a means of supplementing their income. After all, Italian emigration was of little significance and Germany did not represent an important background for the anti-fascists.

Helmut Huetter was the key figure of Italian espionage in Germany from 1928 to the outbreak of the Second World War. An OVRA informer with the number 143, he also disposed of a network of well-tested sub-confidants in hidden locations in Verona, Innsbruck, and Munich. Huetter moved with ease in Austrian and Germanic police circles, thanks also to the large sums of money that he received for his activity and that of his collaborators, whose numbers he probably inflated for budgetary reasons.

Huetter officially worked in the field of journalism, but in reality, he worked full time to efficiently run his information service, which boasted infiltrators within the National Socialist Party and which the Italian government used for counterespionage purposes. Proof of such use is the note the Fascist police leaders sent to Andrea Fusari, head of the Public Security in the fourth Border Zone (*quarta Zona Frontiera*) of Bolzano:

We have been told by a reliable source that the German police have ordered careful surveillance of the following people, because they are suspected of espionage. Please show the names in question to our Huetter, so that he knows how to operate in the event that he were to have some of his informers there.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Note sent by the leaders of the Fascist police to the head of the Public Security in the fourth Border Zone (“quarta Zona Frontiera”) of Bolzano, Andrea Fusari, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 47, Dossier 12, Germany–Alleged Italian Military Espionage” (1932–1934): “Ci è stato riferito da fonte attendibile che la polizia germanica avrebbe disposto un’attenta sorveglianza sulle sottoindicate persone, perché sospettate di spionaggio. La prego di far vedere i nominative in questione al nostro Huetter, perché si sappia regolare nell’eventualità che vi sia qualche suo informatore.”

Huetter's many reports are among the Political Police Division's files.<sup>167</sup> However, when Guido Leto replaced Di Stefano as head of the OVRA, he appeared to mistrust Huetter; he suspected him of double play and of using fictitious sub-confidants for venal reasons. This is why when the war broke out and Huetter requested to be transferred to Argentina with his wife, Leto gladly accepted his request.

The rise of National Socialism, brutally eliminating all forms of opposition, consequently ousted the few refugees from Italy. With the cessation of all concern for anti-fascist activity in Germany, the reports drawn up by confidants focused on the internal situation, offering information and judgement on German internal politics. Among the materials of espionage origin, reports sent to Italy in the summer of 1934 are of particular importance, with thorough details on the internal settlement of accounts of National Socialism. Reporting from Klagenfurt, Huetter gave a sense of the death toll from the party's internal feud:

The Berlin secret police have ascertained up to July 4 in Prussia alone 364 dead, of which only 270 were identified. The Gestapo has commissioned cremation for every corpse that is found. The total number of people killed across the Reich since June 30 is estimated to be 5–600 dead.<sup>168</sup>

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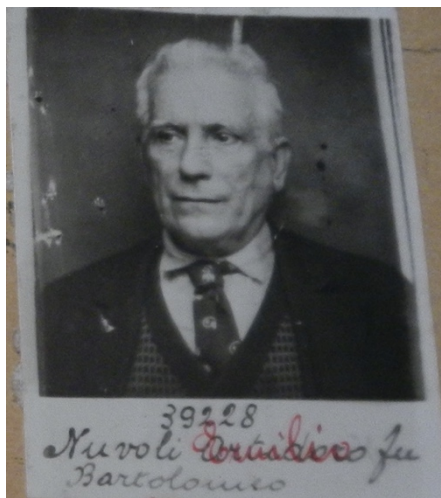
<sup>167</sup> Huetter's reports can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 39, Dossier 13, Germany–Miscellaneous Confidential News; Dossier 16, Germany–German Socialist Party; Dossier 18, Germany–German Communist Party; Dossier 19, Germany–German Communist Party; Dossier 24, Germany–Italian League of Human Rights; Dossier 26, Germany–Italian / German Freemasonry; Dossier 27, Germany–Association of Friends of the U.S.S.R.; Dossier 28, Germany–Accidents and Antifascist Reprisals; Dossier 29, Germany–Expulsion of Antifascist Exiles; Dossier 30, Germany–Italian Colonies; Dossier 31, Germany–Italian Fasces (all dossiers are dated 1932–1934); Box 40, Dossier 1, Germany–Internal Politics and Parties (no date).

<sup>168</sup> Huetter's report, July 16, 1934, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 40, Dossier 1, Germany–Internal Politics and Parties: "La polizia segreta di Berlino ha accertato fino al 4 luglio nella sola Prussia 364 morti, di cui 270 soltanto identificati. La Gestapo ha incaricato di cremare ogni cadavere che viene rinvenuto. Il numero totale di uccisi in tutto il Reich dal 30 giugno viene considerato di 5–600 morti."

## Fascist Spies in France

Since the anti-fascist exiles had settled mainly in France, the Fascist police's attention concentrated on that nation. Espionage was also undertaken at the family level, especially between siblings and, less frequently, between spouses or between parents and children.

The Nuvoli family represents an example of such a family network. On February 24, 1927, the head of the family, Artidoro, was found in possession of two revolvers and "subversive" papers, so he agreed to work for the Fascist police to avoid jail. Released in 1928, he expatriated to France. Nuvoli ran a shoe shop in Paris. In October 1932, he returned to Italy to visit his relatives, then returned to France and remained there until at least 1942, the date of the last report about him.<sup>169</sup>



*Figure 3:  
Artidoro Nuvoli*



*Figure 4:  
Scipio (better known  
as Alvise) Nuvoli*

Artidoro Nuvoli's son Alvise specialized in discrediting anti-fascist leaders in exile, with the aim of promoting splits and conflicts in the anti-fascist camp. He reported from Paris with the number 169. His zealous allegiance to the Fascist cause is described in the anonymous Informer

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<sup>169</sup> ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 3573, Nuvoli, Artidoro. The photo (Figure 3) is also from this dossier.

19's report written in Paris on January 25, 1928:

Nuvoli knows the five or six passages that our competitors use to cross borders, both for people and for the post. He wrote to his friend and collaborator Savorelli, saying that he was willing to meet with him at the border to show our authorities how and where to cross; if you find it appropriate, Savorelli before returning could make an appointment with Nuvoli in Modane or in Ventimiglia and take the necessary measures. Rest assured that Nuvoli is a boy who gives himself body and soul, and we can count on him like we count on ourselves.<sup>170</sup>

Alvise's briefing notes mainly concerned anarchist exiles, republicans, socialists, and members of the Giustizia e Libertà movement. Struck by an expulsion order, he moved to Brussels and spied on Italian clubs in Belgium. In 1932–33, Alvise repatriated several times to meet with police leaders. Back in France in 1935 he infiltrated the new Republican and Socialist Action movement. His resourcefulness and his presence at numerous meetings raised the suspicions of Carlo Rosselli, the leader of Giustizia e Libertà, who on December 10, 1935 wrote to Enrico Bricchetti (in reality also an informer) and fellow anti-fascist Fernando De Rosa to alert them about Nuvoli. Nuvoli was unmasked in early 1939; on February 2, in a meeting of Giustizia e Libertà in Paris, Emilio Lussu abruptly dismissed him and accused him of being a double agent. Alvise Nuvoli returned to Italy, but in September 1942 he expatriated again in the company of his wife and two children. According to the head of the Political Police Division, Nuvoli must have joined the Gestapo during the German occupation of France.<sup>171</sup>

Alvise Nuvoli's case is also proof that the anti-fascist circles took a long time to unmask their spies. Another example that demonstrates the anti-fascists' naivety and vulnerability is Alessandro Consani, a prominent socialist exile. A compatriot who got to know him in Tuscany in

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<sup>170</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 181, Dossier 6, Surveillance at the Border (1928), report written in Paris on January 25, 1928, by informer 19 bis: "Nuvoli conosce i 5 o 6 passaggi che adoperano i nostri concorrenti per varcare le frontiere, sia per le persone che per la posta. Scrisse al suo amico e nostro collaboratore Savorelli, dicendo che era disposto a trovarsi con lui alla frontiera per mostrare alle nostre autorità come e dove si passa; se trovate opportuno, Savorelli prima di rientrare potrebbe dare un appuntamento a Nuvoli a Modane o a Ventimiglia e prendere i provvedimenti del caso. State sicuri che Nuvoli è un ragazzo che si dà corpo e anima e possiamo contare su di lui come su noi stessi."

<sup>171</sup> ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 3573, Nuvoli, Alvise. The photo (Figure 4) is also from this dossier.

the 1920s described him as “vivacious, chatty, nosy, equipped with an enjoyable presence, [and] of alert intelligence,” further noting that “since his young years he succeeded in making himself noticed and somehow emerged in the ranks of the political and union organization.”<sup>172</sup> Consani was able to attract the communists’ sympathies and was a good organizer until he sold his comrades to the Fascists. In the next chapter, focusing on treason, we will see more cases like this one. Franzinelli speculates that Consani’s turnaround may have happened in prison in 1927, when the Fascist police discovered him to be organizing illegal political movements; the only alternative he had to prison and emigration was likely collaborationism. The Fascists released Consani and he started working as an infiltrator. He pretended to continue his activity of clandestine organizer, and while for the communists he remained *comrade Consani*, for the police he was *Tirteo 200* or *Informer n. 51*.<sup>173</sup>

Cesari Neri was another spy who reported from Paris, France with the number 430.<sup>174</sup> The Fascist police recruited Neri on November 5, 1931 for a monthly salary of 5,000 lire. He served until February 1935, spying on the anti-fascist exiles in various European capitals. He was in Paris until September 1932, in Berlin until March 1934, and then in London. Among the victims of his espionage activity was lawyer Federico Comandini, a republican militant since the post-World War I period and member of *Giustizia e Libertà*.<sup>175</sup> Given the considerable scope of his espionage activity, Neri’s appeal to have his name removed from the OVRA list was rejected.<sup>176</sup>

All of these spies were well remunerated by the police, which was certainly one of the

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<sup>172</sup> Jaurès Busoni, *Nel tempo del fascismo* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1975), 196, cited in Franzinelli, 277: “vivace, chiacchierino, inframezzante, dotato di simpatica presenza, di intelligenza sveglia, che fino dagli anni giovanili riuscì a farsi notare ed in certo modo emergere nelle file dell’organizzazione sindacale e politica.”

<sup>173</sup> Franzinelli, 278.

<sup>174</sup> His reports can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 34, Dossier 6, France–Antifascist Espionage.

<sup>175</sup> ACS, Fondo Gabrieli, Box 10, OVRA *Giustizia e Libertà*.

<sup>176</sup> Franzinelli, 450.

reasons why they agreed to spy for the Fascists. Dino Segre, better known as Pitigrilli, joined the OVRA in the spring of 1930 to work as an informer in France for a monthly pay of 5,000 liras, with the possibility of a raise or additional reimbursement for more important services. Pitigrilli was a writer; Franzinelli notes that the role of informer became for him “a meaningful existential dimension that gifted him with a double personality, making him the arbiter of the destiny of many anti-fascist intellectuals in Turin.”<sup>177</sup> Franzinelli adds that his debut as an informer marked the end of his literary production, because clearly “performing the role of the spy made him feel like the protagonist of a gratifying story.”<sup>178</sup>



*Figure 5: Dino Segre (better known as Pitigrilli)*<sup>179</sup>

Pitigrilli’s efficacy as an informer was remarkable. His spying and informing led to the arrest

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 284: “una dimensione esistenziale significativa, che lo dotava di una doppia personalità, rendendolo arbitro del destino di molti intellettuali antifascisti torinesi.”

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., “recitare la parte della spia lo faceva sentire protagonista di una vicenda gratificante.”

<sup>179</sup> Source: <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitigrilli#/media/File:Pitigrilli.jpg>. Photo from the 1930s.

of numerous anti-fascist personalities, mostly from Turin and belonging to the Justice and Freedom movement. In March 1934, Pitigrilli effected the arrest and imprisonment of Sion Segre Amar, Leone Ginzburg (historian Carlo Ginzburg's father), Giuseppe Levi, Gino Levi Martinoli, Carlo Levi and his brother Riccardo, Carlo Mussa Ivaldi, Barbara Allason, and seven other anti-fascists.<sup>180</sup>

Pitigrilli even managed to maintain a cordial relationship with Carlo Rosselli,<sup>181</sup> who was clearly one of the Fascists' main targets. The OVRA also used Pitigrilli's information. From the spring of 1935 to build a dossier against editor Giulio Einaudi, arrested for his political and cultural engagement. But, as with Huetter's case, things took a turn for the worse for Pitigrilli's spying ambitions with Guido Leto's ascension to head of the OVRA; Pitigrilli was dismissed on the grounds that his reports were compromised by his biases and personal interests. In February 1939, all his literary works were confiscated as part of the anti-Semite purge.

## **Nazi Spies in France: Albert Gaveau and the Infiltration of the Musée de l'Homme**

### **Network**

Like the Fascist spies we examined, many *Vertrauensmänner* were motivated primarily by financial gain. Albert Gaveau was one such spy. Recruited by the SD in October 1940, this VM was perfectly able to fulfil the mission entrusted to him: infiltrate a nascent Resistance organization to understand its functioning from the inside and deliver its members to the Germans.

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<sup>180</sup> Chiara Colombini and Carlo Ginzburg, "Quegli arresti del 1934 a Torino," Text, Doppiozero (Doppiozero, December 19, 2014), <https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/lettura/quegli-arresti-del-1934-torino>.

<sup>181</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 428.



*Figure 6: Albert Gaveau*<sup>182</sup>

Born in Angers in 1901 to a German mother, Gaveau attended the meetings of Marcel Déat's neo-socialist group from 1934–1935. In the aftermath of the armistice when Gaveau lost his job at the Blériot factories, he met industrialist Achille Boitel, who hired him for his aeronautical company. A staunch supporter of Vichy's collaboration with the Nazis, Boitel occupied a strategic position by serving as an interpreter between the Paris police headquarters and German authorities. Gaveau informed Boitel that he was in contact with a person who was looking for pilots to go to England. Understanding the possibility of using his employee as an informer because of Gaveau's knowledge of the Parisian pilots' environment, Boitel put him in touch with the Director of General Intelligence of the Prefecture of Police. From there, Boitel presented him to Major Karl Boemelburg, head of section IV of the SD (the Parisian Gestapo), located in rue des Saussaies.<sup>183</sup>

Gaveau became agent DOE VIII. He worked directly with Captain Doering, Boemelburg's

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<sup>182</sup> Source: Grenard.

<sup>183</sup> See his interrogation of November 5, 1945 by the DST in Paris, in SHD, GR 28 P9 1328, Dossier Albert Gaveau.

deputy officer. His emoluments started at 2,500 francs a month. After the first successes he achieved, this rose to 10,000 francs a month, to which he could add various travel and living expenses.<sup>184</sup>

To access the Resistance fighter groups, Gaveau initially resorted to his contacts in the aviation industry developed before the war and passed himself off as a pilot eager to find a route to England in order to continue the fight there. In this capacity he met Daniel Héricault, who belonged to a small circle of air force officers engaged in intelligence activities. At the end of October 1940, Héricault put the then 39-year-old Gaveau in contact with linguist and ethnologist Boris Vildé, founder of one of the earliest underground organizations of the French Resistance, the Musée de l'Homme network.<sup>185</sup>



*Figure 7: Boris Vildé*<sup>186</sup>

Gaveau managed to pass himself off as a mechanic from the Blériot factories, passionate about aeronautics and a holder of an aviation license. Vildé wanted to extend his movement's

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> SHD, GR 28 P3 113, Dossier Musée de l'Homme.

<sup>186</sup> Source: <https://www.museedelhomme.fr/en/boris-vilde-1908-1942-3926>. Photo from the 1930s.

network, so he decided to make Albert Gaveau one of his privileged liaison agents, entrusting him with various missions in the provinces to establish contacts with other Resistance networks and accompany certain members of his organization during their movements. This gave Gaveau direct access to the heart of Vildé's network, allowing him to identify several key actors and units and sell both people and information to the Nazis.

Despite being severely affected by a wave of arrests in the first months of 1941, the Musée de l'Homme network did not disappear completely. Paul Rivet, Jean Cassou, and Claude Aveline took refuge in the southern zone. A new recruit in Paris, Pierre Brossolette, who joined the group at the beginning of 1941 and participated in the drafting of the last issue of *Résistance* in March, tried to rebuild what remained of the movement after the arrest of its main members before joining another organization, Libération-Nord. The ethnologist Germaine Tillion, whose small group of Resistance fighters had also escaped the wave of arrests, continued the work Vildé began by striving to establish connections with new organizations such as the Valmy and Ceux de la Résistance movements or the English network Gloria SMH. We will see in Chapter Five that, unfortunately, Tillion and her branch of the network would in turn be the victim the priest Robert Alesch, agent of the Nazi *Abwehr*. Tillion was arrested at the Gare de Lyon on August 13, 1942 and deported to Ravensbrück.

In August 1944, Gaveau followed the German troops in their retreat and founded a training school for saboteurs in Germany. He returned to France at the end of the war under a false identity and was hired as an accountant at a construction company in Toumay (Orne). However, agents of the Directorate of Territorial Security (DST; a part of the French intelligence system responsible for internal security) were looking for him.

Gaveau was finally arrested in November 1945. The investigation of his culpability,

entangled in several cases, lasted nearly four years. The length of the proceedings likely enabled him to escape the death penalty given that the political and judicial climate was completely different at the very end of the 1940s as opposed to the Liberation's immediate aftermath. On November 5, 1949, the Court of Justice of the Seine sentenced Gaveau to hard labor for life for intelligence with the enemy and imprisoned him in the central house of Clairvaux. Thanks to the amnesty decree adopted on November 23, 1953 for people convicted of collaboration, Gaveau saw his sentence commuted to 20 years of hard labor.<sup>187</sup>

### **An Example of Single-Handed Efficiency: Jacques Desoubrie**

The efficacy of some of the *Vertrauensmänner* in fueling the Nazi system of repression and deportation is undeniable. Jacques Desoubrie is certainly one such example.<sup>188</sup> Born on October 22, 1922 in Luignne, Belgium, he began as assistant inspector of the *Geheime Feldpolizei*, attached to the central service of the German police of the avenue Foch. From October 1942, Desoubrie became one of the principal French agents of the Gestapo of rue des Saussaies in Paris. The first striking detail is his birth date: he turned 17 in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. When he joined the Parisian Gestapo in 1942, he was only 20.

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<sup>187</sup> SHD, GR 28 P9 1328, Dossier Albert Gaveau.

<sup>188</sup> AN, Series Z6, Boxes 818–20, Dossier 5688 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Jacques Desoubrie; SHD, GR 28 P9 1918, Dossier Jacques Desoubrie.



*Figure 8: Jacques Désoubrie*<sup>189</sup>

However young, he was clearly effective. Desoubrie caused 600 arrests of Resistance members from several networks (among others: Libération, Musée de l'Homme, Brandy, Liberté, Turma-Vengeance, Organisation civile et militaire, Comète, Service national maquis, and Alliance) who were then executed or who died in deportation. He managed to remain undercover until August 1944 and narrowly escaped a Resistance attack by fleeing to Germany.

Desoubrie was living in Stuttgart in March 1947 when his mistress gave his address to the Allied police. A commando of the French gendarmerie arrested him at his home. He was less lucky than Gaveau; charged with intelligence with the enemy, he was sentenced to death on July 20, 1949, and executed on December 20, 1949.

Desoubrie was effective because Resistance network leaders believed he was reliable. He kept changing names when switching networks and offered his help just when networks were feeling particularly vulnerable. For example, Desoubrie infiltrated the Comet escape network at the beginning of 1943. The line had suffered a series of arrests and had brought its escape routes

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<sup>189</sup> Source: AN, Series Z6, Boxes 818–20, Dossier 5688 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Jacques Desoubrie. Jacques Leman was one of his aliases.

almost to a complete stop. However, the Allied raids intensified as the war progressed, with hundreds of their planes flying over the occupied territory. There were many downed Allied airmen who needed rescue, so the escape line decided to reorganize itself. The network made changes to the route because the Nazi checks had also increased, making it even more dangerous to cross the border with non-French-speaking people, including these airmen. At this point, a young Belgian known as Franc Masson (in reality Desoubrie) appeared with what seemed to be the solution: he provided the Resistance with false lists of cross-border workers, sealed with false stamps of the *Feldgendarmarie*, which would have allowed ten men to cross the border at the same time. It was not possible to find any negative information about him, and so the escape line tasked him with becoming an international guide between Brussels and Paris.

Desoubrie's court trial file suggests that he did not act rashly. He started by successfully completing several repatriation missions from Brussels to Paris. It was only when he was sure he had won the trust of the other agents of the network that the arrests began:

On June 7 [1943], still with the same airmen, MASSON [Desoubrie] found in Lille, at the Rex café, two French *convoyeuses* [Resistance members whose task was to escort the airmen to a safe location], Madeleine BOUTHOUPT and Raymonde COACH. He left the latter at the Rex café, supposedly to wait for a second convoy, and took the 2 pm train with Miss BOUTHOUPT and the seven airmen. Immediately after his departure, Miss COACH was arrested in Lille. In the train, Miss BOUTHOUPT was separated from the airmen and put under arrest. Upon arrival at the Gare du Nord, at 6:30 pm MASSON, escorted by the airmen, joined Mr. de JONGH and Mr. and Mrs. AYLE who were waiting for him on the platform. As soon as he shook their hands, they were surrounded by the German police, and all were arrested while DESOUBRIE discreetly disappeared.

In the days that followed, about 25 other arrests were made in Paris. On June 8, 1943, the day after the operation at the Gare du Nord, another round of arrests was carried out in Brussels, and DESOUBRIE himself took part in the arrests of the people with whom he had been put in contact by Mr. de JONGH and Mr. RADELET—18 people were apprehended.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 820, Dossier 5688 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Jacques Desoubrie, "*Exposé des motifs de la condamnation*," pages 17–18: "Le 7 juin [1943], toujours en compagnie des mêmes pilotes MASSON retrouva à Lille au café du Rex deux convoyeuses françaises, Madeleine BOUTHOUPT et Raymonde COACH. Il laissa cette dernière au café Rex, soi-disant pour attendre un deuxième

Desoubrie had waited a month to collect names and sufficient information and set up a false meeting at the station on June 7, 1943, inviting the entire Paris team of the escape line. Surrounded in the station, they were all arrested. Desoubrie then continued his infiltration in Belgium and destroyed the Brussels sector of the escape line. In mid-June 1943, a single man had completely crippled the Comet network.

### **When Espionage and Treason Meet: The Bonny-Lafont Gang, Émile Marongin, and the Infiltration of *Défense de la France* (DF)**

*Défense de la France* (hereafter DF) was an underground newspaper produced by a group of the same name within the French Resistance. Based in the Northern Zone, Parisian students had created it in August 1941. Philippe Viannay was its founder and main editor. In January 1944, DF had the largest daily circulation of the whole clandestine press: 450,000 copies.

During the spring of 1943, DF gained significant momentum and established itself as one of the main Resistance organizations in the Northern Zone. The group had established a structured and organized movement to distribute the paper throughout the territory, with relays not only in the Paris region but also in the provinces. DF also expanded the scope of its activity; it was no longer limited to counterpropaganda but also took direct action, such as collecting information and manufacturing false papers for the Resistance fighters.<sup>191</sup>

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convoi, et prit le train de 14 heures avec Mlle BOUTHOUPT et les sept aviateurs. Aussitôt après son départ, Mlle COACH fut arrêtée à Lille. Dans le train Mlle BOUTHOUPT fut séparée des aviateurs et mise en état d'arrestation. À l'arrivée à la gare du Nord, à 18 h 30 MASSON escorté des aviateurs vint rejoindre sur le quai M. de JONGH et M. et Mme AYLE qui l'attendaient. Au moment où il leur serra la main, ils furent entourés par la police allemande, et tous furent arrêtés pendant que DESOUBRIE s'esquivait discrètement.

Dans les jours qui suivirent environ 25 autres arrestations furent opérées à Paris. Le 8 juin 1943, c'est-à-dire le lendemain de l'opération de la Gare du Nord, un autre coup de filet fut effectué à Bruxelles, et DESOUBRIE participa lui-même aux arrestations des personnes avec lesquelles il avait été mis en contact par M. de JONGH et M. RADELET—18 personnes ont été appréhendées.”

<sup>191</sup> Grenard, 113–22.

What really made a difference was a prominent personality joining DF in early 1943: Geneviève de Gaulle (alias *Gallia*), the niece of General de Gaulle.



*Figure 9: Geneviève de Gaulle in 1945, when she came back from Ravensbrück*<sup>192</sup>

The movement emerged from its previous isolation under her leadership. The previous isolation was partly due to Philippe Viannay's slight sympathy for Marshal Pétain, which had led him to refuse both to support de Gaulle's Free France and to work to bring together the various Resistance organizations. Geneviève de Gaulle was able to change Vinnay and his fellow militants' minds; she had them read her uncle's books and transcripts of his speeches. These works made a great impression, especially de Gaulle's speech delivered in June 1942 at the Royal Albert Hall.<sup>193</sup> DF joined forces with General de Gaulle in June 1943 and, in line with the unification of the Internal Resistance, joined the National Liberation Movement (MLN) at the end of 1943.

Émile Marongin, a new DF recruit as of the beginning of April 1943, learned of the

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<sup>192</sup> Source: <https://www.atd-quartmonde.fr/register/genevieve-de-gaulle-anthonioz-refuser-linacceptable/genevieve-de-gaulle-anthonioz-une-vie-de-resistances/>.

<sup>193</sup> "Charles de Gaulle, Paroles Publiques - Discours de l'Albert Hall - Ina.Fr," Charles de Gaulle - Paroles Publiques, November 11, 1942, <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaule00001/discours-de-l-albert-hall.html>.

organization through a student distributing the underground newspaper in the Latin Quarter in Paris. Born in Sardinia in 1919 and naturalized in 1938, the DF mobilized Marongin in 1939 in a regiment in Douai, and he took part in the battle of France. Having left the army the day after the defeat, Douai began studying physiotherapy at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris. At the end of 1942 he met some members of the Combat Resistance network. Marongin joined the movement led by Henri Frenay, carrying out some liaison missions and distributing leaflets.<sup>194</sup>

The young man lived at the Hotel Select, located at 1 place de la Sorbonne. He frequented the many cafés of the Latin Quarter, a strategic recruitment site for Nazi spies. Marongin became acquainted with Doctor Lukaszek in January 1943 at the Dupont Latin café. Lukaszek was a Polish agent of section IV of the BdS, charged by the Sipo-SD to infiltrate student circles. Marongin opened up to him about his Resistance activities, his difficult existence in Paris, and his university failures which prevented him from completing his medical training. Lukaszek immediately understood that Marongin's weakness made him a very promising recruit. He attracted him by regularly inviting him to luxurious establishments and put him in contact with Inspector Pierre Bonny, number-two man at the French Gestapo in rue Lauriston led by Henri Lafont.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> SHD, GR 28 P9 3474, Dossier Émile Marongin, 'Elio'.

<sup>195</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 3 & 3 BIS, Dossier 22 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Pierre Bonny and Henri Chamberlin Called Lafont; SHD, GR 28 P9 883, Dossier on the Bonny-Lafont Gang.



*Figure 10: Pierre Bonny*<sup>196</sup>

Espionage met treason. Working in close collaboration with the Sipo-SD for several months, corrupt policeman-turned-Gestapo Pierre Bonny had been casting his nets in all directions to obtain information on the various Resistance organizations. However, he needed a major success to achieve full credibility with the Nazis. Marongin arrived as a gift. In April 1943, he informed Bonny that he had contacts within DF, so the former inspector asked him to actively join the organization and accept missions and responsibilities to learn the ropes and get acquainted with the main members. Marongin received 5,000 francs a week in exchange for his work as an informer.<sup>197</sup>

Having developed contacts with several student members of DF, Marongin (under the alias *Elio*) was introduced to Jacques Lusseyran, one of the newspaper's circulation managers. Lusseyran asked him to disseminate DF in the North of France, where Marongin's parents lived.

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<sup>196</sup> Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Bonny#/media/File:Pierre\\_Bonny\\_-\\_Police\\_Magazine\\_-\\_1934.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Bonny#/media/File:Pierre_Bonny_-_Police_Magazine_-_1934.png). Photo from *Police Magazine*, April 22, 1934.

<sup>197</sup> SHD, GR 28 P9 3474, Dossier Émile Marongin, "Elio".

“Elio” visited this region five or six times, each time carrying several hundred copies of DF and recruiting new members. As he fulfilled this mission, no one harbored any doubts about his true allegiance. Meanwhile, he had been regularly reporting everything he had learned about the movement to Bonny, sharing the identities and addresses of all the members of whom he was aware and precise information on the location of the newspaper depots, clandestine printing presses, and useful meeting places.

The Nazi gang struck on July 20, 1943 thanks to the information Marongin obtained. Geneviève de Gaulle and Philippe Viannay’s brother, Hubert, fell into a trap that led to a total of 21 arrests. The same day, German and French police officers in the Paris region arrested several executives of the movement whose addresses Marongin had shared. In total, “Elio” caused the capture of 48 members of DF. Most of them were brought to the Fresnes internment camp before being deported to Germany. Many of them did not return.

Geneviève de Gaulle was deported to Ravensbrück on January 31, 1944. Considered a hostage because of her kinship with General de Gaulle, she was placed in solitary confinement from October 1944 to February 1945. She met Virginia d’Albert-Lake—the woman whose story I presented in my master’s thesis—in Ravensbrück. Both of them survived deportation, were brought to the Liebenau camp at the end of the war, and were then able to return to France.

Things did not go so well for Marongin. At the beginning, his actions made him very rich; he received a large sum (probably 100,000 francs) for his betrayal, in addition to his salary from Lauriston Street. But he was quite unstable, and the Nazis got rid of him when he had exhausted his usefulness, as was often the case with informers. Summoned to avenue Foch on the premises of the Sipo-SD on October 13, 1943, Marongin was accused of not having produced DF’s main chiefs, who were able to escape the raid of July 20, 1943. So, the former informer was delivered

to the same fate as those he had sold to the Nazis. First interned in Fresnes, Marongin was transferred to the Compiègne camp in May 1944. He was then deported to Germany, first to the Neuengamme camp and then to Wöbbelin. He was liberated by the Americans in May 1945. Arrested on June 21, 1945 for treason, Marongin chose to cooperate, agreeing to deliver the names of some 40 members of the Bonny-Lafont gang whose trial was held in December 1944. Nevertheless, he was condemned to death on October 30, 1946. He was shot on December 14 of the same year.<sup>198</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A comparative examination of the profiles of Fascist and Nazi spies in this chapter allows me to draw a few conclusions about the way these groups enforced their repression of the Resistance. These regimes took advantage of the Resistance networks' inner fragility. The functioning of these networks was premised on trust—a belief their militants shared that they were all united in the fight against the oppressor and that they had all given their allegiance to a common set of values. By subverting this trust using double agents, the Fascist and Nazi regimes destabilized the Resistance and brought the meaning of political allegiance into question. They used people to target other people, spreading an atmosphere of distrust and constant surveillance—instrumentalizing human frailty. The spies' effectiveness rested on their reliability to the Resistance. They appeared skilled and made themselves necessary to the networks. As we see with Desoubrie or Marongin, they were careful, successfully completing a few missions before starting to have Resistance members arrested.

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<sup>198</sup> “Le dénonciateur Marongin condamné à la peine de mort,” *Le Monde*, November 1, 1946, [https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1946/11/01/le-donciateur-marongin-condamne-a-la-peine-de-mort\\_1874421\\_1819218.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1946/11/01/le-donciateur-marongin-condamne-a-la-peine-de-mort_1874421_1819218.html).

Divisions and political fragmentation within the Resistance itself did not help. They undermined the credibility of antifascism and harmed its operations. Such political clashes and personal rivalries also existed in the French Resistance. We saw earlier that DF's leader Philippe Viannay did not initially trust de Gaulle and felt more drawn to Marshal Pétain. Historian Oliver Wieviorka has also showed that the Gaullists were suspicious of the Communist Party in France, fearing that communist resisters had a secret plan to turn the defeat of Nazi Occupation into some sort of revolutionary insurrection.<sup>199</sup> In the next chapter we will see that de Gaulle tasked Jean Moulin with the difficult mission of unifying the Resistance, which made Moulin the Nazis' most coveted target.

As I mentioned before, historians have highlighted a fundamental difference between Italian Fascism and Nazism, in that the Fascist party was absorbed by the state bureaucratic apparatus and a strong bureaucratic machine, whereas the party was stronger and more autonomous in the Nazi system. This disparity, coupled with a significance difference in scale, comes up in their approaches to espionage. The Fascist spies, closely monitored by other spies and regularly reporting to the Political Police division, often lacked autonomy and appeared to be a part of the state bureaucratic apparatus. The Nazis had too big of a territory to monitor so they relied on local criminals, such as Lafont and Bonny, and they distributed their surveillance across a multitude of services and spies.

The spies themselves seemed to be more motivated by financial gain than by ideology. When possible, I have noted how much they were paid to convey the idea that espionage was a lucrative, though dangerous, business. Both Roda and Marongin became spies because of the attraction of these earnings and of the material privileges that the job offered. Neri and Pitigrilli received a

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<sup>199</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

monthly salary of 5,000 lire. Gaveau's salary started at 2,500 francs a month, before skyrocketing after his first successes to an impressive 10,000 francs a month. Spies often lied to pretend that their networks were broader than they were and earn more money. For instance, Soncelli inflated the counts of his sub-confidants.

In this chapter we have mostly looked at spies who voluntarily signed up for the job. I will continue the theme of the subversion of political allegiance in the next chapter, but I will look at traitors: anti-Nazi and anti-fascist militants who switched sides and became Nazi and Fascist spies, further complicating the narrative around the Resistance's unity and purity.

## *Chapter Two* **Becoming Traitors: From Antifascist Ideals to Collaboration**

### **Abstract**

This chapter investigates the anti-Nazi and anti-fascist militants who switched sides and became Nazi and Fascist spies. I argue that some of these cases put into question the reputation of the Resistance itself, highlighting how the stigma of treason has shaped popular memory of the Resistance. Both the Fascist and Nazi regimes identified traitors as useful tools for infiltrating political opponents' networks. Turning Resistance members against their comrades and political groups of origin was a highly effective strategy for acquiring knowledge of and access to their networks. Repressive operations that involved traitors had long-lasting consequences for the reputation of antifascists, casting doubt on the unity of the Resistance for many years after the end of the Second World War, and generating individual and societal traumas. Long-debated cases such as René Hardy's and Ignazio Silone's are symptomatic of the lasting damage that these repressive operations left in the public conscience. The traitors' individual stories unfolded against the backdrop of a general atmosphere of terror and distrust fostered by the totalitarian regimes, in which spies spied upon other spies, both undertaking and undergoing surveillance. Where political allegiance failed, totalitarian surveillance and repression won.

### **Main Characters**

#### *FRANCE*

- Barbie, Klaus ~ 1913–1991: the so-called “Butcher of Lyon,” SS and Gestapo functionary stationed in Lyon in Vichy France, and eventually convicted of crimes against humanity.
- Bastien, Lydie (alias “Béatrice,” “Ananda Devi”) ~ 1922–1994: mistress of Harry Stengritt, assistant to Klaus Barbie, and allegedly responsible for seducing René Hardy and enabling the arrest of several high-ranked members of the French Resistance, including Jean Moulin.
- Dunker, Ernst (alias “Delage”) ~ 1911–1987: Nazi officer of the SIPO-SD in Marseille who organized some of the most effective repressive operations against the French Resistance, including the one that originated the “Flora Report.”
- Hardy, René (alias “Chauvy,” “Bardot,” “Didot”) ~ 1911–1987: Member of the French Resistance, suspected of defecting to the Nazis and being instrumental in famous Resistance militant Jean Moulin's arrest.
- Multon, Jean (alias “Lunel”) ~ 1908–1946: Member of the French Resistance who defected to the Nazis and became a SIPO-SD agent in Marseille.

#### *GERMANY*

- Bästlein, Bernard ~ 1894–1944: Communist Resistance fighter and member of the Berlin Workers' Resistance.
- Jacob, Franz ~ 1906–1944: Communist Resistance fighter and member of the Berlin Workers' Resistance.
- Rambow, Ernst ~ 1908–1946: Communist Party official turned Gestapo spy who facilitated the arrest and execution of the members of the Berlin Workers' Resistance.

- Saefkow, Anton ~ 1903–1944: Communist Resistance fighter and member of the Berlin Workers’ Resistance.

### ITALY

- Bellone, Guido ~ ?–1948: first head of the Rome headquarters of the Fascist police, he was assigned to the Ministry of the Interior in 1926 and was responsible for a special office of the Political Police Division delegated to controlling international subversivism. He hired Ignazio Silone as an informer.
- Bondi, Antonio ~ 1891–?: a socialist who clandestinely expatriated to France, and then petitioned Mussolini to be allowed to return to Italy for family reasons, and agreed to work for the Fascist secret police.
- Costa, Adolfo ~ 1904–?: born in Barcelona, he became a spy of the Fascist secret police because of his difficult family situation. His allegiance to the Fascist regime was ambiguous.
- Pistocchi, Mario ~ 1901–?: initially anti-fascist, he emigrated to France where he became an active member of anti-fascist circles. He then had a personal moral crisis that led him to get close to a Fascist party official and—some historians argue—become a spy for the Fascist secret police.
- Rambaldi, Angelo ~ 1881–?: initially anarchic, he became a spy for the Fascist regime, but his allegiance was shaky.
- Tranquilli, Secondino (alias “Ignazio Silone” and “Silvestri”) ~ 1900–1978: one of the best-known and most widely read Italian intellectuals in Europe and a founding member of the Communist Party of Italy, whose reputation is tainted because of documentary evidence that he worked as a spy for the Fascist police.

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What is the relationship between traitors and spies? In the first chapter, we saw that the Nazis systematized “treason” as a tool of espionage, setting up the *Vertrauensmänner* (VMs) system. The main task of these double agents was to infiltrate groups that represented any form of opposition to the Nazi occupation. The individuals I analyzed in the first chapter were mostly Fascist and Nazi agents from the start, only pretending to be Resistance members to gain the trust of other antifascist militants and infiltrate their networks. However, the last spy I presented, Émile Marongin, was briefly a Resistance member before he defected and started working for the French Gestapo in rue Lauriston. His case leads me to ask: What about traitors? What about individuals who were originally antifascist but then switched to the other side and agreed to work for the enemy? These were traitors not only to their state, but to their comrades and political allegiances,

to the values they had initially embraced. Why did they decide to embark on such a dangerous endeavor, and what were the consequences of their actions for the legacy of the Resistance itself?

The Italian historian Marcello Flores has recently devoted two books to treason.<sup>200</sup> He highlighted that an objective criterion for defining a traitor is difficult to establish, since treason is so often subjective. When looking at court trials, he ultimately found his “objective criterion” to label someone as traitor in the indictment.<sup>201</sup> He also observed that, during the Second World War, the figure of the traitor tended to overlap with that of the spy, in part because the intelligence apparatuses underwent an expansion and employed an ever larger number of people to obtain information from the enemy. The war amplified the possibility and almost the necessity of betrayal, especially in the context of states with formally autonomous governments that were actually subjected to Nazi rule. This further complicated the legal definition of treason and the technical use of the high treason charge: under the latter category fell cases generated by many different crimes (espionage, sedition, revolt against the state, aid to the enemy).<sup>202</sup>

I am relying on the traitors’ court trials or on the documentary evidence that their surveillance left. Spies are often spied upon by other spies; they become both subjects and objects of the multi-layered surveillance that totalitarian regimes put in place. But what if this evidence is inconclusive, and therefore subject to challenge and debate? What if we do not know for sure if those individuals were actually traitors?

With these questions in mind, in this chapter I will revisit two well-known cases, René Hardy’s and Ignazio Silone’s, because of the impact their alleged treason had on French and Italian public discourse. I will also introduce a lesser-known case: that of Ernst Rambow, a communist

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<sup>200</sup> Marcello Flores, *Traditori: Una storia politica e culturale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015); Marcello Flores, *Il secolo dei tradimenti: Da Mata Hari a Snowden 1914-2014* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).

<sup>201</sup> Flores, *Traditori*, 10–11.

<sup>202</sup> Flores, *Il secolo dei tradimenti*, 12–14.

official who became a Gestapo spy, ultimately preventing the Berlin Workers' Resistance from collaborating with the German army in Stauffenberg's plot to assassinate Hitler. Finally, I will focus on four traitors among the antifascist ranks in Italy: Antonio Bondi, Adolfo Costa, Mario Pistocchi, and Angelo Rambaldi.

These cases are representative of larger arguments I make in this dissertation. Traitors within the Resistance are proof of the Fascist and Nazi "proactive" approach at enforcing their repression. Turning Resistance members against their comrades was an effective way of dismantling Resistance networks from within, while targeting the reputation of the Resistance itself. Furthermore, the cases of the Italian antifascists abroad who became Fascist spies illustrate the blurring of national and political allegiances characteristic of espionage. The Fascist police often took advantage of individuals whose antifascist ideals were shaky and whose life circumstances made them vulnerable.

With the cases of René Hardy and Ignazio Silone I build on an existing body of historical literature. Hardy, who wrote his own memoirs,<sup>203</sup> has been examined in Jean-Pierre Azéma's<sup>204</sup> and Jacques Gelin's<sup>205</sup> work. Other Resistance members, such as Raymond Aubrac,<sup>206</sup> Claude Bourdet,<sup>207</sup> Daniel Cordier,<sup>208</sup> and Henri Frenay,<sup>209</sup> mentioned his case in their accounts. In terms of archival sources, I focused on Hardy's court trial documents, held at the Dépôt central des

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<sup>203</sup> René Hardy, *Derniers mots: Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1984).

<sup>204</sup> Jean-Pierre Azéma et al., eds., *Jean Moulin et la Résistance en 1943*, Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire du temps présent, cahier no 27 (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1994); Jean-Pierre Azéma, *Jean Moulin: Le politique, le rebelle, le résistant* (Paris: Perrin, 2003).

<sup>205</sup> Jacques Gelin, *L'affaire Jean Moulin: Trahison ou complot ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013).

<sup>206</sup> Raymond Aubrac, *Où la mémoire s'attarde* (Paris: Editions O. Jacob, 1996).

<sup>207</sup> Claude Bourdet, *L'aventure incertaine: de la Résistance à la restauration* (Paris: Stock, 1975).

<sup>208</sup> Daniel Cordier, *Jean Moulin: La République des catacombes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014); Daniel Cordier, *Jean Moulin: La République des catacombes*, vol. 2 (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2014).

<sup>209</sup> Henri Frenay, *The Night Will End* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

archives de la justice militaire (DCAJM)<sup>210</sup> and at the French National Archives.<sup>211</sup>

Ignazio Silone's case has been carefully analyzed by the historians Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali.<sup>212</sup> However, Ernst Rambow is not mentioned at all in the secondary literature. His name appears only in the catalogue of the exhibition devoted to the Berlin Workers' Resistance.<sup>213</sup> A folder about Rambow, titled "Preparation for High Treason," can be found in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.<sup>214</sup> Antonio Bondi, Adolfo Costa, Mario Pistocchi, and Angelo Rambaldi appear in Mimmo Franzinelli<sup>215</sup> and Mauro Canali's<sup>216</sup> histories of the OVRA. The documentation pertaining to their cases can be found at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome.<sup>217</sup>

My contribution to the existing historiography rests on a comparative analysis of these cases. Taken together, they show how Fascist and Nazi regimes used treason as an opportunity to dismantle networks of political opponents. These treacherous spies betrayed their political allegiances and antifascist ideals, breaking faith with their comrades and political circles.

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<sup>210</sup> MS, DACJM Collection, Hardy's Case, Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 01, A Information I. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 1-23; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 02, A Information II. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 24-65; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 03, A Information III. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 66-108; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 04, A Information IV. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 109-142; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 05, A Information VI. "Documents" Hardy's Case, Subfolders 12-26; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 06, B Intelligence II. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 3-37; Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 07, Form C. Intelligence B.I. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 1-2.

<sup>211</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 244, Dossier 2919 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against René Hardy.

<sup>212</sup> Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, *L'informatore: Silone, i comunisti e la polizia* (Milan: Luni, 2000); Canali, *Le spie del regime*.

<sup>213</sup> Annette Neumann, Susanne Reveles, and Bärbel Schindler-Saefkow, *Berliner Arbeiterwiderstand 1942–1945. "Weg mit Hitler – Schluß mit dem Krieg!" Die Saefkow-Jacob-Bästlein-Organisation* (Berlin: Berliner Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes – Bund der Antifaschisten und Antifaschistinnen, 2009), 9.

<sup>214</sup> BAB, R/3018/2174, Preparation for High Treason (1937-38).

<sup>215</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*.

<sup>216</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*.

<sup>217</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927-1944, Box 159, Bondi, Antonio; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 719, Bondi, Antonio; Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927-1944, Box 338, Costa, Adolfo; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 1502, Costa, Adolfo; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l'Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell'OVRA (1946-1949), Box 11, Dossier 172, Pistocchi, Mario; Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927-1944, Box 1033, Pistocchi, Mario; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4013, Pistocchi, Mario; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4213, Rambaldi, Angelo.

Discovering traitors within their ranks was particularly problematic for the communists, who in the postwar period argued that they had made the most important contribution to the anti-fascist and anti-Nazi Resistance. Some of the cases of treason ultimately cast doubt on the narrative that the Resistance largely depended on the communists' sacrifice.

### **The French Resistance on Trial: René Hardy**

If you ask French people to name one of the heroes of the Resistance, most will answer, "Jean Moulin." The French education curriculum celebrates Moulin as a symbol of civic virtuousness, moral rectitude, and patriotism.



*Figure 11: Jean Moulin*<sup>218</sup>

As of 2015, Jean Moulin was the fifth most-common name for a French school,<sup>219</sup> and as of 2016 the third most-common French street name.<sup>220</sup> The Lyon 3 University and a Paris metro station have been named after him. On December 19, 1964, Moulin's ashes were transferred to the Panthéon in a ceremony General de Gaulle attended. Marking the occasion, fellow Resistance

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<sup>218</sup> Source: <https://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/the-death-of-jean-moulin-the-french-resistance-gets-its-greatest-martyr/>.

<sup>219</sup> Luc Bronner and Maxime Vaudano, "De Jules Ferry à Pierre Perret, l'étonnant palmarès des noms d'écoles, de collèges et de lycées en France," *Le Monde*, April 18, 2015, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/18/de-jules-ferry-a-pierre-perret-l-etonnant-palmares-des-noms-d-ecoles-de-colleges-et-de-lycees-en-france\\_4613091\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/18/de-jules-ferry-a-pierre-perret-l-etonnant-palmares-des-noms-d-ecoles-de-colleges-et-de-lycees-en-france_4613091_4355770.html).

<sup>220</sup> "Noms de rues: Jaurès et Moulin les plus donnés," *ladepeche.fr*, April 16, 2016, <https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2016/04/16/2326668-noms-de-rues-jaures-et-moulin-les-plus-donnees.html>.

member and Minister of Cultural Affairs André Malraux gave a speech, calling him the symbol of the Resistance itself: “May the commemorations of two world wars close with the resurrection of the people of the shadows whom this man mobilized, whom he symbolizes and whom he now brings into this place as a humble yet solemn guard of honor around his mortal remains.”<sup>221</sup>



*Figure 12: André Malraux gives the speech on the day of the transfer of Jean Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon<sup>222</sup>*

In the speech, Malraux mentioned the circumstances of Moulin’s demise:

On June 9, General Delestraint, commander of the “Secret Army,” unified at last, was taken prisoner in Paris. There was no obvious successor, as so often happens in the secret world. Before the arrival of Serreules, Jean Moulin said on many occasions, “Had I been captured, I would not even have had time to brief a deputy...” He wanted the appointment of a successor to be made with the agreement of the Resistance movements, particularly those in the south. He was to meet their representatives on June 21, in Caluire. They were waiting for him. So, too, was the Gestapo.

Treason played its part—as did destiny, which made the normally punctual Jean Moulin three-quarters of an hour late, only to be matched by the tardiness of the German police. Soon enough, they learned that they had captured the head of the Resistance.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Sophie Guerrier, “Le discours d’André Malraux au Panthéon,” *Le Figaro*, April 8, 2014, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2014/04/08/25001-20140408ARTFIG00071-le-discours-d-andre-malraux-au-pantheon.php>: “Puissent les commémorations des deux guerres s’achever aujourd’hui par la résurrection du peuple d’ombre que cet homme anima, qu’il symbolise, et qu’il fait entrer ici comme une humble garde solennelle autour de son corps de mort.”

<sup>222</sup> Source: [https://www.lepoint.fr/histoire/il-y-a-55-ans-entre-ici-jean-moulin-19-12-2019-2354105\\_1615.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/histoire/il-y-a-55-ans-entre-ici-jean-moulin-19-12-2019-2354105_1615.php).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.: “Le 9 juin, le Général Delestraint, chef de l’armée secrète enfin unifiée, est pris à Paris. Aucun successeur ne s’impose. Ce qui est fréquent dans la clandestinité : Jean Moulin aura dit maintes fois avant l’arrivée de Serreules : « Si j’étais pris, je n’aurais pas même eu le temps de mettre un adjoint au courant... » Il veut donc désigner ce successeur avec l’accord des mouvements, notamment de ceux de la zone sud. Il rencontrera leurs délégués le 21, à Caluire. Ils l’y attendent, en effet. La Gestapo aussi. La trahison joue son rôle—et le destin, qui veut qu’aux trois-quarts d’heure

Did a traitor cause Jean Moulin's death? The answer to this question is still debated today.

After leaving his post of prefect in 1941, Jean Moulin traveled through France and met several chiefs of Resistance networks to assess the scale of the available forces. He then went to London and met General de Gaulle. De Gaulle, highly impressed by Moulin's resourcefulness, appointed him as his representative in occupied France with the mission of organizing links between De Gaulle's Fighting France (*France combattante*) and the internal Resistance, while unifying the latter. In a year and a half, Moulin accomplished a colossal job arranging radio links and parachuting operations, creating an organization called Unified Movements of the Resistance (*Mouvements Unis de la Résistance* or MUR) and its armed wing, the Secret Army (*Armée Secrète*) and reuniting the National Council of the Resistance (*Conseil National de la Résistance* or CNR). But the former prefect also made a few enemies along the way who were jealous of his power. Internal conflicts within the Resistance networks exploded during the spring of 1943 and reached their peak at the end of May.<sup>224</sup>

René Hardy, a Resistance member of the *Combat* movement, took center stage precisely in this period of conflict.

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de retard de Jean Moulin, presque toujours ponctuel, corresponde un long retard de la police allemande. Assez vite, celle-ci apprend qu'elle tient le chef de la Résistance.”

<sup>224</sup> Gelin, 21.



*Figure 13: René Hardy*<sup>225</sup>

Hardy had initially joined the Resistance while working in his capacity as an *attaché d'inspection* for the SCNF, the French National Railway Company. Stationed at the Paris-Montparnasse station, he was in charge of passing information to a contact, who then forwarded it to a British agent. However, his cover was eventually blown. Hardy first tried to seek refuge in Spain, but was arrested on May 13, 1941 and detained in the Toulon maritime prison. Sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment, he was released on May 27, 1942. Imprisonment weakened Hardy considerably, but he regained health in the small commune of Garons in southern France, where he joined a local group of Resistance fighters.<sup>226</sup>

Given Hardy's expertise, the founder of *Combat*, Henri Frenay, entrusted him with organizing the Resistance's railway activities. These activities entailed destroying railways and locomotives to slow down the movements of German troops in France. Needless to say, the Nazis were neither happy about these activities nor about the general agenda of Moulin's Secret Army.

Building on a series of arrests and the seizure of documents concerning the Secret Army in

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<sup>225</sup> Source: <https://alchetron.com/René-Hardy>.

<sup>226</sup> Guillaïn de Bénouville, *Le sacrifice du matin* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1946).

March 1943, the German general staff created a special commando with the task of tracking down all the agents of the organization. The commando settled in Lyon under the direction of Commissioner Werth and under the high hand of Klaus Barbie, strong man of the Sipo-SD in Lyon.<sup>227</sup>

This large-scale Nazi repressive operation had actually originated in Marseille, as we can infer from the so-called *Flora Report (Rapport Flora)*.<sup>228</sup> This is the first and most famous of three secret reports drawn up by Ernst Dunker (alias “Delage”), one of the leaders of the Sipo-SD in Marseille.<sup>229</sup> Treason is very much at the center of the report, since the success of the operation can be attributed to five Resistance fighters that the Nazis arrested and managed to turn. The most serious betrayals were those of: Léon Brown, alias “Brunet,” regional manager of the mobile armed squads called *Groupes Francs* in Toulon; and Jean Multon, alias “Lunel,” secretary of Maurice Chevance, alias “Bertin,” and regional leader of the movement *Combat*. In particular, Multon’s betrayal presented a highly problematic challenge for the Resistance because he had a deep knowledge of the networks’ functioning both in Marseille and Lyon. Dunker highlights the successful operations of his counteragents in the report, mentioning specifically the actions against the “Section of railway sabotage in Lyon”:

Multon, arrested here by our Service on April 28, 1943, and working as a counteragent since April 30, 1943, was made available to the EK of Lyon as counteragent on May 24, 1943, after successful use in the German interest. Multon, as a courier, transmitted at the same time the indications of Brown, regional head of the Franc Group to the EK of Lyon, concerning the national leaders and the means of their arrest in Lyon [...] having received the mission of monitoring the new letterbox of the Unified Movements [of the Resistance], of the Section of railway sabotage in Lyon and the new letterbox of FRENAY, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Mâcon, about whose existence we learned from the chief-courier LE COUSTER when he

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<sup>227</sup> BDIC, F delta res, Box 0933, Klaus Barbie (1971–1997).

<sup>228</sup> BDIC, F delta res, Box 0888, Flora Operation (1940–1977).

<sup>229</sup> See AN, Series Z6, Box 244, Dossier 2919 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against René Hardy. The entire report can be read in the original German and in the French translation in Hardy’s court trial file, in the first dossier, starting from p. 165 of the archival count added later in black.

was stopped by our Service.<sup>230</sup>

The arrests multiplied in May and June 1943. Leaving Lyon for Paris on the evening of June 7, Hardy found himself on the train with Multon. On June 8, at 2 am, the German army's field gendarmerie (*Geheimfeldpolizei*) arrested Hardy and imprisoned him in Chalon-sur-Saone. He was brought back to Lyon by Barbie himself in the afternoon of June 10. Up to this point, there is overwhelming consensus about this reconstruction of the facts.<sup>231</sup>

What follows, however, is told differently by Hardy's defenders and detractors. For those who are convinced of Hardy's guilt, the Nazis turned Hardy. Threatened with seeing his fiancée Lydie Bastien—a traitor herself—taken hostage, Hardy agreed to work for the Germans from the evening of June 10 or morning of June 11.



*Figure 14: Lydie Bastien*<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., Flora Report, first dossier, p. 137: “Multon, arrêté ici par notre Service le 28 avril 1943 et engagé comme contre-agent depuis le 30 avril 1943 a été mis à la disposition le 24 mai 1943, après utilisation dans l’intérêt allemand couronnée de succès, de l’EK de Lyon en qualité de contre-agent. Multon, en qualité de courrier, a transmis en même temps, les indications de Brown, chef régional du Groupe Franc à l’EK de Lyon, concernant les chefs nationaux et les moyens de leur arrestation à Lyon [...], ayant reçu la mission de surveiller la nouvelle boîte aux lettres des mouvements Unis, Section des sabotages ferroviaires à Lyon et la nouvelle boîte aux lettres de FRENAY, à l’hôtel de Bourgogne à Mâcon, dont on a eu connaissance par le chef-courrier LE COUSTER arrêté par notre Service.”

<sup>231</sup> Gelin, 21–22.

<sup>232</sup> Source: <http://certitudes.eklablog.com/lydie-bastien-la-femelle-diabolique-du-caluire-de-jean-moulin-a191014020>.

Bastien was actually Harry Stengritt's mistress and assistant to Klaus Barbie. The Nazis had tasked her with collecting information from French sources. Hardy was her entry point into the secrets of the Resistance; seducing him allowed her to relate to Barbie what the latter needed to know to arrest the head of the Secret Army, General Charles Delestraint (alias "Vidal").

Jean Moulin was going to be the next target. Hardy's detractors accused him of believing Bastien's double game. After he agreed to work for the Nazis he was apparently allowed to move freely; in reality, the Nazis kept him on a leash. Moulin was going to organize a meeting to find an appropriate replacement for Delestraint and, for the Nazis, it was key to know the details of this gathering. The meeting was set for Monday, June 21 in the Lyon suburbs in Caluire, at the home of Dr. Frederic Dugoujon. The Nazis, who learned the time and location thanks to Hardy, burst in and arrested five people, including Hardy, in a room on the first floor of the house. They arrested several others in the waiting room, including Jean Moulin and many other high-ranked members of the Secret Army and the Unified Movements of the Resistance.<sup>233</sup> Initially, Barbie had not identified Moulin; he had actually arrived late and had been brought to the waiting room. Hardy had not seen him as a result. Unfortunately, two days later, finally identified as "Max" and as General de Gaulle's representative, Barbie violently tortured Moulin and then sent him to Paris, where he died under circumstances still unclear today.<sup>234</sup>

The Nazis were certainly satisfied with the results of the operation, as evidenced by the way Dunker concluded the Flora Report:

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<sup>233</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 244, Dossier 2919 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against René Hardy, Flora Report, first dossier, p. 365: "Le 11 juin 1943, MULTON était de retour à Lyon et il a retrouvé HARDY à La Gestapo, paraissant aussi à l'aise que lui-même dans les bureaux allemands. C'est par la suite qu'il a appris qu'HARDY avait « donné » aux Allemands le rendez-vous de CA[L]UIRE, dans la banlieue lyonnaise. La Gestapo, sur les indications d'HARDY a procédé, ce jour-là, à l'arrestation de MOU[L]IN Jean, alias MAX, Président du Comité Directeur des M.U.R., Délégué personnel du Général de GAULLE-LACASE, DUGOUJON, SCHWARZFELD, LASAGNE, Mme RAISIN, XAVIER AUBRAC, tous membres supérieurs de l'A.S. ou de M.U.R.S."

<sup>234</sup> Gelin, 22.

Thanks to the arrests of the isolated leaders of the Movement by our EK [*Einsatzkommando*, Nazi unit], the Unified Movements of the Resistance remain without leadership and their activity is paralyzed for a while. After the execution of our planned action to arrest other known people, the complete annihilation of the Unified Movements of the Resistance could be assured.<sup>235</sup>

The supporters of Hardy's guilt flagged his miraculous "escape" from the Nazi raid as proof of his betrayal. The Nazis had handcuffed all the Resistance members in Caluire except Hardy, and this looked suspicious. Dr. Dugoujon's housekeeper underlined this detail during her hearing at Hardy's trial:

The hearing of Mrs. BROSSIER Marguerite, housekeeper of Dr. DUGOUJON [...] shows that HARDY did not have handcuffs behind his back when he fled. She also relates that the German stationed at the front door armed with a machine gun did not fire at HARDY, although he would have been able to. She is surprised that the Germans who were chasing and shooting at him from very close by did not kill him and that they did not search for him further. In retrospect, she finds this scene bizarre.<sup>236</sup>

Hardy's detractors also claimed that he had shot himself in the arm to prove to his fellow Resistance fighters that there had been a struggle. That same day, French police arrested him and sent him to the hospital at L'Antiquaille. Seven days later, he was delivered to the Germans at their request and transferred to the Croix-Rousse hospital. On August 3, he escaped again, under extraordinary conditions, and disappeared for a while. At the end of 1943, Hardy resumed contacts with the French Resistance. He joined Frenay in Algeria in June 1944 and followed him to Paris after the liberation. There, he was arrested on December 12, 1944, after the discovery of the Flora

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<sup>235</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 244, Dossier 2919 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against René Hardy, Flora Report, first dossier, p. 129: "Grâce aux arrestations des chefs isolés du Mouvement par notre EK, les Mouvements de résistance Unis restent sans direction et leur activité est paralysée pour un certain temps. Après exécution de l'action d'arrestation prévue par nous des autres personnes connues, l'anéantissement complet des Mouvements Unis de résistance pourrait être assuré."

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., first dossier, p. 426: "L'audition de Mme BROSSIER Marguerite, domestique du Dr DUGOUJON [...] fait ressortir que HARDY n'avait pas des menottes dans le dos lorsqu'il s'est enfui. Elle relate également que l'Allemand en stationnement sur la porte d'entrée, armée d'une mitrailleuse n'a pas tiré sur HARDY, bien qu'il ait pu le faire. Elle s'étonne que les Allemands qui le poursuivaient et lui tiraient dessus de très près ne l'aient pas tué et qu'ils n'aient pas poussé davantage leurs recherches. À la réflexion, elle trouve cette scène bizarre."

Report.<sup>237</sup>

The report was quite damning since it specifically names Hardy and attributes Moulin's arrest to his treason:

Didot (Hardy's pseudonym): National leader of the Sabotage of the trains of the *Mouvements Unis [de la Résistance]*, who then, as counter-agent of the EK of Lyon, facilitated the arrest on June 25, 1943 in a meeting in Lyon of: Mou[l]in, Jean, called Max, called Régis, personal delegate of De Gaulle, president of the Steering Committee of the *Mouvements Unis*.<sup>238</sup>

However, the value of the information revealed here continues to be the subject of controversy among historians. My goal is not to determine whether Hardy was indeed a traitor—I do not have any additional documentary evidence to offer—but to highlight the many layers of treason involved in this case.

Hardy benefited from contradictory reports and unclear facts at his trials. He was acquitted in the first in 1947 because he convinced his judges that there was no evidence of his arrest on the train during the night of June 7. According to Hardy's scenario, he had escaped, which is why the Germans wanted to take their revenge on him. And yet, the day after his acquittal, the discovery of a new document proving his arrest resulted in his further incarceration and a second trial in front of a military tribunal in 1950. Again, Hardy was acquitted, benefiting this time from a particular provision of military justice called the *minorité de faveur*: four jurors had found him guilty, and three innocent; to condemn him, a difference of two votes (one more pronouncing him guilty) would have been necessary. He was therefore acquitted and released, much to the fury of a large part of the Resistance.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Gelin, 22.

<sup>238</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 244, Dossier 2919 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against René Hardy, Flora Report, Flora Report, first dossier, p. 136: "Didot (nom de guerre). Chef national du Sabotage des trains des Mouvements Unis, lequel ensuite, comme contre-agent de l'EK de Lyon, a fait arrêter à Lyon le 25 juin 1943 dans une réunion à Lyon : Mou[l]in, Jean, dit Max, dit Régis, délégué personnel de De Gaulle, président du Comité directeur des Mouvements Unis."

<sup>239</sup> Gelin, 23.

Historian Jacques Gelin wrote that Hardy had been saved above all by his intelligence and that, apart from the participants in the Caluire meeting, he had not been directly involved in any other recognized arrest, while he could have betrayed Frenay and many other members of *Combat*, thus dismantling the cornerstone of the entire French Resistance.<sup>240</sup>

The spies' ambiguity fuels the stigma of treason itself. The long-lasting debate around Hardy's case illuminates how connotations of treason as well as constructs of disloyalty and responsibility continue to affect French society. Hardy himself died aware of this long-lasting notoriety. A 1987 article in the *New York Times* states that he declared in one of his last interviews "You will see. People will be fighting even over my dead body."<sup>241</sup>

Despite having been brought to trial twice and acquitted in both cases, Hardy could not shake the charge that he had betrayed Jean Moulin. Raymond and Lucie Aubrac—two other famous Resistance members—strongly argued for Hardy's guilt. After his first acquittal in 1947, they "lent their support to a large communist campaign to try him again."<sup>242</sup> More than 70 years later, a series of conflicting narratives remains with treason at their center, as Raymond Aubrac was himself accused by none other than Klaus Barbie of having betrayed the secret of Jean Moulin's 1943 Caluire meeting with Resistance leaders.<sup>243</sup> The same elements of the story that had been used to identify Hardy as guilty of betraying Moulin "would be used much later by the Aubracs' critics to cast doubt on their story."<sup>244</sup> Hardy's case and Klaus Barbie's trial for crimes against humanity put into question the very myth of the Resistance itself. While Barbie "was charged with 'crimes

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Associated Press, "Rene Hardy, Resistance Chief Accused of Giving Barbie Aid," *The New York Times*, April 15, 1987, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/15/world/rene-hardy-resistance-chief-accused-of-giving-barbie-aid.html>.

<sup>242</sup> Donald Reid, *Germaine Tillion, Lucie Aubrac, and the Politics of Memories of the French Resistance* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 137.

<sup>243</sup> Klaus Barbie's *Testament*—wherein he accused Aubrac of being an agent in his service—was later disclosed in a book written by French journalist and historian Gérard Chauvy, *Aubrac : Lyon 1943* (Paris: A. Michel, 1943).

<sup>244</sup> Reid, 137.

against humanity’ for his role in the deportation of the Jews,” his lawyer, Jacques Vergès, contended that he had been “extradited to stand trial in France” for the events that lead to Moulin’s arrest at Caluire. But why would the Republic not try Barbie on the latter charge? According to Vergès, France was “unwilling to look closely at Caluire for fear of revealing the faulty foundation—the myth of the Resistance—upon which the Republic was based.”<sup>245</sup> Even if Barbie was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, Vergès’ argument “cast doubt on the unity and purity of the Resistance,”<sup>246</sup> further highlighting how the stigma of treason affected its memory.

### **A Traitor in the German Communists’ Ranks: Ernst Rambow**

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the communists were among the main enemies of both the Fascists and Nazis. Both of these regimes aimed to create a situation in which the need for order was the priority and the police, presented as an instrument of civilization, the natural solution to the problem. A major enemy was necessary for the success of such a plan; the communists—juxtaposed with the Jews by the Nazis—provided the easiest scapegoat since they also happened to be real ideological enemies. The communists were the ones that most challenged both regimes, in Germany to the point of inventing and publishing a book that suggested that the Reichstag fire was a Nazi conspiracy: the *Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror*, which “created the prism through which most of the world saw Nazism for more than a generation.”<sup>247</sup>

During the night of February 27, 1933, the Reichstag in Berlin was set on fire. Police and

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>247</sup> Anson Rabinbach, “Staging Antifascism: The Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror,” *New German Critique*, no. 103, “Dark Powers: Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in History and Literature” (Winter 2008): 99.

firemen arriving at the scene found Marinus van der Lubbe, who confessed to being the arsonist. Within hours, President Paul von Hindenberg signed an emergency decree that ended all civil liberties. The Nazi regime unleashed a massive campaign of repression directed first and foremost against communists, arresting thousands of them in the weeks that followed.

At the end of August 1933, a group of communist exiles and writers who had fled to Paris in the fire's wake published a book discussing its origins and laying bare the elements of a counter conspiracy. The *Brown Book* accused the Nazis of being behind the fire and using it as an excuse to eliminate their political rivals and terrorize the population on the eve of the March 5 elections. Willi Münzenberg, a "renowned international communist impresario and Reichstag deputy,"<sup>248</sup> was behind the book's creation. The book's premise was that the fire could only be a political crime and, since it benefitted the National Socialists, it "must be premeditated, supported, and perpetrated by leading National Socialist functionaries."<sup>249</sup>

The *Brown Book* suggests the existence of an anti-fascist counterpropaganda that borrowed some strategies from the Nazis such as the depiction of the opponent as a ruthless, diabolical, and immoral terrorist. There is no Italian equivalent to the Brown Book, but there is a *Manifesto of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals* written by Benedetto Croce in response to the *Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals* by Giovanni Gentile, published by *Il Mondo* on May 1, 1925.<sup>250</sup> While these texts succeeded in damaging the regimes' images, they did not stop their relentless consolidation of power, partly because of the secret police forces' effectiveness.

There were instances of German Resistance, even if historians generally highlight their sporadic nature in comparison to the more substantial structure that the Resistance took in other

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>250</sup> Giuseppe Giordano, "La denuncia di un tradimento: Il 'Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti,'" *Il Pensiero Italiano. Rivista di studi filosofici* 1, no. 1 (2017): 37–50.

countries. The critically acclaimed 2005 film *Sophie Scholl–The Final Days* helped spread knowledge about the White Rose. Led by Hans and Sophie Scholl, two students at the University of Munich, the movement consisted of an anonymous leaflet and graffiti campaign that called for active opposition to the Nazi regime. Unfortunately, their effort was short-lived; they were all arrested by the Gestapo on February 18, 1943, many of who were then sentenced to death or imprisonment.

Another movement perhaps less known by the general public is the Berlin Workers' Resistance: the group of Anton Saefkow, Franz Jacob, and Bernard Bästlein, active in particular in 1943 and 1944.



*Figure 15: Anton Saefkow, Franz Jacob, and Bernard Bästlein*<sup>251</sup>

The group's goal was to support the Nazi regime's opponents, helping prisoners and people sentenced to forced labor flee and providing food and money to all those who lived illegally and risked being arrested. The network was dismantled because of traitor Ernst Rambow, a Communist official who became a Gestapo informant. Rambow's case is not known in the secondary literature.

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<sup>251</sup> Source: Neumann, Reveles, and Schindler-Saefkow, 13.

His name only appears in the catalogue of the exhibition devoted to the Berlin Workers' Resistance.<sup>252</sup>



*Figure 16: Monument dedicated to Anton Saefkow, Franz Jacob, Bernard Bästlein, and the victims of the Berlin Workers' Resistance<sup>253</sup>*

The Nazis arrested Rambow in February 1933 and sent him to a concentration camp until July 1933. In November 1934 he was sentenced to six years in prison, during which time he was tried for high treason (*Hochverrat*). We can read his confession in the court trial file, where he detailed his activity for the Communist Party of Germany (KPD):

I have been unionized and politically leftist since 1910. After the war I was a member of the USPD [*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* or Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany] and converted to the KPD in 1920. I held various positions

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 5.

in the party [...]”<sup>254</sup>

Rambow mentioned that from 1928 onward, he “was entrusted with the entire defense work” of a district in Brandenburg, and that “defense work at that time meant all illegal work.”<sup>255</sup> He essentially worked for the intelligence service of the KPD. Rambow continued this work until the end of 1930 beginning of 1931. He then joined the Russian trade agency, where he worked until December 1932.<sup>256</sup>

During his confession, Rambow gave many names which could have proven useful for the Nazis. For example, he mentioned the existence of a communist cell called Justice, “which included all of the comrades who were employed by the justice system in Berlin”:<sup>257</sup>

I never learned the strength and names of the members or the leadership. The Reich Department “Authorities” under the direction of Schubert took care of this group. [...] I learned from Schubert during my first protective custody that he had been deported as a foreigner. The Berlin SPD officer called himself “Paul,” his real name is not known to me. His superior, that is, the SPD agent working in the National Statistics Office, called himself “Willy.” [...] The Berlin agent for the right-wing parties called himself “Egon.” I also know his real name, which I can’t think of at the moment. His father was a tailor by trade. I can no longer provide any information about the Berlin manager for operations.<sup>258</sup>

It is easy to understand why such a confession would be so useful for the Nazis: one traitor was all it took to track down and dismantle an entire network. Rambow, however, was even more

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<sup>254</sup> Transcript of Ernst Rambow’s confession, in BAB, R/3018/2174, Preparation for High Treason (1937–38): “Seit 1910 bin ich gewerkschaftlich organisiert und politisch links eingestellt. Nach dem Kriege war ich Mitglied der USPD und trat 1920 zur KPD über. Ich bekleidete in der Partei verschiedene Funktionen...”

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.: “Von 1928 an wurde ich von der BL. Bln-Brandenburg (ich arbeitete s.Zt. im KL-Haus) als Abwehrmann im illegalen Apparat eingesetzt. Man übertrug mir die gesamte Abwehrarbeit des Besirks [...] Unter Abwehrarbeit war damals die gesamte illegale Arbeit zu verstehen.”

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.: “Bis Ende 1930, evtl. bis Anfang 1931 übte ich diese Arbeit aus und kam dann zur russischen Handelsvertretung, wo ich bis Dezember 1932 tätig war.”

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.: “Mir war weiter bekannt, daß eine kommunistische Zelle „Justiz“ bestand, zu der die gesamten Genossen gehörten, die bei der Justiz in Berlin beschäftigt waren.”

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.: “Stärke und Namen der Mitglieder oder der Führung habe ich nie erfahren. Um diese Gruppe kümmerte sich das Reichsressort „Behörden“ unter der Leitung von Schubert [...] Über Schubert habe ich während meiner ersten Schutzhaft erfahren, daß er als Ausländer abgeschoben worden ist. Die Berliner SPD-Bearbeiter nannte sich „Paul“, sein richtiger Name ist mir nicht bekannt. Sein Vorgesetzter, also der SPD- Bearbeiter im Reichsmaßstabe, nannte sich „Willy“ [...] Der Berliner Bearbeiter der Rechtsparteien nannte sich „Egon“, ich kenne auch seinen richtigen Namen, der mir aber im Moment nicht einfällt. Sein Vater war Schneider von Beruf. Über den Berliner Leiter für die Betriebe kann ich keine Angaben mehr machen...”

useful as a spy because he had already worked in the intelligence service of the Communist Party. He knew what this kind of work entailed. In his confession, he even described how the party handled blacklists and sensitive documents.<sup>259</sup>

Rambow was transferred to the Berlin Gestapo prison in 1940. He agreed to work for the Gestapo so as not to be sent back to the concentration camp. He was paid well and received various material benefits for his spy work.<sup>260</sup> He managed to gain Anton Saefkow's trust because the latter knew him as a fellow communist, and they had spent some time in prison together in 1933.

In April 1944, the social democrats Adolf Reichwein and Julius Leber contacted Saefkow to involve the Saefkow-Jacob-Bästlein organization in the conspiracy of July 20, 1944. This is the most famous attempt to assassinate Hitler, organized by the army officer Claus von Stauffenberg. Saefkow met with Reichwein and Leber on June 22, 1944, in the apartment of Dr. Rudolf Schmid. Unfortunately, Rambow also participated in the meeting.<sup>261</sup> An additional meeting was planned for July 4, 1944 to discuss concrete measures, but when Saefkow, Jacob, and Reichwein arrived at the appointed place, the Gestapo arrested them all. Leber was arrested a few days later.

Saefkow was deeply shocked when he found out that Rambow was the traitor. While in prison, he managed to convey this information outside of the prison walls and pass it on to network agents who were still at large. Saefkow was sentenced to death on September 5 and executed by guillotine on September 18 in the Brandenburg-Görden prison. Jacob suffered the same fate.

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.: "In der eigentlichen Parteiabwehr waren Unterlagen gesammelt worden in Form von bereits veröffentlichten „Schwarzen Listen“ die in den Büros der BL im KL-Haus aufbewahrt wurden. Bei Durchsuchungen des Hauses wurden sie meistens in den Aktentaschen und Zimmern der Abgeordneten versteckt. Eine Kartei habe ich nicht geführt. Auch überhaupt kein illegales Büro gehabt. Schriftstücke, die nicht im Hause aufbewahrt werden durften, gingen zu den Reichsressorts. Schubert hat als Reichsabwehrmann bestimmt eine Kartei und eine Sammlung von Abwehrmaterial gehabt, welches meiner Ansicht nach in Neukölln untergebracht sein musste. Ich habe diese Stelle aber nie erfahren. Bei den einzelnen Abwehrfällen fragte ich stets bei Ihn an, ob der Verdächtige schon bekannt sei und erhielt von ihm dann die Anfrage zurück. Ich machte die Zusammen [S]tellungen der Spitzel usw., worauf die Schwarzen Listen in Reichsmaßstabe."

<sup>260</sup> Neumann, Reveles, and Schindler-Saefkow, 9.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 144–57.

Bernhard Bästlein had been arrested before, on May 30, 1944. After being tortured for days, he was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. On September 5, 1944, he was sentenced to death for the crimes of conspiracy to commit high treason, aiding the enemy, and undermining military strength; on September 18, 1944, he too was executed in the Brandenburg-Görden prison.

Because of Rambow, 114 men and women were arrested in July 1944 and a further 103 between August and September, bringing the Berlin Workers' Resistance to its knees.<sup>262</sup>

After Berlin was liberated from the Nazis, Rambow found employment at the Charlottenburg District Court in May 1945. He managed to become a member of the KPD again, and on July 4, 1945, he even tried to seek recognition as a victim of fascism.<sup>263</sup> Unveiled as a Gestapo spy, he was arrested at the end of July 1945 and sentenced to death by a Soviet military tribunal on September 25, 1945. After his appeal for clemency was rejected on October 29, 1945, the sentence was carried out on November 12, 1945 by a firing squad.<sup>264</sup>

The significance of Rambow's actions can only be understood within the broader picture of German history in this period. As mentioned at the beginning of the section, historians generally point out that the Resistance in Nazi Germany was a limited phenomenon, and that the Nazi dictatorship had a high level of approval. The German historian Martin Broszat identified small actions such as refusing to give the Nazi salute as a type of resistance. He distinguished between more political and deliberate forms of resistance (*Widerstand*) and milder ones (*Resistenz*), whereby certain Germans resisted against the Nazi regime by simply maintaining their pre-1933 value system without fundamentally challenging the regime's premises.<sup>265</sup> The concept of

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>263</sup> Klaus-Dieter Müller et al., eds., *Todesurteile sowjetischer Militärtribunale gegen Deutsche (1944-1947): Eine historisch-biographische Studie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

<sup>264</sup> Hermann Weber, *Deutsche Kommunisten: Biographisches Handbuch 1918 bis 1945* (Berlin: K. Dietz, 2008).

<sup>265</sup> Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (London: Longman, 1981), 149; Martin Broszat, *Nach Hitler: Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte: Beiträge* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1987).

*Resistenz* has been criticized by other historians such as the Swiss Walter Hofer, who claimed that this concept “leads to a levelling down of fundamental resistance against the system on the one hand and actions criticizing more or less accidental, superficial manifestations on the other.”<sup>266</sup> I argue that there was the potential for a real political resistance within the Berlin Workers’ Resistance that the Nazis effectively repressed with a traitor. The potential of the Berlin Workers’ Resistance lies in its lost link with Stauffenberg’s plot to assassinate Hitler.

The German army was the only entity that had the power to do something against Nazi rule. In the late 1930s, when the army realized that Hitler’s plan was to start a war, the high-ranked officers decided to get rid of him because they believed that Germany did not have the resources to win such a war. But Germany did well at the beginning of the war after all, conquering many states. When the Wehrmacht started losing, the army’s conspiracies to kill the Führer revived. Stauffenberg’s plot was the only one that could have succeeded, even more so with the support of the Berlin Workers’ Resistance, but Rambow prevented the communist resistance from joining the army in this effort.

### **Antifascist Intellectual or Fascist Traitor? The Riddle of Ignazio Silone**

As we have already seen with the post-war problems surrounding the Hardy case, traitors were a great tool for dismantling myths of unity pertaining to the Resistance and communist movements. One of the most debated Italian cases among historians is that of Italian novelist Secondino Tranquilli, better known under his pseudonym Ignazio Silone.

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<sup>266</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 195.



*Figure 17: Ignazio Silone*<sup>267</sup>

He is cited as one of the best-known and most widely-read Italian intellectuals in Europe and in the world. His most famous novel, *Fontamara*, emblematic for its denunciation of the condition of poverty, injustice, and social oppression of the lower classes, has been translated into many languages.<sup>268</sup> Between 1946 and 1963, Silone received ten nominations for the Nobel Prize for literature. Aside from his literary works, Silone also had a prominent political career. He was a founding member of the breakaway Communist Party of Italy in 1921 and became one of its covert leaders during the Fascist regime. His brother Romolo Tranquilli was arrested in 1928 for being a member of the PCI; he died in prison in 1931 as a result of the severe beatings he received. Silone officially “broke with the Party in 1930–31 and spent the rest of his life as an independent-minded Christian Socialist.”<sup>269</sup>

Where does the issue lie then? In the 1990s, Italian historians Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali found documents that implied that Silone acted as an informant for the Fascist police from 1919

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<sup>267</sup> Source: <https://www.ridiabruzzo.it/2020/04/30/ignazio-silone-la-voce-dei-cafoni-dabruzzo/>.

<sup>268</sup> Ignazio Silone, *Fontamara* (New York: Random House, 1934).

<sup>269</sup> Martin Clark, “Who Was Silvestri?” *London Review of Books*, August 9, 2001, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v23/n15/martin-clark/who-was-silvestri>.

until 1930, presumably for money. The documents indicated he eventually chose to interrupt his services as an informer because of the torture the police inflicted upon his brother. The two historians published the results of their research in a work titled *The Informer: Silone, the Communists, and the Police*.<sup>270</sup>

In his book on the OVRA, Canali added further documentary evidence of Silone's activity as an informer, noting, however, that others still argued for his innocence.

Silone had close ties with Guido Bellone, a senior leader of the Fascist police. Bellone headed the Rome police headquarters, specializing in the control of so-called "subversives" in popular circles in the capital. He had risen to prominence in 1925 for arresting the Socialist Deputy Tito Zaniboni as he was about to make an attempt on Mussolini's life, even though the Fascists were aware of Zaniboni's plot and had taken advantage of him. Bellone was assigned to the Ministry of the Interior in 1926, with the responsibility of a special office of the Political Police Division delegated to control international subversivism. He remained in service until 1936.<sup>271</sup> Biocca and Canali speculate that Bellone may have acted as a father figure to Silone.<sup>272</sup> Bellone had carefully maneuvered Silone, who had lost his father early and most of his other relatives, including his mother, in an earthquake in 1915; he was insecure and in need of a parental figure.

In his correspondence with Bellone—which predates the creation of the OVRA—Silone used the pseudonym "Silvestri." He continued to use this name even when, in the summer of 1927, he was recruited by the Fascist Political Police [hereafter POLPOL]. He signed a letter dated April 1930 as Silvestri in which he expressed to Bellone his desire to simultaneously exit active politics and the universe of informing. Canali argues that there is no doubt that Silone's moral crisis, latent

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<sup>270</sup> Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, *L'informatore: Silone, i comunisti e la polizia* (Milan: Luni, 2000).

<sup>271</sup> See footnote 62 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 337.

<sup>272</sup> Clark.

throughout the twenties, worsened with the arrest and death of his brother Romolo:

The arrest of Romolo, who died a few years later in prison, and the reaffirmation of his communist belief before the judges of the Special Court sharpened the deep feelings of guilt of the elder brother, who perhaps drew moral and psychological energy from this family tragedy to begin the journey that would lead him to break the relationship with Bellone and with the POLPOL.<sup>273</sup>

This, however, did not cancel Silone's previous actions. According to Canali, his collaboration with Bellone had begun in the early twenties, or perhaps between 1918 and 1919. Silone was officially included in the ranks of the direct trustees of the POLPOL in June 1927 when Bellone, who for years had held the position of head of the political office of the Rome police headquarters, was called to be part of the newly established POLPOL division. He brought his own trustees into the POLPOL trust network. Silone was among the first trustees to be recruited by the POLPOL since he was assigned the code number 73, included in the first 100 numbers assigned to trustees already active in other Fascist secret services.<sup>274</sup>

Canali also cites additional documentary evidence of Silone's informing activity. The first is a note from the second director of the Fascist Political Police Division, Michelangelo Di Stefano, dated September 1, 1929: "Tranquilli Secondino will have a meeting in these days with Commissioner Bellone abroad. We await the outcome."<sup>275</sup> Canali found the document in the POLPOL collection in a file in the name of this Guido Saraceno. The POLPOL received some information from a trustee in Moscow in January 1929 about the presence in the Soviet capital of an Italian Communist leader by the name of Saraceno. Subsequent investigations made it possible to establish that the mysterious Saraceno called himself Guido. A file was then opened in his name.

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<sup>273</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 410: "L'arresto di Romolo, che morì qualche anno dopo in carcere, e la riaffermazione davanti ai giudici del Tribunale Speciale del suo credo comunista acuirono i profondi sensi di colpa del fratello maggiore, il quale da questa tragedia familiare attinse forse le energie morali e psicologiche per iniziare quel cammino che lo avrebbe portato alla rottura del rapporto con Bellone e con la POLPOL."

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 412: "Tranquilli Secondino dovrà avere un abboccamento in questi giorni con il comm. Bellone all'estero. Attendiamo l'esito."

Due to the persistent uncertainty about Guido's real identity even after a series of attempts to solve it, and since in the end some trustees had advanced the hypothesis that it could be a pseudonym used by Secondino Tranquilli, Di Stefano had entrusted Bellone with the task of requesting a confirmation directly from his trustee Secondino Tranquilli (alias Silone). Bellone received from Tranquilli and transmitted to POLPOL sufficient information to allow the file to be closed. The confirmation is in Alfonso Leonetti's personal file in the holdings of the *Casellario Politico Centrale*; in a note dated November 18, 1929, it is communicated that "the documents relating to Saraceno Guido passed from Tranquilli Secondino to Leonetti Alfonso, given that, as a trustee, this pseudonym must belong to the latter and not to the former."<sup>276</sup>

The second document that Canali cited as proof of Silone's continued collaboration with the Fascist police is an autographed postcard by "Silvestri" from Locarno dated November 11, 1928 and addressed to Emilia Bellone, sister of Inspector Guido Bellone. The contents of the postcard are as follows: "Greetings to you and to the lawyer—A letter will follow—Silvestri."<sup>277</sup> With the postcard, Silone announced to Bellone that he was sending a more detailed letter or report. Later, Bellone met with Silone as usual; from Bellone's confidential file, in which all his missions in Italy and abroad are recorded, it appears that on November 19, 1928—only a few days after receiving the postcard—the official left on a mission for Locarno, Switzerland, where the postcard came from, and returned to Rome on November 28.

Canali also recalls another document relevant to explaining Bellone's trip to Switzerland, which proved that Bellone had met with Di Stefano, who had then given him a memo dated

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<sup>276</sup> ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 2768, Alfonso Leonetti's folder, note dated November 18, 1929, cited in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 412: "gli atti relativi a Saraceno Guido passati da Tranquilli Secondino a Leonetti Alfonso, dato che, da fonde fiduciaria, tale pseudonimo deve appartenere a quest'ultimo e non al primo."

<sup>277</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati, Sezione I: K/R OVRA, 1927–1944, Box 18, postcard by "Silvestri" from Locarno, addressed to Emilia Bellone, sister of Inspector Guido Bellone, and dated November 11, 1928, cited in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 412: "Saluti a Lei e all'avvocato—Seguirà lettera—Silvestri."

November 17, 1928 consisting of 24 questions on the Communist Party of Italy's internal life to submit to "the well-known Communist confidant," by which he meant Silone.<sup>278</sup> The questions aimed at obtaining a deep knowledge of the structure the international communist movement had given itself. This document disproves the argument that Silone provided Bellone with nothing but harmless information. The long duration of the mission—six days—also testifies to its complexity and that of the information requested.

In April 1928, Silone wrote:

We do not risk being proven wrong by saying that the PNF [the National Fascist Party] has received the support of compact groups from all Italian political parties except the Communist Party.

There have been a very limited number of basic elements of the Communist Party who have passed over to Fascism, despite the opposite story spread by the reformists. [...] Their betrayal was of no political significance [...]<sup>279</sup>

A quite hypocritical statement on his part...

### **Tales of Departure and Return: Traitors in Italian Antifascism**

If probably the most famous, Silone was not the only case of treason among the anti-fascist ranks. Even if they did not officially systematize treason as an espionage tool, the Fascists definitely took advantage of the anti-fascist militants who joined the Fascist side. These cases also show how surveillance blurred boundaries between the foreign and national spheres: they prove that spies had no fixed identity and a blurred sense of national and political allegiance. They often operated abroad, pretending to be anti-fascists while they were working for the Fascists amidst identity

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<sup>278</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 413: "noto fiduciario comunista."

<sup>279</sup> Secondino Tranquilli, "Borghesia, piccola borghesia e fascismo," *Stato Operaio*, April 1928, cited in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 311: "Non rischiamo di essere smentiti affermando che il PNF ha ricevuto l'apporto di gruppi compatti da tutti i partiti politici italiani eccetto il partito comunista. Vi è stato un numero limitatissimo di elementi di base del partito comunista passati al fascismo, malgrado la favola contraria diffusa dai riformisti. [...] Il loro tradimento non ebbe alcuna importanza politica [...]"

crises, personal and ideological shifts, opportunistic choices, and changes of heart. As I mentioned before, these spies were also constantly spied upon by the Fascist regime. Reports of extensive surveillance of OVRA informers by OVRA informers can be found in the files of the Political Police Division (*Divisione Polizia Politica*) and in the *Casellario Politico Centrale* at the Central Archives of the State in Rome.

One such case is Antonio Bondi's. The Fascists took advantage of him to infiltrate the anti-fascist resistance movement *Giustizia e Libertà*, which, as we have already seen in the first chapter, was one of the OVRA's main targets. Born in Cesena in 1891, Bondi was initially a socialist. He worked for the National Federation of the Cooperatives until 1924. In 1927, he clandestinely expatriated to France to carry on his work in the cooperative movement. On December 18, 1932, he petitioned Mussolini to be allowed to return to Italy for family reasons: "because of the present crisis, but especially for a recent tragic family misfortune that happened to me in Italy, I would like to return to my home country."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> See ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 159, Antonio Bondi's folder; ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 719, Antonio Bondi's folder. The quoted letter is in the Casellario's file: "per la crisi attuale, ma soprattutto per una recente tragica disgrazia familiare avvenutami in Italia, io desidererei ritornare in Patria."



Figure 18: Antonio Bondi<sup>281</sup>

He then assured Mussolini that he had given up any anti-fascist political commitment: “I assure Your Excellency that if I have the chance to be able to return to work in Italy, I will do everything in my power to be deserving of the help I receive.”<sup>282</sup> In this way, Bondi quickly went from socialist to police spy, with the pseudonym of “Arsace” and the number 693.

The militants of Giustizia e Libertà were initially suspicious of him, but after some time the leader himself, Carlo Rosselli, decided to trust Bondi, and included him in June 1936 in the newly established council of culture.<sup>283</sup> The Fascists, however, did not fully trust him until January 25, 1941 when he was finally deleted from the list of subversives. Therefore, Bondi was the object of more than a decade of surveillance, as evidenced by the reports collected in his Casellario file.

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<sup>281</sup> Source: ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, busta 719, Antonio Bondi’s folder.

<sup>282</sup> See ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, busta 719, Antonio Bondi’s folder: “Assicuro V.E. che se avrò la fortuna di poter rientrare a lavorare in Italia, farò tutto il mio possibile per rendermi degno dell’aiuto ricevuto”.

<sup>283</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 157.

If Bondi proved to be a capable spy receiving the Fascists' praise for his accurate reports,<sup>284</sup> more questionable is Angelo Rambaldi's allegiance.



Figure 19: Angelo Rambaldi<sup>285</sup>

Born in Ravenna in 1881 and initially an anarchist, Rambaldi was arrested in 1912 when accused of planning King Vittorio Emanuele's assassination. Rambaldi spent his anarchic years between France, the Principality of Monaco, and Belgium. He returned to Italy in the 1920s and settled down in Milan, where he started working as a technical overseer at a construction site. This is when his ideas changed. He joined the Anti-Fascist Concentration (*Concentrazione Antifascista*)—an Italian coalition of anti-fascist groups—but he carried out a subtle work of provocation, determined to widen divisions within the community of exiles. In 1928, Rambaldi tried to split the Concentration, attacking the leaders with a defamatory manifesto for which he collected the signatures of some anarchists:

We believed them virtuous, strong, generous, intelligent; instead today they appear to our

<sup>284</sup> See ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, busta 719, Antonio Bondi's folder: On January 8, 1941, the head of the Political Police Division wrote that Bondi "for many years spontaneously offered useful and intelligent work as political informer" ("Per molti anni ha prestato spontaneamente utile e intelligente opera di informatore politico").

<sup>285</sup> Source: ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4213, Angelo Rambaldi's folder.

eyes poor in heart and spirit, gossipy as servants, envious as brokers, cheap as merchants, petty always and in everything. In exile, when solidarity should have strengthened between leaders and wingmen, they told us that there was nothing more to hope from them, that everyone had arranged as best he could. We learned from Treves to know Modigliani, we learned from Nenni to know De Ambris, we learned from the Republicans, from Bergamo, from Pistocchi etc. to know the *magna pars* [the most important representatives] of socialism and vice versa, we have learned from many comrades to know the anti-fascism of Nitti, Giannini, etc. How much moral misery! How much baseness of feelings!<sup>286</sup>

The fascists did not take long to recognize a promising ally. According to a report of the prefect of Milan dated January 31, 1930, Rambaldi had “given tangible signs of repentance, rendering a few services to the local *questura* [the police headquarters], just as he had served the royal consul of Brussels before he returned to Italy.”<sup>287</sup> Rambaldi became a police informer with the pseudonym of “Napoleone,” but unfortunately his official activity on the construction site was not very profitable. In September 1934, he left Italy again and moved to Toulon where he resumed his contacts with some of the anti-fascist exiles. In January 1939, however, Rambaldi wrote to the Italian consul in Toulon to be allowed entry in Italy. He declared that he had gone to Toulon to work for his brother, a contractor, and that he “had always kept [his] distance from any political person as well as avoided any equivocal person.”<sup>288</sup> The consul initially granted the permit, but on September 13, 1940 the Fascist regime sentenced him to four years of *confino* [political exile]. His questionable allegiance had ultimately been refused both by the regime and by the anti-fascists themselves, who promptly kicked him out of their circles when they discovered that he had worked

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<sup>286</sup> The manifesto is cited in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 185: “Li credevamo virtuosi, forti, generosi, intelligenti; invece si manifestano oggi ai nostri occhi poveri di cuore e di spirito, pettegoli come serve, invidiosi come sensali, avari come mercanti, meschini sempre ed in tutto. Nell’esilio, quando la solidarietà avrebbe dovuto rinsaldarsi tra capi e gregari, quelli ci dissero che da loro non c’era più nulla da sperare, che ognuno si fosse arrangiato come poteva. Abbiamo imparato da Treves a conoscere Modigliani, abbiamo imparato da Nenni a conoscere De Ambris, abbiamo imparato dai repubblicani, da Bergamo, da Pistocchi ecc. a conoscere i *magna pars* del socialismo e viceversa, abbiamo imparato da molti compagni a conoscere l’antifascismo di Nitti, di Giannini ecc. Quanta miseria morale! Quanta bassezza di sentimenti!”

<sup>287</sup> See ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4213, Angelo Rambaldi’s folder. The original quote from the report in question is: “dato segni tangibili di ravvedimento, rendendo anche qualche servizio alla locale questura, come già ne ebbe a rendere al R. Console di Bruxelles prima di rimpatriare.”

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., letter to the Italian consul in Toulon, January 9, 1939: “Mi sono sempre tenuto distante da qualsiasi persona politica come ho evitato non importa qualsiasi persona equivoca.”

as a Fascist spy.

Like Bondi, Adolfo Costa was affected by family issues. Born in 1904 in Barcelona, he worked for 13 years in the Italian Consulate there. Then, sources say that “he was led astray by inadvisable company and started to spend time in frivolous environments until he fell victim to the schemes of a woman of easy virtue who made him lose first his mind and then the job at the Consulate.”<sup>289</sup> Unable to find another occupation, he also had a difficult situation at home with both his elderly mother and a sick sister to take care of. So, Costa agreed to become an informer of the Fascist Ministry of Interior and contacted the anti-fascists who went to Spain. His allegiance to the Italian regime, however, proved just as ambiguous as Rambaldi’s. Some Fascist spies who had infiltrated the Spanish Republican Armed Forces reported his presence in the left-leaning front to the Fascist police, accusing him of having joined the anti-Francoist forces for opportunistic reasons. A spy declared of Costa that “even if his conduct was politically reprehensible, he was a ‘scarcely red militiaman’ and therefore had enlisted among the Spanish militiamen only for opportunism.”<sup>290</sup> Costa ended up staying with the anti-Francoist front until the end of the Spanish Civil War, and escaped to France in January 1939. When he understood that he was at risk of being arrested, Costa crossed the Pyrenees but was captured again and interned in a concentration camp until the Consulate of Barcelona managed to have him released. In January 1942 Costa was about to be expelled from Spain as an ex-Republican, but he did not want to be repatriated; he had no attachment whatsoever to Italy, whose customs and language he did not even know well.

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<sup>289</sup> See ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 338, Adolfo Costa’s folder; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 1502, Adolfo Costa’s folder. The quote is from the report of the consulate general of Italy in Salamanca to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 11, 1937, in the CPC file: “fu sviato da sconsigliabili compagnie e prese a frequentare ambienti frivoli fino a cadere nelle reti d’una donna di facili costumi che gli fece perdere la testa prima e l’impiego al consolato poi.”

<sup>290</sup> See ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, box 338, Adolfo Costa’s folder, anonymous note dated February 2, 1937: “Il fiduciario crede di poter assicurare che, abbenché la condotta del Costa sia politicamente riprovevole, egli tuttavia sarebbe un ‘miliziano assai poco rosso’ e cioè si sarebbe arruolato tra i miliziani spagnoli solo per opportunità.”

Rambaldi's vehement manifesto mentions another case worth citing: the Republican Mario Pistocchi.<sup>291</sup>



Figure 20: Mario Pistocchi<sup>292</sup>

Born in Cesena in 1901 and initially anti-fascist, he emigrated to France where he became an active member of the LIDU (*Lega italiana dei diritti dell'uomo*; Italian League of Human Rights), the *Concentrazione antifascista* (Anti-fascist Concentration), and of the *Federazione dei repubblicani italiani in Europa* (Federation of the Italian Republicans in Europe). He even wrote a book, *Le destin de l'Europe*,<sup>293</sup> in which he imagined a European federation as a solution that would counter the twentieth century's regression to totalitarianism. Pistocchi then had a personal moral crisis that led him to become close to the count Teodorani Fabbri, a Fascist party official, in the hopes of being able to return to Italy. Pistocchi described his disillusion with his previous political ideals, which he now defined as “anachronistic,” in a long letter to Teodorani Fabbri:

For several months now—while Italy was preparing its supreme decisions and France was

<sup>291</sup> See ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 1033, Mario Pistocchi's file; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4013, Mario Pistocchi's file. The Italian Republican Party, of course, is nothing like the American one: It began with a somewhat liberal left-wing position, claiming descent from the political thought of Giuseppe Mazzini. It was banned by the Fascists in 1926.

<sup>292</sup> Source: Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4013, Mario Pistocchi's file.

<sup>293</sup> Mario Pistocchi, *Le destin de l'Europe* (Paris: Éd. Figuière, 1931).

lulled into a proud position of intransigence and new apocalyptic dreams of hegemony—I have been able day by day to realize the vanity of these efforts and discover the turbid tangle of lies, of public and private silence, of appetites and resentments, which constituted the true essence of a lustful and slothful world, in full decay, whose multiple and noisy external manifestations managed to deceive even the most discerning observers. Today the illusions faded away. In the whirl of an enormous defeat, I witnessed the definitive collapse of anachronistic ideologies, to which only a skillful propaganda had given, to the eyes of well principled men, a certain force of seduction.”<sup>294</sup>

Like Bondi and Costa, Pistocchi stressed why he wanted to return home:

In an hour such as this one, in which Italy is still busy in a fight from which the setup of a just and long-lasting peace must emerge, I feel the need to give to my homeland the little force which I possess. I have fully known the torment of exile: I feel today more than ever nostalgia for my country.<sup>295</sup>

Pistocchi’s personal breakdown made him the ideal target of the secret police. However, did he really become an informer? A mystery complicates the answer to this question related to the inclusion of a person with the same name (but different birthdate and birthplace) in the official list of Fascist spies published in the “Gazzetta Ufficiale” n. 145 of July 2, 1946. The Mario Pistocchi included in the list was not born in Cesena on January 18, 1901, but in Faenza on May 17, 1906. He filed a later-accepted appeal to be removed from the list.<sup>296</sup>

Conversely, the Mario Pistocchi from Cesena asked the lawyer Federico Comandini, an old anti-fascist friend of his, to take up his defense. This effort was in vain. In a letter dated July 7, 1946, Pistocchi wrote: “They told me this morning that my name is on a list of the OVRA. Crazy!

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<sup>294</sup> See ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 4013, Mario Pistocchi’s file, letter to Teodorani Fabbri from Dordogna, August 10, 1940: “Da vari mesi a questa parte—mentre l’Italia preparava le sue supreme decisioni e la Francia si cullava in un’orgogliosa posizione di intransigenza e in nuovi apocalittici sogni di egemonia—ho potuto giorno per giorno rendermi conto della vanità di questi sforzi e scoprire il torbido groviglio di menzogne, di pubbliche e private omertà, di appetiti e di rancori, che costituivano la vera essenza di un mondo cupido e ignavo, in pieno disfacimento, le cui molteplici e rumorose manifestazioni esteriori riuscivano però ad ingannare anche gli osservatori più perspicaci. Oggi le illusioni sono svanite. Nel turbine di un’immane disfatta, ho assistito al crollo definitivo di ideologie anacronistiche, cui soltanto un’abile propaganda aveva dato, agli occhi degli uomini di buona fede, una certa forza di seduzione.”

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.: “In un’ora come questa, in cui l’Italia è ancora impegnata in una lotta dalla quale deve uscire l’assetto di una pace giusta e durevole, sento il bisogno di dare alla mia patria le poche forze di cui dispongo. Ho conosciuto a fondo il tormento dell’esilio: sento oggi più che mai vivace la nostalgia del mio paese.”

<sup>296</sup> ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l’Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell’OVRA (1946-1949), Box 11, Dossier 172, Mario Pistocchi.

In my troubled existence it is the most terrible blow I have ever suffered. I cry out to you all my amazement, my indignation, my torment. Ah no! I didn't expect this.”<sup>297</sup> However, Comandini believed him to be a traitor given his chilling response: “There are many things that leave one perplexed in this story of yours. And I was more than perplexed: in very serious doubt. Not only me. All those who knew you and felt the same painful sensation that I felt.”<sup>298</sup> Thus Pistocchi did not file an appeal and cut off all contacts from his previous life. After settling in France he occasionally lived in Milan and worked for the Mondadori publishing house, but never set foot in his native town again. His brother broke off all relations with him. Pistocchi did not return to Cesena even for his mother’s funeral in March 1947.<sup>299</sup>

Pistocchi’s case is reminiscent of Hardy’s in that it too elicited a historiographical debate. The Forlì essayist Elio Santarelli re-evaluated his character in the mid-70s in his article “Justice for Mario Pistocchi” published in the Forlì republican fortnightly *Pensiero Romagnolo*. In this article, Santarelli supported the thesis of Pistocchi’s homonymy with an informant of the OVRA, and hence his innocence.<sup>300</sup> According to a historian of the republican movement, on the other hand, Pistocchi “represents—for the positions he occupied for a long time not only inside the PRI [Italian Republican Party], but also in the LIDU [Italian League of Human Rights] and the Antifascist Concentration—the most disconcerting case of an antifascist leader who subsequently passed to the service of the regime.”<sup>301</sup> In the biographical essay dedicated to Pistocchi’s exile

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<sup>297</sup> See footnote 98 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 456: “Mi han detto stamani che in una lista dell’Ovra c’è il mio nome. Roba da pazzi! Nella mia esistenza travagliata è il colpo più terribile che mi sia dato subire. Ti grido tutto il mio stupore, la mia indignazione, il mio tormento. Ah no! Questo non me lo aspettavo.”

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.: “Ci sono molte cose che lasciano perplessi in questa tua vicenda. Ed io ero più che perplesso: in gravissimo dubbio. Non solo io. Tutti quelli che ti conoscevano e provavano la stessa dolorosa sensazione che provavo io.”

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Elio Santarelli, “Giustizia per Mario Pistocchi,” *Pensiero Romagnolo*, July 16, 1977, cited in Franzinelli, 456, footnote 98.

<sup>301</sup> Santi Fedele, *I repubblicani in esilio nella lotta contro il fascismo 1926–1940* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1989), 13, cited in Franzinelli, 456, footnote 98.

from Cesena, Enzo Merendi also hypothesized that he collaborated with the Fascist secret police in some form starting from 1941.<sup>302</sup>

### Conclusion

Both the Fascist and Nazi regimes identified traitors as tools to infiltrate networks of political opponents. Turning Resistance members against their political groups of origin presented the advantage that they did not have to gain their comrades' trust as professional spies did, and they also brought unprecedented knowledge and access to their networks. Repressive operations that involved traitors had long-lasting consequences for the reputation of antifascism and the Resistance itself, casting doubts on its unity for many years after the end of the Second World War and generating individual and societal traumas. Long-debated cases such as those of René Hardy and Ignazio Silone are symptomatic of the lasting damage that these repressive operations left in the public imaginary.

Hardy's case appears to be a tale of monsters and a fallen hero. On the one side, the monster, Klaus Barbie, and his minions, the traitors—including Hardy. On the other side, the fallen hero and symbol of the Resistance, Jean Moulin. But the reality is more nuanced, and Barbie's lawyer was able to take advantage of this faulty narrative at his trial. He even referred to the "Vichy Syndrome" in his closing argument, saying the French wanted to depict Barbie as a scapegoat for what were the crimes of Vichy, a complicity which further undercut the right of the French to try Barbie in the first place. By raising this issue, "Vergès pitted the long-dominant French memory of the Occupation, which had been cast in terms of German treatment of resisters, against the Vichy

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<sup>302</sup> Enzo Merendi, "La vicenda dell'esilio di Mario Pistocchi vista attraverso le carte e i documenti dell'Archivio Centrale dello Stato," in *Atti del Convegno su "Antifascisti romagnoli in esilio durante il fascismo" celebrato a Cesena il 6-7 dicembre 1980 a cura del Circolo Culturale "Rodolfo Morandi" e dell'AICS di Cesena* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1983), 339–80, cited in Franzinelli, 456, footnote 98.

Syndrome focus on the French state's participation in the deportation of Jews from France."<sup>303</sup> This is why the judge ultimately decided to "set aside the issue of Barbie's responsibility for events at Caluire in his first trial, reserving it for a civil suit brought by the families of two men arrested at Caluire."<sup>304</sup> Barbie ultimately died in prison in 1991, before he could be brought to trial again for those events.

Fascist and Nazi terror capitalized on these gray areas and on feelings of insecurity that treason generated among their opponents' ranks. Saefkow could not believe that it was a comrade, Rambow, who had betrayed him. Federico Comandini's reaction to Pistocchi evokes a similar sentiment, echoing the painful disbelief that a betrayal of a shared value and politics provoked.

The Italian cases of anti-fascists emigrating abroad and then switching sides elicit additional questions of identity and belonging. The anti-fascists end up blurring boundaries between the national and the foreign, asking: where is home? As some of them adhere to Fascist espionage to be able to return home, spying ends up becoming a point of no return. Silone, Bondi, and Costa are also affected by familial commitments further complicating their political allegiance. Pistocchi's choice, conversely, ended up burning his familial ties. These individual stories unfold within a general atmosphere of distrust that the Fascist regime fomented, where spies were spied upon by other spies, both undertaking and undergoing surveillance. Where political allegiance fails, surveillance wins, pitting French against other French, Germans against Germans, Italians against Italians, communists against communists, anti-fascists against anti-fascists. These dynamics challenge the traditional narrative of monsters and heroes.

Claudio Pavone expresses this challenge in *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance*, whose poignant subtitle is "historical essay on morality in the Resistance" ("*saggio storico sulla*

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<sup>303</sup> Reid, 139.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

*moralità nella Resistenza*”). Pavone brings to light the personal conscience and political consciousness of the Italians who fought on the side of the Resistance and on that of the Fascist regime. The wounds that such civil war provoked continued to affect Italian society for a long time, especially as it tried to emerge from 20 years of Fascist dictatorship.<sup>305</sup> Speaking of treason, Italian society had to come to terms with a multilayered betrayal: the country’s betrayal of Germany and the Axis in favor of the Allies; the King and Prime Minister Pietro Badoglio’s betrayal, who abandoned the country right after the armistice with the Allies, leaving it in a state of confusion and disarray; the betrayal of the people by fascism, ultimately unable to achieve its promises; and Mussolini’s betrayal by his fellow fascists, who arrested and imprisoned him on July 25, 1943. In this chaotic context, relationships and alliances at all scales were readjusted and redefined. The only people who used the term *civil war* after the liberation were the Fascists themselves, reemerging into political life as the MSI (the Italian Social Movement) and insisting on their legitimacy as a political force. Instead, the Italian Left wanted to condemn fascism to oblivion. But no form of historical consciousness can be achieved through a *tabula rasa*. If the greatest merit of Pavone’s book is to rescue the reality of the civil war from a Fascist exploitation of this term, the task of any Resistance historian is to give a nuanced appraisal of its inner contradictions and gray zones. The spies depicted in this chapter are part of such an effort.

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<sup>305</sup> Claudio Pavone, *Una guerra civile: Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1991).

**PART TWO:**  
**Espionage & the Subversion of Gender Norms**

## *Chapter Three* **Stealing the Scene: The Trope of the Treacherous Femme Fatale**

### **Abstract**

This chapter analyzes the stories of five female spies who “stole the scene” from their more numerous male colleagues: Bice Papeschi and Celeste Di Porto in Fascist Italy, Mathilde Carré in Vichy France, Margarete Kahane in Nazi Austria, and Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn in Nazi Germany. By looking at these women’s public accounts and trial records, the chapter will show how their portrayals fit within the long-standing trope of the treacherous femme fatale. Their stories elicited such a strong fascination that they ended up dominating the public interest and imagination, while the many more male informants and the Fascist and Nazi officers for whom they worked were relegated to the side. Women were supposed to be mothers and housewives, not spies and informers, but totalitarian regimes were willing to bend the rules for people who served their purpose and enforced their system of repression. But just as surveillance is a double-edged sword, spies are not always safe tools. They have a will of their own and pursue their own agenda. These women agreed to spy for the Fascists and Nazis, but, while they subverted and betrayed the Resistance, they also fought against or asserted their power over a male-dominated world, highlighting the contradictions between the regimes’ propaganda and practice.

### **Main Characters**

#### *ITALY*

- Antonelli, Vincenzo ~ ?-?: Member of a Fascist gang in Rome and Celeste Di Porto’s lover
- Benuzzi, Valerio (alias “Michele”) ~ 1892-?: OVRA informer who introduced Bice Papeschi to Arturo Bocchini
- Bocchini, Arturo ~ 1880–1940: chief of the OVRA and Bice Papeschi’s lover
- Di Porto, Celeste ~ 1925–1981: Jewish girl in the ghetto of Rome who denounced members of her community to the Gestapo
- Papeschi, Bice (alias “Diana” / “Bini”) ~ 1894-?: Head of a group of OVRA informers and lover of the OVRA chief, Arturo Bocchini

#### *FRANCE*

- Bleicher, Hugo (alias “Colonel Henri” / “Monsieur Jean” / “Verbeck” / “Jean Castel”) ~ 1899–1982: Feldwebel (Sergeant) of the Nazi Abwehr in Paris who targeted the French Resistance network *Interallié*; Mathilde Carré’s lover
- Borni, née Petitjean, Renée (alias “Violette”) ~ ?-?: Member of the French Resistance network *Interallié* who was arrested by the Nazis and started working for them
- Carré, née Bélard, Mathilde (alias “la Chatte” / “Micheline” / “Bagherra” / “Victoire”) ~ 1908–2007: Member of the French Resistance network *Interallié* who was also arrested by the Nazis and started working for them, becoming the lover of Nazi officer Hugo Bleicher
- De Vomécourt, Edouard Pierre Fourrier De Crevoisier (alias “Lucas”) ~ 1906–1986: Agent of the “Special Operation Executive” (SOE)

- Garby-Czerniawski, Roman (alias “Armand” / “Walenty” / “Brutus”) ~ 1910–1975: Founder of the French Resistance network *Interallié* who played a significant role in the D-Day Deception plan, operation “Fortitude”

#### GERMANY

- Dobberke, Walter ~ ?–[he allegedly died of diphtheria in winter 1945–46]: *SS-Hauptscharführer* and head of the *Jüdisches Fahndungsdienst* (the “Jewish Manhunt Commission”) in Berlin, tasked with tracking down Jewish people who had gone into hiding
- Isaaksohn, Rolf ~ 1921–1957: Jewish man and Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn’s second husband, who worked for Dobberke and spied on other Jewish people for the Gestapo in Berlin
- Kübler-Isaaksohn, née Goldschlag, Stella ~ 1922–1994: Jewish woman who also worked for Dobberke and spied on other Jewish people for the Gestapo in Berlin

#### AUSTRIA

- Kahane, Margarete (alias “Fritzi” / “Sonja” / “Olga” / “Maid”) ~ 1917–1950: Member of the Communist Youth of Austria, who later was arrested by the Gestapo in Vienna and became a Gestapo spy
- Koppel, Kurt (alias “Konrad Hans Klaser” / “Hans Glaser” / “Harry” / “Ossi” / “Peter”) ~ 1915–?: A prominent spy of the Gestapo in Vienna and Margarete Kahane’s lover

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Labeled as selfish and unfeeling, cats are often criticized for lacking dogs’ emotional attachment to their owners. They also do not like to obey orders. In the 1960s, the CIA developed an unfortunate program called Operation Acoustic Kitty: a secret plan to turn cats into spies. However, the agency was soon forced to abandon the idea because its test launch did not go as planned. The “Acoustic Kitty” was supposed to be a cyborg cat spy; “A surgeon implanted a microphone in its ear and a radio transmitter at the base of its skull. The surgeon also wove an antenna into the cat’s fur.”<sup>306</sup> CIA operatives thought that the cyborg cats could sit next to Soviet officials and record their private conversations. They drove a cat to a park and “tasked it with capturing the conversation of two men sitting on a bench.”<sup>307</sup> Sadly, the cat ignored orders and

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<sup>306</sup> Becky Little, “When the CIA Learned Cats Make Bad Spies,” *History*, accessed May 21, 2020, <https://www.history.com/news/cia-spy-cat-espionage-fail>.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

wandered into the street, where it was run over by a taxi.<sup>308</sup> In a stern memo, the CIA declared: “Our final examination of trained cats [...] convinced us that the program would not lend itself in a practical sense to our highly specialized needs.”<sup>309</sup>

It seems that the woman who nicknamed “the Cat” during the Second World War was an equally untrustworthy spy. But it was not just Mathilde Carré; many women spies have a similar reputation. The depiction of the treacherous and highly-sexualized femme fatale is a trope with a long history:<sup>310</sup>

The femme is identified by the power she has over men and how she uses this for her own benefit. She is expected to present some obstacle to the hero and to deceive and to betray him. [...] She challenges the hero because she disrupts the normal gender roles with a range of deviant behaviours. These behaviours can include clear independence from men, a free and unapologetic sexuality, or it can come from her involvement with the villain or “other” side, placing her in direct conflict with the hero’s mission. One of the key things that sets her apart from other enemies, and what allows her to be an alluring danger to the hero, is the fact that she often does not appear at first to be dangerous. Instead the femme uses her femininity to entice the hero into betrayal by exploiting him in the vulnerable and intimate area of sex.<sup>311</sup>

The stereotypes attached to women gain an additional layer when they are added to the depiction of spies as deceiving and cunning. For example, the media’s portrayal of Dutch exotic dancer Mata Hari played a key role in the construction of this trope even though her espionage career during the First World War only lasted a few months—between the late summer of 1916 and her arrest in February 1917. We can see it in the reports on her trial and execution and in the

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<sup>308</sup> Little; Ciar Byrne, “Project: Acoustic Kitty,” *The Guardian*, accessed May 21, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/11/worlddispatch>.

<sup>309</sup> “CIA Memorandum for: Views on Trained Cats” (March 1967), The National Security Archive, The George Washington University, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB54/st27.pdf>.

<sup>310</sup> For more on the trope of the femme fatale, see: Kirsten Smith, “Seduction and Sex: The Changing Allure of the Femme Fatale in Fact and Fiction,” *At the Interface / Probing the Boundaries*, no. 90 (September 2017): 37–52, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004350816\\_004](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004350816_004); Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Julie Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover: Mata Hari and the Myth of Women in Espionage* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992); Tammy M. Proctor, *Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War* (New York: New York University, 2003); Rosie White, *Violent Femmes: Women as Spies in Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>311</sup> Smith, “Seduction and Sex,” 37–38.

films and fictionalized accounts of her life.<sup>312</sup> In particular, a 1931 film starring Greta Garbo had Mata Hari's whole life revolve around men. The film emphasized how Hari's eventual death came about because of a jealous ex-lover and her refusal to give up or abandon her love for the Russian officer Alexis Rosanoff. Garbo's Mata Hari is portrayed as sexual and amoral until she discovers her true romantic feelings for Rosanoff.<sup>313</sup>



*Figure 21: Ramon Navarro as Alexis Rosanoff and Greta Garbo as Mata Hari*<sup>314</sup>

Second World War propaganda on both sides strengthened the understanding that female sexuality was particularly dangerous in periods of wartime or political upheaval.<sup>315</sup> British posters such as “Keep Mum, She’s Not So Dumb” and “Don’t Tell Aunty & Uncle or Cousin Jane” underlined the idea that female sexuality and gossip around it would undermine the war effort.

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<sup>312</sup> Melissa Dearey, Susana Nicolás, and Roger Davis, *Re-Visiting Female Evil: Power, Purity and Desire* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 39.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>314</sup> Source: Alex von Tunzelmann, “Mata Hari: The Partially Naked Truth about the Spook Hooper,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2014, sec. Film, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/20/reel-history-mata-hari-greta-garbo>. Photograph: Rex Features.

<sup>315</sup> Dearey, Nicolás, and Davis, 41.



Figure 22: “Keep Mum, She’s Not So Dumb”<sup>316</sup>

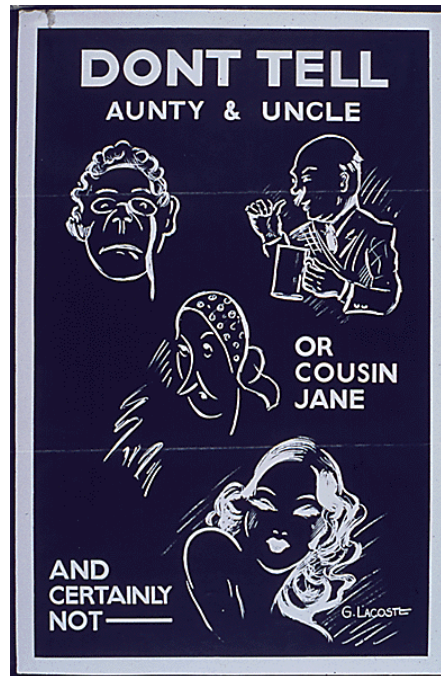


Figure 23: “Don’t Tell Aunty & Uncle or Cousin Jane”<sup>317</sup>

Women were depicted as Hollywood stars on these posters who, rather than doing their duty of working for their country and following wartime austerity rules, were more interested in dressing up in a glamorous way and leading expensive lifestyles.<sup>318</sup> This type of depiction of women can be found on all sides of the Second World War.

Yet there is a difference in the implications that this depiction of women has in the Fascist and Nazi context and in that of Vichy France. All the examples I have chosen fit the trope of the beautiful, treacherous woman—figures that elicited such a strong fascination that they ended up dominating the public interest and imaginary while the many more male informants and the Fascist

<sup>316</sup> Source: NARA, 44-PF-260, Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services, “World War II Posters, ‘Keep Mum - She’s Not So Dumb! - Careless Talk Costs Lives’” (1945 1942).

<sup>317</sup> Source: NARA, 44-PF-260, Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services, “World War II Posters, ‘Don’t Tell Aunty and Uncle or Cousin Jane’” (1945 1942).

<sup>318</sup> Dearey, Nicolás, and Davis, 41.

and Nazi officers for whom they worked were relegated to the side. Why focus on these cases if most spies were men? They signal a fundamental incoherence between Fascist and Nazi rhetoric and practice—an incoherence that these women identified and took advantage of.

This section of my dissertation about gender deals with outcasts: women and homosexuals who did not fit within the Fascist and Nazi understanding of who belonged to the dictatorships' frontlines and decision-making roles. Only "true" and "virile" men were allowed that position. Yet, these Fascist regimes appeared to allow informers and collaborators who did not correspond to this description as long as the latter served the former's cause.

Fascist and Nazi ideology and politics relegated women to the role of mothers and housewives. Women were supposed to be "the custodians of race, culture and sentiment."<sup>319</sup> Victoria De Grazia brilliantly summarizes Mussolini's plan: "The male purview was the public, and the man's voice articulated political sentiment; the female was the pillar of the household, and her voice expressed intimacy. Virility was publicized and glorified; femaleness was castigated and idealized."<sup>320</sup> Mussolini's plan did not really work the way it was supposed to, though, mainly because women were mobilized to sustain the state during the Second World War while the men were on the front lines. Women who lived in cities "filled the munitions industries and staffed government bureaucracies and commercial offices," while those who lived in rural areas worked on farms and tended to animals.<sup>321</sup>

The Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg expressed a similar view of women in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century*: "All deep thinkers have held the view that man is superior to woman in the spheres of research, invention and exploration, and in all creative work, whilst the value of woman

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<sup>319</sup> Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), xiii.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

is to preserve the blood and to propagate the race.”<sup>322</sup> He also wrote: “In times of catastrophe [...] the effeminate man and the emancipated woman arise as symbols of cultural and political decline. In spite of all freedom granted to women [...] the words of Aristotle still apply: ‘Lack of capacities makes woman a woman.’”<sup>323</sup>

Vichy France echoed the message. Marshal Pétain was convinced that women were responsible for the 1940 defeat because “the spirit of enjoyment prevailed over the spirit of sacrifice.”<sup>324</sup> French society had degenerated “through its feminization.”<sup>325</sup> Women were taking on a more active role outside the home due to the necessities of war yet the regime blamed them for unbalancing its perceived equilibrium of society. Women had too much freedom in the way they dressed. Gender roles would be dangerously blurred if women could “usurp” male duties. And finally, women had lost their “good values” by stepping away from the home and the Church, while their “natural destiny,” according to the regime, should have been motherhood and the transmission of morals. Therefore, women were guilty of treason against the nation, since they had deprived it of its children through a notable drop in the birth rate.<sup>326</sup> Pétain’s clerical, hierarchical, and authoritarian nationalism thus adopted the triad *work, family, patria* (*travail, famille, patrie*) as a slogan. The Vichy regime relegated women to the role of family procreators. This manifested, for instance, in two propaganda posters. The first one says: “The vain woman without children... has no place in the city... she is useless,”<sup>327</sup> whereas the second one states, “Motherhood makes a

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<sup>322</sup> Katherine Thomas, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Gollancz, 1943), 29.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Yannick Ripa, *Les femmes, actrices de l’histoire France, de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.3917/arco.ripa.2010.01>: “l’esprit de jouissance [qui] l’a emporté sur l’esprit de sacrifice.”

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> ADS, 1382W 36, “State Propaganda Concerning Women and Mothers,” accessed June 6, 2020, [http://www.savoie-archives.fr/archives73/expo\\_savoie\\_des\\_ombres/pano08/pages/04-01-PN\\_50-5.html](http://www.savoie-archives.fr/archives73/expo_savoie_des_ombres/pano08/pages/04-01-PN_50-5.html).

balanced woman.”<sup>328</sup>



Figure 24: “The vain woman without children... has no place in the city... she is useless...”



Figure 25: “Motherhood makes a balanced woman”

What do Bice Papeschi, Mathilde Carré, Margarete Kahane, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn, and Celeste Di Porto have in common? This chapter will specifically focus on these women’s lives, public portrayals, and trial records to investigate: (1) which life circumstances and motivations led them to become spies for the Fascist and Nazi regimes; (2) how their gender depiction is problematic and fits within the trope of the treacherous femme fatale; and (3) how, while working for the Fascists and the Nazis, these women still sometimes managed to subvert the gender roles that totalitarian regimes pre-assigned to them and highlighted the contradiction between the regimes’ propaganda and practice.

<sup>328</sup> Eric T. Jennings, “Discours corporatiste, propagande nataliste, et contrôle social sous Vichy,” *Revue d’histoire moderne contemporaine* vol. 49-4, no. 4 (2002): 101–31.

While these women subverted and betrayed the anti-fascist Resistance, they also resisted against and asserted their power over a male-dominated world. My previous work on women's involvement in the Resistance demonstrated that joining one of its networks was an independence claim for women; it was an occasion to exorcise the image of their passivity when faced with the incursion of a male occupation army, and to involve themselves in non-traditional activity which a patriarchal vision of their role would have forbidden them to undertake. The women who worked against the Resistance wanted to attain the same independence as men; their position called into question the unstable gender policies and morals of the totalitarian regimes they spied for.

No one has devoted a full-length biography to Bice Pupeschi, but her espionage activity is treated in Mimmo Franzinelli's *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*<sup>329</sup> and Mauro Canali's *Le spie del regime*.<sup>330</sup> The extensive documentation from her trial can additionally be found at the Rome State Archive.<sup>331</sup>

Much more material exists about Mathilde Carré. In 1959, she published her memoir titled *J'ai été "la Chatte"* (revised in 1975 as *On m'appelait "la Chatte"*).<sup>332</sup> Gordon Young wrote a biography of her in 1957;<sup>333</sup> Luran Paine published another one in 1976.<sup>334</sup> I rely on the 2018 biography published by intelligence historian David Tremain,<sup>335</sup> as well as on Ben Macintyre's account of the D-Day operation.<sup>336</sup> Carré's trial records can be found at the French National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine.<sup>337</sup>

Of the five women I will be discussing in this chapter, I have the least information about the

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<sup>329</sup> Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999).

<sup>330</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004).

<sup>331</sup> ASR, Corte D'Assise, Sezione Speciale, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi, 1946.

<sup>332</sup> Mathilde Carré, *On m'appelait "la Chatte"* (Paris: A. Michel, 1975).

<sup>333</sup> Gordon Young, *The Cat with Two Faces* (London: Putnam, 1957).

<sup>334</sup> Luran Paine, *Mathilde Carré, Double Agent* (London: Hale, 1976).

<sup>335</sup> David Tremain, *Double Agent Victoire: Mathilde Carré and the Interallié Network* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: History Press, 2018).

<sup>336</sup> Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* (New York: Crown, 2012).

<sup>337</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 696, Dossier 5374 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Mathilde Bélard, Widow Carré.

Austrian Margarete (Grete) Kahane. More attention is generally devoted to her lover, Kurt Koppel (alias “Konrad Hans Klaser”). Kahane is mentioned in Franz Weisz’s<sup>338</sup> and Hans Schafranek’s work<sup>339</sup> and Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer’s book about the Gestapo in Vienna.<sup>340</sup> Lambert Leutgeb, head of the intelligence department (*Nachrichtenreferat*) of the Vienna Gestapo, also listed her among the Gestapo spies. A copy of the undated 53-page transcript of Leutgeb’s interrogation (*Verhörprotokoll*) at his trial in front of the Belgrade military court is now available at the *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands* (DÖW) in Vienna; historian Thomas Mang found the original in the archives of the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>341</sup> Leutgeb starts his list with the “most successful” spy, Kurt Koppel; he lists Margarete Kahane right after. There is also a copy of the court proceedings against Kahane<sup>342</sup> and Koppel,<sup>343</sup> and other documents in which she and Koppel are mentioned, in the DÖW.<sup>344</sup>

The only full-length biography that exists of Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn was written by one of her school classmates—Jewish journalist Peter Wyden—who is not shy about his infatuation with her: “why was she willing to agree to this Faustian pact with Hitler? I had always wanted to find an explanation for the secret of this beauty, whom I had once worshipped.”<sup>345</sup> The information

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<sup>338</sup> Franz Weisz, “Die V-Männer der Gestapoleitstelle Wien: Organisation, Personalstruktur, Arbeitsweise,” *Zeitgeschichte* 6, no. 40 (2013): 338–57.

<sup>339</sup> Hans Schafranek, “V-Leute und ‘Verräter’. Die Unterwanderung kommunistischer Widerstandsgruppen durch Konfidenten der Wiener Gestapo,” *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 3 (2000): 300–349; *Widerstand und Verrat: Gestapospitzel im antifaschistischen Untergrund 1938-1945* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2017); “Wiener Gestapo-Spitzel im Umfeld sowjetischer Funk- und Fallschirmagenten und als Mitbegründer der 4. illegalen Inlandsleitung der KPÖ (1942),” *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 40, no. 6 (December 2013): 323–37.

<sup>340</sup> Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2018).

<sup>341</sup> DÖW, 51840, Lambert Leutgeb’s Verhörprotokoll.

<sup>342</sup> DÖW, 51790, Documents of the Procedure of Vienna’s Volksgericht or People’s Court against Grete Kahane.

<sup>343</sup> DÖW, 51789, Procedure of Vienna’s Volksgericht or People’s Court against Kurt Koppel; 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna’s Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People’s Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo Informer).

<sup>344</sup> DÖW, 21697, List of Gestapo Informers with Their Procedure Numbers of the Volksgericht (People’s Court)” (1948); 19808, Criminal Case of Vienna’s Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court against Gestapo Agent Rosa Friedl.

<sup>345</sup> Peter Wyden, *Stella* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 17.

provided in the biography, therefore, needs to be tested against the biased depiction of her character. Like Mathilde Carré, Stella's story fascinated public audiences and was even recently romanticized in a novel<sup>346</sup> and musical.<sup>347</sup> The novel by Takis Würger stirred significant public debate.<sup>348</sup> Reviewers found it an outrage to the memory of the Shoah ("Holocaust kitsch") and accused it of being "full of narrative clichés."<sup>349</sup> However, the extensive archival documentation about Stella and her court trials at the Landesarchiv,<sup>350</sup> the Bundesarchiv<sup>351</sup> in Berlin, and at the Stasi archive<sup>352</sup> remains largely unexplored.

As for Celeste Di Porto, no full-length biography exists. Her case is discussed in Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi's *Caino a Roma*<sup>353</sup> and Anna Foa's *Portico d'Ottavia 13*,<sup>354</sup> but only in the context of the Holocaust in Rome. Di Porto's trial records and other documentation about her can be found at the Central Archives of the State in Rome.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Takis Würger, *Stella: Roman* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2019).

<sup>347</sup> Wolfgang Böhmer and Peter Lund, "Stella," Neuköllner Oper Berlin, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.neukoellneroper.de/en/play/stella/>.

<sup>348</sup> "Novel Based on Jew 'Catcher' Stella Kübler Stirs Controversy," Deutsche Welle, January 16, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/novel-based-on-jew-catcher-stella-k%C3%BCbler-stirs-controversy/a-47092960>.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> The most relevant files from the court trials are in LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1854, Handakte Band 4, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1987; Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960; Box 1856, Band 5, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1972–1992; Box 2486, Band 2, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1957; Box 2487, Band 3, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1957–1963; Box 2487, Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler, married Schellenberg (1922–1994), 1956.

<sup>351</sup> BAB, DO/1/4060, Isaaksohn Born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid; BAB, Karteikarte 4/290/54, Isaaksohn Born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid (February 16, 1950).

<sup>352</sup> BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol.

<sup>353</sup> Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *Caino a Roma: I complici romani della Shoah* (Rome: Cooper, 2005).

<sup>354</sup> Anna Foa, *Portico d'Ottavia 13: Una casa del ghetto nel lungo inverno del '43* (Rome-Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2016).

<sup>355</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Riservati, Ctg B, Fascicoli Personali, Box 299, Porto (Di) Celeste of Sabatino; Ministero Interno, Gabinetto 1944-46, Box 304, Dossier 28859, Rome. Di Porto's Trial. Black Panther (September 19, 1946); Ministero Interno, Gabinetto 1944–46, Box 128, Dossier 11096, Di Porto Celeste (1945); Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Demografia e Razza, Divisione Razza, Fascicoli Personali, Box 83, Dossier 6285, Di Porto Giacomo, Son of Angelo (1939); Ministero Grazia e Giustizia, Gabinetto, Archivio Generale, Affari diversi per Min., Ministro Grassi, Box 13, Dossier 56, Rome. Popular Judges in the Trial of 'Pantera Nera' Celeste Di Porto and Others" (1947).

Celeste Di Porto's case is very similar to Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's so I chose to treat her last, since it did not make sense to associate her with Bice Papeschi. The two women never met and were not part of the same networks. Both Di Porto and Kübler-Isaaksohn were Jewish so they will come back in Chapter Six, specifically devoted to the Nazi and Fascist use of Jewish spies to have other members of the Jewish communities arrested and deported to concentration camps. Here I am only interested in looking at how their stories fit within the trope of the treacherous femme fatale.

### **The Head of an Army of Male Spies: Bice Papeschi**

Practically no information exists about Bice Papeschi's childhood. She was born in Florence in 1894. According to an article from her court trial file, she was the daughter of a luthier.<sup>356</sup> From here, all accounts fast-forward to the fact that she relocated to Rome and became a variety actress.



*Figure 26: Bice Papeschi*<sup>357</sup>

At just over 30, Bice Papeschi became the lover of the OVRA chief Arturo Bocchini.

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<sup>356</sup> Unsigned article from *Il Pubblico* n. 23, dated July 19, 1949, in ASR, Corte D'Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Papeschi.

<sup>357</sup> Source: Maria Bandini Buti, *Enciclopedia biografica e bibliografica italiana: poetesse e scrittrici* (Rome: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1942).

Pupeschi wrote in her own deposition that she was introduced to Bocchini in 1926<sup>358</sup> by another OVRA informer, Valerio Benuzzi, who operated under the pseudonym “Michele.”<sup>359</sup> According to Canali, Benuzzi acknowledged Pupeschi’s promising personality and her connections with some important political and business circles.<sup>360</sup> There is an interesting report about Pupeschi dated October 11, 1926 in the personal file of Rosario Javicoli, head of the Fascist Ministry of the Interior’s press office and the person who had recommended Benuzzi at the beginning of his espionage career:

Ms. Bice Pupes[ch]i, Italian of Polish origin and legally separated from her husband, the lawyer Monti, whom she married eight years ago, was recommended to me as a particularly suitable person for the intelligence service. I was able to get to know her and earn the platonic friendship of the said lady who during long interviews gave me an exact picture of her life and situation. For three years Ms. Pupes[ch]i was the mistress of the industrialist Doglio and then of Baron Ricciardi.<sup>361</sup>

Pupeschi, who had separated from her husband, learned to use her charm as an asset to forge valuable contacts with people from high society. The report also alleges that she worked in a brothel frequented by important political and financial personalities:

Now the lady confided in me that she had received the visit of a certain Mrs. Speranza who has a dating house in via del Babuino 164 frequented by people well known in the political and financial circles of the capital [...] Ms. Pupes[ch]i was urged to have a meeting in that house with Bosso. She did go because she now lives off of her capital, of which she has only 14,000 lire left.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Cf. Pupeschi’s handwritten deposition of April 13, 1946, to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “A rettifica del precedente interrogatorio chiarisco che conobbi il Bocchini per presentazione fatta da Benuzzi Valerio.”

<sup>359</sup> For Benuzzi, see also ACS, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per la Pubblicazione delle Liste dei Confidenti dell’OVRA (1946–1948), Box 11, OVRA – Added Lists – Decrees, Benuzzi, Pupeschi e Soncelli. Subinformers (1948 1946).

<sup>360</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 283.

<sup>361</sup> Unsigned report dated October 11, 1926, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 669, Rosario Javicoli’s dossier: “La signora Bice Pupes[ch]i, italiana di origine polacca e separata legalmente dall’avv. Monti a cui andò moglie otto anni or sono, mi venne indicata quale persona particolarmente adatta per il servizio informazioni. Riuscii a conoscerla e a guadagnarli l’amicizia platonica della detta signora che durante lunghissimi colloqui mi diede un esatto quadro della sua vita e della sua situazione. La signora Pupes[ch]i è stata per tre anni l’amante dell’industriale Doglio e poi del barone Ricciardi.”

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.: “Ora la signora mi confidò che era venuta da lei una certa signora Speranza che ha una casa di appuntamenti in via del Babuino 164 frequentata da persone molto note negli ambienti politici e finanziari della Capitale [...] La

Canali wrote that when he met Pupeschi, Benuzzi encouraged her to continue visiting the brothel to report on what she could gather from her occasional meetings there.<sup>363</sup> Later, Benuzzi introduced her to Bocchini, who became her lover. Pupeschi wrote in her deposition: “I became familiar with Bocchini and had frequent intimate relationships with him that would have ended with marriage if [my previous] marriage bond could be broken.”<sup>364</sup> She added that, at Bocchini’s request, she moved to an apartment in via Basento in Rome that Bocchini was already using as a meeting place for his spies: “I had to notice that the house, even before I occupied it, served as a meeting point for personalities who could not be seen in the Viminale [where the Ministry of Interior was located].”<sup>365</sup>

Bocchini did not particularly like to “share” Pupeschi with other men. The previously-cited article from her court trial file alleges that she had an affair with the union activist Baldassarre Londaro when she was sent to Egypt. Bocchini forgave her, but “not the employee, who became a rival in love. He sent him ‘for service’ to Brussels, where he mysteriously [was] stabbed in a hotel room.”<sup>366</sup> This story is corroborated by anti-fascist activist Ernesto Rossi’s testimony. An alternative version (credited by both a police assistant and some anarchist sources) says that Londaro was shot in Barcelona in the winter of 1936–37—after the Spanish Civil War broke out—

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signora Pupes[ch]i fu sollecitata ad avere un ritrovo in quella casa con Bosso. Ci andò dato ch’essa vive ormai del suo capitale, di cui non le rimangono che 14.000 lire.”

<sup>363</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 283.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. Pupeschi’s handwritten deposition of April 13, 1946, to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “Col Bocchini entrai in dimestichezza ed ebbi con lui frequenti rapporti anche intimi che dovevano concludersi col matrimonio se si fosse riusciti a sciogliere il vincolo matrimoniale..”

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.: “Stabilitami per volere di Bocchini in un appartamento in via Basento, dovei constatare che la casa, anche prima che io la occupassi, serviva come punto di convegno per personalità che non potevano farsi vedere in Viminale.”

<sup>366</sup> Unsigned article from *Il Pubblico* n. 23, dated July 19, 1949, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “Perdona alla femmina: non al dipendente, divenuto rivale in amore. Lo invidia “per servizio” a Bruxelles, dove si fa misteriosamente pugnalare in una camera d’albergo.”

because of a bitter conflict with the anarchist Gino Bibbi and an intricate currency smuggling arrangement.<sup>367</sup> Regardless of which story is true, Pupeschi remained unscathed. Her relationship with Bocchini made her very well-protected and granted her privileges and comfortable living conditions, first in the apartment in via Basento in Rome, and later in a luxury villa near Grottaferrata.<sup>368</sup>

Pupeschi transformed her relationship with Bocchini into a real espionage career. In 1927, she became the director of an army of spies—mostly men—who reported directly to her.

Her first step was to take advantage of the network of the man who had introduced her to the police chief. Benuzzi, in fact, originally had his own network of informers. However, he was accused of reporting false information; he was arrested in November 1926 and sentenced to police confinement for five years. The sentence was commuted to a two-year probation (*ammonizione*) on December 28, 1926.<sup>369</sup> Pupeschi was quick to take advantage of Benuzzi's downfall, and took command of his informers. Once Benuzzi was readmitted to the ranks of Fascist spies, Bocchini ordered Benuzzi to join Pupeschi's group. Their roles had reversed. In June 1928, Benuzzi was sent to Vienna with the task of creating an intelligence network reaching Yugoslavia and Hungary.<sup>370</sup>

Pupeschi mostly used the pseudonym "Diana" and the number 35. In her deposition, she wrote that sometimes when she went to the Viminale, she "was announced to Bocchini with the

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<sup>367</sup> See footnote 63 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 255.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 207.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

pseudonym of Bini and not Diana.”<sup>371</sup> She received a monthly allowance of 20,000 lire.<sup>372</sup> She operated an extensive network of informants (*subfiduciari*) who directly reported to her. In 1927, it included only five members; the following year, the network’s staff doubled to 40 members.<sup>373</sup> Pupeschi managed the network in an intelligent way; all of her informants’ reports were anonymously signed “35 bis.” This prevented the public exposure of most of her associates in the official list of OVRA informants published as an annex of the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* no. 145 of July 2, 1946.

There are many reports signed “35 bis” in the political police’s files at the Central Archives of the State in Rome. According to Franzinelli, Pupeschi’s group’s initial goal was to control Roman financial circles and infiltrate Slavic irredentists’ circles.<sup>374</sup> When the group’s workforce increased, “Diana” also hired several foreign collaborators. Her informants produced thousands of reports over the span of 15 years. Some of her associates also had an independent espionage career within the OVRA ranks.

Pupeschi inherited professor Vittorio Falorsi from Benuzzi’s group—one of the first informers that she hired—as early as 1928, who was paid a monthly allowance of 3,500 lire. A member of the Freemasonry, Falorsi was born in Florence in 1878, lived in Rome, and was

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<sup>371</sup> Cf. Pupeschi’s handwritten deposition of April 13, 1946, to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “mi facevo annunciare a Bocchini con lo pseudonimo di Bini e non Diana.”

<sup>372</sup> To get an idea of the purchasing power of 20,000 lire in 1927, we can use a converter from Luca Tremolada’s article of April 14, 2015: 20,000 lire would correspond to more than 16,700 euros (more than 18,600 US dollars) today. See Luca Tremolada, “‘Se potessi avere...’ Calcola il potere d’acquisto in lire ed euro con la macchina del tempo,” *Il Sole 24 ORE*, April 14, 2015, <https://www.infodata.ilssole24ore.com/2015/04/14/se-potessi-avere-calcola-il-potere-dacquisto-in-lire-ed-euro-con-la-macchina-del-tempo/>.

<sup>373</sup> ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: 31 of her associates are listed in a table dated April 8, 1946. See also footnote 62 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 254.

<sup>374</sup> See Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 256. Dalmatia was a strategic region during World War I that both Italy and Serbia intended to seize from Austria-Hungary. As a result., irredentists on both sides supported the unification of the region to either one state or the other. The coexistence between Italian and Slavic Dalmatians between the two wars was also difficult due to the effect of Italy–Yugoslavia relationships. A 1928 treaty between Italy and Yugoslavia to encourage the return of Italian refugees from Dalmatia was interpreted by the Slavic population as an affront and remained unfulfilled.

employed at the International Agriculture Office. He operated under the pseudonym of “Falroma,” reporting on his colleagues—especially those who appeared to be anti-fascists—and on the activity of foreign personalities and employees of various embassies.<sup>375</sup>

Pupeschi also hired another former Freemason member of the Loggia del Grande Oriente, Amerigo Bianchini (pseudonym “Bianco”), who was tasked with spying in the diplomatic sector. Canali wrote that Bianchini was an accountant and employed as a cashier by the Provincial Association of Professional and Artist Unions of Rome (Unione provinciale dei Sindacati Professionisti e Artisti di Roma).<sup>376</sup> According to Franzinelli, Bianchini received a monthly remuneration of 1,300 lire and prepared 1,286 reports, from 1931 to 1943.<sup>377</sup>

The geographical scope of Pupeschi’s network was remarkable. She received Giacomo Calabi’s (“Labica”) reports from Paris and London. Born in Turin in 1883, Calabi the coal merchant had been hired in August 1930 and was paid 1,300 lire a month. Julius Sachs<sup>378</sup> and Colonel Roler were in charge of reporting from Austria. Yet another group of informers—Benuzzi, Jacques Faber, and a previous informer of Benuzzi’s, Otene (or Ottone) Fröhlic<sup>379</sup>—monitored the situation in Yugoslavia and the anti-fascist movements in Istria.<sup>380</sup> Faber and Fröhlic relied heavily on Benuzzi. Faber, a Croatian merchant with a Hungarian father and a German mother residing in Rijeka, was hired as early as October 1927 and received a monthly salary of 2,000 lire

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<sup>375</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 476, Vittorio Falorsi’s dossier; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l’Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell’OVRA (1946–1949), Box 13, Dossier 225, Vittorio Falorsi. Falorsi tried to appeal against his inclusion in the official list of OVRA informers, arguing that he had limited himself to examining the foreign press, on behalf of Ms. Pupeschi (“essendosi egli limitato, su incarico della sig.ra Pupeschi, a esaminare la stampa estera”), but his appeal was rejected.

<sup>376</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 766. See footnote 841 for more information about Bianchini’s biography and collaboration with Pupeschi.

<sup>377</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 256.

<sup>378</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 208–9.

<sup>379</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 534, Ottone Froehlich’s dossier.

<sup>380</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 256–57.

supplemented by 5,000 lire as travel reimbursement. Faber was in an ideal position to monitor the situation in Yugoslavia because he had ties to the Yugoslav Interior Minister through business speculations. Fröhlic, also hired in October 1927, was a timber trader, but had a close relationship with the Ljubljana police headquarters.<sup>381</sup>

It was quite a challenge to follow all of these agents' activity and verify the reliability of their reports. Delivering false information got the agents in trouble. There were many incidents involving Benuzzi, such as when he was tasked with monitoring anti-fascist activity on the French Riviera.<sup>382</sup> In 1930 Benuzzi reported from Montecarlo to the General Directorate of the Fascist Public Security that he had unveiled a Freemason conspiracy to poison Mussolini. However, the investigations that followed did not find proof, raising suspicions that it was a hoax Benuzzi orchestrated himself to highlight the usefulness of his investigative service.<sup>383</sup>

Pupeschi also kept an eye on the foreign press circles through Luigi Boschetto and the marquis Nicola de Aldisio, aka "Aldi." Boschetto, born in Bologna in 1902 and residing in Rome, was a correspondent for *United Press*, a US news agency. Aldisio had originally been recruited as a direct informer of the Fascist police with the number 240 and was subsequently aggregated to Pupeschi's group. His lover, Maria Villani, was also an informer under the number 679.<sup>384</sup>

In the business world, Pupeschi had tasked two men with investigations into entrepreneurial speculations: the lawyer Michele del Chiaro (aka "Chiaro 35") and one of the most efficient spies of her group, Alfredo Montuschi. Montuschi, aka "Tuschi" or "Tanzi," was born in Faenza in 1880. He was living in Rome, where he worked as an accountant and banker. Pupeschi recruited him as early as 1928 to report on banks and financial circles. Montuschi worked in credit

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> See footnote 69 in Franzinelli, 256.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> See footnote 842 in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 766.

companies in Faenza, Schio, and Reggio Emilia. The bankruptcy of the Reggio Emilia bank, of which he was director, earned him an arrest warrant for fraudulent bankruptcy on February 23, 1929. Montuschi fled to France to escape capture, where he nonetheless continued to work diligently as a spy. This time, he worked as a direct informer with number 352, reporting comments critical of the Fascist regime's repressive apparatus and those on the public opinion's dissatisfaction with the economic situation.<sup>385</sup>

Pupeschi also handled the brothers Gino<sup>386</sup> and Silvio Galli,<sup>387</sup> who carried out their espionage activity in the city of Trieste. Gino, born in Rome in 1893, was a futurist painter. Bocchini had personally recruited him between 1929 and 1930 and assigned him to Pupeschi's group. Pupeschi wrote in her deposition that Gino Galli also made a portrait of Bocchini.<sup>388</sup> Galli was tasked with monitoring the problematic coexistence between Italians and Slavs in the Trieste area. Silvio, born in Rome in 1897, was an insurance employee. A member of the Roman Fascio since July 1919, he had been injured in clashes with political opponents. Director of the periodical *L'Italia Fascista*, Silvio collaborated with various other Fascist newspapers and spied on fellow workers registered in the National Fascist Party. Specialized in fomenting racism, he had even founded an esoteric sect (the Ordine dei fratelli d'Italia, later disavowed by the regime) and participated in two international anti-Jewish conferences in Germany in 1936–37, in addition to regularly publishing articles against the Jews in the press of the Fascist University Youth and on

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<sup>385</sup> Montuschi's reports can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia, 1927–1944, Box 168, Dossier 3, Special Courthouse (1932-1934). For more information, see also Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 257, and footnote 838 in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 766.

<sup>386</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 549, Gino Galli's dossier.

<sup>387</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 550, Silvio Galli's dossier.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. Pupeschi's handwritten deposition of April 13, 1946, to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism, in ASR, Corte D'Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi.

*Il Popolo di Trieste* under the pseudonym “Quinto Flavio.”<sup>389</sup>

This list shows that most of Pupeschi’s subordinates were men. The only woman we know of who worked for her went by the name Luba Lvova. She worked in Cinecittà as a make-up artist and was responsible for providing information on the anti-fascists gravitating towards the world of entertainment.<sup>390</sup> Her full name was actually Lubow Germanovitch and she was the widow of Giacomo Lvov, a theatrical impresario who had represented the American film house “Radio Pictures” in Italy and worked as an informer for the Fascist police.<sup>391</sup>

The crowning jewel of Pupeschi’s operation was the infiltration of the Vatican—a remarkable accomplishment, considering that the Church was among the least-infiltrated institutions by the Fascist police. The Fascist regime generally found people outside the Vatican to collect information on the Holy See.<sup>392</sup> Pupeschi actually managed to hire influential prelates and create a network of spies who reported directly to her from within the Vatican. We will see how this network operated in Chapter Five.

The contents of Pupeschi’s personal file were leaked to the press in the spring of 1946. The media, however, concentrated on her relationship with the police chief, while the intelligence structure that she had built remained mostly in the darkness. Police officers also had a hard time wrapping their heads around the fact that she had been giving orders to men. This is evident, for example, from the letter that Marshal Ciro Casaretti sent to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism on March 31, 1945:

Pupeschi Bice, Bocchini’s lover, posed as a writer and poet. Of Romanian origin, beautiful, shapely, brunette, of tall stature, she was the group leader for information regarding anti-fascist speeches and actions.

Pupeschi had hired fifty ladies, married (“signore”) and unmarried (“signorine”), either of

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<sup>389</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 258. Franzinelli spells her name as Suba Svov.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> See footnote 843 in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 766–67.

<sup>392</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 260.

the upper class or employees of banks, insurance companies, and various firms, who had the opportunity to start political discussions.

Through this organization Pupeschi denounced the anti-fascists, many of whom were imprisoned or sent to “confino.”<sup>393</sup>

Apart from the physical description at the beginning—unnecessary for the purposes of prosecution—Marshal Casaretti alleges that Pupeschi had hired only women (*signore* and *signorine*).

Incarcerated in the Roman prison of the Mantellate, Pupeschi was interrogated in mid-April 1946 in the context of OVRA investigations which ended inconclusively shortly thereafter with no major arrests. She did not deny her relationship with Bocchini but understated the work that she had done for the Fascist secret police. In her deposition, she wrote that she “never forwarded any written information” and that she “limited [herself], during the conferences with Bocchini, to giving him the news that [she] thought might interest him,” specifying that such news “did not concern specific individuals, but systems and abuses committed in the various offices.”<sup>394</sup>

The press focused on the gossipy details of Pupeschi’s liaison with the police chief and, for the most part, did not cover her espionage activities. Her lawyers, Mr. Giovannini and Mr. Melucco, also took advantage of the gender stereotypes. They made it look like Pupeschi had very little agency, had been subjugated by Bocchini, and obeyed his orders because she was sick and had to provide for a small child:

Bocchini took advantage of her so that some informers’ reports could arrive in her home. In

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<sup>393</sup> Letter of Marshal Ciro Casaretti to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism, dated March 31, 1945, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “Pupeschi Bice, amante di Bocchini, si atteggiava a scrittrice e poetessa. Di origine romena, bella, formosa, bruna, di statura alta, era capogruppo per informazioni riguardanti i discorsi e le azioni antifasciste.

La Pupeschi aveva ingaggiato per il suo gruppo una cinquantina di signore e signorine o appartenenti all’alto ceto o impiegate di banche, di società di assicurazione e ditte diverse, che avevano occasione di intavolare discorsi politici. Mediante tale organizzazione la Pupeschi denunciava gli antifascisti, molti dei quali furono imprigionati o confinati.”

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Pupeschi’s handwritten deposition of April 13, 1946, to the High Commissioner for Sanctions Against Fascism, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “Io non ho mai rinviato informazioni scritte, e mi limitavo, durante i convegni con Bocchini, a dargli quelle notizie che ritenevo potessero interessargli. Le mie notizie però non riguardavano persone singole, ma sistemi ed abusi commessi nei vari uffici.”

that house where he was the lover and at the same time the police chief, this information was delivered to him.

How Pupeschi could submit herself to this could be the subject of a painful, however human, story.

Young, with a little girl, separated from her husband, sick, the woman suffered from a lung injury and is still suffering and hospitalized in the prison infirmary—she did not live the easy and shiny life that the large public of the sensationalist gazettes likes to imagine—but a hard path that led her to dishonor and prison.<sup>395</sup>

### **The Most Remarkable Woman Spy since Mata Hari, According to... Herself:**

#### **Mathilde Carré**

We know much more about Mathilde Carré than about Bice Pupeschi. Born on June 30, 1908 (née Béliard) in Le Creusot, Saône-et-Loire, France, Carré was the daughter of a draftsman.<sup>396</sup> Her parents were bourgeois—so her beginnings may have been less humble than Pupeschi’s—but Tremain wrote that “her parents had a very active social life, so she was forced to live a sheltered life under the care of her maternal grandfather and two 35-year-old maiden aunts.”<sup>397</sup> It sounds like she did not enjoy their company; she called one of the aunts “the Sad One” complaining that “she never laughed” and “only preached morality, modesty, virtue, duty, devotion and self-sacrifice”.<sup>398</sup> This experience was probably a contributing factor in Carré’s desire to emancipate herself and lead a very different kind of life.

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<sup>395</sup> Cf. Letter from Bice Pupeschi’s lawyers, Mr. Giovannini and Mr. Melucco, to the Attorney General at the Court of Appeal of Rome, undated, in ASR, Corte D’Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, Bice Pupeschi: “Di lei il Bocchini si servì perché nella sua casa pervenissero talune informazioni di confidenti. Nella sua casa dove egli era l’amante e a un tempo il capo della polizia tali informazioni gli venivano consegnate. Come la Pupeschi sia potuta giungere a questo, potrebbe costituire il soggetto di una dolorosa, per quanto umana, vicenda. Giovane, con una bambina in tenera età, divisa dal marito, malata, la donna ha sofferto di una lesione polmonare ed è tuttora sofferente e ricoverata nell’infermeria del carcere – essa ha percorso non la vita facile e brillante che il grosso pubblico delle gazzette scandalistiche ama rappresentarsi – ma un duro cammino che l’ha condotta al disonore e al carcere.”

<sup>396</sup> Tremain, *Double Agent Victoire*, 21.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*



*Figure 27: Mathilde Carré*<sup>399</sup>

Sources allege that Carré was not a particularly bright student in her youth.<sup>400</sup> In spite of her alleged low academic record, she enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the Sorbonne in the 1930s.<sup>401</sup> While working as a substitute teacher in a small school in Montmartre in May 1932, she met another teacher by the name of Maurice Henri-Claude Carré.<sup>402</sup> Her parents did not approve of the relationship: Maurice Carré was poor and came from a lower class than Mathilde's. Nevertheless, the two married on May 18, 1933 and moved to Oran, in Algeria, where Maurice had obtained a teaching post.<sup>403</sup>

The marriage was not a happy one. In the MI5 documentation, Mathilde is said to have had many extramarital affairs. In the meantime, Maurice had grown tired of teaching and moved on to a military career. When World War II broke out, however, he did not want to take an active part

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<sup>399</sup> Source: <https://alanmalcher.com/2021/01/01/double-agent-victoire-mathilde-carre-and-the-interallie-network/>.

<sup>400</sup> Tremain, 22.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Tremain, 23.

in it, and therefore refused an assignment on the Western Front and instead opted for a post of staff officer in Beirut.<sup>404</sup> Mathilde learned from her mother-in-law that childhood mumps had left Maurice impotent. She also learned that Maurice had lied about the circumstances of his father's death; he had apparently died in a lunatic asylum, and not during the First World War as Maurice had claimed.<sup>405</sup> Therefore, Mathilde decided to leave Maurice and return to Paris where she chose to work as a nurse, offering herself as a volunteer for the Red Cross. She was assigned to a hospital near the Maginot line, but because of the events leading up to the French capitulation, she was forced to move several times while hospitals were evacuated due to the German army's advance.

Macintyre wrote that "in 1941, the *Interallié* was the most important spy network in Nazi-occupied France"<sup>406</sup> and, although it included many informers and agents, it was mostly the creation of Roman Garby-Czerniawski. Macintyre described him as a "Polish patriot. [...] He lived for Poland and was perfectly prepared (at times almost anxious) to die for it."<sup>407</sup> Trained as a pilot, "a serious crash had left him partially sighted and deskbound [...] at air force headquarters in Warsaw."<sup>408</sup> When the Nazis invaded Poland, Garby-Czerniawski escaped to Romania and then to France, where "he persuaded a young French widow, Renée Borni," who was later to find herself as co-defendant in Carré's trial, "to lend him her late husband [Armand Borni]'s identity."<sup>409</sup>

Czerniawski moved to the unoccupied zone in southern France, made contact with the Polish secret service, and obtained formal approval for his plan to establish a Resistance network there. On the night of June 22, 1940 having dinner at a restaurant in Toulouse named La Frégate, "a young woman asked if she might occupy the empty seat at his table."<sup>410</sup> That woman was Mathilde

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Macintyre, *Double Cross*, 11.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

Carré. Three weeks after their first meeting, Czerniawski told Carré about his intention to create an anti-Nazi espionage network which would later become the *Interallié* network. The network was officially born on November 18, 1940. Carré agreed to be part of it and would take on a very important role of *chief recruiter*.<sup>411</sup> Her nickname “The Cat” came from the fact that she always began her messages with “The cat reports....”<sup>412</sup> The network would greatly expand from the first recruits. In Carré’s court trial file, the exposé on the reasons for her conviction states that the network “had become an invaluable source of information for the London War Office.”<sup>413</sup> The *Interallié* agents managed to smuggle a wireless transmitter across the border from Vichy France to send and receive coded messages and hide it “in a top-floor flat near the Trocadéro” in Paris. Renée Borni (alias “Violette”), “the widow who had furnished Czerniawski’s false identity,” was tasked with coding and decoding the messages.<sup>414</sup> By the middle of 1941, the *Interallié* agents were able to add three more underground wireless stations.

Soon, however, the Nazi Abwehrstelle of Paris St Germain, under sergeant Hugo Bleicher’s oversight, discovered *Interallié*. Roman Garby-Czerniawski and Renée Borni were arrested on November 18, 1941. Six hours later, Mathilde Carré was arrested too.<sup>415</sup>

The *Interallié* case was Bleicher’s first big case.<sup>416</sup> He later told his MI5 interrogators that “when she was arrested, VICTOIRE (Carré) had immediately demanded to see ‘Le Chef’ (Bleicher) and had been willing to give up the names of everyone in the organization even before

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>412</sup> I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot, “Carré, Mathilde,” in *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), accessed April 20, 2021, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198604464.001.0001/acref-9780198604464-e-314>.

<sup>413</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 696, Dossier 5374 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Mathilde Bélard, Widow Carré, Exposé: “elle était devenue une source de renseignements d’une valeur inappréciable pour le « War office » de Londres.”

<sup>414</sup> Macintyre, 16.

<sup>415</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 696, Dossier 5374 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Mathilde Bélard, Widow Carré, Exposé.

<sup>416</sup> Tremain, 118.

they had discussed any terms.”<sup>417</sup> Bleicher brought Mathilde home to keep her under surveillance. They become lovers, and she helped him arrest all the network’s members. The Nazis also kept Borni since she was very good at enciphering.



*Figure 28: Hugo Bleicher*<sup>418</sup>

Carré’s collaboration with the Abwehr was disastrous not only for *Interallié* but also for the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Carré knew everything: “the locations of the four *Interallié* wireless stations, their transmitting schedules, codes, and the hidden security checks placed in the texts of messages.”<sup>419</sup> Her knowledge allowed the Abwehr to deceive British intelligence and obtain a constant stream of valuable information.

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> Source: <https://historycollection.com/this-housewife-became-world-war-iis-highly-decorated-spy/16/>.

<sup>419</sup> Jeffery T. Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 128.

Everything proceeded according to Bleicher's plans until a French Resistance member named Edouard Pierre Fourier De Crevoisier de Vomécourt with the code name "Lucas" parachuted into the area to train other members of the French Resistance and came into contact with Carré. According to Tremain, de Vomécourt's network "served to distract the Germans from *Interallié*."<sup>420</sup> The circumstances of Carré's meeting with de Vomécourt are not exactly clear, but he pressured her into betraying the Abwehr and going back to the Resistance's side. Whether she really did is hard to know.



*Figure 29: Edouard Pierre Fourier De Crevoisier de Vomécourt*<sup>421</sup>

In the night between 27 and 28 February 1942, thanks to a plan drawn up by "Lucas," he and Carré managed to return to London under the Nazis' apparent "protection," as they were convinced that Carré was still working for them. In fact, "Lucas" had told "the Cat" to convince her Nazi lover that this whole operation would go to their advantage. She was supposed to lead the Nazis to believe that Carré would help them arrest "Lucas" upon their return to France and replace

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<sup>420</sup> Tremain, 136.

<sup>421</sup> Source: <https://alanmalcher.com/2021/01/01/double-agent-victoire-mathilde-carre-and-the-interallie-network/>

him with a Gestapo agent. She could then warn London that “Lucas” had been arrested, claim that one of the Resistance’s main leaders had escaped the raid, and explain that she intended to come to England with him to organize the Resistance movement’s reconstruction. She would then return to England with a Gestapo agent who would be accredited there. The Gestapo found this plan very appealing since their goal was to establish a London branch to facilitate the coming and going of alleged leaders of the Resistance that were in fact Gestapo agents. The ambiguity of Carré’s position is evident in de Vomécourt’s statement in which he details the plan to fool the Gestapo as to Carré’s trip to London:

In the meantime, I had told VICTOIRE [Carré’s alias] to tell the Germans that I had offered to take her to England with me, and that she should use all her skills to make this solution acceptable to the Gestapo. She obviously had to come back with me when I returned to France. After a few days of hesitation, BLEICHER replied that after a lot of delays, he had decided to let her go to England with me, and that it was a big risk because one should not underestimate the Intelligence Service. She would be questioned very closely about the Polish affair, but she was thought to be skilled enough to get out of this interrogation victoriously, especially since she was being asked to do nothing in England that would compromise her. All she had to do would be to go with me, to be received and recognized as VICTOIRE, succeeding ARMAND, to be sponsored by me (LUCAS) and to return with me quietly. Upon my return, after I had met the leaders of the Resistance and been arrested, she would receive the Iron Cross [a German military decoration]. She would warn London that I had been arrested, but that one of the main leaders of the Resistance had escaped the raid and that she intended to come to England with him to organize the reconstruction of the Resistance movement. She would return to England with an agent provided by the Gestapo who would be accredited there, being introduced by her. The Gestapo would then have managed to establish a branch and a coming and going of alleged leaders of the Resistance that in reality were agents of the Gestapo.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 696, Dossier 5374 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Mathilde Bélard, Widow Carré, Compte rendu de Pierre de Vomécourt, page 6: “Entretemps j’avais dit à VICTOIRE de dire aux Allemands que je lui avais proposé de l’emmener avec moi en Angleterre et qu’elle déploie toute son habileté pour faire accepter cette solution à la Gestapo. Elle devait évidemment rentrer avec moi à mon retour en France. Au bout de quelques jours d’hésitation BLEICHER lui répondit que, après beaucoup d’atermoiements, il avait décidé de la laisser aller en Angleterre avec moi, que c’était un gros risque car il ne fallait pas sous-estimer l’Intelligence Service. Elle serait questionnée de très près sur l’affaire polonaise, mais on la croyait assez habile pour se tirer victorieusement de cet interrogatoire, surtout qu’on lui demandait de ne rien faire en Angleterre qui soit compromettent. Tout ce qu’elle avait à faire serait d’y aller avec moi, de se faire recevoir et reconnaître comme VICTOIRE, succédant à ARMAND, se faire également patronner par moi (LUCAS) et de revenir avec moi tranquillement. Lorsqu’à mon retour je ferais la réunion des chefs de la Résistance et que j’aurais été arrêté elle aurait la Croix de Fer. Elle préviendrait Londres que j’avais été arrêté, mais que l’un des principaux chefs de la Résistance avait échappé à la rafle et qu’elle se proposait de venir en Angleterre avec lui afin d’étudier la reconstruction du mouvement de Résistance. Elle retournerait en Angleterre avec un agent fourni par la Gestapo et

Bleicher had accepted the proposal with suspicion but was indeed enthusiastic about the possibility of infiltrating British intelligence through Carré.

This plan's success could have been Carré's ultimate emancipation. When she first met Lucas, she realized that this was her chance to leave the Germans behind for good: "I was delighted. Lucas would be my revenge."<sup>423</sup> Too bad "Lucas" was arrested instead on a April 25, 1942 mission after returning to France. The British thought that the Abwehr had discovered "the Cat's" triple game and that she had betrayed the Resistance yet again. She was arrested on July 1 and kept in detention at the French government's request. She ended up spending three years in prison, at which point the Nazis even destroyed her file as they had no more news of her.

After the end of the Second World War, Carré was deported to France together with Renée Borni, where she faced charges for treason. The prosecution used her diary to paint her as a sociopathic woman of easy virtue, stressing her entry about what she wanted before her execution: "To have a good dinner, spend the night in bed with a friend—and then hear the Requiem of Mozart."<sup>424</sup> The accusations levied against her were harsher than those against Borni:

Upon their arrest, these two women agreed to serve the enemy. Without being the object of the slightest violence, they allowed a German Hugo BLEICHER to completely destroy the *Interallié* network, of which almost all the members were arrested. In this work of annihilation, the named BELARD alias "The Cat" played the main role in which she was seriously engaged. For two months she served the German BLEICHER, of whom she became the mistress the day after her arrest, with an intelligence and zeal equal to that which she had used to assist Captain CZERNIAWSKY. Then, following a second betrayal, as sudden as the first, she succeeded, by playing the triple game, to deceive the confidence that the Germans had put in her and to gain London in the company of Pierre de VOMECOURT leader of a network which she had infiltrated in complete agreement with BLEICHER.<sup>425</sup>

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qui serait agréé là-bas, étant présenté par elle. La Gestapo aurait alors réussi à établir un courant et un va-et-vient de prétendus chefs de la Résistance n'étant autres que des agents de la Gestapo."

<sup>423</sup> Tremain, 159.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>425</sup> AN, Series Z6, Box 696, Dossier 5374 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Mathilde Bélard, Widow Carré, Exposé: "Dès leur arrestation ces deux femmes ont accepté de servir l'ennemi. Sans être l'objet de la moindre violence elles ont permis à un allemand Hugo BLEICHER de détruire totalement le réseau Interallié dont presque tous les membres furent arrêtés. Dans cette œuvre d'anéantissement la

The trial ended on January 7, 1949 with a death sentence, the sentence was commuted to 20 years in jail three months later. Carré was released in September 1954.

A “whore, traitor, a liar, a killer and, most of all, an ingenious spy.”<sup>426</sup> A “dangerous nymphomaniac.”<sup>427</sup> “A woman possessed of a tremendous sexual motivation, and from this... came her unreasoning periods of violent jealousy.”<sup>428</sup> “Fundamentally vicious, spiteful and amoral.”<sup>429</sup> “Utterly egotistical ... who cares for nothing and nobody but herself and her own well [being?] and pleasures... very lazy and will only do what amuses her.”<sup>430</sup> These are only some of the ways Carré was described by her biographers, in MI5 reports, and at her trial. Like Papeschi, Carré did not seem to mind too much and quite enjoyed being at the center of the limelight. She also ended up describing herself in her own words. In 1959, she published a memoir titled *J’ai été “la Chatte”* (*I was “the Cat”*; revised in 1975 as *On m’appelait “la Chatte”*; *They called me “The Cat”*)<sup>431</sup> in which she denied many claims made about her double game during the war. Her autobiography’s subtitle was “The Truth about the Most Remarkable Woman Spy since Mata Hari – by herself”—a nod to the other spy who best embodied the trope of the femme fatale.<sup>432</sup>

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nommé BELARD alias « La chatte » a tenu le rôle principal engageant très gravement sa responsabilité. Pendant deux mois elle a servi l’allemand BLEICHER, dont elle est devenu la maitresse dès le lendemain de son arrestation, avec une intelligence et une ardeur égales à celles qu’elle avait mis en œuvre pour seconder le Capitaine CZERNIAWSKY. Puis à la suite d’une deuxième volte-face, aussi subite que la première, elle a réussi, en jouant le triple jeu, à tromper la confiance que les allemands avaient mis en elle et à gagner Londres en compagnie de Pierre de VOMECOURT chef d’un réseau au sein duquel elle s’était infiltrée en complet accord avec BLEICHER.”

<sup>426</sup> Tremain, 25. The source is Carré’s biographer Gordon Young.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. The source is an unnamed witness at her trial.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. The source is a recent short biography of Mathilde in a chapter of *The Women who Spied for Britain*.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. The source is a MI5 report.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 26. The source is the report of Mrs. S. (Susan) Barton of MI5 to John Marriot of the Double-Cross Committee, dated May 1942, and included in one of Mathilde’s MI5 files.

<sup>431</sup> Carré, *On m’appelait “la Chatte.”*

<sup>432</sup> Tremain, 33.

### In Love with Mephisto: Margarete Kahane

As with Pupeschi, we have little information about Margarete Kahane's childhood. She was born in Vienna on June 10, 1917. Schafranek wrote that, according to the Nuremberg Race Laws, she was "Mischling 1. Grades" (mixed race of the first degree).<sup>433</sup> An illegitimate child, her parents separated soon after her birth. She received the last name Kahane from her mother's Jewish husband. Her biological father was deported to Kielce and murdered there on February 12, 1941.<sup>434</sup>

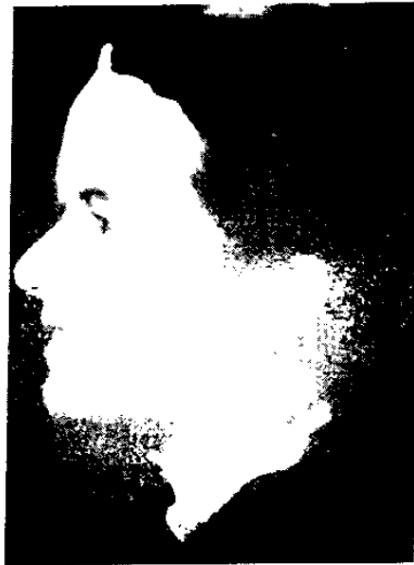


Figure 30: Margarete Kahane<sup>435</sup>

Kahane joined the *Sozialistische Arbeiter-Jugend* (SAJ), a socialist youth association, at a very early age. After 1934, she became a member of the Communist Youth of Austria [*Kommunistischer Jugendverband Österreich* or KJVO]. Austrian Resistance member Franz Danimann, who was also working for the Communist Youth at the time, testified to this. He said that Kahane was using the code name "Fritzi" at the time.<sup>436</sup> *She continued to work for the*

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<sup>433</sup> Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat*, 412.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Cf. Franz Danimann's transcript, Polizeidirektion Wien, Abteilung I, Vienna, February 22, 1949, in DÖW, 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna's Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People's Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo)

*Communist Youth until the Anschluss—the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany—on March 12, 1938.*<sup>437</sup>

It is unclear exactly when Kahane met Kurt Koppel for the first time. Schafranek wrote that she took part in a 1937 conference of the Communist Youth in Prague; she must have met Koppel at that time, but then lost sight of him again.<sup>438</sup> Koppel was himself an official of the Communist Youth and of the Austrian Communist Party, but unfortunately also one of the Viennese Gestapo's most formidable spies.

After the Anschluss, Kahane was arrested and interrogated by Lambert Leutgeb, head of the intelligence section of the Austrian Gestapo.



*Figure 31: Lambert Leutgeb*<sup>439</sup>

Weisz writes that Leutgeb threatened to deport Kahane to a concentration camp, so she declared

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Informer): “Die Grete Kahane kenne ich seit dem Jahre 1935 aus meiner Tätigkeit im Kommunistischen Jugendverband und ich arbeitete mit ihr bis zum Jahre 1938 zusammen. Kahane verwendete damals den Decknamen „Fritzi“.”

<sup>437</sup> Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat*, 413.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Source: <https://www.doew.at/english/memorial-room-for-the-victims-of-the-gestapo-vienna/persecution-and-suppression-of-organized-resistance>. The photo is taken from the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Series Staatspolizeileistelle Wien, AS 1931/811 104 – 72/ZA.

herself ready to infiltrate newly-formed Communist Youth groups under the code name “Sonja” and denounce them to the Gestapo. Koppel was placed beside her as a “guardian.”<sup>440</sup> The question that is hard to answer for certain is whether Kahane was aware from the beginning that “Sonja” would have been working for the Gestapo, or if Koppel managed to make it look as if he had somehow rescued her from the Gestapo and she could go back to work for the Communist Youth with no strings attached.

Schafranek included an excerpt of her own account in Kahane’s biography, where she presents the facts in a tragic tone:

[I] had to recognize in the further course of events that K[oppel] is a Gestapo agent hidden under the mask of the illegal party official. K. wanted to hide this from me for as long as possible, because he had to expect that I might endanger his work. When it was no longer possible to hide it, K. pointed out to me that if I did anything against him, I would have to pay for it with my life. The whole tragedy of my situation and that of the party was now clear to me. [...] I see that there was only one way out at the time: to kill K. [...] but this thought never came to fruition. K. forced me to continue working under his control in the party and suggested that I come to terms with the facts. The person in whom I believed that all my ideals were united and to whom I looked up as a role model and teacher and whom I loved as a woman suddenly stood before me [...] like a Mephisto in human form.<sup>441</sup>

The report contained in the court trial file of Vienna’s *Landesgericht* against Koppel seems to validate this version. It mentions that Kahane shared this story with her friends in 1945, saying that she got to know Koppel in 1938 and fell in love with him, but learned only in 1940 through various circumstances that he had already been working for many years as an agent provocateur

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<sup>440</sup> Weisz, “Die V-Männer der Gestapoleitstelle Wien: Organisation, Personalstruktur, Arbeitsweise,” 342.

<sup>441</sup> Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat*, 414: “[Ich] musste im weiteren Verlauf der Dinge erkennen, dass K. ein unter dem Deckmantel des illegalen Parteifunktionärs versteckter Gestapoagent ist. K. wollte dies vor mir möglichst lange verbergen, da er damit rechnen musste, dass ich eventuell seine Tätigkeit gefährden könnte. Als es nun aber doch nicht mehr zu verbergen war, machte mich K. darauf aufmerksam, dass ich im Falle ich irgendetwas gegen ihn unternehmen würde, mit meinem Leben dafür bezahlen müsse. Mir war nun die ganze Tragik meiner Lage und die der Partei klar [...] heute erkenne ich, dass es damals nur einen Ausweg gegeben hätte: K. zu töten [...] aber es kam nie zur Durchführung dieses Gedankens. K. zwang mich, weiter unter seiner Kontrolle in der Partei zu arbeiten und legte mir nahe, mich mit den Tatsachen abzufinden. – Der Mensch, in dem alle meine Ideale vereinigt glaubte und zu dem ich als Vorbild und Lehrer aufschaute und den ich als Frau geliebt habe, stand plötzlich (...) wie ein Mephisto in Menschengestalt vor mir.”

for the Gestapo: “She allegedly intended, together with another friend, to get rid of Koppel, but could not make up her mind.”<sup>442</sup> The report states that “after protracted resistance, she agreed to work with the Gestapo and subsequently reported either to Koppel or directly to the senior officer of the intelligence section of the Gestapo in Vienna, Leutgeb.”<sup>443</sup>

Kahane and Koppel’s successes for the Gestapo were remarkable. According to Schafranek, they were responsible for as many as 800 of the Gestapo’s victims.<sup>444</sup> The report contained in the court trial file of Vienna’s *Landesgericht* against Koppel mentions some of their victims’ names:

The Gestapo arrested several hundred people, mainly Resistance fighters from the ranks of the Communist Youth Association and the Communist Party, as a result of the activities of the two above-mentioned persons [Koppel and Kahane], and the majority of them were executed. It is alleged that due to the activities of the two the following people were also arrested by the Gestapo and later sentenced to death by a court judgment: Leo Gabler, Puschmann, Leopold Steurer, Franz Sebek, Leopold Fischer, Friedl Hartmann, Trude Müller, Emil Homolka, Fritz Lachnik, Poldi Kowarik, Walter Schopf, Walter Kempf, Anni Gräf, Poldi Sika, Erna Diwisch, Toni Kellner, Franz Reingruber, Brothers Glöckner, Anni Wallner, Alfred Rabowsky, Fernd Oppieh, Alfred Imreich, Josef Hempel, Erich Gittler, Franz Beier, Wilhel, Fury and many others.<sup>445</sup>

Kahane, using one of her aliases “Sonja,” “Olga,” or “Maid,” assisted Koppel in the

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<sup>442</sup> Cf. Report about Kurt Koppel and Margarete Kahane, Polizeidirektion Wien, Abteilung I, Vienna, January 18, 1949, in DÖW, 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna’s Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People’s Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo Informer): “Sie hat angeblich beabsichtigt, gemeinsam mit einer anderen Freundin, Koppel zu beseitigen, konnte sich aber dazu nicht entschliessen.”

<sup>443</sup> Cf. Report about Kurt Koppel and Margarete Kahane, Polizeidirektion Wien, Abteilung I, Vienna, January 18, 1949, in DÖW, 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna’s Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People’s Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo Informer): “[...] willigte nach längerem Widerstand zur Mitarbeit bei der Gestapo ein und hat in der Folge Berichte entweder an Koppel oder direkt an der leitenden Beamten des Nachrichten-Referates (N-Referat) bei der Wiener Gestapo, Leutgeb, übermittelt.”

<sup>444</sup> “Verräter und politisches Werkzeug,” *Der Standard*, February 10, 2009, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/1234261210054/geschichte-verraeter-und-politisches-werkzeug>.

<sup>445</sup> Cf. Report about Kurt Koppel and Margarete Kahane, Polizeidirektion Wien, Abteilung I, Vienna, January 18, 1949, in DÖW, 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna’s Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People’s Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo Informer): “Durch die Tätigkeit der beiden Oberwähnten wurden mehrerer hundert Personen, vor allem Widerstandskämpfer aus den Reihen des kommunistischen Jugendverbands und der Kommunistischen Partei von der Gestapo verhaftet, und in der Mehrzahl hingerichtet. Es wird behauptet, dass auf Grund der Tätigkeit der beiden u.a. auch folgende Personen von der Gestapo verhaftet und später, durch ein Vorgerichtsurteil zum Tode verurteilt, hingerichtet wurden:

Leo Gabler, Puschmann, Leopold Steurer, Franz Sebek, Leopold Fischer, Friedl Hartmann, Trude Müller, Emil Homolka, Fritz Lachnik, Poldi Kowarik, Walter Schopf, Walter Kempf, Anni Gräf, Poldi Sika, Erna Diwisch, Toni Kellner, Franz Reingruber, Gebrüder Glöckner, Anni Wallner, Alfred Rabowsky, Fernd Oppieh, Alfred Imreich, Josef Hempel, Erich Gittler, Franz Beier, Wilhel, Fury u.a.m.”

infiltration of the Austrian Communist Party's management ranks. Schafranek noted that the Communist Youth's infiltration (probably from the beginning of 1941 or even earlier) as well as the liquidation of the fourth illegal leadership of the Austrian Communist Party (July 1942) were largely Kahane's own work.<sup>446</sup> However, the historian finds it credible that Koppel deceived or maybe even blackmailed Kahane in the beginning by Koppel, and this would result in a rift between the two.<sup>447</sup>

Austrian Resistance member Danimann, who used to work with Kahane in the Communist Youth and was deported to Auschwitz, recounts what fellow Resistance member Leo Gabler told him while they were both detained in the Rossauerlände police prison. Gabler attributed significant responsibility to Kahane:

After March 1938, Kahane was arrested by the Gestapo and subsequently released from the organization. I intended to "reactivate" Kahane [as a Communist agent], which I was no longer able to do and from then on, I had no contact with her. It was only when I was transferred from Auschwitz to Vienna for a trial in 1943 that I heard about Grete Kahane in a community cell of the Rossauerlände police prison. In this cell was Leo Gabler, whom National Socialist justice would later sentence to death and execute, who had been imprisoned there for two years, and who told me that Kahane had become a Gestapo spy. I expressed my surprise about this and Gabler told me what had happened when he was arrested. Gabler entered Austria from Yugoslavia in 1941 to organize the Resistance movement. With the support of Grete Kahane, whose real role he did not know at the time, he was given accommodation. One evening when Gabler came home to rest, Kahane informed the Gestapo and Gabler was arrested in a nightshirt by a huge police force. In addition, a number of his combatants were betrayed by Kahane and arrested by the Gestapo. Gabler also mentioned that there was no doubt about Kahane's guilt, since during the interrogation the Gestapo officers, especially the senior officer of the Gestapo intelligence apparatus, called Leutgeb, confronted me with various details that no one else could have known except him and Kahane.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat*, 414–15.

<sup>447</sup> Schafranek, 415: "Dass sie anfangs von ihm getäuscht, vielleicht sogar erpresst wurde und daraus ein schweres Zerwürfnis entstand, ist durchaus glaubwürdig, auch andere Berichte deuten darauf hin."

<sup>448</sup> Cf. Franz Danimann's transcript, Polizeidirektion Wien, Abteilung I, Vienna, February 22, 1949, in DÖW, 19827, Criminal Case of Vienna's Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People's Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo Informer): "Nach dem März 1938 wurde Kahane von der Gestapo verhaftet und schied nach baldiger Freilassung aus der in der Folge aus der Organisation aus. Ich beabsichtigte, die Kahane wieder zu aktivieren, was mir jedoch nicht mehr gelang und habe ich von diesem Zeitpunkte an mit ihr keinerlei Kontakt gehabt. Erst als ich im Jahre 1943 aus dem KZ Auschwitz zu einer Verhandlung nach Wien überstellt wurde, hörte ich in einer Gemeinschaftszelle des Polizeigefangenenhauses Rossauerlände wieder von Grete Kahane. In dieser Zelle befand sich bereits 2 Jahre der

For Kahane, being a Gestapo spy meant acquiring some privileges. Witness Leopoldine Starek remembered in 1949 that Kahane came from the poorest of backgrounds but wore expensive clothes that she could surely not afford from her modest salary as an accountant.<sup>449</sup>

Kahane had a child with Koppel in 1943. They continued to meet at regular intervals, sometimes in Zagreb and other times in Vienna. Their last meeting took place on April 18, 1945 in Altaussee.<sup>450</sup>

Kahane's sister, Wilhelmine Zohmann, and later also her mother, were imprisoned for a few months by Soviet occupying forces after the end of the Second World War. By holding Kahane's relatives, the military authorities hoped that they would be able to track her and Koppel down. The plan succeeded for Kahane; she was lured into a secret meeting place where she hoped to find out more about the whereabouts of her mother and sister, but this turned out to be a trap. Kahane was dragged into a car and kidnapped to Vienna via the American demarcation line. She gave birth to her second daughter while imprisoned. Since she had also betrayed partisans, she was extradited to Yugoslavia on February 26, 1947 at the instigation of the Soviet occupying powers.<sup>451</sup>

Kahane's death certificate (dated 1950) contains very little information. The time and cause of death are missing, so it is impossible to determine whether she was executed or died of an illness

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nat.soiz. Justiz zum Tode verurteilte und hingerichtete Leo Gabler, der sich bereits 2 Jahre in Haft befand, und erzählte mir dieser, daß die Kahane ein Lockspitzel der Gestapo geworden ist. Ich äußerte darüber mein Befremden und hat mir darauf Gabler die Vorkommnisse bei seiner Verhaftung erzählt. Gabler ist glaublich im Jahre 1941 aus Jugoslawien nach Österreich eingereist, um hier die Widerstandsbewegung zu organisieren. Mit Unterstützung der Grete Kahane, deren wirkliche Rolle er damals nicht kannte, erhielt er ein Quartier. Eines Abends, als Gabler nach Hause kam, um sich zur Ruhe zu begeben, verständigte Kahane die Gestapo und Gabler wurde in Nachthemd mit einem riesigen Polizeiaufgebot verhaftet. Im weiteren Versondern eine ganze Reihe seiner Kampfgefährten durch die Kahane verraten wurden und von der Gestapo verhaftet wurden. Gabler erwähnte auch, daß an der Schuld der Kahane kein Zweifel besteht, da ihm bei der Einvernahme von den Gestapobeamtten, vor allem durch den leitenden Beamten des Nachrichtenapparates der Gestapo namens Leutgeb, verschiedene Details vorgehalten wurden, die außer ihm und Kahane niemand anderer wissen konnte."

<sup>449</sup> Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat*, 415.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

while in custody.<sup>452</sup>

The language that Lambert Leutgeb used to talk about Margarete Kahane is striking. He provided a dismissive description of Kahane's abilities, totally stripping her of her agency and reducing her to Koppel's object:

She knew nothing of Koppel's activity for the *Staatspolizei*. Up until mid-1941 she was still of the opinion that his work was for the Communist Party. She was used by him to make various connections, which she had through her previous activity. Koppel had used Kahane, who was sexually submissive to him, to his advantage unscrupulously. Only when he was assigned to Agram [now Zagreb] did he convince her to make herself available to the *Staatspolizei*. She did not bring any special messages and could not be put to good use.<sup>453</sup>

According to Leutgeb, Koppel abandoned her when she had their child.

### **The “Blonde Poison”: Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn**

Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn, née Goldschlag, was born in Berlin on July 10, 1922. Peter Wyden based his biography of her on his own recollections and on a wide range of interviews. However, he did not cite the interviews as a historian would do, which makes it hard for us to know to whom to attribute his statements. The trope of the femme fatale is evident starting with Wyden's description of Stella in school. According to Wyden, she was “the school's Marilyn Monroe: tall, slim, leggy, cool, with light blue eyes, teeth out of a toothpaste ad, and pale satin skin.”<sup>454</sup> He portrayed her as a living, untouchable Venus:

She wore her glowing blond hair in a pageboy bob that seemed to dance whenever she moved. Her posture was so perfect that it required little imagination to picture her atop of a pedestal, a monument to beauty, albeit distant up there, silent, sequestered in her private heights—a masterpiece, untouchable, a fantasy for a pubescent boy, and a vision I could

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>453</sup> DÖW, 51840, Lambert Leutgeb's Verhörprotokoll, 115: “Sie wusste von der Tätigkeit des Koppel für die Staatspolizei nichts. Sie war immer bis Mitte 1941 der Meinung, dass seine Arbeit für die Kommunistische Partei sei. Sie wurde von ihm zur Herstellung diverser Verbindungen, die sie auf Grund ihrer früheren Tätigkeit hatte benützt. Koppel hatte die Kahane, die ihm geschlechtlich hörig war, skrupellos für seine Zwecke ausgenützt. Erst als er nach Agram abkommandiert wurde, brachte er sie soweit, dass sie sich dann für die Staatspolizei zur Verfügung stellte. Sie brachte keine besonderen Nachrichten und konnte nicht richtig eingesetzt werden”

<sup>454</sup> Wyden, 15.

never forget.<sup>455</sup>

Figure 32: Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's index card<sup>456</sup>

And yet her beauty could not change her Jewish origins. In 1935, the new Nazi laws “compelled her to leave her public high school and enroll in the private Jewish school of Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt at the Roseneck in the exclusive Grunewald section”—the school that Wyden attended with her.<sup>457</sup> This meant that she was “placed [...] among the mostly dark-haired and sometimes big-nosed children of the hated minority, the persecuted, the leprous. It also stamped her as poor.”<sup>458</sup> Wyden continues with the gender stereotypes and insists on her “teenage princess cool”—a quality which only increased in later years. Stella was soon attention-seeking and aware of her sex appeal: “Eroticism appealed to her, especially because it shocked her peers. Stella got a thrill out of being shocking.”<sup>459</sup> What we can take from Wyden’s biased depiction is that she was a popular girl, living a quite comfortable life.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Source: BAB, Karteikarte 4/290/54, Isaaksohn born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid, February 16, 1950.

<sup>457</sup> Wyden, 25.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 26.

Things abruptly changed after the pogrom of November 10, 1938, when Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues were smashed by the Nazi paramilitary forces (*Sturmabteilung* or SA). Stella was sent home early from school on that day only to find out that her father was in hiding because Jewish males were being rounded up. Unlike Wyden's family, which was richer than hers, Stella's family was not able to escape Berlin.<sup>460</sup>

On October 23, 1942, Stella married her Jewish boyfriend, Manfred Kübler, who was the leader of a small jazz band in which Stella sang.<sup>461</sup> Because she was Jewish, Stella was forced to work in a factory as an "armament Jew." There, she started seeing many Jews being taken away to concentration camps, until on February 27, 1943, on the day of another round-up, she and her mother narrowly escaped being among the arrested Jews. They were saved by the color of Stella's hair: "Both were blondes, and Nazis still believed that Jews could not be blond."<sup>462</sup> Stella's husband was not so lucky. He was arrested at his workplace, the company Wilhelm Banhaf in Pankow, and deported to Auschwitz with the 33<sup>rd</sup> transport of March 3, 1943:<sup>463</sup>

Manfred was scooped up while doing his forced labor at a scrapyard in the outskirts of the city. Before he was driven onto an Auschwitz train, he managed to send word to Stella through an *Abholer* (fetcher). His message said that he would eventually meet up with her at the Roscherstrasse home of friends, the Feilchenfelds. Nothing further was ever heard from him.<sup>464</sup>

After her first husband's arrest, Stella became one of the 18,300 Jews who were illegally living in hiding in Berlin—the people she would later betray.<sup>465</sup> She hustled from that moment on. She met Rolf Isaaksohn, her second husband, in the late spring of 1943 "in the queue of a

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>461</sup> Doris Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat: Jüdische "Greifer" im Dienste der Gestapo 1943–1945* (Berlin: Metropol, 2006), 143.

<sup>462</sup> Wyden, 110.

<sup>463</sup> Tausendfreund, *Erzwungener Verrat*, 143.

<sup>464</sup> Wyden, 113.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 130.

delicatessen shop on Olivaer Platz.”<sup>466</sup> Günther Rogoff (an alias for Samson Schönhaus), a longtime admirer of Stella’s and one of the most notorious passport forgers in Berlin, had forged a police identification card for her. Isaaksohn was also a good forger: “for Stella he manufactured several additional documents to supplement those made for her by Rogoff.”<sup>467</sup> But life in hiding was boring, so on July 2, 1943, Stella, Rolf, and Rolf’s cousin Dorothy decided to go out in public to their favorite place: Café Bollenmüller on Mittelstrasse. Gestapo agents burst in and arrested Stella, after another acquaintance of hers, Inge Lustig, had come in and waved at her. Lustig was already one of the *Greifer*. Wyden writes that Lustig “became a key to Stella’s decision-making a few months later.”<sup>468</sup> She was proof that “a catcher was a government agent, a new occupation enjoying a measure of respectability, being the creation of the legally constituted authorities.”<sup>469</sup> The job came with a number of benefits: not only money but the possibility to leave the transit camp whenever they wanted; no obligation to wear the yellow star; and ration cards, accommodation, and valid papers.<sup>470</sup>

Stella was brought to the Gestapo regional headquarters on Burgstrasse, where she was initially brutally interrogated by Gestapo officials Greinert, Schwöbel, and Kurz. She was taken to the women’s prison on Bessemerstrasse in the Tempelhof district the next morning.<sup>471</sup>

Wyden writes that “ultimately, it would be Stella’s looks and intelligence that would elevate her to the star rank for the Gestapo.”<sup>472</sup> According to him, she had a “computerlike memory for

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 71.

<sup>471</sup> Beate Meyer, Hermann Simon, and Chana Schütz, *Jews in Nazi Berlin: From Kristallnacht to Liberation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 255.

<sup>472</sup> Wyden, 143.

names, dates, addresses, and other useful minutiae.”<sup>473</sup> But first she had to endure physical torture—an experience which, according to Wyden, “demolished her exalted picture of herself.”<sup>474</sup> When the Gestapo policemen had searched her papers, they had recognized Rogoff’s handiwork. Stella was beaten so she would turn her friend in, although she in fact did not know where Rogoff was. She even managed to escape on July 10, 1943, after complaining that she had a toothache and had to get dental treatment.<sup>475</sup> She was arrested again 12 hours later along with her parents, who were immediately “taken to the already infamous Grosse Hamburger Strasse”—the first step of deportation to Auschwitz.<sup>476</sup>

Wyden persists with his gender stereotypes in his analysis of what happened next. Stella had impressed her captors with “her cleverness, the cool, the agility that had already enabled her to escape twice from the Gestapo,” but also “she had a talent for exploiting her looks and her sex.”<sup>477</sup> He continued to obsess over her looks: “Where would they find another blond, blue-eyed Jewess who could wiggle her way into any male confidence [...] and tough enough to recover from torture with no visible damage?”<sup>478</sup> This last question is clearly highly problematic, considering that Wyden was not there to evaluate what kind of lasting damage torture had left on Stella. In any event, Stella was “sufficiently interesting to be led into the presence of the number-one man on the scene, the camp commander, *SS-Hauptscharführer* Walter Dobberke.”<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>475</sup> Tausendfreund, 144.

<sup>476</sup> Wyden, 146.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.



*Figure 33: Walter Dobberke*<sup>480</sup>

Stella was unlike the other women treated in this chapter in that Walter Dobberke did not become her lover but instead her boss while both she and her husband Rolf Isaaksohn carried out his orders. Together they spied for the “Manhunt Commission” (*Fahndungsdienst*): a specific section of the State Police Main Office in Berlin composed of Jewish spies and mainly tasked with tracking down Jewish people who had gone into hiding.<sup>481</sup>

Stella and her husband Rolf “operated individually and in cooperation with other searchers to hunt down Jews throughout Berlin.”<sup>482</sup> Rolf especially monitored Berlin Mitte, in particular the area around the Börse station (now Hackescher Markt) and Prenzlauer Berg, whereas Stella

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<sup>480</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 250.

<sup>481</sup> Dams and Stolle, 40; Tausendfreund, chap. 2.

<sup>482</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 257.

checked the area around Kurfürstendamm in the western part of Berlin.<sup>483</sup>

This woman in a light gray tailor-made suit now stands under the heavy charge of aiding and abetting murder. The prosecution accuses her of having delivered 37 people, including 13 children, to the Gestapo in 1943/44 and being guilty of their extermination in notorious concentration and extermination camps.<sup>484</sup>

This newspaper article understates Stella's efficiency as a spy. Dobberke's extortion tactics<sup>485</sup> made her into the person who would later be nicknamed the "blonde poison" (*blonde Gift*) or "the terror of the Kurfürstendamm" (*der Schrecken vom Kurfürstendamm*).<sup>486</sup> It is hard to determine precisely how many Jews were arrested because of her initiative, but it was probably more than 100.<sup>487</sup>

Unfortunately, her zealotry did not pay off; after about seven months as a *Greiferin*, the Nazis informed Stella that her parents' deportation could not be delayed any longer. On February 23, 1944, they were transferred to Theresienstadt, and they were deported to Auschwitz in the fall of 1944.<sup>488</sup>

And yet, Stella continued to work for the Nazis and to deliver fellow Jews to their executioners. Wyden writes that her husband Rolf pushed her to continue her job as a "catcher," but their marriage slowly dissolved. Rolf also had a plan for when the war was over and "the recriminations" would follow: "he had accumulated plenty of money and had his private getaway plan. Stella had no place in it."<sup>489</sup> Stella continued to work for the Gestapo until the end, even

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960, article titled "Vorsicht vor der blonden Stella!" ("Beware of the blonde Stella!"), signed M.K., no newspaper name, no date: "Diese Frau im hellgrauen Schneiderkostüm steht heute unter der schweren Anklage der Beihilfe zum Mord. Die Anklagebehörde wirft ihr vor, 37 Menschen, darunter 13 Kinder, in den Jahren 1943/44 der Gestapo ans Messer geliefert zu haben und an ihrer Vernichtung in berüchtigten Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslagern schuldig zu sein."

<sup>485</sup> Stella talks about her relationship with Dobberke and how he obtained the Jews' addresses in the interrogation of March 18, 1946, in BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's Interrogation Protocol.

<sup>486</sup> Tausendfreund, 142.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>489</sup> Wyden, 199.

when she became aware that she risked being executed after the war for her actions.

In February 1945, Stella discovered she was pregnant by one of her lovers, Heinz (Heino) Meissl, but he wanted nothing to do with her or the child. On October 7, 1945, while hiding in Liebenwalde, she gave birth to a daughter, Yvonne Meissl.<sup>490</sup>

Stella was arrested in March 1946. The baby was seized by the police and taken to a hospital, where she was handed off to a nurse, Alice Safristein. Yvonne, who would become a frontline nurse in Israel, essentially “survived her first ten years through the kindness of strangers.”<sup>491</sup>

As for Stella, she was handed over to the Soviet authorities. She stood trial, the victims who had survived deportation came forward,<sup>492</sup> and on May 31, 1946 she was “sentenced to serve ten years at hard labor in Soviet camps.”<sup>493</sup> She was in the Torgau detention center until July 17, 1948; on February 3, 1950, she was transferred to the former concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. She was subsequently transferred from Soviet custody to the West German penal system, and imprisoned in the Hoheneck penitentiary and in the Waldheim detention center. After almost ten years, she was released on January 23, 1956. She had also contracted tuberculosis during her detention.<sup>494</sup>

Shortly after her return to West Berlin, the Jewish community sought a new criminal case against her. The atmosphere was heated. A newspaper reports that, during the lunch break at the trial, the enraged witnesses “threateningly approached the defendant, who was spared from pre-trial detention for a lung complaint” and “slapped her in the face.”<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> Tausendfreund, 148.

<sup>491</sup> Wyden, 259.

<sup>492</sup> See, for example, the testimony of Erich Kalkstein, who was deported to Auschwitz because of Stella, dated April 2, 1946, in BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn’s Interrogation Protocol.

<sup>493</sup> Wyden, 233.

<sup>494</sup> Tausendfreund, 149.

<sup>495</sup> See article “Schlag ins Gesicht der Angeklagten,” in *Adler Tagesspiegel*, “June 25, 1957, in LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960: “Zu schweren Zusammenstößen und tumultuarischen Szenen kam es

The trope of the femme fatale comes back in the way she is described in another newspaper:

Stella Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler, known in the Nazi era as the “Jewish Lorelei,” is a slender, very pretty woman with dark blond hair, in which brunette tones are reflected. Her light gray tailored suit over a white blouse fits like a glove. But there is an unmistakable cold in her dark eyes.<sup>496</sup>



Figure 34: “Saved Her Life Through Betrayal?”<sup>497</sup>

gestern vor dem Verhandlungssaal des Schwurgerichts, das den Prozeß gegen die 34-jährige Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn wegen Behilfe zum Mord - begangen an ihren jüdischen Galubensgenossen während der Jahre 1943 und 1944 als ‚Greiferin‘ der Gestapo - fortsetzte. In der Mittagspause gingen einige der sehr erregten Zeugen drohend auf die Angeklagte zu, die wegen eines Lungenleidens von der Untersuchungshaft verschont ist. Sie erhielt einen Schlag ins Gesicht und flüchtete sich vor der Menge in die vergitterte Anklagebank, auf der sie auch während der Beweisaufnahme zum eigenen Schutz vor etwaigen tätlichen Angriffen Platz genommen hatte.”

<sup>496</sup> Article titled “Durch Verrat das eigene Leben gerettet?” (“Saved Her Life Through Betrayal?”), no date, no newspaper name, in LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960: “Stella Isaaksohn, geschiedene Kübler, in der Nazizeit unter dem Namen „jüdische Lorelei“ bekannt, ist eine schlanke, bildhübsche Frau mit dunkelblondem Haar, in dem sich brünette Töne spiegeln. Ihr hellgraues Schneiderkostüm über einer weißen Bluse sitzt wie angegossen. Aber in Ihren dunklen Augen liegt eine unverkennbare Kälte.”

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

She received another ten-year prison sentence,<sup>498</sup> but did not serve it because she was credited for the years she had spent on the previous sentence and because of her health issues.<sup>499</sup> The press followed the negotiations with great interest. As the *Morgenpost* reported, the verdict's verbalization was met with great disapproval. Many considered it to be too lenient.<sup>500</sup>

In the meantime, Stella had married her third husband, Werner Friedheim Schellenberg, on November 2, 1957.<sup>501</sup> She had also converted to Christianity. After her release from prison in 1956, she worked hard to get custody of her daughter Yvonne who was housed with a foster family in Berlin. Stella had not succeeded despite her multiple attempts—nor did the girl want to contact her mother, having learned what she was responsible for. It took Stella until 1966 to get her daughter back,<sup>502</sup> but reconciliation never truly happened. Yvonne hated the idea of being connected to her mother: “Nothing can help me [...] I will live with it and die with it. I am Yvonne, who had better not have been born.”<sup>503</sup>

Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn died by suicide in 1994 at the age of 72 by jumping out her apartment window in Freiburg.<sup>504</sup>

### **The “Evil Star”: Celeste Di Porto**

Celeste Di Porto was born in the Jewish ghetto of Rome on July 29, 1925. We do not know much

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<sup>498</sup> See articles “10 Jahre Zuchthaus für Stella Kübler” (*Tagesspiegel*, June 30, 1957) and “Genau dieselbe Strafe. 10 Jahre Zuchthaus für Stella Kübler” (*Tagesspiegel*, July 1, 1957), as well as court proceedings on pages 30–151, in LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922–1994), 1956–1960.

<sup>499</sup> Ernest Gunter Fontheim, “More Effective Than the Gestapo,” *The New York Times*, January 24, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/24/books/l-more-effective-than-the-gestapo-436793.html>.

<sup>500</sup> Tausendfreund, 150.

<sup>501</sup> LAB, Box 2487, Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler, married Schellenberg (1922–1994), 1956.

<sup>502</sup> Tausendfreund, 151.

<sup>503</sup> Wyden, 13.

<sup>504</sup> Tausendfreund, 152.

about her childhood other than that her family was very poor, which forced her to accept humble jobs at an early age and fostered in her a strong desire for emancipation. Historian Anna Foa highlights this as one of the main reasons that she later chose to betray her Jewish community:

She was also moved by a sort of revenge against her world which had perhaps treated her badly, and had forced her to leave school. Her father, her family were very poor and with the racist laws they had lost the chance to work. Her father was a peddler, and they had taken the licenses away from the peddlers. Celeste is first sent to be a servant and then becomes a saleswoman. She has some conflicting relationships because she had a very dramatic love story with a boy who, just because she was poor, had not been able to marry her. The parents had interfered. At this point she was infamous, in the sense that they considered her an “easy” girl. She had had a series of boyfriends.<sup>505</sup>

The “black panther,” as she would later be nicknamed, exuded the same charm as “the blonde poison.” Everybody, every document, every article talks about Celeste Di Porto’s extraordinary beauty: even Auschwitz survivor Piero Terracina underlined it when interviewed by the Italian TV program “Il Tempo e la Storia.”<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Anna Foa, in Michela Ponzani, “Celeste Di Porto: La pantera nera del ghetto,” *Il Tempo e la Storia* (Rai, October 21, 2016), [www.raiplay.it/video/2016/10/Il-tempo-e-la-Storia---Celeste-Di-Porto-la-pantera-nera-del-ghetto-del-21102016-b3eab543-0035-4239-8d8e-d08e2c82bd72.html](http://www.raiplay.it/video/2016/10/Il-tempo-e-la-Storia---Celeste-Di-Porto-la-pantera-nera-del-ghetto-del-21102016-b3eab543-0035-4239-8d8e-d08e2c82bd72.html): “Era mossa anche da una sorta di rivincita verso il suo mondo che l’aveva forse trattata male, che l’aveva obbligata a lasciare la scuola. Suo padre, la sua famiglia erano molto poveri e con le leggi razziste avevano perduto la possibilità di lavorare. Il padre era un ambulante e tolgono la licenza agli ambulanti. Celeste viene mandata prima a servizio e poi fa la commessa. Ha dei rapporti conflittuali perché aveva avuto una storia d’amore molto drammatica con un ragazzo che proprio perché lei era povera non aveva potuto sposarla. I suoi si erano intromessi. A questo punto era malfamata, nel senso che la consideravano una ragazza leggera. Aveva avuto una serie di fidanzati.”

<sup>506</sup> “C’era questa ragazza che era di una bellezza straordinaria...,” says Piero Terracina in Ponzani’s documentary.



*Figure 35: Piero Terracina*<sup>507</sup>

Di Porto lived at via della Reginella 2 in Rome. Davide Lombardi, editor-in-chief of the online magazine *Note Modenesi*, was inspired by two photos of Celeste that he found in the archive in Modena<sup>508</sup> and wrote a blog post about her story.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Screenshot from Ponzani's documentary.

<sup>508</sup> AFLF, Photos, "A Rare Photo of Celeste at 16 Years Old. For Her Beauty, in the Ghetto of Rome They Called Her 'Stella' (Star). It Became 'Stella Ria' (Evil Star) When She Began to Sell Her People to the Germans"; "Celeste, Known as 'Black Panther', Former Collaborator of the SS, on the Day She Was Baptized in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi."

<sup>509</sup> Davide Lombardi, "Il mistero delle foto ritrovate," *Note Modenesi. Appunti di politica e società* (blog), January 23, 2015, <http://www.notemodenesi.it/2015/il-mistero-delle-foto-ritrovate/>.



*Figure 36: Celeste di Porto at 16 years old*



*Figure 37: Celeste di Porto on the day she was baptized in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi*

He wrote that she was considered “one of the most beautiful girls in the Ghetto [...] tall, slender, black hair and eyes, bouncing breasts, a fleshy mouth, a magnetic and charming gaze. Fifth of eight children, in the family she was called ‘Stella’ [Star], apparently for her showy beauty.”<sup>510</sup>

Di Porto’s acquaintances were quite murky, especially her relationships with the Fascist gang of the “squadrista” Giovanni Cialli Mezzaroma and Vincenzo Antonelli, a prominent member of the gang and hunter of Jews. Di Porto had met Antonelli while working as a waitress in a restaurant called “Il Fantino” in Piazza Giudia, known to be visited by the Fascists.<sup>511</sup>

On October 16, 1943, the SS broke into the alleys between Largo Arenula and Portico d’Ottavia in Rome. They took more than 1,000 women, men, and children from their homes. Most

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid.: “All’epoca Celeste aveva appena 18 anni, abitava in via della Reginella 2, ed era considerata tra le più belle ragazze del Ghetto: alta, slanciata, capelli e occhi neri, un seno prosperoso, la bocca carnosa, uno sguardo magnetico e ricco di fascino. Quinta di otto figli, in famiglia veniva chiamata Stella, pare per la sua vistosa bellezza.”

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

of them were deported to Auschwitz. From that day on, the Roman Jews lived in constant fear of being denounced to the Nazis. Yet they did not expect the threat to come from one of their own.

Di Porto had miraculously escaped capture on the day of the Ghetto raid. Some hypothesized that Celeste decided to collaborate with the Nazis and began her career as a “black panther,” denouncing her fellow Jews to the Gestapo, because of that shock. The job was certainly well rewarded. Aldo Pavia, president of the Italian national association of ex-deportees in the Nazi camps (ANED), enumerated the horrible price list in the documentary of “Il Tempo e la Storia”: “Anyone who handed over a Jew to the Nazi authorities was awarded 5000 *lire* if he was an adult male and therefore able to work, 3000 *lire* for a woman, 2000 *lire* for a child.”<sup>512</sup>

From March 24, 1944—the day of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre—Di Porto lived with Antonelli and intensified her activity as an informer.<sup>513</sup>

Di Porto’s actions proved her desire to stand out, to oversee people’s life and death. Sometimes she saved people. The Jew Rosina Di Veroli, for instance, testified that she had happened to meet Celeste, who had warned her not to come back to Portico d’Ottavia, effectively saving her life.<sup>514</sup> But Di Porto’s crimes are heavier than her redeeming actions: the most infamous case of denunciation links her to the aforementioned Fosse Ardeatine massacre: the mass killing carried out in Rome on March 24, 1944 by the Nazi occupation troops.

Di Porto is accused of having indicated the hiding places of 26 Jews later killed in that massacre,<sup>515</sup> including Di Veroli’s family. The depositions at the trial, clearly analyzed by Anna

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<sup>512</sup> “A chi consegnava un ebreo alle autorità naziste veniva corrisposto un premio di 5000 lire se era un maschio adulto, quindi in grado di lavorare, 3000 lire per una donna, 2000 lire per un bambino,” in Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

<sup>513</sup> Osti Guerrazzi, 107.

<sup>514</sup> “Celeste [...] al momento di salutarsi, le consigliò di non farsi vedere da quelle parti per un po’. Rosina si ricorderà di questo avviso, e nel dopoguerra testimonierà a favore di Celeste, che le aveva salvato la vita,” in Foa, *Portico d’Ottavia* 13, 33.

<sup>515</sup> Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

Foa in her book *Portico d'Ottavia 13*, make it quite clear.<sup>516</sup> For instance, Virginia Di Porto, the 60-year-old mother of Pacifico Di Segni—one of the Jews murdered at the Fosse Ardeatine—recounted her son's arrest. On March 23, 1944 at 7:30 pm, the spy Luigi Roselli and another Fascist in plainclothes had burst into Anna Fioravanti's house at via Caetani 2, where her daughter Enrica Di Segni also lived, leaving two other Fascists to guard the gate. Fioravanti held the child she had had with a Jew in her arms. Enrica Di Segni stated in her deposition that Fioravanti pleaded with Roselli to save the child, but he replied: "Who told you to be with a Jew?"<sup>517</sup> In the meantime, the Fascists entered, looked for other hidden Jews, and found and arrested Pacifico Di Segni and his cousin Alberto Funaro. Son of Lazzaro and Allegra Di Veroli, Alberto Funaro was only 24-years-old. Both Pacifico and Alberto were murdered the following day at the Fosse Ardeatine.

Around eight o'clock that same evening, the Fascists surrounded the house at via della Reginella 2 where Celeste Di Porto's family lived. All the Jews in the house, including Celeste's family members, managed to escape through a window. Essentially unconcerned by what was happening, Celeste remained in her room sleeping, after having shown the men her Fascist membership card. Arrested in the morning, she was immediately released by Vincenzo Antonelli, her lover. A room in her house had meanwhile been used as a temporary prison for the Jews who had been arrested overnight. In via Arenula, Lazzaro and Romolo Anticoli and Rubino Di Veroli were also arrested after Di Porto had led the Fascists to them. Romolo and Rubino managed to escape, while Lazzaro did not; he was also killed at the Fosse Ardeatine. While detained in the Regina Coeli prison, he managed to leave an inscription on the wall: "I am Lazzaro Anticoli called Bucephalus, a boxer. If I don't see my family again, it's the fault of that crooked Celeste Di Porto.

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<sup>516</sup> Foa, *Portico d'Ottavia 13*, chap. 5 "I luoghi della cattura."

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 41: "Chi ti ha detto di stare con un ebreo?"

Avenge me.”<sup>518</sup>

Di Porto moved to Naples at the end of the war. She called herself Stella Martinelli and started working in a brothel, but changing her identity was not enough. On May 9, 1945, two Roman Jews recognized her in Naples, so she was arrested and taken back to Rome. On March 5, 1947, the trial of the entire Fascist gang with whom she had been affiliated started. Even if the main defendants were the Fascists, it was the “black panther” who stole the show and completely dominated the scene.<sup>519</sup> Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi notes that Di Porto’s was one of the three trials that caused a particular sensation; the other two were those of Federico Scarpatò, another collaborator, and the Fascist gang of Gino Bardi and Guglielmo Pollastrini.<sup>520</sup> If the atmosphere during Bardi and Pollastrini’s hearing was nearly cheerful, it was very tense during Celeste Di Porto’s trial.

“To death!” the audience shouted when Celeste appeared in front of the judges, but she continued to be aggressive, rebutting all accusations.<sup>521</sup> The prosecutor asked for 30 years in prison for her. On June 9, 1947, after an eight-hour-long deliberation, the verdict came: Celeste Di Porto, found guilty of theft and kidnapping, was sentenced to 12 years in prison,<sup>522</sup> which was ultimately reduced to five. As with Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn, the sentence greatly angered the relatives of the Jewish victims, the Roman Jewish community, and the public in general, who defined Celeste’s case as one of the “links in a long chain of acquittals, inadequate penalties due to meekness or

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<sup>518</sup> “Sono Anticoli Lazzaro, detto Bucefalo, pugilatore. Si non arivedo la famija mi e’ colpa de quella vendita de Celeste Di Porto. Rivendicatemi,” in Lombardi, “Il mistero delle foto ritrovate”; Osti Guerrazzi, 108.

<sup>519</sup> Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

<sup>520</sup> Osti Guerrazzi, 149.

<sup>521</sup> Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

<sup>522</sup> ACS, Ministero Grazia e Giustizia, Gabinetto, Archivio Generale, Affari diversi per Min., Ministro Grassi, Box 13, Dossier 56, Rome. Popular judges in the trial of “Pantera Nera” Celeste Di Porto and others, A. Spallanzani’s letter of June 24, 1947: “Sono stati condannati DI PORTO Celeste e CIALLI Mezzaroma Giovanni alla reclusione per anni 12, ANTONELLI Vincenzo alla reclusione per anni 18 e alla multa in L. 15000, ROSELLI Luigi alla reclusione per anni 16 e alla multa in L. 12000, VEZZANI Serrao alla reclusione per anni 14 e alla multa in L. 6000.”

severity which demonstrate how much practical uncertainty and how much mental and spiritual disorientation there is in those who have the delicate task of *doing justice*.”<sup>523</sup> Gender tropes reappeared in the newspaper articles, which used the usual derogatory language to talk about Di Porto, with one article defining her as “the prostitute who attracted men to be delivered to the SS:”

The renegade Jewish Di Porto, who with a cold mind [sent] hundreds of her fellow worshipers to die in the German extermination camps, the prostitute who attracted men to be delivered to the SS had the impudence to appeal against the sentence by invoking remissions and amnesties.<sup>524</sup>

The conviction appears somewhat strange; why wasn't she explicitly sentenced for collaborating with the Nazis and denouncing the Jews? Anna Foa explained that in 1946, the amnesty proclaimed by the Minister of Justice Togliatti pardoned “everything that had been committed for ideological reasons,” including being anti-Semitic and sending Jews to extermination camps for that reason. The defendants would fall under the scope of the amnesty unless they had denounced Jews for profit or had personally killed someone. Since Celeste had not personally killed anyone, it was on profit that her accusations focused,<sup>525</sup> and the fact that she had seized her victims' possessions, including the jewelry that she used to wear.

Di Porto was released on March 10, 1948, but her story continued to elicit discussion. Rumors talked about a conversion to Catholicism during the detention, highlighting once again an

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid., See L. d'Arbenga's article “Giustizia Ingiustizia,” in *Gloria al Sacrificio*, July 1, 1947: “Celeste Di Porto, detta a ragione PANTERA NERA, Maria Ricottini, gli assassini di Massimo Gizzio, sono tutti anelli di una lunga catena di assoluzioni, di pene inadeguate per mitezza o per severità che dimostrano quanta incertezza pratica e quanto disorientamento mentale e spirituale vi sia in coloro che hanno il compito delicato di *fare giustizia*.”

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., see article from *La Nuova Strada*, June 19, 1947: “L'ebrea rinnegata Di Porto, che a mente fredda [ha] mandato a crepare centinaia di suoi correligionari nei campi di eliminazione tedeschi, la prostituta che attirava nel suo letto gli uomini da consegnarsi alle S.S. ha spinto la propria impudenza sino a ricorrere contro la sentenza invocando condoni e amnistie.”

<sup>525</sup> “C'era nel 1946 l'amnistia varata dal ministro della giustizia Togliatti in cui veniva amnistiato tutto ciò che era stato commesso per motivi ideologici, per cui se eri antisemita e mandavi gli ebrei in campo di sterminio eri amnistiato. Se invece lo facevi a scopo di lucro non ricadevi sotto l'aministia, oppure se avevi personalmente ammazzato qualcuno. Celeste, anche se girava armata, non aveva personalmente ammazzato nessuno e lo scopo di lucro invece è evidente. E sullo scopo di lucro questi processi insistono perché sono quelli che consentono una condanna che altrimenti l'amnistia avrebbe impedito,” in Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

analogy with Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn in a similar desire to distance herself from her Jewish origins. The rumors were confirmed when she was baptized on March 15.<sup>526</sup>



Figure 38: “Black Panther Was Baptized in Assisi”<sup>527</sup>

Auschwitz survivor Piero Terracina attributed this conversion to the attacks that Di Porto had suffered from her Jewish fellow worshipers, calling it “a plausible reaction.”<sup>528</sup> The attacks continued, with the slogan: “The Pope baptized her, De Gasperi pardoned her,” a reference to the

<sup>526</sup> See article excerpt “Pantera Nera ad Assisi è stata battezzata,” from *Giornale d’Italia* n. 71 of March 26, 1948, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Gabinetto 1944–46, Box 128, Dossier 11096, Di Porto Celeste, 1945.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> “È stata una reazione tutto sommato legittima dal fatto che i suoi correligionari l’attaccavano in questo modo, quindi se lei si sentiva accusata ingiustamente può essere stata una reazione plausibile,” in Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

governmental pardon that had allowed her to be released.<sup>529</sup>

On December 27, while Di Porto was having dinner in a Roman restaurant, she escaped an attempted lynching by a narrow margin. From that moment on, her traces are harder to locate. From Rome, she probably moved to Trento, then to Milan. In the end, she moved back to Rome, where she died in 1981 at the age of 56.<sup>530</sup>

### Conclusion

Women—like gay men, as we will see in the next chapter—were marginalized in regimes that glorified the body of the male hero (Mussolini, Pétain, and Hitler). But it is the marginalization of both women and gay men that sometimes made them good spies, because the spy is by definition an individual on society's edge who lives in a state of secrecy.

All these women broke with the regimes' ideology and gender rules; their life was not confined to the household, they were not devoted to their husbands, and they did not give the nation new children. It is striking that all these women had a relationship with a police chief or spy—a relationship that some of them managed to turn to their advantage.

The Fascist and Nazi regimes broke with their own ideology by hiring these women as spies. And while these women worked for totalitarian regimes, they also resisted the male-dominated world that these regimes had crafted and fostered, at times leveraging, and at other times suffering from, the gender stereotypes that such a world conveyed. Although some of them were threatened into collaborating with the Fascists and the Nazis, all five women appeared to have been quite

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<sup>529</sup> “Il papa l’ha battezzata, De Gasperi l’ha graziata,” in Ponzani; see also article excerpt “Pantera Nera in libertà con l’applicazione del nuovo condono,” from *Tempo*, February 22, 1948, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Gabinetto 1944–46, Box 128, Dossier 11096, Di Porto Celeste, 1945.

<sup>530</sup> Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

skilled at their job, with unfortunate consequences for their targets.

It was not the impressive list of men who spied for Bice Papeschi who made headlines. It was Papeschi herself and her relationship with the OVRA chief, the buzz around which she carefully exploited so that the scale of her espionage activity would be overlooked. It was not the figure of Giovanni Cialli Mezzaroma, head of the most effective groups of collaborators specialized in tracking down the Roman Jews, that dominated the postwar trial of his gang. It was not even gang member Vincenzo Antonelli. It was Celeste Di Porto. And the volume of Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's trial records easily surpasses that of *SS-Hauptscharführer* Walter Dobberke, head of the *Jüdisches Fahndungsdienst* (the "Jewish Manhunt Commission"). As long as the focus remained on Mathilde Carré's affairs and extramarital adventures, it was much harder to disentangle her ambiguous shifts between the Resistance side and that of the Nazis and understand where her allegiance ultimately lay. She was probably only working for herself and, in fact, managed to have her sentence reduced in the end. But while facing similar accusations and trying to convey that she had at first been tricked by her lover Kurt Koppel, Margarete Kahane was less resourceful or less lucky than Carré, even if we did not know the cause of her death. And Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn proved to be less capable than Carré and Di Porto of handling the pressure of public scrutiny, since she died by suicide in the end.

It is impossible to ignore the gender elements in these women's stories: their fetishized depiction as femmes fatales, and the mixture of power and helplessness that they convey; the way they take advantage of their sex as capital to negotiate better conditions for themselves, and the limits of this negotiation. For these women, escaping gender-biased oppression was key to or at least played a part in their decision-making process; they had complicated relationships with parents, husbands, and lovers. Kübler-Isaaksohn's and Di Porto's conversions seem to be proof of

an ultimate rejection of their family and community ties to the Jewish community they had betrayed and who wanted a harsher punishment for them. They wanted to reinvent their identity. Perhaps their sex and attractiveness made them even more of a target of the Fascist and Nazi recruiters. So, they agreed to spy for them, but they also subverted the shaky ideological order and understanding of morality that the Fascist and Nazi regimes advertised.

**Chapter Four**  
**Bending Ideology:**  
**Homosexual Spies and the Ambiguity of Fascist Morals**

**Abstract**

This chapter delves into the stories of two foreign queer spies in Fascist Italy: the Swiss Roberto Hodel and the German Gerhard Dobbert. The Fascist regime cultivated a dual relationship with gay men; it exploited them for their contacts, but persecuted them as “enemies of the new man” who undermined the Fascist understanding of morality. This chapter illustrates this relationship by focusing on these two cases and ultimately proving that the Fascist surveillance—like any other—is doomed to fail, because double agents are “imperfect” tools. Spies live in a gray zone of blurred agencies and conflicting incentives. As in fiction, where characters play a deceitful role, the archival documents analyzed in this chapter replicate that deception in three layers of ambiguity. Just as spy novels become open-ended trajectories of several stages of suspicion, these layers of ambiguity are multiplied in the spies’ surveillance reports, where the distrust of the foreign alien is combined with the rejection of homosexuality to designate an extremely ambiguous “other” that the Fascists both reject and exploit.

**Main Characters**

- Dobbert, Gerhard ~ ?–1935: a German professor of political economy, resident in Italy.
- Hodel, Roberto ~ ?–?: a Swiss journalist and the president of the Foreign Press Association, resident in Italy.

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To Corporal BERTOLDI Carlo—Filettino—

Dearest love,

It’s Sunday afternoon; I am alone alone, I read once more your letters, which are immensely dear to me. How I desire you and how big will be the joy of our reunion. When? I would so gladly chat with you about this...MASSIMO went to Paris today, AUGUSTO goes to Switzerland this week, so I will be alone, if I don’t get the Austrian to come for two weeks.

Destroy this letter and write as soon as possible, with 1,000 kisses your

[H]odel<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> Copy of Roberto Hodel’s letter to Corporal Carlo Bertoldi signed by Major O. Carnevali, in ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, folder 11, Roberto Hodel’s file: “Al Caporale BERTOLDI Carlo – Filettino– // È domenica pomeriggio, io sono solo solo, leggo ancora una volta le tue lettere, le quali mi sono immensamente care. Come ho desiderio di te e come sarà grande la gioia del nostro rivederci. Quando? Io vorrei così volentieri chiacchierare con te su questo [...] MASSIMO è andato oggi a Parigi, AUGUSTO va in questa settimana in Svizzera,

There is probably no less-fitting place than a cold, dusty folder of the Fascist Ministry of Popular Culture for letters of anguished love, yet here they are, zealously collected by the Fascist police. Their author, Roberto Hodel, was a Swiss journalist resident in Italy and had been nominated president of the Foreign Press Association in 1926. He also happens to be a perfect example of how Fascist Italy can shape our understanding of espionage along with the place of homosexuals as outsiders in that historical context.

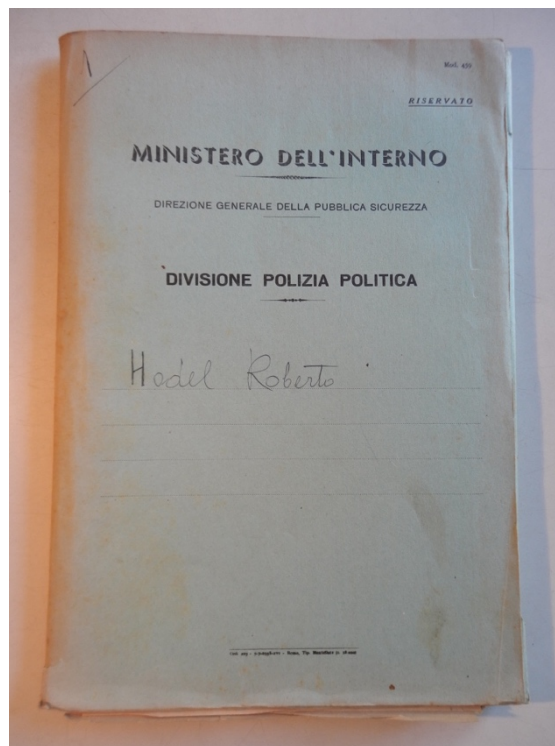


Figure 39: Hodel's file in the Polizia Politica<sup>532</sup>

Lorenzo Benadusi, in his study of homosexuality in Fascist Italy, states that “Hodel’s ‘homosexual tendencies’ were extremely well known.”<sup>533</sup> The Fascist regime offered him

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così io sarò solo, se non faccio venire per due settimane l'austriaco. // Distruggi questa lettera e scrivi al più presto, con mille baci tuo // Odel.”

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 267.

immunity from prosecution if he became a spy: “Hodel carried out the delicate task of steering the foreign press toward pro-Fascist positions and had the secret charge of supplying confidential information to the Ministry of Popular Culture.”<sup>534</sup> The Fascist secret police, OVRA, turned a blind eye to Hodel’s activities, but kept close tabs on all his movements.

The Fascist treatment of homosexuality gives us insight into the inner contradictions of the repression enacted by the regime. The police force cultivated a dual relationship with gay men; it exploited them for their contacts, but persecuted them as “enemies of the new man” who undermined Fascist morality. This chapter aims at illustrating this relationship by focusing on the cases of two prominent foreign police informers: Roberto Hodel and Gerhard Dobbert. The relationship is important because these individuals linger in a space of ambiguity—an essential feature of espionage. As Allan Hepburn explained when defining his theory of intrigue, “the spy’s appeal is his ambiguity, his articulation of doubts, violence, and mixed motives.”<sup>535</sup> The spy novels and movies that Hepburn analyzes seem to mirror the archival documents in that the ambiguity lies not only in the spy’s motives, but also in his allegiance to a particular state and its hierarchical structure: “Secret agents work inside and outside hierarchical structures at the same time [...] Because authority is dispersed throughout the hierarchy, no one controls all details of intelligence.”<sup>536</sup> And just as the spy “never sees the full picture” and espionage narratives do “not have to announce for whom the agent works,”<sup>537</sup> historians who read these documents are sometimes left to speculate in order to resolve doubts. Giving only a one-sided answer to some of the questions that the archival cases elicit would be too reductive, because a nuanced study of

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Allan Hepburn, *Intrigue: Espionage and Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

surveillance—by the very nature of its object—needs observant eyes and a complex set of analytic lenses. I will therefore attempt to offer a multi-layered answer.

Archival documents are not spy fiction, but they share the genre's ambiguity and raise questions for fictional representations of espionage. Spies live in a gray zone of blurred agencies and conflicting incentives. Just as how spy characters play a deceitful role in fiction, these archival documents offer us what the Fascist spies—often homosexual themselves—reported about these queer police informers. The historian is therefore confronted with a complex ramification of deceit, where those doing the spying are also spied upon. The challenge lies in the equally deceitful medium; the historian gets to know these police informers through the eyes of those who were watching them, to the point that these informers have no voice of their own in the sources and sometimes seem to be stripped of their agency. Scholars who deal with this documentation find themselves confronted with a problem of methodology: where does the truth stand? Do we ever really penetrate the universe of the watched through the watchers' perspective or are we left with speculation? These questions are particularly important for a historian, whose first task is always to question the reliability of sources—and this has never become more apparent than when dealing with espionage.

The archival documents are also emblematic of the conflicting relationship that spying has with loyalty. As Erin Carlston has pointed out, “Not all spies are traitors to their own nations, but in one sense all are treacherous; they are supposed to lie and deceive, to perform loyalties that they do not actually feel.”<sup>538</sup> A foreign spy is both useful and dangerous, since their employing country is never certain that the spy is not working as a double agent for a foreign power. Carlston is

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<sup>538</sup> Erin G. Carlston, *Double Agents: Espionage, Literature, and Liminal Citizens* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 4.

excellent at underlining the connection between queer sexuality and spying; both seem to require a condition of secrecy, so that one could argue that queer people make the perfect spies. Although not criminalized in Fascist Italy, homosexuality was demonized, which made queer individuals vulnerable to blackmail and the perfect targets of the Fascist quest for informers. One question, however, the extent to which a spy can be loyal to the regime when the latter has coerced them into undertaking the job.

No one is better than John le Carré at capturing the troubled essence of the “cold” life of a spy—never a moment of true relief or honesty, a conflicted sense of identity and belonging, and a never-ending struggle with suspicion. If the “practice of deception” is for the spy “a matter of experience, a professional expertise,” it is hard for the secret agent to simply “return from his performance” like an actor, to go back to regular life when the job is done.<sup>539</sup> In the character of Alec Leamas “the spy and the man are also so thoroughly entangled as to be inseparable.”<sup>540</sup> Being a spy is ultimately the only “true” identity a spy has: “Leamas may not be able to come in from the cold because the cold is who he is.”<sup>541</sup> And when deception becomes the price to pay for immunity, the spy seems to reach a point of no return; being spied upon soon translates into becoming a spy out of self-preservation.

Such is the case of the two queer foreign nationals in Fascist Italy who are the subject of this essay. The condition of the spy in fiction is very often connected to that of the foreign alien (see, for example, Eric Ambler’s *Uncommon Danger*); the archival documents are symptomatic of the same issues. Just as spy novels become open-ended trajectories of several stages of suspicion,

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<sup>539</sup> John Le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001), 120.

<sup>540</sup> Phyllis Lassner, *Espionage and Exile: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Spy Fiction and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 205.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*

these layers of ambiguity are multiplied in the surveillance reports that I read. But in these documents the distrust of the foreign alien is combined with the rejection of homosexuality.

Queer foreign aliens are the ultimate stranger—the ultimate “other.” Their condition can be compared to that of the Jews, defined by Hannah Arendt as “pariahs”: stateless people who never achieve the juridical or political status of citizens or are explicitly excluded from any form of citizenship.<sup>542</sup> Arendt furthermore links the condition of the stateless refugee to that of the exile in her reflections on the demolition of the right to asylum: “Arendt situates the stateless exile in an imprisoning no man’s land where there is no negotiation for an acceptable identity.”<sup>543</sup> Queer spies are construed as pariahs, but they are neither stateless nor unconditionally loyal to the totalitarian state that both condemns and takes advantage of their otherness. As Hepburn puts it: “In effect, a spy belongs nowhere.”<sup>544</sup> And spy fiction and the historical documents I analyzed are comparable in the way they highlight the inextricable connection between spy and exile, or spy and other: “Frightening and threatening to others and even to themselves.”<sup>545</sup> Spies, Jews, and homosexuals all share one feature: “Invisible Others passing as the Same, they could act like, and on behalf of, both the ‘us’ within the nation and the ‘them’ outside it.”<sup>546</sup>

The queer spies that are the object of this essay pose an additional challenge. While it may be incorrect to apply the lexicon of genocide—that of *victims* and *perpetrators*—to them, it is nevertheless true that these gay spies seemed to ambiguously occupy both of those roles; threatened by the Fascist regime, they accepted becoming its accomplices, participating in its

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<sup>542</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 22; Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 275.

<sup>543</sup> Lassner, 7.

<sup>544</sup> Hepburn, 11.

<sup>545</sup> Lassner, 9.

<sup>546</sup> Carlston, 5.

crimes.<sup>547</sup> I would therefore like to stress three layers of ambiguity that emerge from my analysis of the archival documents. First, the extent of these spies' loyalty to the Italian government was questionable, and yet the Fascist regime had specifically recruited them in response to concerns about the possibility of international intrigues and a diminished view of Italy in the foreign public opinion—an opinion that Hodel was specifically tasked to redress in his capacity as president of the foreign press association. Second, as I previously mentioned, the spies swung between the roles of victims and accomplices of the regime; they were persecuted, but became the persecutors' accomplices or persecutors themselves when they agreed to serve as informers. Third, it is true that both the police and their informers adopted the language of moral opprobrium to describe the gay men on whom they spied. However, they were in the end more interested in using these individuals than in containing them for their “inappropriate” behavior; the instrumental use prevailed over the principles of Fascist ideology. I will first establish the framework of the Fascist treatment of homosexuality and then address these layers of ambiguity through Dobbert's and Hodel's stories.

### **A Legal Vacuum Conducive to Terror**

In Ettore Scola's 1977 film *A Special Day (Una Giornata Particolare)*, Marcello Mastroianni plays the role of Gabriele, a gay radio broadcaster who has been dismissed from his job and is about to be deported to confinement (*confino*) because of his homosexuality.

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<sup>547</sup> For the discussion of the categories of *victim* and *perpetrator* as the main roles in genocide (together with that of bystander), see Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). For a more complete discussion of the existing literature, see Johanna Ray Vollhardt and Michal Bilewicz, “After the Genocide: Psychological Perspectives on Victim, Bystander, and Perpetrator Groups,” *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 1 (March 2013): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12000>.



Figure 40: Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni in *A Special Day*<sup>548</sup>

Sociologist Erving Goffman describes *confinio* as one of the *total institutions*: places where “a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.”<sup>549</sup> This was the solution that Fascism chose in the absence of a formal criminalization of homosexuality.

The Fascist Minister of Justice, Alfredo Rocco, started drafting a new Penal Code in 1925. Among its goals was “strengthen[ing] the protection of the family and public morality” and “protect[ing] the integrity and the future of the race.”<sup>550</sup> In his initial draft of the code, there was a specific article, number 528, against homosexual relationships:

Article 528—Homosexual Relationships: Anyone who [...] performs libidinous acts on persons of the same sex, or consents to such acts, is punishable by imprisonment from six months to three years if the events cause public scandal. The penalty is imprisonment from one to five years: 1) if the person guilty is over 21-years-old and commits the act on a person

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<sup>548</sup> Source: <https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/cultfilms-and-ica-present-special-day-una-giornata-particolare-introduction>.

<sup>549</sup> Benadusi, 113–14.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 96–97.

under 18 years of age; 2) if the act is performed habitually, or for profit.<sup>551</sup>

After a long discussion, the article was eliminated from the code on the grounds that such measures were not necessary “because fortunately Italy can proudly say that this abominable vice is not so widespread among us as to justify legislative intervention.”<sup>552</sup> Benadusi contends that “direct legal action against homosexuality was effectively substituted by its demonization, while virility was exalted and protected through repressive measures of control.”<sup>553</sup> Like “harmful viruses or infectiously sick people,” individuals who were problematic for the regime’s official narrative, such as homosexuals, were simply removed from circulation: “The Duce himself said that *confino* was ‘social hygiene, a national preventive treatment. These individuals are removed from circulation just like a doctor isolates an infectious person’.”<sup>554</sup>

While I do not deny that such demonization occurred, I would argue that it was especially the lack of a binding legal reference that allowed the Fascist police to take advantage of influential homosexuals to gain information. In this respect, Dobbert’s and Hodel’s cases are particularly illuminating. Had there been a specific measure in the legal code, the police would not have had such *carte blanche*. Totalitarian regimes often take advantage of similar legal vacuums, structuring themselves as permanent states of emergency where immediate action is more important than the law.<sup>555</sup> Dobbert’s and Hodel’s stories also provide insights into the Fascist regime’s ambiguous definition of morality, quickly and comfortably forgotten in the name of more pressing political

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<sup>551</sup> Alfredo Rocco, *Progetto preliminare di un nuovo Codice penale* (Rome: Tipografia delle Mantellate, 1927), 206.

<sup>552</sup> Benadusi, 104.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>555</sup> See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship: From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle*, trans. Michael Hoelzl (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2014); Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

needs.

The official narrative advertised the Fascist *new man*: a “monument” of masculinity, exuberant of virile strength, “energetic, courageous, and fervently agonistic.”<sup>556</sup> He was the opposite of the bourgeois man: a man of action and not of thought. He was a man committed to the greatest action of all, war: “War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it.”<sup>557</sup> The Fascist new men were obviously very similar to the Nazi *Volksgenossen*, Hitler’s *racial comrades*: part of the *Volksgemeinschaft* or *national community*, they were supposed to symbolize “the transcending of class, denominational, and political divisions through a new ethnic unity based on ‘true’ German values.”<sup>558</sup> The precursors of the racial comrades were the *Freikorps*, with their values of male bonding and brotherhood.<sup>559</sup> But there is one essential difference: while the *Freikorps* essentially avoided erotic women and seemed to fear them,<sup>560</sup> the Fascist new man was also the opposite of the gay man because there was no Fascist without a woman at his side—a woman “depicted as wife and mother and subjugated to male supremacy and vigorously devoted to the ‘political’ function of producing children for the Fascist state.”<sup>561</sup> In *A Special Day*, this woman is perfectly portrayed by Sofia Loren’s ill-educated and overworked Antonietta, married to an arrogant and rude Fascist new man whose life goal, despite his infidelity, seems to be to procreate their seventh

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<sup>556</sup> Benadusi, 20.

<sup>557</sup> Benito Mussolini, “The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism,” in Nathanael Greene, *Fascism an Anthology* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1968), 41.

<sup>558</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 172.

<sup>559</sup> While Theweleit challenges the acritical and automatic use of the notions of either latent or overt homosexuality to describe the fascist terror, he concedes that it is “more than likely that something akin to a ‘latent’ homosexuality, and an associated ‘damming up of the drives,’ played a constitutive part in the fascist terror.” See Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 307.

<sup>560</sup> Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 227.

<sup>561</sup> Benadusi, xv.

child and finally obtain the prize that the regime awarded to large families. Fascism rewarded procreative zeal and bashed “non-men” such as Mastroianni’s Gabriele with a “singles tax.” And Loren’s Antonietta is proof that this narrative was powerful; before she meets Gabriele and he opens her eyes to the hypocrisy of the regime, she idolizes Mussolini. She spends her scarce free time making portraits of Il Duce with buttons or collecting press clippings and pictures of his adventures in an album, where she also writes some Fascist slogans that perfectly summarize Mussolini’s views on the new man: “A man must be a husband, a father, and a soldier” (*L’uomo deve essere marito, padre e soldato*) and “Incompatible with female physiology and psychology, genius is only male” (*Inconciliabile con la fisiologia e la psicologia femminile, il genio è soltanto maschio*).

This was but the official narrative. Analysis of the archival documents shows that the “moral” scandals of which the Fascist police took advantage to turn homosexuals into spies for the regime came in handy. The regime heavily relied on surveillance, on “the practice of gathering information on influential figures, at times using it in their favor, at others against them.”<sup>562</sup> By capitalizing on those scandals, the regime could turn people against each other and build a network of informers. Nobody felt safe in such an atmosphere; the Fascist government suspected both Dobbert and Hodel of being spies for their respective foreign governments, but they were also spied upon by and turned into spies for the Fascist regime. Though Dobbert’s agency is more ephemeral than Hodel’s, both men’s cases underscore a relationship to the universe of terror that totalitarian regimes carefully built. In such a universe, submission to terror was an element of normality. Police spies first submitted to terror as victims of the regimes, but their later actions helped to uphold the very system that oppressed them. By looking at them as the ambiguous

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 214.

enabling wheels of this universe of terror, one ultimately understands where totalitarian regimes first succeeded and then failed: at keeping a hold on their people.

### The First Layer: Untrustworthy Spies

Dobbert's file in the *Polizia Politica* tells us that he was a German “professor of political economy, scientist of great value.”<sup>563</sup>

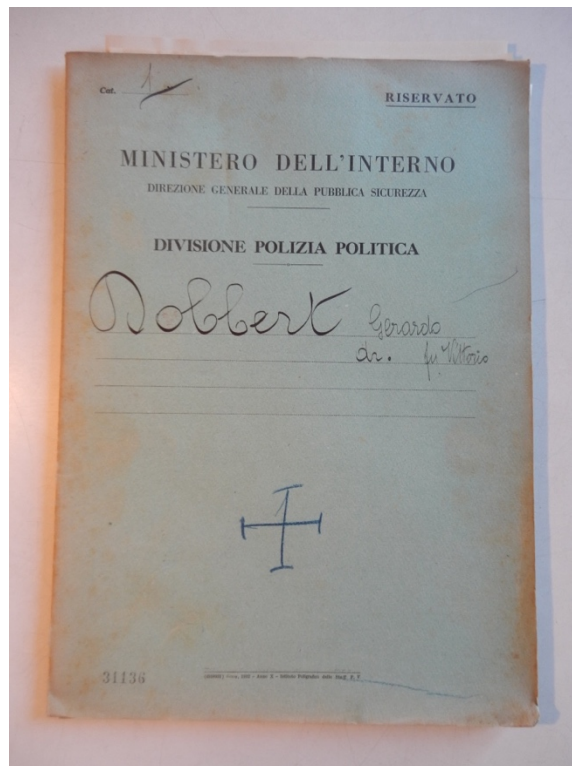


Figure 41: Dobbert's file in the *Polizia Politica*<sup>564</sup>

He was famous for a book he had published on the Soviet economy. He was a member of the National Socialist party, but “since 1931,” says the unsigned note, “his activity has taken place

<sup>563</sup> “Appunto,” no author, no date, in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 446, Dobbert's file: “professore di economia politica, scienziato di gran valore.”

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

exclusively in Italy.”<sup>565</sup> At the bottom of the page, however, the unknown author of the note brings the first serious accusation:

Dr. Dobbert is very well known and appreciated in the milieu of foreign journalists, in the Germanic community and, especially, in the German Embassy. According to what has been reported by a reliable ‘fiduciary’ source [a paid informer], Dr. Dobbert, in addition to being a collaborator of German newspapers, is suspected of being the informer of the German Foreign Office on the Italian financial and industrial questions.<sup>566</sup>

Dobbert was thus accused of industrial espionage. When questioned by the police, he asserted that he was “a convinced admirer of Il Duce, a fervent supporter of His politics, and a cult follower of the corporate discipline,”<sup>567</sup> alluding to his publications, which included a book titled *Economia fascista (Fascist Economy)* in which he openly praised corporatism.

The accusations against Hodel, who was subject to more than a decade of surveillance, were even more substantial. The police took advantage of homosexuals to spy on other homosexuals. In fact, Vittorio Terracini, a “Jewish tradesman from Turin” considered to be a “well-known and incorrigible pederast,” was one of the authors of the reports on Hodel.<sup>568</sup> According to Terracini’s report of December 19, 1936, Hodel had employed his “friend” (a certain Silvio Gasparrini, who had been living with him in Rome) and his nephew Max Boesch in an antiquarian’s shop that he opened in their name. Terracini pointed out that the shop, located in Via della Vite, “was the landing and exchange place for all international inverts, the place of ‘exchange’ and ‘restock’ in

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid.: “Dal 1931 l’attività del Dobbert si svolge esclusivamente in Italia.”

<sup>566</sup> Ibid.: “Il Dr. Dobbert è molto noto ed apprezzato nell’ambiente dei giornalisti esteri, nella colonia germanica ed in ispecie all’Ambasciata tedesca. Secondo quanto è stato riferito da attendibile fonte fiduciaria, il Dr. Dobbert, oltre che collaboratore dei giornali tedeschi, sarebbe sospettato di essere l’informatore del Ministero degli Esteri tedesco sulle questioni finanziarie ed industriali italiane.”

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.: “[...] un convinto ammiratore del Duce, un fervente fautore della Sua politica ed un cultore della disciplina corporativa.”

<sup>568</sup> Benadusi, 219.

the broadest and most obscene sense that can be understood in this particular case.”<sup>569</sup> Hodel was also in close contact with other prominent homosexual informers, such as the journalist Italo Tavolato, who “had actively taken part in the futurist movement and was famous for his articles against traditional morality in *Lacerba*.”<sup>570</sup> A prefect’s report in Hodel’s file states that Tavolato “is another amoral pervert, and as for politics, his sentiments are absolutely not straightforward and sincere.”<sup>571</sup> Tavolato was dismissed from the newspaper *Tevere*, for which he had been a correspondent, for “reasons of morality” and now collaborated with Hodel and Fritz Kusen, also “struck off the journalists’ register for his immoral conduct by the federation of the German press following the discovery of his love affair with Tavolato.”<sup>572</sup> Tavolato is particularly interesting because, thanks to “his knowledge of Nazism, he was even authorized [by the Fascists] to accept secret assignments from the Gestapo and to immediately refer what he discovered about its organization and agents.”<sup>573</sup>

The informers accused Hodel of being a duplicitous spy; the accusations ranged from spreading calumnies against the Fascist regime to being an anti-fascist. An unsigned report dated December 8, 1936, accuses him of having initiated a defamatory campaign against Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Foreign Minister of Fascist Italy.<sup>574</sup> Terracini’s report of December 19, 1936 hints that the purpose of the antiquarian’s shop was also to find a “discreet and safe environment” to pursue

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<sup>569</sup> Vittorio Terracini’s report of December 19, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “La bottega di Via della Vite, fino all’apertura, fu il punto d’approdo e di smistamento di tutti gli invertiti internazionali, il luogo di “scambio” e di “rifornimento” nel senso più lato e più osceno che si può intendere nella fattispecie.”

<sup>570</sup> Benadusi, 223.

<sup>571</sup> Report of the prefect of the *Questura* (central police station), December 3, 1929 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “Costui è un altro amorale, pervertito, e, quanto a politica, i suoi sentimenti non sono affatto schietti e genuini.”

<sup>572</sup> Benadusi, 224.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>574</sup> Report, no author, December 8, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file.

his anti-fascist activities.<sup>575</sup> Another anonymous report, dated March 8, 1937, claims that Hodel “continuously tries to diminish the value of Italian foreign politics and to ridicule all the internal provisions of the Fascist government, not hesitating to offend the very person of the Head of the Government, Mussolini,” whom he even referred to with the scornful German expression *diesen Burschen* [hence dismissing him as *this guy*].<sup>576</sup>

The archives present us with this first layer of ambiguity: could Dobbert and Hodel, the prominent professor of political economy and the outspoken president of the Foreign Press Association, be loyal spies for the Italian government, or was the first one working for Germany and the second really acting as an anti-fascist at every opportunity? These files underscore my argument that the spies’ allegiance is ultimately deceptive and their loyalty essentially ambiguous. But if Dobbert’s and Hodel’s foreign nationalities hint at possibilities of international intrigue, their charges of “immorality” further complicate the picture. They are not only outsiders because they are foreigners in Fascist Italy; their main crime—which makes them the ideal target of the Fascist threats—is their failure to conform to the gold standard of the Fascist new man.

### **The Second Layer: Victims or Accomplices?**

The second page of the note on Dobbert details the nature of his “immorality”: “Our trustee services, in charge of the surveillance on Dobbert, discovered a dark side of his personality, a side that does not absolutely bring him honor. Dobbert, although married and with a son, has homosexual tendencies with a special fondness for young boys.”<sup>577</sup> In Milan, Dobbert became

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<sup>575</sup> Vittorio Terracini’s report of December 19, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file.

<sup>576</sup> Report, no author, March 8, 1937 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] cerca continuamente di diminuire il valore della politica estera italiana e di rendere ridicoli tutti i provvedimenti interni del Governo Fascista, non evitando di offendere la stessa persona del Capo del Governo, Mussolini.”

<sup>577</sup> Appunto,” no author, no date, in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 446, Dobbert’s file: “Dai nostri servizi fiduciari, incaricati della sorveglianza sul Dobbert, è stato scoperto un lato oscuro della sua personalità, lato che non

acquainted with a procurer, who offered him the services of a young boy, “evidently already educated in such dubious matters.”<sup>578</sup> The boy entered Dobbert’s room where he “played a pitiful comedy, with tears and scenes of sorrow.”<sup>579</sup> The report claims that Dobbert surrendered to the procurer’s offer, but given the young boy’s behavior, he sent him away. But what the informer writing the report defines as a “comedy” quickly turned out to be an extortion and continued as the young boy came back to Dobbert’s room later, accompanied by a “little more than eight-year-old” kid. Dobbert sent them away, but the whole scheme had been organized by the procurer to put himself in the position of blackmailing the professor.<sup>580</sup>

The report states that “the comedy turned into a tragedy” when the boy’s parent sued the procurer for “kidnapping of a minor for purpose of lust” and Dobbert was accused of complicity.<sup>581</sup> Dobbert was arrested on February 6, 1935, released 19 days later, and awaited trial for April 6, 1935. We learn that Dobbert justified the boy’s presence in his room to the Magistrate as some sort of “inquiry of social character” that he was conducting. The informer cynically comments: “An argument which between Germans, maniacs of *Kultur*, could work, but among us [Italians] has a very limited value.”<sup>582</sup> So Dobbert found himself at the mercy of the police chief, who offered him help in exchange for his services as an informer. Afraid of the consequences that the trial could have on his career, Dobbert agreed to be a spy for the Fascists, pledging to the usual contract on March 22, 1935 and taking on the pseudonym of “Gustavo.”<sup>583</sup> Here we see the previously

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gli fa certamente onore. Il Dobbert, benché ammogliato e con un figlio, ha delle tendenze omosessuali con particolare predilezione verso gli elementi giovani.”

<sup>578</sup> Ibid.: “evidentemente già ammaestrato in tali equivoche faccende.”

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.: “con lacrime e scene di dolore.”

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.: “La commedia purtroppo volse in tragedia, perché il genitore del ragazzo presentò querela contro il mezzano [...] per ratto minorenne a fine di libidine.”

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.: “un argomento che fra i tedeschi, maniaci della ‘Kultur’, potrebbe andare, ma da noi ha un valore molto relativo.”

<sup>583</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 156.

described dynamic at play; threatened by the Fascist regime, Dobbert accepted to become its accomplice.

The Fascists exerted a similar pressure on Hodel, as he, too, got caught in a “shameful” accident. In 1936 two grenadiers, Carlo Bertoldi and Pietro Vienna, guilty of exchanging letters (including the one in the introduction) and engaging in inappropriate relationships with Hodel, were arrested and interrogated by the Fascist police. The anonymous informer notes that the Foreign Press president, despite being a spy, had no fear of being exposed: “Hodel, because of the simple fact that he serves the Regime (not even without pay, on the contrary!), believes that he benefits from an absolute impunity.”<sup>584</sup> Evidently the same protection did not apply to his partners. Two French citizens, Émile Jacques Lang and René Germain, with whom Hodel, Bertoldi, and Vienna also had relationships, as well as Hodel’s nephew Max Boesch, were all involved in the scandal. While Vienna did not admit anything in his interrogation, Bertoldi was quite candid and admitted having intercourse with Hodel to receive money.<sup>585</sup> Whereas both Vienna and Bertoldi were assigned to “a specific correctional squad for pederasty,” Hodel “came into possession of some compromising documents concerning his person” thanks to his connections and avoided his and his nephew’s direct involvement in the affair.<sup>586</sup> However, Dino Alfieri—the secretary of Popular Culture at the time—and Galeazzo Ciano persuaded Hodel “not to nominate himself for the post of Foreign Press president again.”<sup>587</sup> Thus he left the position in 1937. Once again, Dobbert and Hodel appear to be both targets and actors of the Fascist repression; they ought to be persecuted “others,” and yet the regime seeks their collaboration until it determines that Hodel is

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<sup>584</sup> Report, no author, no date, in ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, folder 11, Roberto Hodel’s file: “Hodel per il solo fatto che serve il Regime (del resto non gratuitamente, anzi!) crede di godere [di] una assoluta impunità.”

<sup>585</sup> Questionnaire presented to the Corporal major Bertoldi Carlo, in ACS, Ministry of Popular Culture, Gabinetto, folder 11, Roberto Hodel’s file.

<sup>586</sup> Benadusi, 268.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

more of a threat than a resource and wants to get rid of his uncomfortable presence.

Dobbert did not deal so well with the consequences of his actions. His spy career was tragically cut short:

Rome, April 5, 1935

Regarding the sudden and mysterious death of Dobbert, occurring on March 29 [1935] in Milan, we learn now from a German journalist, who received a letter from Dobbert's wife, that [Dobbert] opened his veins and died of loss of blood. The 19 days he spent in Milan's prison shook his nerves too much.<sup>588</sup>

Shocked by the days spent in prison and upset by the potential consequences of his agreement with the Fascist police, Dobbert felt trapped and took his own life. His outsider status was ultimately the greatest factor in his demise. One cannot help but think about Leamas climbing back down the eastern side of the wall at the end of le Carré's novel after Liz has been shot, to be shot and killed also. Is dying the only way of "coming in from the cold" and ending the spy's job? Leamas had tried to erase Liz; he did not succeed: "Liz returns as a catalyst of catastrophe. She exposes Leamas's ruse and causes his death."<sup>589</sup> It is not possible to definitively erase memory or personal feelings: "The willful eradication of memory in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* results in dehumanization until too late when recognition of self-deceit leads to tragedy."<sup>590</sup> In a similar way, Dobbert had deceived himself into thinking that he could spy for the Fascists, but ultimately could not lie to himself anymore.

Hodel, in contrast, had more leeway. An anonymous report of August 19, 1937 states that if

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<sup>588</sup> Letter to the police, unknown author, Rome, April 8, 1935 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 446, Dobbert's file: "Roma, 8 April 1935 // Circa la morte repentina e misteriosa di Dobbert, avvenuta il giorno 29 marzo u.s. a Milano, apprendiamo da un giornalista tedesco, che ha ricevuto una lettera della moglie di Dobbert, che quest'ultimo s'è aperto le vene e che è morto per dissanguamento. I 19 giorni passati dal Dobbert al carcere di Milano avrebbero scosso troppo i suoi nervi."

<sup>589</sup> Hepburn, 169.

<sup>590</sup> Lassner, 207.

when he was Foreign Press president he maintained—at least in public—a certain favorable attitude towards Fascism, now that he did not occupy that position anymore, he dropped the mask at last. The ambiguity of his allegiance to the Fascist regime emerges again from the report. The informer claims that “he generally speaks about the ‘facts’ but avoids naming people.”<sup>591</sup> Lately, however, driven by his resentment against minister Alfieri for the consequences of the scandal we discussed before, Hodel had accused Alfieri of being “not only one of the major cretins of Italy, but also one of the greediest profiteers.”<sup>592</sup> Not a very subtle move for a spy—maybe a deliberate attack to the regime? The Fascists also accused Hodel, who was also the correspondent for the Swiss daily newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, of damaging the regime in his articles. In November 1938, another anonymous report accuses him of defeatism: Hodel criticized Mussolini’s autarchic politics on grounds that the future generation had to pay its price, “unless a war made Italy the most miserable and poorest country on earth,” and then claimed that Italy would never take part in a European war because Fascism’s days were numbered.<sup>593</sup> As Benadusi remarked, some of Hodel’s friends claim that “he became anti-Fascist when Italy joined forces with Germany and the Axis; and that his hatred of Germany derived from the fact that Hitler and Himmler persecuted pederasts.”<sup>594</sup> He appeared to some to be increasingly critical of the regime, while simultaneously spying for the Fascists and pretending to others to be loyal to it. And yet, it is only fitting that Hodel, as an outsider, escapes our categories: neither a Fascist nor anti-fascist, but certainly not ideologically close to the regime.

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<sup>591</sup> Report, no author, Rome, August 19, 1937 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “Hodel in genere parla dei ‘fatti’ e si guarda dal fare i nomi.”

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.: “[...] ultimamente però, spinto dal suo risentimento contro Alfieri, egli lo accusò di essere ‘non soltanto uno dei maggiori cretini d’Italia, ma anche uno dei più avidi affaristi’.”

<sup>593</sup> Report, no author, Rome, November 25, 1938 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] a meno che una guerra non faccia già prima dell’Italia il Paese più misero e più povero del mondo.”

<sup>594</sup> Benadusi, 269.

The notes mention a potential expulsion of Hodel from Italy in February 1939.<sup>595</sup> Hodel's situation becomes even more precarious in the extreme tension preceding Italy's declaration of war when the regime needed the Italians' trust and could therefore not accept a critical voice. Nevertheless, better connected and more resourceful than Dobbert, Hodel managed to have the measure of expulsion revoked and in 1941, after a trip to Switzerland, was authorized to return to Italy. Tavolato continued to keep tabs on him, but Hodel remained unscathed. We are left with the implications of Hodel's ambiguous outsider status; his only allegiance seems to be to himself and to his survival.

Are Dobbert and Hodel victims or accomplices of the regime? Dobbert was already a member of the Nazi party before being threatened into becoming a spy for the Fascists, but what was the extent of his collusion with Nazi politics? Was he really a spy for the Germans or was he simply a party member for convenience? Does the tragic end of his spy career make him a victim? And what about Hodel? Was he forced to work for the Fascists or did he gain real benefits from his position as president of the foreign press association and his life in Italy? Was he really committed to criticizing the regime while keeping up the pretense of steering the foreign press towards pro-Fascist positions? These questions matter because, as stated before, these outsiders—these imperfect spies—ultimately appear to be the ambiguous enabling wheels of the machine of terror that the Fascist regime sought to create. They are proof that in the Fascist totalitarianism, repression was not totally and perfectly enforced.

### **The Third Layer: Bending “Moral” Values to Political Needs**

The issue of Dobbert's dubious “culpability” in the scandal he was involved in is explicitly

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<sup>595</sup> Note, no author, Rome, February 20, 1939 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel's file.

discussed by the informer who wrote the report: “As a whole, Dobbert’s responsibility in such a dubious business is very relative: without doubt he, in the first instance, attracted by the procurer’s offer, wanted to take advantage of it, but when he understood the boy’s game he returned to his senses and certainly gave up any aim. Thus we are only in the field of intentions.”<sup>596</sup> It seems as if the author of the report is trying to find a mitigating circumstance for Dobbert, though that would not erase the previously noted “dark” side of his personality. The ambiguity of Dobbert’s agency is mirrored by the ambiguous description of his apparent change of heart.

Hodel’s more voluminous files in the *Divisione Polizia Politica* are heavy with observations about his morality: his moral vices are sometimes mixed with his political ones. The first report, dated April 3, 1928, focuses on his homosexual circle. The attorney Agostino Mormino—himself a homosexual and former assistant editor of *Il Popolo*, a newspaper close to the Italian People’s Party led by the Catholic priest Luigi Sturzo—is identified as Hodel’s procurer, who furnished him with the “boys” for his “orgies.”<sup>597</sup> Their “acts of depravation” are detailed in several notes. The informers paint an increasingly gloomy picture of Hodel: “Extremely cunning man who knows ‘everything’ about ‘everybody’”;<sup>598</sup> his attitude is “a national disgrace for Switzerland”;<sup>599</sup> “in his long life, he distributed sizable amounts of money to young men who [...] knew him in the Biblical sense”;<sup>600</sup> he is allowed “all licenses, even the most illicit and detrimental, in exchange for his

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<sup>596</sup> “Appunto,” no author, no date, in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 446, Dobbert’s file: “In complesso la responsabilità del Dobbert in sì losca faccenda è molto relativa: senza dubbio egli, in un primo tempo, allettato dalla offerta del mezzano, intendeva approfittarne, ma quando si accorse della commedia del ragazzo, è rientrato in se stesso e senz’altro ha desistito da ogni proposito. Siamo quindi soltanto nel campo delle intenzioni.”

<sup>597</sup> Report of the police chief to the “Questore” (police commissioner), Rome, April 3, 1928 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file.

<sup>598</sup> Report, no author, Rome, February 25, 1933 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] uomo furbissimo che sa ‘tutto’ di ‘tutti’.”

<sup>599</sup> Report, no author, Rome, May 13, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “l’atteggiamento di Hodel è una vergogna nazionale per la Svizzera.”

<sup>600</sup> Terracini’s report, Rome, September 13, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] nella sua lunga vita ha distribuito somme cospicue ai giovani che... biblicamente lo conobbero.”

supine complicity”;<sup>601</sup> his “moral figure is too well known to be further highlighted”;<sup>602</sup> he slanders the Fascists, spreading “mumbles, insinuations, smiles full of significance and wickedness” in the foreign journalistic environments and embassies;<sup>603</sup> his attitude towards Italy is “among the most venomous, devious and immoral, because it offends the profound values of the Italian people in a much more harmful way than the openly anti-fascist attitude of some correspondents of the Foreign Press”;<sup>604</sup> Hodel “while getting older, becomes more and more clownish”;<sup>605</sup> and he has no loyalty whatsoever and is “ready to serve anyone, provided that he can quietly remain in Rome.”<sup>606</sup>

The list is quite impressive, especially the assessment that Hodel may be even more of an anti-fascist than the openly anti-fascist foreign press correspondents. Here, Hodel’s homosexuality and outsider status become a synonym of political dissidence. More than just being an outsider, he voluntarily acts like one. But if Hodel is given greater political agency, the same homosexual spies adopt homophobic language in their reports, as previously seen in Terracini’s description of the antiquarian’s shop. Once again, the Fascist repression is both enforced and disrupted by the outsiders, who adopt a language that condemned their very identity.

Here therefore lies the third layer of ambiguity. Homophobic prejudice was deeply rooted among the Fascists. Although the specific article against homosexual relationships did not make it

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<sup>601</sup> Terracini’s report, Rome, September 19, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “All’Hodel si consentono tutte le licenze, anche le più illecite e dannose, per averne in cambio la supina complicità [...]”

<sup>602</sup> Report, no author, Rome, December 8, 1936 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “La figura morale di costui è troppo nota per essere ulteriormente lumeggiata.”

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.: “[...] mezze parole, insinuazioni, sorrisi pieni di significato e di perfidia.”

<sup>604</sup> Report, no author, Rome, August 19, 1937 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] un atteggiamento fra i più velenosi e corrosivi, più subdoli e immorali, poiché offende i profondi valori del popolo italiano in modo ben più lesivo che non l’atteggiamento apertamente antifascista di alcuni corrispondenti alla Stampa Estera, i quali credono di dover attaccare il fascismo per ragioni ideologiche.”

<sup>605</sup> Report, no author, Rome, April 2, 1940 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “[...] invecchiando diventa sempre più pagliaccesco [...]”

<sup>606</sup> Report, no author, Rome, July 18, 1940 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel’s file: “Hodel è pronto a servire chiunque, pur di potersene stare tranquillamente a Roma.”

into the penal code, homosexuality was listed as a specific category in the surveillance reports, “often referred to in the personal files of people watched by the police precisely for their ‘particular’ sexual tendency.”<sup>607</sup> Difference was perceived as a material, moral, and political threat to the regime. Being “morally acceptable” also coincided with being a true Fascist, on the right political side. The treatment of alleged pederasts was even more ambiguous, “hovering somewhere between sin and crime, vice and illness.”<sup>608</sup> We are therefore confronted with ambiguous definitions and an even more ambiguous outcome. Despite the reports’ ambiguity, the police seemed to be neither motivated by moral concerns nor interested in defending Fascist virility. Instead, they identified a potential informer and used his sexual tendencies as leverage to convince him to become one. The growing intolerance in the reports about Hodel is due more to his growing “antifascism” than to any conduct of his that could have been considered immoral.

### **Conclusion**

In principle, homosexuality was a negative archetype for the Fascists—the absence of virility. This lack was incompatible with the regime’s ideological premises. As George Mosse has clearly shown, Mussolini’s new man had to be quintessentially masculine: a fighter, constantly in action, wearing a uniform, marching, and practicing physical exercise.<sup>609</sup> Could homosexual agents be any of the above? For the Fascists, certainly not. But what they could do was use their “immoral” networks to spy for the regime—a lesser evil for a greater good.

Both the Fascist and Nazi regimes advertised a narrative of morality and respectability, of which the Duce and the Führer were to be considered the embodiment and greatest realizations.

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<sup>607</sup> Benadusi, 212.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 160.

And yet, for the Fascist police, homosexuality became a tool for controlling individuals and turning them into spies at its service, one of many examples of the contradictions between the totalitarian narrative and practice. Instead of safeguarding morality and enforcing respectability, the police “tolerated” homosexuality in exchange for information. The Fascists seemed to clash with their own ideology in pursuing this policy, also constructed pragmatic principles and practices that identified these outsiders as disposable tools—unfit to be Fascists, but useful to uphold the Fascist repression.

The Fascist new man had already found an obstacle in what Benadusi calls the “bourgeois canon of respectability”; while the latter “defended the private sphere from political interference,” Fascism hammered on the heroism of the politically-engaged mass. In their “antibourgeois campaign,” the Fascists preached against the bourgeois man, characterizing him as effeminate and ridiculing him as a dandy.<sup>610</sup> Homosexuality posed an even bigger problem, especially considering the absence of anti-homosexual sanctions in the penal code. Fascism’s response seems to be a combination of concealment and exploitation; homosexual spies could come in handy, as long as their practices were not advertised.

These homosexual spies, however, seemed to be part of a failed “totalitarian experiment,” to use one of Emilio Gentile’s concepts: essentially, the regime’s structural plan to subjugate individuals to its goal and ideological grounds. Gentile notes that the “limits of Fascist totalitarianism are not sufficient to deny that it existed and had effects; in the same way the contradictions between myth and realization do not disprove the importance of the presence and

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<sup>610</sup> Benadusi, 291–92.

function of myth in Fascist politics.”<sup>611</sup> But Dobbert’s and Hodel’s cases are proof that police intimidation does not always lead to the expected results; these spies are imperfect tools, just as their place in the Fascist universe is blurry. Dobbert did not respond well to the pressure; Hodel did not accomplish his task and was ultimately more detrimental than useful to the image of the regime abroad.

If the archival documents about Dobbert and Hodel suggest insights about the police exploitation of homosexual informers, they also voice the regime’s concern for Italy’s international power and the view of the country in the foreign public opinion. Mussolini cared enormously about the view of the regime from abroad. His plans for a “national regeneration” and crafting of a Fascist new man were paired with illusions of national conquest.<sup>612</sup> He dreamed of creating “a Mediterranean and Red Sea empire”—a dream that later escalated with the invasion of Ethiopia.<sup>613</sup> Thus, foreign spies could also be tasked to influence the foreign public opinion in favor of the regime.

The biggest concern with Dobbert seems to be that he might reveal industrial secrets to Germany. His expertise in economics makes him even more dangerous in the eyes of the Fascist regime. An anonymous report of June 12, 1934 specifies that he is well suited for this kind of espionage “for his incredible knowledge of the world economy.”<sup>614</sup> The same concern about Germany appears in some reports in Hodel’s file, such as one titled “Trustee news,” dated April 15, 1938, where the unknown author discussed the issue of Germany’s expansionist goals of

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<sup>611</sup> Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo: Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), 148–50, qtd. in Benadusi, 404.

<sup>612</sup> Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>614</sup> Report, no author, Rome, June 12, 1934 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 446, Dobbert’s file: “[...] attività alla quale egli ben si attaglia per le sue stupefacenti nozioni dell’economia mondiale.”

attaining an outlet in the Mediterranean with Yugoslavia's support—a project that would obviously undercut Germany's friendship with Italy.<sup>615</sup> But more generally and importantly, Hodel is constantly accused of spreading malicious gossip and defeatism about the Fascist regime. While he acts as the police's asset because he wants to remain president of the Foreign Press Association and continue to live comfortably in Rome, he also targets the regime in every possible way. First, he challenges Fascist morality with his immoral conduct; the Fascists consider his relationships with the soldiers particularly worrisome considering the dreaded potential infiltration of homosexuals in the army. Second, he does the opposite of what he is asked—stirring the public opinion in favor of the regime—with his deprecation of the regime's policies, geopolitical role, and hierarchs such as Ciano and Alfieri. Finally, he eludes the Fascist control, with the self-assuredness that the feeling of being essential to the regime gives him. While Dobbert succumbs to the pressure of his new role of spy, Hodel gains more from it than he loses. Surveillance becomes a double-edged sword for the Fascists and sometimes is turned against them by the very ones they thought they were keeping in check. The Fascist repression fails because the spies do not always act in accordance with the regime.

A careful analysis of the documents leaves us incapable of labeling Dobbert and Hodel as victims or accomplices since they occupy an ambiguous, shifting position. We are, however, left with the impression that in the Fascist regime surveillance takes on an agency of its own; the limits of the spies' actions are always defined by the possibility that someone else may be spying on them. This mirroring dynamic has both historical and narrative implications. The historical outcome is the totalitarian's system of surveillance, whose premises of uncontested allegiance and unchallenged terror do not ultimately work. The narrative implications consist of a multi-layered

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<sup>615</sup>“Notizie fiduciarie,” no author, April 15, 1938 in ACS, Divisione Polizia Politica, binder 660, Roberto Hodel's file.

gaze, once again reminiscent of those of fictional characters. Just as we do not know whether Hodel is ultimately working for or against the Fascists, le Carré's *Spy* does not tell us until the end where Mundt's loyalty is. And yet, spy fiction provides that final answer or plot twist that archival documents are more reticent to give.

Even without a definitive interpretation, Dobbert's and Hodel's stories expand our knowledge of the inner workings of Fascist surveillance. Mussolini had deliberately set up this atmosphere. His policy in regard to his regime was reminiscent of the Romans' *divide et impera*: "a system of rivalry and distrust, conflicting ambitions, suspicion, and slander aimed at weakening the power of the most influential *gerarchi* [party officials] and rising above them as the arbitrator of their fights."<sup>616</sup> The secretary of the Nationalist Fascist Party, Roberto Farinacci, "maintained emblematically that 'every Fascist must be a carabinieri [policeman] to the next."<sup>617</sup> The regime thus capitalized on this constant feeling of the spy's insecurity, of being under surveillance, to strengthen Mussolini's charisma as a leader and prevent other Fascists from replacing Il Duce's leadership. Morality and sexual tendency were reduced to tools to keep the wheels of this complex system turning, but the wheels brought the system to places the Fascist regime did not always anticipate.

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<sup>616</sup> Benadusi, 214.

<sup>617</sup> See "Roberto Farinacci ai fascisti cremonesi," *Il Regime fascista*, November 1, 1927, cited in Benadusi, 372, note 7.

**PART THREE:**  
**Espionage & the Subversion of Religious Values**

*Chapter Five*  
**Breaking the Seal of Confession:  
Priests Spying for the Nazis, and the Fascist Infiltration of the Vatican**

**Abstract**

The last part of this dissertation deals with Fascist and Nazi espionage and the subversion of religious values. I focus on spies who subverted the values of their own religious community by betraying it to the Fascists and the Nazis. There were Fascist spies among the high-ranked prelates in Italy. A group of them directly reported to OVRA agent Bice Papeschi, whom we encountered in Chapter Three. With this army of male spies she headed, she succeeded in the difficult task of infiltrating the Vatican. While the archival material suggests that the prelates' guilt is undeniable, the Vatican exerted pressure to have their names taken off the official list of Fascist spies published in the "Gazzetta Ufficiale" n. 145 of July 2, 1946. Priests were also deployed as Nazi spies in France during the Second World War. These cases reinforce my argument about spies as the embodiment of the totalitarian system of terror. Priests—closer to people's secrets than other individuals are—made the perfect spies, reinforcing the feeling of constant insecurity that nourishes totalitarian regimes. The spies' presence within the Catholic Church also brings into question its role as a limiting factor in the power of the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

**Main Characters**

*ITALY*

- Benigni, Umberto (Monsignor) ~ 1862–1934: Member of the Roman Curia who had founded the secret organization "Sodalitium Pianum," also known as "La Sapinière," to spy on other clergymen accused of following Modernism, condemned as heresy by Pope Pius X. He later became a Fascist spy.
- Brumet, Federico (Monsignor) ~ ?–?: Member of the Roman Curia and Fascist spy, part of Virginio Troiani's network.
- Caterini, ? (Monsignor) ~ ?–?: Member of the Roman Curia and Fascist spy, part of Bice Papeschi's network.
- D'Ambrosio, Bianca ~ ?–?: Benigni's secretary and one of his closest collaborators. She took care of relations with the Political Police on Benigni's behalf.
- Fogar, Luigi (Monsignor) ~ 1882–1971: Bishop of Trieste and Capodistria since July 1923, and Fascist spy, part of Virginio Troiani's network.
- Gabrieli, Romolo ~ ?–?: Deputy Prosecutor of the Italian Republic, member of the High Commission for Sanctions Against Fascism ("Alto Commissariato per le Sanzioni contro il Fascismo"), who intended to try the most compromised priests who spied for the Fascists.
- Godina, Giuseppe (pseudonym "Gluck") ~ ?–?: a priest of the "Vicentinum" college of Ljubljana, who spied for the Fascists as part of Virginio Troiani's network.
- Juch, Giuseppe ~ ?–?: Chaplain of the "Fatebenefratelli" hospital in Gorizia, who spied for the Fascists as part of Virginio Troiani's network.
- Mataloni, Pietro ~ ?–?: Benigni's nephew. He managed the editorial agency "Urbs," through which Benigni carried out his anti-Semitic activities. He also handled Benigni's relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Benigni's behalf.

- Pavlica, Andrea ~ 1866–?: Priest who spied for the Fascists as part of Virginio Troiani’s network.
- Pucci, Enrico (Monsignor) ~ 1879–?: Member of the Roman Curia, he was recruited by Bocchini as a Fascist spy and later became part of the network of spies directed by Bice Pupeschi.
- Resci, Giovanni Andrea ~ ?–?: Priest who spied for the Fascists as part of Virginio Troiani’s network.
- Riccio, Vincenzo ~ ?–?: Franciscan priest who spied for the Fascists, first as part of Benigni’s network, and later as a direct spy of the Fascist secret police.
- Stoppa, ? (Monsignor) ~ ?–?: Member of the Roman Curia and Fascist spy, part of Bice Pupeschi’s network.
- Troiani, Virginio (pseudonym “Capranica”) ~ 1882–?: Journalist and head of a network of Fascist informers. He specialized in gathering news in Roman and Vatican financial circles.

#### FRANCE

- Alesch, Robert ~ 1906–1949: Luxembourger priest and spy for the Nazi *Abwehr* in France.
- Masloff, Nicolas ~ 1890–?: Priest who spied for the Nazi *Abwehr* in France.
- Tillion, Germaine ~ 1907–2008: French ethnologist and Resistance member—her entire Resistance network was dismantled because of Alesch and she was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

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While Alesch was wearing the cassock, his blue gaze could appear seraphic, and his parishioners got caught in the trap. But here [in front of the Court], dressed in a gray, well-cut suit, upright, harsh, scornful, full of a violence that he hardly contains, Alesch appears as the too perfect type of the cruel and merciless Aryan. And, during the whole occupation, he was indeed divided between the charity that he practiced in la Varenne-Saint-Hilaire and the most abominable of treasons.<sup>618</sup>

Robert Alesch was a Luxembourger. Born in 1906 in Aspelt, he was ordained in 1933 and settled in France in 1935, where he became vicar at la Varenne-Saint-Hilaire. As the above-cited article excerpt suggests, he passed himself off in his sermons as an opponent of the Nazis, but he

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<sup>618</sup> AN, series F7, folder n. 15306, report about Robert Alesch, press clippings, article published in *Popu*, May 25th, 1948, titled “The abbot Robert Alesch, agent 162 of the *Abwehr*, refuses to explain himself in front of the Court of Justice” (“L’abbé Robert Alesch, agent 162 de l’*Abwehr*, refuse de s’expliquer devant la Cour de justice”): “Lorsque Alesch était en soutane, son regard bleu pouvait paraître séraphique, et ses paroissiens s’y sont laissé prendre. Mais ici [devant la cour], vêtu d’un costume gris bien coupé, droit, dur, dédaigneux, plein d’une violence qu’il contient à grand peine, Alesch apparaît comme le type trop parfait de l’aryen cruel et impitoyable. Et, pendant toute l’occupation, il a bien été partagé entre la charité qu’il pratiquait à la Varenne-Saint-Hilaire et la plus abominable des trahisons.”

was in reality an agent in their service. He led a double life: priest during the day, he lived with two mistresses on rue Spontini in Paris and was paid 12,000 francs monthly to gain entry into Resistance circles and denounce their members.<sup>619</sup>



Figure 42: Robert Alesch<sup>620</sup>

Hitler started World War II by invading Catholic Poland where the Nazis set out to systematically dismantle the Church, arresting and exiling priests and shutting down all places of worship. Pius XII, who had become Pope on March 2, 1939—the eve of the war—took an ambiguous stance toward the Nazis. His first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, called the war “a real ‘Hour of Darkness,’” referencing Luke 22:53, “in which the spirit of violence and of discord brings indescribable suffering on mankind.”<sup>621</sup> However, he officially pursued a policy of neutrality, never explicitly taking a side. John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope* accused Pius XII of directly legitimizing the Nazi regime through the pursuit of a *Reichskonkordat* in 1933 while advancing

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<sup>619</sup> The best source for biographical information about Robert Alesch is the extensive records of his court trial in AN, series Z6, Box 597, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch. See “Procès Verbal” dated January 25, 1949, where the police superintendent writes that Alesch’s appeal has been rejected.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

<sup>621</sup> Pius XII, “Summi Pontificatus,” The Holy See, October 20, 1939, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_20101939\\_summi-pontificatus.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html).

his plan to increase and centralize the power of the Papacy. Cornwell argued that the Pope's agenda was "frequently resisted, not only by indignant Protestant leaders but also by Catholics who believed that his vision for the German Church was unacceptably authoritarian."<sup>622</sup> Hitler obviously saw an opportunity in the treaty. While it "authorized the papacy to impose the new Church law on German Catholics and granted generous privileges to Catholic schools and the clergy," it also forced the "Catholic Church in Germany, its parliamentary political party, and its many hundreds of associations and newspapers" to withdraw "from social and political action."<sup>623</sup> In other words, the Catholic Church in Germany pledged not to challenge the Nazi regime.

Cornwell's book sparked controversy. Holocaust historian Martin Gilbert argued that Pius XII, on the contrary, deliberately acted to save the Jewish people from the Nazi extermination.<sup>624</sup> However, according to Susan Zuccotti's later study of the Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy, the Pope did not issue any specific directive to help the Jews. She credited the individual and spontaneous actions of priests, archbishops, bishops, monks, and nuns in various Italian cities for choosing to shield the Jewish people from prosecution.<sup>625</sup>

The context of France is further complicated by the division of the nation between the pseudo-independent Vichy regime in the south and the occupied zone in the north as established by the Armistice of June 22, 1940. The Vichy leader Marshal Philippe Pétain was not particularly religious but acknowledged that most French people were and that it was worth courting Catholic support. Pétain had married Eugénie Hardon in 1920 in a civil ceremony. He subsequently decided to prove that he was a devout Catholic, stating that "a good Mass never hurt anybody" and had a

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<sup>622</sup> John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking, 1999), 6.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>624</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*, 1st American ed. (New York: Henry Holt, 2003).

<sup>625</sup> Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).

religious wedding in 1941.<sup>626</sup> Pétain's staunch rival and leader of the Resistance, General Charles de Gaulle, was a devout Catholic to the point that he chose Joan of Arc's Cross of Lorraine as the emblem of the Free French forces.

The Nazis targeted the French clergy under Nazi occupation, with Gestapo searches and frequent arrests. In July 1940, the Gestapo searched the residence of Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, for "evidence of collusion between the late Cardinal Verdier and the Jews."<sup>627</sup> That same day, the residences of Cardinal Beaudrillart—rector of the Catholic Institute—the offices of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, as well as those of several youth groups were also searched.<sup>628</sup> Measures against the clergy kept increasing. On September 9, the Bishop of Quimper was arrested "for denouncing German plans to remake Brittany."<sup>629</sup> A German language broadcast announced through Vatican radio that, in Alsace-Lorraine, "Catholic schools have been disbanded, and priests active in educational work have been dismissed from their posts."<sup>630</sup> The Bishop of Strasbourg was prevented from returning to his diocese and his Cathedral was "closed to Catholic services."<sup>631</sup> The Bishop of Metz was also expelled from his diocese. Membership in Hitler Youth organizations became compulsory and replaced all Catholic organizations. Catholic priests were frequently arrested and jailed. Nuns were ousted from their institutions and, in many cases, were sent to Germany by the Gestapo.<sup>632</sup>

While the Catholic Church largely acknowledged and highlighted this Nazi persecution of

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<sup>626</sup> Jean-Louis Clément, *Les évêques au temps de Vichy: Loyalisme sans inféodation: Les relations entre l'Église et l'État de 1940 à 1944* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1999), 156.

<sup>627</sup> National Catholic Welfare Conference, *The Nazi War Against the Catholic Church* (Washington, D.C., United States National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943), 105, <http://archive.org/details/TheNaziWarAgainstTheCatholicChurch>; See also Lucien Lazare, *Rescue as Resistance: How Jewish Organizations Fought the Holocaust in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). She mentions Cardinal Suhard on pages 210 and 212, and Cardinal Verdier on page 161.

<sup>628</sup> National Catholic Welfare Conference, *The Nazi War Against the Catholic Church*, 105.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

the clergy, it was much less upfront about priests who collaborated with the Nazis, a fact that brings into question the Church's assertion that it acted as a limitation or obstacle to the Nazi regime's power. The Vatican's position seems to be changing now. It finally opened up the archives of Pius XII's pontificate (1939–1958) for scholarly consultation in March 2020. The coronavirus outbreak prevented me from traveling to Rome, but a team of seven German researchers from the University of Münster led by Hubert Wolf was able to conduct research at the Vatican Archives for one week after the opening of these holdings and collect initial findings that “the pope, who never directly criticized the Nazi slaughter of Jews, knew from his own sources about Berlin's death campaign early on.”<sup>633</sup> The Vatican chose to hide this sensitive information “presumably to protect Pius's image.”<sup>634</sup> On May 1, 2020, newspapers reported that “Germany's council of Catholic bishops ha[d] finally admitted to the church's complicity in the actions of the Nazi regime during World War II.”<sup>635</sup> The council published a document stating that most German bishops “made themselves complicit in the war” and “told their followers to support the regime during the war,” because they were “motivated by nationalism and anti-communist sentiment and a desire to preserve the church by avoiding confrontation with the Nazis.”<sup>636</sup>

Until the archives of Pius XII's pontificate are analyzed, there will remain a vacuum about the topic of the Church's collaboration with the Fascist and Nazi regime in the scholarly literature. For instance, the aforementioned Robert Alesch—the scope of whose collaboration was remarkable—is mentioned only twice; he is featured in Patrice Miannay's *Dictionnaire des agents*

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<sup>633</sup> Tom Heneghan, “Pope Pius XII, Accused of Silence During the Holocaust, Knew Jews Were Being Killed, Researcher Says,” *Washington Post*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2020/04/29/vatican-pope-pius-records-holocaust/>.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Oliver Moody, “We Were Complicit in Nazi Crimes, Say German Bishops,” *The Times*, May 1, 2020, sec. World, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-were-complicit-in-nazi-crimes-say-german-bishops-3psjlszsb>; TOI Staff, “In ‘Confession of Guilt,’ German Catholic Church Admits ‘Complicity’ with Nazis,” *The Times of Israel*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/german-bishops-said-to-admit-complicity-in-nazi-actions-in-new-report/>.

<sup>636</sup> TOI Staff, “In ‘Confession of Guilt,’ German Catholic Church Admits ‘Complicity’ with Nazis.”

*doubles dans la Résistance*<sup>637</sup> and plays a significant role in Sonia Purnell's *A Woman of No Importance*, which is mostly devoted to the OSS spy Virginia Hall.<sup>638</sup> The archival sources about him—notably his court trial—are still largely unexplored.<sup>639</sup>

The Catholic Church's attitude becomes particularly problematic when the collaborators were high-ranked or particularly resourceful priests because they had more power and could do more harm. We will see that the problem can be traced back to the highest ranks within the Vatican itself. Mimmo Franzinelli and Mauro Canali addressed some of these cases in their excellent works on the Fascist secret police.<sup>640</sup> Carlo Fiorentino is, to my knowledge, the only author who has devoted a whole book to the Fascist espionage within the Vatican, although his study stops at 1939.<sup>641</sup>

I have chosen to compare the Nazis in France with the Fascists in Italy because the Catholic faith has a particular resonance in those two countries and is deeply embedded in the fabric of the states themselves. Even the leader of the French Resistance, Charles de Gaulle, could not fully condemn the Papal Nuncio Valerio Valeri who, after the fall of the Vichy regime, had become *persona non grata* to the French people because of his collaboration with the regime. Valeri was replaced by none other than Angelo Roncalli—the future Pope John XXIII. And yet, Charles de Gaulle could not let Valeri go without awarding him the highest French honor: the Legion d'honneur medal.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Patrice Miannay, *Dictionnaire des agents doubles dans la Résistance* (Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2005).

<sup>638</sup> Sonia Purnell, *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II* (New York: Viking, 2019).

<sup>639</sup> AN, series F7, Box 15306, Dossier SRA 44, report about Robert Alesch; Box 597, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against Robert Alesch.

<sup>640</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004); Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999).

<sup>641</sup> Carlo M Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro: la Chiesa cattolica e lo spionaggio fascista in Vaticano, 1929–1939* (Florence: Casa editrice le lettere, 1999).

<sup>642</sup> Pierre Blet, *Pie XII et la Seconde Guerre mondiale d'après les archives du Vatican* (Paris: Perrin, 1997), 134.

The priests who spied for the Fascist and Nazi regimes speak to my argument about totalitarian proactive persecution. Such a strategy necessitated spies who reached spaces that the Fascists and Nazis could not otherwise infiltrate, both high and low—in other words, inside the Holy See and in the lives of common people. Priests make the perfect spies. People reach out to priests when they are most in need, have something to hide, or want to confess their sinful actions. By breaking the seal of confession, priests could relay their secrets to the Nazis and earn rewards. They were also excellent conduits to enforce the Nazi system of terror and the feeling of constant insecurity that nourishes totalitarian regimes: the perception that you are always watched and never safe, not even in the confessional.

### **Fascism and the Vatican**

Nina Valbousquet's recent work about the Roman Catholic Church shows that there was certainly a connection between Catholic and Fascist anti-Semitism, and that "some sectors of Catholic culture and politics under Fascist Italy were not impervious to racial prejudices and attempted to shape a Catholic narrative on Italian race and racism."<sup>643</sup> The question of the relationship between Fascism and the Vatican has been hugely debated in historiography. Was Italian Fascism an "imperfect" or "incomplete" form of totalitarianism, precisely because of the limitations posed by the Catholic Church's presence? The wholly or partly negative views are largely based on a comparison with National Socialism. For Hannah Arendt, Fascism does not stand up to comparison either with Nazism or with Stalinism.<sup>644</sup> In contrast, Maurice Duverger and Dante L. Germino

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<sup>643</sup> Nina Valbousquet, "Race and Faith: The Catholic Church, Clerical Fascism, and the Shaping of Italian Anti-Semitism and Racism," *Modern Italy* 23, no. 4 (November 2018): 356, <https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2018.34>.

<sup>644</sup> Emilio Gentile, "The Silence of Hannah Arendt: Interpreting Fascism in the Origins of Totalitarianism," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* vol. 55-3, no. 3 (2008): 11–34.

consider Fascism a totalitarianism.<sup>645</sup> The latter notably focused on several characteristics of the Fascist party and regime which he compared with the constituent elements of totalitarianism in order to challenge Italian Fascism's exclusion from the category. Germino highlighted:

the presence in Fascism of several elements considered specific to totalitarianism by Carl Friedrich: eschatological ideology, single party guided by a leader, organized in a hierarchical way and superimposed or intertwined with the State, system of police control against opponents and against arbitrarily designated categories of the population, monopoly of the means of mass communication.<sup>646</sup>

Moreover, he detected in the Fascist ideology (dominated by a totalitarian conception of the state and by the myth of imperial Rome) what he called “a political religion imposed on minds and institutions.”<sup>647</sup> So, even if the Italian Fascist party had limited its ambitions in the presence of the Church, the army, and monarchy, Germino concluded that “Fascism nonetheless remained a totalitarianism, no doubt of a lesser intensity than the Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianisms, but analogous to them in substance.”<sup>648</sup>

Immediately after the arrival of Fascism in power, its democratic opponents—notably Amendola, Dorso, and Salvatorelli—defined the new regime as totalitarian.<sup>649</sup> Alberto Aquarone denied that the Fascist State fully had that nature, once again citing the monarchy and the Catholic Church as limiting factors.<sup>650</sup> Renzo De Felice appeared equally unconvinced that Fascism could

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<sup>645</sup> Dante L. Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power: A Study in Totalitarian Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959).

<sup>646</sup> Olivier Forlin, *Le fascisme: Historiographie et enjeux mémoriels* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.forli.2013.01>. See Chapter Eight: “il affirme au contraire la présence dans le fascisme de plusieurs éléments jugés propres au totalitarisme par Carl Friedrich : idéologie eschatologique, parti unique guidé par un chef, organisé de façon hiérarchique et superposé ou entremêlé à l'État, système de contrôle policier contre les opposants et contre des catégories de population arbitrairement désignées, monopole des moyens de communication de masse.”

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*: “il détecte dans l'idéologie (dominée par une conception totalitaire de l'État et par le mythe de la Rome impériale) une religion politique imposée dans les esprits et les institutions.”

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*: “Le fascisme n'en demeure pas moins un totalitarisme, sans doute d'une intensité moindre que les totalitarismes nazi et stalinien, mais analogue à ceux-ci quant à la substance.”

<sup>649</sup> Jens Petersen, “The History of the Concept of Totalitarianism in Italy,” in *Totalitarianism and Political Religions*, ed. Hans Maier (London: Routledge, 2004), 21–38, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203340288-10>.

<sup>650</sup> Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965).

fully qualify as totalitarian, even if his opinion on the matter fluctuated. In his volume *Lo Stato totalitario* devoted to the years 1936–1940 and published in 1981, he evoked the *totalitarian turn* inaugurated in 1937–1938 and revised his previous conceptions that had led him to underline elements of continuity between the liberal regime and Fascism. De Felice essentially argued that Mussolini, concerned about the problems inherent to his succession—notably the inability of Fascism to form a new elite—chose to take the totalitarian turn to avoid a takeover of power by the traditional ruling groups. This turn entailed several legal measures, including the tendency to politicize civil society and to dissolve the private sphere into the public one.<sup>651</sup> Lastly, Emilio Gentile disputed the theory of an imperfect or incomplete form of totalitarianism, refusing to strip Mussolini’s dictatorship of its agency and responsibility.<sup>652</sup> Gentile argued that “the fall of the fascist regime was determined by the military defeat, not by the monarchy, the Church or the people’s opposition.”<sup>653</sup>

Instead of asking what determined the fall of Fascism, what if one shifts the focus onto the Church itself, asking whether it obstructed or collaborated with the Fascist regime, obstructing postwar justice to cover its collusion with totalitarianism? This is not to say that there had not been a public façade to the Church’s relationship with Mussolini; the latter had recognized the Vatican’s independence with the Lateran Pacts of 1929. We can still see the trace of those pacts every time we walk in the Via della Conciliazione (Road of the Conciliation)—the street that Mussolini commissioned to commemorate the successful conclusion of such negotiations. But the actual

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<sup>651</sup> Forlin.

<sup>652</sup> Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo: Il partito e lo Stato nel regime fascista* (Rome: Carocci, 2008), 307: “i critici negativi si sono trincerati nella difesa di vecchie tesi, ripetendo in coro che il fascismo non fu totalitario perché in Italia c’era la monarchia, la Chiesa, l’esercito; perché il partito fascista fu liquidato politicamente, fu subordinato allo Stato, fu trasformato in macchina burocratica priva di potere, unicamente impegnata nell’organizzare parate e infliggere agli italiani il conformismo dei costumi e la petulante ritualità di uno stile militaristico.” See also Gentile, “Fascism and the Italian Road to Totalitarianism,” *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory* 15, no. 3 (September 2008): 291–302, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00492.x>.

<sup>653</sup> Gentile, “Fascism and the Italian Road to Totalitarianism,” 299.

presence of the Fascist police's spies inside the Vatican is a different matter, and a relevant one in an argument such as mine in which the proactive nature of the dictatorship's surveillance is key, as is the role of its spies in the fabric of such surveillance.

This chapter focuses on one irrefutable fact: the Fascist OVRA recruited spies from among the clergy—not low-level priests, but prelates high up in the hierarchy—who allowed the Fascist secret police to infiltrate the Vatican. The archival documents are proof of their pro-Fascist activity.

Historians are indebted to Romolo Gabrieli for these findings. Gabrieli shares a name with the legendary founder and first king of Rome. But he is no king, merely the conscientious and meticulous Deputy Prosecutor of the Italian Republic and member of the High Commission for Sanctions Against Fascism (“Alto Commissariato per le Sanzioni contro il Fascismo”). At the fall of the Fascist regime, Gabrieli, using the very documentation that we can now see at the Central Archives of the State in Rome, attempted to try the most compromised priests, but the June 22, 1946 amnesty of then-Minister of Justice Palmiro Togliatti saved them. The Vatican even exerted pressure to have their names taken off the official list of Fascist spies published in the “Gazzetta Ufficiale” n. 145 of July 2, 1946,<sup>654</sup> which makes me speculate that there may have been more priests on the original list even if I do not know their exact number. There are only two clergymen in the published list of 622 informers: Enrico Pucci and Vincenzo Riccio. Historian Mimmo Franzinelli recounts in a footnote how, according to Togliatti's former secretary Massimo Caprara, the secretary of the PCI and Pius XII had a very confidential conversation in the early days of March 1945 in the Vatican palaces; the Pope, in quite a categorical tone, “demanded that the priests' names be deleted from the secret lists of the Fascist police, which were about to be

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<sup>654</sup> See for example Monsignor Enrico Pucci's appeal in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 700–704.

published.”<sup>655</sup> Yet, the documentation that Gabrieli and his colleagues assembled to prove the priests’ guilt remains available and can be easily consulted at the archives in Rome.

### Umberto Benigni’s Network

Who were these spies? Let’s start with the veteran of espionage—Monsignor Umberto Benigni.<sup>656</sup>



*Figure 43: Monsignor Umberto Benigni*<sup>657</sup>

Benigni was born in Perugia on March 30, 1862, and officially became a priest in 1884.<sup>658</sup> He quickly moved up the hierarchy; called to Rome, in 1903 he was appointed a member of the historical-liturgical commission (commissione storico-liturgica), and in 1906 became undersecretary to the congregation for extraordinary ecclesiastical affairs (congregazione degli

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<sup>655</sup> Franzinelli, footnote 65, 440: “il pontefice [...] esigeva che dalle liste segrete della polizia fascista, che stavano per essere pubblicate, fossero cancellati i nomi dei sacerdoti.”

<sup>656</sup> Benigni appears in the list of 48 informants who died before 1945, when the High Commission for Sanctions Against Fascism was established. See Franzinelli, 641.

<sup>657</sup> Source: *The Catholic Encyclopedia and its Makers* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1917).

<sup>658</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 257.

Affari ecclesiastici straordinari) and then undersecretary for extraordinary affairs of the Secretariat of State (Affari straordinari della Segreteria di Stato). Benigni remained in office as an undersecretary until March 1911.<sup>659</sup>

A staunch anti-Semite, Benigni had contributed to the spread in Europe of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”: a fabricated anti-Semitic text that described a Jewish plan for global domination.<sup>660</sup> Most importantly, he had founded the secret organization “Sodalitium Pianum,” also known as “La Sapinière,” of which he was general manager. The association, whose purpose was to fight Modernism—condemned as heresy by Pope Pius X in his 1907 encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*—became a powerful instrument of control and espionage of the private life of the upper and lower clergy.<sup>661</sup>

Cornwell described Benigni as “a monsignor of enormous energy and charm who had won the confidence of his Pontiff and several highly placed cardinals”:

He was to hunt down suspect Modernists with fanatical zeal. Although he had studied Church history and had even held a part-time post in the subject at one of the Roman seminaries, he once condemned a group of world-class historians as men for whom “history is nothing but a continual desperate attempt to vomit. For this sort of human being there is only one remedy: the Inquisition.”<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid.; I am indebted to Mauro Canali for all biographical information about Benigni. Further information can be found in: Emile Poulat, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral: Un réseau secret international antimoderniste: La “Sapinière,” 1909–1921*. (Paris; Tournai: Casterman, 1969); Emile Poulat, *Catholicisme, démocratie et socialisme: Le mouvement catholique et Mgr Benigni de la naissance du socialisme à la victoire du fascisme* (Tournai: Casterman, 1977); Giuseppe Perri, *Il caso Lichtner: Gli ebrei stranieri, il fascismo e la guerra*, 1st Italian edition (Milan: Jaca Book, 2010).

<sup>660</sup> Benjamin Wolf Segel, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: The Greatest Lie in History* (New York: Bloch, 1934); Cesare G De Michelis, *The Non-Existent Manuscript: A Study of the Protocols of the Sages of Zion*, English ed., rev. and expanded. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); on Benigni’s antisemitic trajectory, see in particular Nina Valbousquet, *Catholique et antisémite: Le réseau de Mgr Benigni. Rome, Europe, Etats-Unis, 1918–1934* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2020).

<sup>661</sup> Cornwell, 36. Cornwell explains that “Modernism had been identified, for example, in the teaching and works of Louis Duchesne, a Catholic professor in the 1870s at the Institut Catholique in Paris who questioned the notion that God acts in a direct way in the affairs of humankind.” Following Duchesne, his pupil Alfred Loisy “went further by denying that every line of Scripture was literally rather than perhaps metaphorically true.” Their work “provoked the wrath of the Curia, which interpreted all such ideas, even in defense of the Church, as a dangerous challenge to Catholic orthodoxy and Roman authority.” See also Alfred Leslie Lilley and George Tyrrell, *The Programme of Modernism: A Reply to the Encyclical of Pius X., Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908).

<sup>662</sup> Cornwell, 36.

Benigni's Sodalitium Pianum was later extended to several other European countries through his hired informers.<sup>663</sup> Although it was officially dissolved in 1921 by Benedict XV, Benigni kept it alive and put it at Fascism's disposal. Identifying himself using the code number 42, he directed Sodalitium Pianum until his death in February 1934, continuing to report to the Fascist regime.<sup>664</sup>

Gradually moving away from the Vatican, Benigni set up a complex propaganda and information structure based on the Roman Institute of Social Defense ("Istituto Romano di Difesa Sociale" or IRDS) but with a more overtly political intent, grounded in the fight against Judaism and communism. It is not really surprising that the anti-Semite and anticommunist would like Mussolini's dictatorship. Mauro Canali underlines how Benigni happily pledged allegiance to the Fascist values that he related to: "the defense of traditional values, order, the family, the law, and the nation."<sup>665</sup> The IRDS had broad international reach, with affiliated groups in England, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Romania, France, and Egypt.<sup>666</sup>

Benigni's closest collaborators who held institutional positions within the IRDS were his informants in turn: most importantly, his nephew Pietro Mataloni and his secretary Bianca D'Ambrosio.<sup>667</sup> Mataloni managed the editorial agency "Urbs," through which Benigni carried out his anti-Semitic activities. Mataloni also acted as secretary of the IRDS information service, which

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<sup>663</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 257.

<sup>664</sup> I found information reports signed with the number 42 in the following files of the holdings of the Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Materia in ACS: from Box 95, Dossier 5, "Freemasonry" and Dossier 24, "Naples-Freemasonry"; from Box 100, Dossier 1, "Theosophical Order"; Dossier 2, "Italian People's Party"; Dossier 3, "National Fascist Party"; Dossier 8, "Theosophical Order"; and Dossier 9, "International Communism"; from Box 102, Dossier 6, "Opponents"; Dossier 13, "Monarchy, Fascism"; and Dossier 14, "White International".

<sup>665</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 258: "La convergenza con il fascismo era inevitabile; la difesa dei valori tradizionali, l'ordine, la famiglia, la legge, la nazione, spinsero Benigni all'esaltazione del regime mussoliniano al servizio del quale pose la sua organizzazione."

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.; Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 259; Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 20–23.

after the creation of the Political Police<sup>668</sup> was directly controlled by the Ministry of the Interior and the head of the OVRA, Arturo Bocchini.<sup>669</sup> While Mataloni handled the relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bianca D’Ambrosio took care of relations with the Political Police. Canali writes that D’Ambrosio was Benigni’s “true *alter ego*” and continued to direct his network after his death on February 26, 1934.<sup>670</sup> Mataloni and D’Ambrosio, therefore, provided a face for Benigni’s operation, allowing the prelate’s most overtly pro-Fascist activity to remain in the background.

Another important branch of Benigni’s network, although more autonomous, was the Egyptian one directed by the aforementioned Franciscan father Vincenzo Riccio. Riccio appears in the official list of OVRA informers, probably because he later became a direct spy of the Fascist secret police with the number 212.<sup>671</sup> Canali explains that Riccio felt drawn to Benigni because they shared some common interests: notably philofascism and fundamentalist Catholicism.<sup>672</sup> From 1924 to 1931, Riccio passed on information about the Freemasons and subversive movements in Egypt to the Carabinieri’s marshal major Antonio Sechi—stationed at the consulate of Alexandria in Egypt—who forwarded the information to the Foreign Ministry, while Benigni forwarded Riccio’s reports to the Political Police. Riccio became a direct spy of the Fascist secret police in the summer of 1928, maintaining a direct correspondence with the OVRA chief,

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<sup>668</sup> Fiorentino, *All’ombra di Pietro*, 9: Fiorentino explains the difference between the Political Police Division and the OVRA. The Political Police coordinated several offices’ activities such as the postal censorship service and information service directly reporting to the police chief. The Political Police Division used informers who were not affiliated with its administration, recruited from a wide variety of social circles, who reported to the General Direction of Public Security (Direzione generale di Pubblica sicurezza). These informers were therefore primarily tasked with collecting information, and not with enforcing repression, which was instead—at least initially—the main task of the OVRA’s informers. Fiorentino points out in the footnote, however, that there ended up being a certain amount of overlap between the two police services as evidenced by the OVRA informers’ list published in the “Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana” on July 2, 1946.

<sup>669</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 258.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*

Bocchini, to whom he also felt close because they had both been born in the province of Salerno.<sup>673</sup>

### **Bice Pupeschi's Network**

The only other priest to appear in the published list of OVRA informers is Monsignor Enrico Pucci.<sup>674</sup> Born in Rome on February 4, 1879, he became director of the Vatican press office under Pius XI.<sup>675</sup> Pucci also worked for the Secretariat of State and wrote a daily information bulletin in which he reproduced the Pope's speeches.<sup>676</sup> Bocchini recruited Pucchi on October 25, 1927 gave him the number 96 and a monthly salary of 3,000 lire. Pucchi became part of the network of spies directed by Bocchini's lover, Bice Pupeschi, whose profile I analyzed in Chapter Three.<sup>677</sup>

Pucci wrote for the newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*—founded by Mussolini in 1914 after he left the Italian Socialist Party—and for some foreign agencies. Starting with the establishment of Mussolini's first government, Pucci played the role of intermediary between the ecclesiastical hierarchies and the Fascist regime, with the goal of delegitimizing the Italian People's Party (Partito Popolare Italiano).<sup>678</sup> The latter had been founded in 1919 by priest Luigi Sturzo, but it had become an obstacle to Mussolini and the Fascist party's hegemonic plans. On June 25, 1923, in the midst of the parliamentary clash on the new majority electoral law promoted by Acerbo—a law that Mussolini wanted in order to give the Fascist party the majority of deputies—Monsignor

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Files about Enrico Pucci can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 1073, Dossier “Pucci, Enrico”; and Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Riservati, Archivio Generale (1870-1958), Categorie Permanenti, 1894–1958, A1, Informazioni Su Persone 1911–1943, Box 1941, Dossier 85, “Pucci, Enrico”.

<sup>675</sup> Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 11.

<sup>676</sup> Marc Agostino, *Le pape Pie XI et l'opinion, 1922-1939* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1991), 217.

<sup>677</sup> Cf. detailed biographical note 81 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 259; Bice Pupeschi's court trial file can be found at the Rome State Archive [hereafter ASR], in the holdings of the Corte D'Assise, Sezione Speciale, 1946, Dossier 119, “Pupeschi, Bice”.

<sup>678</sup> Stefano Jacini, *Storia del Partito popolare italiano*, 1st edition (Milan: Garzanti, 1951); Gabriella Fanello Marcucci, *Luigi Sturzo: vita e battaglie per la libertà del fondatore del Partito popolare italiano*, 1st edition (Milan: Mondadori, 2004); Luigi Sturzo, *Il Partito popolare italiano*, 1st edition (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1956); Gabriele De Rosa, *Il Partito popolare italiano*, 1st edition (Bari: Laterza, 1988).

Pucci published an article in the *Corriere d'Italia* (promptly relaunched by the Catholic periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*) in which he warned Sturzo not to let his political commitment create embarrassing situations for the Holy See.<sup>679</sup> Pucci's quiet threats played a significant role in inducing the secretary of the People's Party to abandon Italian political life.

Mimmo Franzinelli notes that the memoirs of Cardinal Pietro Gasparri—signatory of the Lateran Pacts, who also served as Cardinal Secretary of State under Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI—contain positive judgments of Pucci. Gasparri wrote, in fact, that he knew Monsignor Pucci, having been an apprentice to the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, abbreviated S.C. degli AA. EE. SS.), and that he “esteemed and respected” him.<sup>680</sup> Yet, there is no question that Pucci collaborated with the Fascists. There is proof that he was in correspondence with Mussolini himself.<sup>681</sup> When his name appeared in the famous list of OVRA informers, Monsignor Pucci denied all charges and appealed to the High Commission for Sanctions Against Fascism, which, also thanks to the Vatican intervention in his favor, was forced to acquit him of all charges.<sup>682</sup> But the High Commission had investigated and documented Pucci's espionage activity for Bice Papeschi, even though—as mentioned in Chapter Three—Papeschi had developed a very intelligent system for protecting her sources. Her spies within the Vatican signed the reports with only the number “35 bis,” so that the spy would not be burned if a report was intercepted. Papeschi was the only one who was quite

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<sup>679</sup> Cf. footnote 81 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 259: “un articolo [...] nel quale ammoniva don Sturzo a non creare con il suo impegno politico situazioni imbarazzanti per la Santa Sede.”

<sup>680</sup> Pietro Gasparri, *Il cardinale Gasparri e la questione romana (con brani delle memorie inedite)* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1972), 266, cited in Franzinelli, 259: “conoscevo e conosco Mons. Pucci, essendo stato apprendista nella S.C. degli AA. EE. SS. Veniva da me quattro o cinque volte nell'anno, il più spesso chiamato per qualche rarissima comunicazione che conveniva pubblicare piuttosto nel *Corriere* che nell'*Osservatore*. Ecco in che consisteva il mio favore verso Mons. Pucci, che io stimavo e stimo.”

<sup>681</sup> Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 11. Fiorentino writes that Pucci had given Mussolini the text of Cardinal Cerretti's memoirs on the talks between him and Orlando that had taken place in Paris in 1919. This relationship is documented in ACS, SPD, CR, b. 6, fasc. “Questione Romana”, sottofasc. 6.

<sup>682</sup> See Fiorentino, 12 and document concerning Monsignor Pucci's appeal in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 700–704.

visible, and in fact ended up on the list of OVRA informers. But Pucci had other incriminating documents. For instance, Monsignor Luigi Maglione, apostolic nuncio—essentially a diplomat of the Holy See—had written Pucci a letter from Paris on October 7, 1931. He thanked Pucci for informing him that a certain Pasquale Maglione,<sup>683</sup> owner of a bookshop in Via Due Macelli and another sub-trustee in the service of Bice Pupeschi, was pretending to be his cousin. Some photographs of this letter were found in the famous series of files marked “35 bis” connected to Pupeschi. The High Commission speculated that Pucci had shown the letter to Pupeschi, probably to provide the Fascist police with proof of Pasquale Maglione’s unreliability as an informer. In another letter from Bocchini to the then Director of the Political Police Michelangelo Di Stefano, Bocchini wrote: “Let’s tell off the famous Prof. Maglione who quietly deceived us.”<sup>684</sup>

Fiorentino wondered whether Pucci was a regular or occasional informer. The Sanctions Office had not found the originals of his notes nor any specific file in his name, since all original informers’ reports were destroyed and Bocchini specifically ordered the destruction of all the files registered to the sub-trustees on the eve of his death in 1940 to erase these traces of the Fascist espionage.<sup>685</sup>

Pucci was probably only an occasional informer of the police chief, but the important fact is that he performed this task with the Vatican’s assent in exchange for confidential information of interest to the Holy See.<sup>686</sup> In the absence of a real press office in the Vatican—one was established later in the mid-1930s—the Holy See used Monsignor Pucci, editor of his own bulletin, to access the Ministry of the Interior. This claim seems to be confirmed by a careful reading of some

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<sup>683</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 752, Dossier “Maglione, Pasquale”.

<sup>684</sup> See footnote 20 in Fiorentino, *All’ombra di Pietro*, 12–13. See also Carte Gabrieli, Box 10, Dossier 13: “Facciamo una buona tirata d’orecchi al famoso Prof. Maglione che ci ha tranquillamente imbrogliato.”

<sup>685</sup> Fiorentino, 13.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*

information notes contained in the green file pertaining to the prelate; they assert that he offered information to foreign embassies at the rate of 200 lire per news item.<sup>687</sup> Pucci also communicated the texts of treaties of the Holy See to foreign governments before they were officially signed,<sup>688</sup> and monopolized information services for the benefit of many foreign agencies.<sup>689</sup> His varied espionage activity and his tendency to ride two horses was not always tolerated so well:

The notorious Msgr. Pucci—called the “international spy”—seems to have fallen out of favor in Vatican circles, where they have noticed who they are dealing with. It has also been made known that he enjoyed a monthly stipend of 3,000 lire from the General Direction of the Italian Public Security, in order to keep the latter informed of various things concerning the Holy See.

Moreover, since it seems that at the General Direction of Italian Public Security they realized that Pucci pretended to be deaf, this lavish check has been removed, although he was still left with one from the government’s Press Office, at a rate of 2,000 lire a month, again for Vatican news.<sup>690</sup>

The Vatican did not overtly oppose Pucci’s espionage activity, which certainly took place with Pope Pius XI’s consent, at least when the relationship between the Vatican and the Fascist government was good.<sup>691</sup> In 1931, relations between the Holy See and the Fascist regime suffered a major crisis. The Fascist government dissolved Catholic youth organizations and declared that membership in Catholic Action was not compatible with membership in the Fascist party, which essentially meant exclusion from all public and most private employment.<sup>692</sup> Pius XI reacted with

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<sup>687</sup> See information report “56” in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 1073, Dossier “Pucci, Enrico,” cited in Fiorentino, 14.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid., information report “44”, Rome, registered on February 8, 1930.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., information report “44”, Rome, February 19, 1930.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid., information report “40”, Vatican City, September 24, 1930: “Il famigerato mons. Pucci – detto la “spia internazionale” – sembra un po’ caduto in disgrazia negli ambienti vaticani, ove si sono accorti con chi hanno a che fare. Si è anche risaputo che godeva di una propina mensile di lire tremila per parte della Direzione generale della P.S. italiana, onde tenerla al corrente di varie cose riguardanti la Santa Sede. Peraltro, poiché sembra che alla Direzione generale della P.S. siansi avveduti che il Pucci faceva il... pesce in barile, gli è stato tolto questo lauto assegno, mentre invece gli è rimasto quello dell’Ufficio stampa del governo, in ragione di lire 2000 mensile, sempre per notizie vaticane.”

<sup>691</sup> Fiorentino, *All’ombra di Pietro*, 15–16.

<sup>692</sup> Vittorio E. Giuntella, “Alcune riflessioni sopra la crisi tra la Santa Sede e il regime fascista nel 1931,” in *L’Église et l’État à l’époque contemporaine: Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Mgr Aloïs Simon*, ed. Gaston Braive and Jacques Lory, Collection Générale (Brussels: Presses de l’Université Saint-Louis, 2019), 289–300, <http://books.openedition.org/pusl/10062>.

the encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno* (*We don't need*), denouncing the Fascist plan.<sup>693</sup> Fiorentino writes that it seems that Pucci fulfilled his duty toward the Holy See in this moment of tension and worked to spread the Pope's word. Reports about Pucci note that he was well connected—connections that probably protected him from prosecution. One report describes him as “too friendly and obliged to [Cardinal] Gasparri not to serve him faithfully and in preference to the government.”<sup>694</sup> In another note concerning Pucci—this one inserted in the green file that the Political Police assembled about him—an informer asserted that he owed his position in the Vatican “to special and personal protections.”<sup>695</sup> This was further articulated in a 1932 report:

In the Vatican it is suspected that Monsignor Pucci has somehow tied himself to Fascist politics, so they don't trust him completely; however, precisely because of this suspicion, they prefer to use him to make certain cautionary reports public. It is also known that Monsignor Pucci is too intelligent and eager not to ruin his ecclesiastical career to commit reckless acts. He continues to be used as the Vatican journalist par excellence, also in regard to his priesthood ennobled by the honorific title of “Monsignor,” by those trying to conceal the true mind, the whole mind of Vatican politics, from Pucci's eyes.<sup>696</sup>

Both Fiorentino and Franzinelli conclude that Pucci's pro-Fascist espionage “was somewhat marginal compared to his information activity in favor of the foreign press, in particular the American press.”<sup>697</sup> Fiorentino concludes that, with the outbreak of the Second World War,

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<sup>693</sup> Pius XI, “Non abbiamo bisogno,” The Holy See, June 29, 1931, [http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_29061931\\_non-abbiamo-bisogno.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_29061931_non-abbiamo-bisogno.html).

<sup>694</sup> See undated information report in ACS, Ministero Cultura Popolare, Gabinetto, Box 155, Dossier “Year 1927”, cited in Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 16: “troppo amico e obbligato a Gasparri per non servirlo fedelmente e a preferenza del governo.”

<sup>695</sup> See information report “44,” Rome, March 8, 1930, in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 1073, Dossier “Pucci, Enrico,” cited in Fiorentino, 16: “a protezioni speciali e personali.”

<sup>696</sup> Ibid., undated information report, copied on January 22, 1931, cited in Fiorentino, 17: “In Vaticano si dubita che mons. Pucci si sia in qualche modo legato alla politica fascista, onde non si fidano completamente di lui; tuttavia proprio in ragione di questo sospetto si servono a preferenza di lui per rendere pubbliche certe notizie ammonitrici. Si sa poi che mons. Pucci è troppo intelligente e desideroso di non rovinare la sua carriera ecclesiastica per commettere imprudenze. Si continua a servirsi di lui come giornalista vaticano per eccellenza anche in riguardo del suo sacerdozio nobilitato dal monsignorato, pur cercando di celargli la vera mente, tutta la mente della politica vaticana.”

<sup>697</sup> See Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 17–18: “tutto lascerebbe intendere che l'attività spionistica di mons. Pucci in favore del fascismo fosse alquanto marginale rispetto alla sua attività informativa in favore della stampa estera.” See also Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 260.

Pucci's activity was fully extended in favor of the Holy See and in support of the United States.<sup>698</sup>

Though they did not end up in the OVRA informers' list, two more high prelates belonged to the same network as Pucci: Monsignor Caterini and Monsignor Stoppa. I note them here because they were also high-ranked prelates and further highlight the extent of the Fascist network's reach. According to the High Commission for Sanctions Against Fascism, they had been enlisted by Bocchini to act as *minutants* (to draft the letters) for the Ecclesiastical Congregations, through which they could easily access the ordinary and secret Vatican archives.<sup>699</sup> Fiorentino and Canali differ in their interpretations. According to Fiorentino, the Caterini to whom the Sanctions Office alluded was Monsignor Ernesto Caterini, a member of the College of Apostolic Protonotaries (*Collegio dei Protonotari apostolici*) and not of the Ecclesiastical Congregations. Fiorentino states that the Political Police informer is therefore probably is not this prelate, but rather his nephew Count Stanislao Caterini, employed by the Secretariat of State. Count Caterini had been abruptly removed from the Vatican in 1931, precisely because of his Fascist espionage activity.<sup>700</sup> Canali, however, thinks that the spy was Filippo Caterini of the Roman convent of S. Sabina, who in 1937 was director of the magazine *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*.<sup>701</sup> There are no archival documents regarding Monsignor Stoppa.

### **Virginio Troiani's Network**

The most active nucleus of priests in the service of the Fascist political police operated in the north-eastern areas of Italy. The head of this network was former journalist Virginio (also spelled as

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<sup>698</sup> Fiorentino, *All'ombra di Pietro*, 18.

<sup>699</sup> See list of sub-informers of Bice Papeschi's group from 1927 to 1943, in ACS, Carte Gabrieli, Box 10, Dossier 13.

<sup>700</sup> Fiorentino, 20.

<sup>701</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 730. See footnote 354.

Virgilio) Troiani.<sup>702</sup> Born in Rome in 1882, Troiani spied for the Fascists under the pseudonym “Capranica,” signing his reports with code number 40. He specialized in gathering news in Roman and Vatican financial circles, though he occasionally extended his range of action (Franzinelli notes, for example, that in the winter of 1926–27, he carried out an espionage mission in Nice, France). Troiani’s name appeared in the list of OVRA informers published on July 2, 1946; his appeal for deletion from the list was rejected.<sup>703</sup>

Several priests operated as his subinformers: for example, Don Giuseppe Juch, chaplain of the Fatebenefratelli hospital in Gorizia; the priests Giovanni Resci, Andrea Pavlica,<sup>704</sup> and Monsignor Federico Brumet; and, from June 1942, Giuseppe Godina, pseudonym “Gluck,” a priest of the Vicentinum college of Ljubljana and former secretary of the federation of Catholic workers, who began to report on some groups of Slav communists with whom he was in contact.<sup>705</sup> But the most effective and “prestigious” spy of the group of prelates Troiani managed was Monsignor Luigi Fogar, bishop of Trieste and Capodistria since July 1923, code number was 90.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> Files about Virginio Troiani can be found in ACS, Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 5334, Dossier “Troiani, Virginio” and Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Riservati, Archivio Generale (1870–1958), Categorie Annuali 1879–1945, Year 1927, Dossier 17, “Troiani, Virginio”.

<sup>703</sup> See Footnote 33 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 17.

<sup>704</sup> A file for Andrea Pavlica can be found in ACS, “Casellario Politico Centrale”, Box 3792.

<sup>705</sup> Mauro Canali, “I preti spie del regime,” *La Repubblica*, January 10, 2007, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2007/01/10/preti-spie-del-regime.html>.

<sup>706</sup> A file for Monsignor Luigi Fogar can be found in ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 513; the file of his court trial is in ASR, Corte D’Appello, Sezione Istruttoria, Dossier 1010, “Bisogni Sesto and Others”.



*Figure 44: Monsignor Luigi Fogar*<sup>707</sup>

Fogar and Troiani's relationship dated back to the early 1920s. At the beginning, Fogar used Troiani as a conduit to send reports concerning foreigners in Venezia Giulia directly to the head of the OVRA, Bocchini.<sup>708</sup>

Fogar was regularly hired by Troiani as his subinformant in 1939. He did not receive a fixed salary but was reimbursed for his travel and holiday accommodation expenses. The Fascist police force was very interested in the reports that Fogar forwarded to Rome after each of his frequent trips to Ljubljana, where Fogar, thanks to the high-level contacts he had, was able to report on Slovenian irredentism and the danger it posed to the Fascist regime. Subsequently called back to Rome, Fogar reported in detail on the activity of the Roman curia and political life in the Vatican, notably its political maneuvers during the Second World War such as an attempt at diplomatic

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<sup>707</sup> Source: Dizionario Biografico dei Friulani. <http://www.dizionariobiograficodeifriulani.it/fogar-luigi/>

<sup>708</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 266.

mediation between the United States and Japan.<sup>709</sup> He also reported on the activities of various high Vatican prelates who were opposed to the Fascist regime including Monsignor Spada, Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, Monsignor Rossignani, and Monsignor Respighi.<sup>710</sup>

Fogar was instrumental in allowing the Fascist regime to identify its opponents—notably anti-Fascist refugees—and friends within the high ecclesiastical hierarchies. He also reported on some secret meetings between authoritative representatives of the curia and diplomats from the Allied countries. He managed to report on the arrival of top-secret telegraphic dispatches exchanged between the Vatican and enemies of the Axis. Even after July 25, 1943, Fogar continued to provide information by transmitting news about De Gasperi, former deputy and anti-fascist refugee in the Vatican, and “a list of anti-Nazi Germans residing in Rome.”<sup>711</sup> Fogar’s espionage activity continued during the phase of the Italian Social Republic. Canali states that Fogar reported on the Vatican’s reactions to German atrocities and those “committed by the Republican fascists in Ferrara” and revealed “the entry into the Vatican of three fugitive soldiers” who had been welcomed by Osborne, English plenipotentiary minister to the Holy See. Finally—since he was going to be one of the targets of this operation—Fogar reported “on the Allies’ intentions for the punishment of war criminals and the spies of the O. V. R. A.”<sup>712</sup> Despite this conspicuous curriculum vitae, Togliatti’s amnesty extended to Fogar.

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<sup>709</sup> Canali, “I preti spie del regime.”

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 266.

<sup>712</sup> Canali, “I preti spie del regime”: “Egli aveva riferito le reazioni in Vaticano alla notizia delle “atrocità tedesche” e di quelle “commesse a Ferrara dai fascisti repubblicani” e aveva rivelato “l’ingresso in Vaticano di tre soldati fuggiaschi”, accolti da Osborne, ministro plenipotenziario inglese presso la Santa Sede; aveva infine riferito, forse perché la cosa lo toccava direttamente, “sui propositi degli Alleati per la punizione dei criminali di guerra e le spie dell’ O. V. R. A.”

## The Bishop's Deceit

In March 2015, Germaine Tillion made her triumphant entry into the Panthéon together with fellow Resistance fighters Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, Jean Zay, and Pierre Brossolette. One of the most decorated and celebrated Resistance members, Tillion stands as a symbol of women's engagement in the Resistance and of surviving deportation to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Less known is Robert Alesch, the spy who had the Nazis arrest her and who successfully dismantled her entire network.<sup>713</sup>



*Figure 45: Francois Hollande (center) stands on the Panthéon steps between the flag-draped coffins of Jean Zay, Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, Pierre Brossolette and Germaine Tillion<sup>714</sup>*

While I do not know how many priests spied for the Nazis in France and do not have as

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<sup>713</sup> AN, report about Robert Alesch: “ALESCH, après instruction de Melle TILLION, devait établir le contact avec le Capitaine allemand de Fresnes et faciliter les évasions de M.M. VOMECOURT et COLIN. Ces opérations n’eurent jamais eu lieu et il y a lieu de croire que les arrestations de Melle TILLION et de tous les membres du Réseau LEGRAND sont l’œuvre de l’Abbé ALESCH bien qu’il prétend, lui, que les agents doubles : VOLTERS, BARTHELEMY et SCHWEITZER en sont les véritables responsables.”

<sup>714</sup> Source: *The Guardian*, May 27, 2015, s <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/27/french-president-hollande-honours-female-resistance-heroes-in-pantheon>.

much information as I presented about the Italian networks, I believe that focusing on Alesch's case demonstrates the effectiveness of a spy in his position. According to his trial record, Alesch had studied theology in Fribourg, Switzerland. He had been ordained a priest in that diocese, and then moved to la Varenne-Saint-Hilaire in Seine, France in 1935 as assistant vicar.<sup>715</sup> He then became vicar until 1943.<sup>716</sup> The documents paint Alesch as a charismatic figure: "his zeal and activity had earned him the confidence [of] his parishioners and especially his female parishioners over whom he seemed to have a certain ascendancy."<sup>717</sup> Two of these women became his mistresses and were also tried with him: "the women ANDRY and CAHEN [...] were devoted to him body and soul and wittingly or unwittingly served him as accomplices."<sup>718</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 1 of the letter and 838 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch.

<sup>716</sup> "Exposé des faits," page 2 of the document and 650 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch.

<sup>717</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 1 of the letter and 838 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: "Son zèle et son activité lui avaient valu la confiance [de] ses paroissiens et surtout de ses paroissiennes sur lesquelles il paraissait avoir un ascendant certain."

<sup>718</sup> "Exposé des faits," page 3 of the document and 649 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: "Deux d'entre elles, les femmes ANDRY et CAHEN qui auraient été ses maitresses lui étaient dévouées corps et âme et sciemment ou inconsciemment lui ont servi de complices."



Figure 46: Robert Alesch and his mistresses, Geneviève Guillemain and Renée Audry, at the trial<sup>719</sup>

Alesch officially “delivered violently anti-German and pro-Allied sermons from the pulpit which only increased his parishioners’ trust in his feelings.”<sup>720</sup> He was a Nazi spy in reality; the documents allege that he had made himself available to the Nazis “with the aim of becoming head of the Luxembourg Catholic mission in Paris and perhaps hoping, thanks to his new masters, to achieve a higher destiny.”<sup>721</sup> This is how he became one of the most active and dangerous spies of

<sup>719</sup> Source: AN, Series F7, Folder n. 15306, Report about Robert Alesch, Press clippings, Article published in *Popu*, May 25, 1948.

<sup>720</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 1 of the letter and 838 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Dès 1940, ALESCH prononçait en chaire des sermons violemment anti allemands et pro-alliés qui ne firent qu’accroître la confiance de ses paroissiens dans ses sentiments.”

<sup>721</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 1 of the letter and 838 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “dans le but de devenir chef de la mission catholique luxembourgeoise à Paris et d’espérer peut-être, grâce à ses nouveaux maîtres de plus hautes destinées.”

the *Abwehr*: the military intelligence service.

In 1939, Hitler decided to centralize all Nazi secret services in the seven sections of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*—the Reich Main Security Office—whose task under Himmler’s control was to fight all enemies of the Reich inside and outside Germany. German intelligence was therefore divided into two principal bodies: the *Abwehr* on the one side, which had a certain autonomy from the Nazi state; the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) and its Section IV, the Gestapo, on the other, which were totally subordinate to the Nazi party. All systems operated simultaneously and were often in competition. All recruited and used spies.

Alesch received orders from the Nazis to infiltrate Resistance groups. For years, he infiltrated various networks and had their members arrested, deported, and killed.<sup>722</sup>

The summary of the facts that justified his condemnation in his court trial file states the following:

It follows from the depositions of the Germans BLEICHER and SHAFFER that ALESCH had been hired as an agent at the beginning of 1942 by the German Captain FUSCH and that he had placed himself at the disposal of the ABWEHR by reporting on his relations with Resistance fighters. SCHAFFER instructed him to make it so that [Resistance networks] appointed him as a liaison officer in order to be able to make contact with as many Resistance fighters as possible and to report them to his leaders. It appears that ALESCH had succeeded in convincing a certain number of his parishioners—especially the women—of his Resistant attitude.<sup>723</sup>

This explains why the Resistance networks would be particularly vulnerable to his activity.

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<sup>722</sup> Miannay lists the Resistance networks that Alesch infiltrated: “Réseau du Musée de l’Homme; Groupe Gloria-SMH; Réseau Farmer, de Vomécourt; Réseau Jean-Marie, Henri Frager; Groupe Lysiana à Lisieux; CDLR à Caen; Groupe Guibelle à Rouen; Réseau Mithridate.” See *Dictionnaire des agents doubles dans la Résistance*, 41.

<sup>723</sup> “Exposé des faits,” page 3 of the document and 649 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Il résulte en effet des dépositions des allemands BLEICHER et SHAFFER que ALESCH avait été engagé comme agent au début de l’année 1942 par le Capitaine allemand FUSCH e qu’il s’était mis à la disposition de l’ABWEHR en faisant état de ses relations avec des Résistants. SCHAFFER lui donna comme consigne de se faire engager comme agent de liaison afin de pouvoir prendre contact avec le plus grand nombre possible de résistants et de les signaler à ses chefs. Il apparait que ALESCH était arrivé à convaincre de son attitude résistante un certain nombre de ses paroissiens et surtout les femmes.”

Germaine Tillion was one of Alesch's victims. In 1942, Tillion was an ethnologist at the Musée de l'homme and part of a Resistance network that coordinated with another network in Lyon to assure liaison with de Gaulle, the Resistance base in London, and the Allies. She got in touch with Alesch, who obtained her and her fellow fighters' confidence and was entrusted with the crucial task of bringing the network's mail to Lyon. He passed on the messages to the *Abwehr*, and German intelligence made them unusable by the Allies.<sup>724</sup>

Sonia Purnell describes how Alesch operated using the example of OSS spy Virginia Hall: "On August 4—the day before Virginia's recall to London was officially canceled—a youngish priest in long black robes rapped on the high wooden double doors leading to Dr. Rousset's office at 7 place Antonin-Poncet."<sup>725</sup> Alesch demanded to see Dr. Rousset (Virginia's assistant, code name "Pépin"), "explaining that he was the new courier from the WOL circuit in Paris"—meaning that he had the task of bringing the Resistance network's messages.<sup>726</sup> Rousset "had never seen the man before [...] A good Catholic, he was reassured by the visitor's religious calling and, of course, the fact that he knew the protocol."<sup>727</sup> Alesch made another appearance on August 25; this time he insisted on meeting Virginia in person. His German accent sounded sketchy, but Alesch "explained that he came from the Franco-German border region of Alsace, which had been annexed by Germany in 1940, but that he was currently a priest in suburban Paris in a parish called La Varenne-Saint-Hilaire."<sup>728</sup> In this way he easily obtained the money and the information he was looking for.

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<sup>724</sup> "Lettre of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 2 of the letter and 837 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch.

<sup>725</sup> Purnell, 149.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 150.

He appeared to be very skillful at deception:

Alesch had gone out of his way to prove his credentials, including revealing that his own father had been shot by the Germans. He had spouted anti-Nazi rhetoric during their meeting and had on his previous visit delivered what appeared to be extremely useful intelligence on the Atlantic Wall, the massive but as yet uncompleted coastal fortifications that Hitler hoped would prevent an Allied landing in France. He had known *Pépin*'s address and both their code names. Even if Virginia harbored a gnawing doubt, Dr. Rousset was impressed by the fact that Alesch was a man of the cloth and he had heard that he denounced the Third Reich in his sermons. [...] Virginia and Dr. Rousset discussed the abbé, what he could do for them, and decided to welcome him into the fold. They gave him the code name *Bishop*.<sup>729</sup>

After Germaine Tillion's and the other Resistance members' arrest, Virginia started doubting Alesch. When she met with him again on September 2, "she confronted him—but he was quick to explain himself."<sup>730</sup> He also "meekly asked for her instructions and advice. He did what he had rightly observed worked best in winning over a woman who so desperately needed to be needed; he asked Virginia for her support."<sup>731</sup>

Tillion was also in contact with another Resistance network led by Pierre de Vomecourt. The *Abwehr* had arrested de Vomecourt in the course of 1942 and his friends were trying to free him from the Fresnes prison. Alesch, who always appeared very resourceful, told them that he could obtain a German officer's complicity if they paid him 300,000 francs. The Resistance members agreed. Alesch pocketed the money and denounced everybody to the *Abwehr*. De Vomecourt remained at Fresnes while Tillion, her mother, and four members of the network were arrested and deported; two of them died during their deportation. Tillion survived and confronted Alesch at the trial.<sup>732</sup> Of course, several members of the network in Lyon had also been arrested and deported.

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

<sup>732</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, pages 2–3 of the letter and 837–836 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch.

Alesch's chief, Nazi officer Hugo Bleicher—whom we already encountered in Chapter Three—sent him to Normandy next, with the task of infiltrating the local Resistance networks. The documents state that “he is responsible in this region for 34 arrests followed by shootings or deportations. Twenty-eight patriots were shot or did not return from the concentration camps.”<sup>733</sup> The survivors also confronted him during the trial.

The documents list many more arrests that Alesch initiated, together with larger-scale operations. Arrested in August 1945 in Brussels by the American authorities, Alesch was immediately handed over to the French police, to whom he made a confession but tried to minimize his responsibility. The trial documents and the press focus on his attitude in front of the Court of Justice, labeled as “particularly odious and arrogant.”<sup>734</sup> At the trial, Alesch was asked insistently by the presiding judge, Ledoux, if he was born in Luxembourg. After twice refusing to reply, he answered: “I was a Luxembourger. I became a German. Constrained and forced, I did my duty as a German and a soldier.”<sup>735</sup> Such an answer calls into question his sense of national allegiance. Alesch said that he was forced to work for the Nazis, but there is no evidence to back up his statement. Since he was bilingual in French and German, the Nazi occupation of France offered an ideal opportunity for him to enrich himself. In his case, I believe that Alesch did not even hold a strong allegiance to Nazi ideology, simply instead to his personal interests and self-advancement. I base my argument on Alesch's court trial documents. Alesch himself stated that he initially

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<sup>733</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 3 of the letter and 836 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Il est responsable dans cette région de 34 arrestations suivies de fusillade ou de déportations. Vingt-huit patriotes ont été fusillés ou ne sont pas revenus des camps de concentration.”

<sup>734</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 4 of the letter and 835 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Devant la Cour de Justice, son attitude a été particulièrement odieuse et arrogante.”

<sup>735</sup> Article from *Popu*, May 25, 1948, in AN, report about Robert Alesch: “J'étais Luxembourgeois. Je suis devenu Allemand. Contraint et forcé, j'ai fait mon devoir d'Allemand et de soldat.”

“refused, because of his anti-Nazi feelings, to apply for naturalization as a German citizen.” However, he then changed his mind “in the hope [...] of becoming parish priest of St. Joseph’s Chapel (Luxembourg Catholic foreign mission) and it was for the same purpose that he became a member of V.D.B. (Luxembourg Nazi movement).”<sup>736</sup>

The question of these double agents’ national identity frequently comes up in their trials, showing how spies often have a vague and blurred understanding of their national allegiance. This becomes particularly problematic when they are charged with treason to a state. Alesch also tried to argue for miscarriage of justice and have his lawyer delay the outcome of the trial, in part because he had contracted the Spanish flu in 1918 and tried to present its effects on his health as an attenuating factor. However, the psychiatrists found him to be “perfectly aware of his actions”<sup>737</sup> and the Court “noted that Alesch displayed perfect lucidity of mind, and that the conclusions of the experts cannot determine a reduction in its criminal responsibility.”<sup>738</sup> The Court concluded that his crimes were “committed with full knowledge of the facts by an intelligent, skillful and deceitful accused” and so it “could not admit in his favor the least mitigating circumstance even if a Spanish flu may have left some effects.”<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>736</sup> “Exposé des faits,” page 2 of the document and 650 of the general folder count in AN, Dossier 5024 of the Procedure Instructed by the Cour de Justice Du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Toujours d’après ALESCH, quoique sollicité par l’office luxembourgeois à Paris, il aurait refusé à raison de ses sentiments anti nazis, de demander sa naturalisation en qualité de citoyen allemand. Toutefois il ne tarda pas à solliciter son appartenance à la nationalité allemande dans l’espoir dit-il de devenir curé de la Chapelle St Joseph (mission étrangère catholique luxembourgeoise) et c’est dans le même but qu’il devint membre du V.D.B. (mouvement nazi luxembourgeois).”

<sup>737</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 5 of the letter and 834 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “ALESCH était parfaitement conscient de ses actes.”

<sup>738</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 5 of the letter and 834 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “Les débats de l’audience nous ont également permis de constater que ALESCH a fait preuve d’une parfaite lucidité d’esprit, et que les conclusions des experts ne sauraient déterminer une atténuation de sa responsabilité pénale.”

<sup>739</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement adjoint C. Sudaka to Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice (Direction des affaires criminelles et des Grâces), no date, page 5 of the letter and 834 of the general folder count, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against

Charged with intelligence with the enemy, Alesch was sentenced to death and executed on January 25, 1949.<sup>740</sup>

### The Prophet's Double Game

In the folder containing the report about Robert Alesch at the Archives Nationales de Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, there is another about an additional priest who also spied for the Nazis. Nicolas Masloff, vicar at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, got in trouble for selling his information twice to competing Nazi intelligence services—the *Abwehr* and the SD—and was thus deported to the Neuengamme concentration camp.

An article from *Libération* describes him as “large, sluggish, affecting a certain deafness to take more time to fabricate his answers.”<sup>741</sup>



Figure 47: Nicolas Masloff<sup>742</sup>

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Robert Alesch: “La Cour, par son arrêt s’est rendue à nos avis et a estimé que la gravité des crimes commis en toute connaissance de cause par un accusé intelligent, habile et fourbe ne pouvait admettre en sa faveur la moindre circonstance atténuante même si une grippe espagnole avait pu laisser des séquelles.”

<sup>740</sup> Letter of the Commissaire du gouvernement to Monsieur le Directeur des Domaines de la Seine, no date, in AN, Dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the Cour de Justice du Département de La Seine against Robert Alesch: “ALESCH Robert, condamné le 27 Mai 1948 par la Cour de Justice de PARIS à la peine de mort a été passé par les armes le 25 Janvier dernier à 8 heures 55 au Fort de Montrouge.”

<sup>741</sup> Article “« Prophète » dans l’Abwehr. Le vicaire Masloff renseignait également la S.D. pour compléter le dernier du culte,” published in *Libération*, February 8, 1949, in AN, series F7, folder n. 15306, report about Nicolas Masloff: “GROS, poussif, affectant une certaine surdité pour prendre plus de temps à fabriquer ses réponses.”

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

The first time Masloff appeared in front of the Court in October 1947, he was tried only as a camp informer. He was accused of having denounced some other deportees to the SS to obtain preferential treatment in the camp. In contrast, when he appeared in front of the Court again, the prosecution had discovered that in reality he had been “Agent No. 3.350-42 GZ of the *Abwehr*” since 1942.<sup>743</sup> The article states that a German report was discovered “which highlights the true role of the priest, who was nicknamed ‘the prophet.’”<sup>744</sup> Masloff had spied for the *Abwehr* to move up in the hierarchy, informing on other priests who helped the Resistance. But he was too greedy; he sold duplicates of his reports to the *Abwehr*’s rival service: the SD.

Masloff appeared in front of the Court a third time, this time undeniably as a Nazi spy. He had, similarly to Alesch, morphed into a monster in the press’ description: “The denouncer Father Masloff enters for the third time. His smile is sculpted right on his monster head. A still smile.”<sup>745</sup> Masloff was smiling because he believed that he was going to have a good day; it was the day when the witnesses that he and his defense had called—mostly priests “whose ecclesiastical robes occupy the anteroom of the Court of Justice”—were going to be called to the stand and “sing his praises.”<sup>746</sup>

Unfortunately for him, things did not exactly go as planned. None of these witnesses “would swear on the Gospel that Masloff did not betray his fellow captives,” although they would not directly accuse him either.<sup>747</sup> But while Masloff was already celebrating the fact that the hearing

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.: “un rapport allemand a été découvert depuis qui fait ressortir le véritable rôle du prêtre, qui était surnommé le prophète”

<sup>745</sup> Article “Supplément d’information dans l’affaire Masloff. C’était un agent de l’Abwehr depuis 1942 dit un commissaire de la D.S.T.” in *Franc Tireur*, October 23, 1947, in AN, report about Nicolas Masloff: “L’abbé dénonciateur Masloff fait son entrée pour la troisième fois. Son sourire est sculpté à même sa tête de monstre. Un sourire immobile.”

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.: “Les témoins qu’il a fait citer, et dont les robes ecclésiastiques occupent l’antichambre de la Cour de justice, vont chanter ses louanges.”

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.: “Aucun d’eux, bien sûr, ne jurerait sur l’Évangile que Masloff n’a pas trahi ses compagnons de captivité.”

was over, a spontaneous witness who had learned about the trial from the morning newspapers came forward and asked to be heard. It was Commissioner Espailac of Territorial Security, also a survivor of the Neuengamme camp. An article states that “Masloff glanced furtively at the witness. His smile increased, but his eyelids veiled the little glow that suddenly shines devilishly in the bottom of his glaucous eye.”<sup>748</sup> Mr. Espailac declared that Masloff “was an agent of the enemy long before his arrest” and that “he received 6,000 francs a month from the *Abwehr* for the services he rendered to the occupier.”<sup>749</sup> Clearly wanting more money, “he had also found a way to be appointed by the SD,” so the Nazis had arrested Masloff not, as he claimed, for acts of resistance, but because the Germans had caught his scam and found out that he was selling the same information to both services.<sup>750</sup>

Masloff screamed that he did not know Espailac, that the latter had never been deported to Neuengamme, and that Espailac’s name did not appear on the list of his group in the camp. His lawyer rushed to fetch the list. Espailac’s name was in fact there, proof that the witness was telling the truth and that Masloff was indeed the “prophet” of the *Abwehr*.

### Conclusion

The cases highlighted in this chapter show that both low and high-ranked Catholic priests spied for the Fascist and Nazi regimes. Using priests as spies fell within the scope of the system of terror that totalitarian regimes implemented. Priests are generally seen as trustworthy and therefore make the perfect spies—the perfect “traitors”—especially in the context of the Nazi occupation of France

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<sup>748</sup> Ibid.: “Masloff a jeté sur le témoin un regard furtif. Son sourire s’est accentué, mais ses paupières ont voilé la petite lueur qui luit soudain diaboliquement au fond de son œil glauque.”

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.: “Cet homme était un agent de l’ennemi bien avant son arrestation. Il touchait, pour les services qu’il rendait à l’occupant, six mille francs par mois de l’*Abwehr*.”

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.: “Il avait trouvé le moyen de se faire appoiner aussi par le S.D. S’il a été arrêté, ce n’est pas comme il le prétend, pour faits de Résistance, mais parce que les Allemands le prirent en flagrant délit d’escroquerie lorsqu’ils découvrirent que Masloff se faisait payer les mêmes renseignements par chacun des services.”

and of the Resistance.

The analysis of these priests' profiles speaks to the overall argument of this dissertation that these spies augmented the reach of Fascist and Nazi espionage. The Italian networks were extensive; in the French case one priest, Robert Alesch, single-handedly caused much damage to the Resistance. These priests were also used to spy abroad on behalf of the Fascist and Nazi interests. Sometimes their networks, contacts, or friendships preceded their recruitment by the Fascist or Nazi secret services.

A related issue that the chapter examined is the relationship between the Vatican and Fascism, which is important because it has consequences for the very nature of Fascism as a form of totalitarianism. The Vatican did not seem to have acted as much of a limitation on Fascist power. Rather, it acted deliberately to remove the priests who had been included in the official list of OVRA informers and to cover up its collaboration with the Fascist regime. It did so even though the Holy See had itself been the victim of this espionage. Togliatti's amnesty made this effort very easy. Fogar is a good example of how this amnesty saved someone from a conviction since his court trial documents prove that his information activity had continued even after July 25, 1943 and for most of the life of Mussolini's Italian Social Republic. Fogar had even reported on the Allies' intention to punish the OVRA spies.<sup>751</sup>

After the Second World War, the institution of the Catholic Church avoided enacting the necessary critical reflection on its past conduct and on the responsibilities of the prelates who supported the Fascist regime. The Church instead highlighted its role in the fight against Fascism. Pietro Scoppola explained that it was only in this way that the Catholics could claim "their right

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<sup>751</sup> Fogar's court trial documents in ASR, Corte D'Appello, Sezione Istruttoria, Dossier 1010, "Bisogni Sesto and Others."

to participate with other anti-Fascist forces in the democratic reconstruction of the country.”<sup>752</sup> The Catholic Church’s postwar official narrative focused exclusively on the great work of assistance that priests and bishops carried out in favor of the Italian population during the Nazi occupation. There was not even a discussion of the Church’s official agreement with the Fascist regime. The Church presented itself as the pivotal institution that would make the reconstruction of the Italian society possible, especially in a context where the government had failed to address the citizens’ needs; the major failure had happened right after the armistice of September 8, 1943, when Prime Minister Pietro Badoglio and King Victor Emmanuel escaped to Pescara and Brindisi, leaving the country in a state of chaos. The postwar hegemony of De Gasperi’s Christian Democracy facilitated this policy of denial.

As Giovanni Miccoli correctly highlighted, the trouble was that there were *essential consonances* between the Catholic Church and the Fascist regime: “the cult of authority, the corrosive criticism of liberal-democratic thought, in its fundamental nucleus, that is, individualism, the need for discipline, and diffidence for every form of discussion had been the pillars of a harmony strengthened by the perception of the existence of common enemies such as freemasonry, liberalism, communism.”<sup>753</sup> The Church did implement a process of modernization after the Second World War, but this process only occurred at the organizational level and did not include a critical reflection on its policies during the war.

Cases such as that of Monsignor Umberto Benigni also prove that, despite the Vatican’s

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<sup>752</sup> Pietro Scoppola, *La proposta politica di De Gasperi* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1977), 29.

<sup>753</sup> Giovanni Miccoli, “La Chiesa e il Fascismo,” in Guido Quazza, *Fascismo e società italiana* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1973), 185–208, cited in Lucia Ceci, “La Chiesa e il fascismo. Nuovi paradigmi e nuove fonti,” *Studi storici* 55, no. 1 (2014): 127: “Tra cattolicesimo e fascismo - affermava Miccoli - vi erano «consonanze essenziali»: il culto dell'autorità, la critica corrosiva del pensiero liberaldemocratico, nel suo fondamentale nucleo, cioè l'individualismo, il bisogno di disciplina, la diffidenza per ogni forma di discussione avevano costituito i pilastri di una sintonia rafforzata dalla percezione dell'esistenza di nemici comuni come la massoneria, il liberalismo, il comunismo.”

official condemnation of Nazi racism, the Vatican prelates could pursue their own anti-Semitic agenda. Further, some Catholic sectors in Fascist Italy were not impervious to anti-Semitic and racial prejudices. Often, both the Roman Catholic Church and Fascism gave cover to these spies to act on their own pre-existing anti-Semitism and racism.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Betraying Your Own: Jewish Spies and the Deportation of Jews**

#### **Abstract**

This chapter highlights, once again, how the Nazi and Fascist regimes proactively orchestrated their repression. In Austria, Germany, and Italy, the Nazis and the Fascists took advantage of Jewish informers who betrayed their own people, with traumatic consequences for their individual and their community's sense of identity. No spies were needed to arrest Jewish people under normal circumstances, but spies were essential for finding Jews who had gone into hiding in large cities. In France, the Nazis found it more convenient to delegate the task of implementing anti-Jewish policies to the Vichy government and its institutions—in particular, the *Institut d'étude des questions juives* (*Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions*) and the *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (*General Commission for Jewish questions*). Both of them had significant ties to the Germany embassy's intelligence services and Theodor Dannecker, the Paris chief of section IV J of the Gestapo, directly responsible for the "Jewish question." In France, there was not a specific intelligence service employing Jewish spies, but these institutions functioned as "supra-political informers," denouncing Jews until their activity was nearly unnecessary and the Nazi massive system of deportation was well underway.

#### **Main Characters**

##### *AUSTRIA*

- Klinger, Rudolf ~ 1889–1943: Jewish spy in Vienna who worked under Gestapo official Johann Rixinger.
- Rixinger, Johann ~ 1892–?: Gestapo official, head of department II B (called IV B from 1942) and key man in the persecution of the Jews in Vienna.
- Stern, Michael ~ 1897–1989: legal consultant who also worked for the Gestapo in Vienna (although his allegiance to the Gestapo is disputed).

##### *GERMANY*

- Dobberke, Walter ~ ?–1945 or 1946 (alleged death): *SS-Hauptscharführer* and head of the *Jüdisches Fahndungsdienst* (the "Jewish Manhunt Commission") in Berlin, tasked with tracking down Jewish people who had gone into hiding.
- Goldstein, Bruno ~ 1894–?: Jewish man who worked for Walter Dobberke and spied on other Jewish people for the Gestapo in Berlin.
- Isaaksohn, Rolf ~ 1921–1957: Jewish man and Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's second husband, who also worked for Dobberke.
- Kübler-Isaaksohn, née Goldschlag, Stella ~ 1922–1994: Jewish woman who also worked for Dobberke.

##### *ITALY*

- Di Porto, Celeste ~ 1925–1981: Jewish girl in the ghetto of Rome who collaborated with a Fascist gang and denounced members of her community to the Gestapo.

- Grini, Mauro ~ 1910–? (before 1947): Jewish spy who worked for the Nazis in Trieste, Venice, and Milan.
- Terracina, Piero ~ 1928–2019: Auschwitz survivor who came from the same Jewish community in the Roman ghetto as Celeste di Porto.

#### FRANCE

- Abetz, Heinrich Otto ~ 1903–1958: German ambassador to Vichy France.
- Dannecker, Theodor ~ 1913–1945: SS-captain (*Hauptsturmführer*) and Paris chief of section IV J of the Gestapo, tasked with solving the “Jewish question.”
- Darlan, François ~ 1881–1942: French admiral and deputy leader of the Vichy regime.
- Sézille, Paul ~ 1879–1944: notable anti-Semite and leader of the *Institut d'étude des questions juives* (“Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions”).

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In his study of the genocide of Italian Jews, Simon Levis Sullam devoted one chapter to Jewish informers.<sup>754</sup> He described their deeds as one of the most perverse consequences of “the encounter – and the clash – between executioners and victims [...] which pits even victims against each other.”<sup>755</sup> If it is true that the Italian, German, and Austrian populations were often complicit in Fascist and Nazi repression, it is important to show that these regimes had orchestrated this repression proactively. A historical argument that overemphasizes the popular nature of the dictatorships is dangerous inasmuch as it minimizes the Fascist and Nazi regimes’ responsibility for the terror they perpetrated. Instead, one must understand that the Fascists and Nazis adapted their repression to instrumentalize human frailty; their spies and confidential informers often numbered among the individuals they persecuted. The Nazi logic was to recruit spies who already belonged to the social environment they were tasked with infiltrating. It was the most efficient way of proceeding: blackmailing and forcing enemies to turn on their own people. The Nazis extended this system to all the countries they occupied.

In Nazi Germany, and later in the rest of Nazi-occupied Europe, it took little to arrest a

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<sup>754</sup> Simon Levis Sullam, *The Italian Executioners: The Genocide of the Jews of Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018), 118–30.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Jewish person. An anonymous denunciation for a seemingly superficial matter was more than enough. After the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were enacted, one of the main focuses of these denunciations was the charge of “race defilement,” pertaining to forbidden relationships between Jews and non-Jews. All of these cases fall under the Gestapo case files, which the police created “whenever a person was brought to their attention.”<sup>756</sup> When the Nazis understood that they had lost the Second World War and tried to cover up their crimes, they destroyed all of the Gestapo case files except for a few thousand that survived in Würzburg, Düsseldorf (these files are now located in Duisburg), Neustadt an der Weinstraße, and Trier.

In Robert Gellately’s statistics about the circumstances that initiated cases of race defilement and “friendship to Jews” in the Würzburg Gestapo, most of these appear to be the result of spontaneous denunciations. Cases initiated by *Vertrauensmänner* (VM or V-men), Nazi double agents, are nearly absent.<sup>757</sup>

However, there is some evidence that there were some Jews among these *Vertrauensmänner* in Würzburg. They appear among the cases of *unzuverlässige Vertrauenspersonen*: “unreliable informers.” There is a file about a certain Leopold Stern, born in Frankfurt in 1892. Of him, we read in a short summary dated November 4, 1940 that he was in contact with the police center of Bremen and that “by claiming false facts, he tried to obtain a larger sum of money.”<sup>758</sup> Therefore, he was included in a list of unreliable informers.<sup>759</sup> Another example in the list of unreliable informers is Ernst Toch; he “made a series of false statements.”<sup>760</sup> These records or lack thereof elicit an uncomfortable question: how many Jewish informers were there? It is hard to know if the

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<sup>756</sup> Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1935–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 14.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>758</sup> StAWü, Gestapo Würzburg, 15314, Leopold Israel Stern’s file: “Versuchte durch Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen, eine grössere Summe Geld zu erhalten.”

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*: “Siehe Zusammenstellung Nr. 4 über unzuverlässige Vertrauenspersonen.”

<sup>760</sup> StAWü, Gestapo Würzburg, 15314, Ernst Toch’s file: “Hat der Stl. Wien eine Reihe unwahrer Angaben gemacht.”

Nazis destroyed most of the records.

If informants were not usually necessary to arrest the Jewish people under normal circumstances, “there was an important exception: the search for Jews who had gone into hiding, attempting to avoid deportation.”<sup>761</sup> In large cities such as Berlin and Vienna, the Nazis “took advantage of the Jews’ extremely desperate situation,” forcing them to spy on other Jews by promising them preferential treatment—essentially, that they would not be deported.<sup>762</sup> Something similar happened in Italy. It is true, as Levis Sullam underlined, that most informers were “non-Jewish Italians who grasped at the chance to make money, exact revenge, or remove an obstacle in their professional or personal sphere.”<sup>763</sup> However, Jewish spies turned out to be particularly useful to the Nazis when they occupied Rome in 1943. The current historiography is largely limited to national perspectives. I adopt a more transnational approach here which reveals how manipulating and taking advantage of spies and informers among the population that they wanted to persecute was constitutive of the larger Fascist and Nazi policies of repression.

The sources—mostly records of court trials of convicted informers, and the related press coverage—leave little space for the defendants’ voices, so it is somewhat difficult to give an unbiased depiction of their motivations. Dominick LaCapra has further shown that it is also difficult to narrate traumatic events that “pose challenges to both reconstruction or representation and dialogic exchange.”<sup>764</sup> Historians have adopted contrasting approaches in the past, either removing the victims from their narrative or identifying with them completely. Raul Hilberg, in his 1961 magnum opus *The Destruction of the European Jews*, “tended not to employ the

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<sup>761</sup> Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 69.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid.

<sup>763</sup> Sullam, *The Italian Executioners*, 125.

<sup>764</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 127.

testimony of victims and based his study largely on documents left by perpetrators,” while Daniel Jonah Goldhagen “instantiated the possibility of extreme identification with Jewish victims [...] accompanied by an inability to employ evidence to test rather than simply illustrate extremely questionable hypotheses and assumptions.”<sup>765</sup> The issue is further complicated by the fact that the line between victims and perpetrators is sometimes blurred in the case of Jewish informers. They exist in a gray zone to which the usual “grid linking together perpetrator, victim, equivocal perpetrator-victim, collaborator, bystander, rescuer, and so forth” is difficult to apply.<sup>766</sup>

This is why I, unlike many historians, believe that narrative history might help to render the specificity of the individual circumstances of the cases treated here, where the details matter. Such an approach also considers the newest research on perpetrators, notably that included in Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw’s edited volume *Der Holocaust. Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung* (*The Holocaust. Results and New Research Questions*).<sup>767</sup> In Bajohr’s contribution entitled “Täterforschung: Ertrag, Probleme und Perspektiven eines Forschungsansatzes” (Perpetrator Research: Yield, Problems, and Perspectives of a Research Approach), he praised the microanalytical focus on perpetrators and their networks for changing our understanding of how the Holocaust was implemented,<sup>768</sup> but also stated that separating perpetrators from Nazi German society at large is difficult, as is coming up with a strict definition of who qualifies as a perpetrator and who does not. Bajohr cautioned against relying too much on the perpetrators’ personal motivations and biographical specificities, suggesting that researchers combine these insights with structural and institutional analyses.<sup>769</sup> Following this suggestion, my research combines a

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<sup>765</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>766</sup> The concept of *gray zone* was originally developed by Primo Levi in *I sommersi e i salvati* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986).

<sup>767</sup> Frank Bajohr and Andrea Löw, eds., *Der Holocaust: Ergebnisse und neue Fragen der Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2015).

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., 181.

microhistorical approach with a focus on the overarching system of terror that the Fascist and Nazi regimes put into place.

This chapter will highlight how the Nazis used Jewish spies in a similar way in Austria, Germany, and Italy. In the case of the Jews' persecution in France, however, the Nazis behaved differently. Rather than using Jewish spies, they delegated the task of implementing anti-Jewish policies to the Vichy government and state agents of "official" institutions, namely the *Institut d'étude des questions juives* (*Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions*) and the *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (*General Commission for Jewish questions*). They essentially chose to "place the responsibility for their policy of repression" on Vichy.<sup>770</sup> We will see, however, that these institutions had ties to the Nazi intelligence services.

### **From Unreliable Informers to Second-Rate Spies**

Historians of the Gestapo in Vienna described how its "news section" (*Nachrichtenreferat*) created a specific "requirement profile" which, depending on the activity or task to be undertaken, called for *Vertrauensmänner* who belonged to the social environment or milieu that they were ordered to infiltrate—a requirement that forced them to betray their peers.<sup>771</sup> The Gestapo leadership prioritized the surveillance and dismantling of Resistance groups. Emphasis was given to the so-called *Gegnerbekämpfung: the fight against the enemies*.

Between 1938 and 1945, 400–600 spies worked for Viennese Gestapo.<sup>772</sup> It is difficult to find traces of them in the Austrian archives, however, because V-men were not allowed to testify

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<sup>770</sup> Laurent Joly, *L'État contre les Juifs: Vichy, les nazis et la persécution antisémite (1940–1944)* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2018), 63: "faire reposer sur Vichy la responsabilité de leur politique."

<sup>771</sup> See, for example: Franz Weisz, "Die V-Männer der Gestapoleitstelle Wien: Organisation, Personalstruktur, Arbeitsweise," *Zeitgeschichte* 6, no. 40 (2013): 338–57; Hans Schafranek, *Widerstand und Verrat: Gestapospitzel im antifaschistischen Untergrund 1938–1945* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2017); Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Gestapo-Leitstelle Wien 1938–1945* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2018).

<sup>772</sup> Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, 190.

against their victims in court; the Gestapo only provided written evidence to the courts lest their informers be burned.<sup>773</sup> Also, after the bombing of the Vienna Gestapo headquarters on the Morzinplatz at the end of World War II, the Gestapo still managed to destroy almost all their records by burning them in the building's boilers and then in the atrium of the building in Riemergasse No. 7.<sup>774</sup>

In order to ensure the *Vertrauensmänner*'s secrecy, the Vienna Gestapo created two separate files. The first one was stored only in the news section: it contained the informers' personal files, with details about their political and professional backgrounds, circumstances of recruitment, areas of work, and an "employee assessment" in which the agents' efficiency and motivation were highlighted. The second file contained index cards with the informers' code names: ciphers by which they were referred in all forms of correspondence. Thus, full information about a particular V-man can only be acquired if both files are available, which means that historians often know of an informer only by code name and remain ignorant of their true identity.<sup>775</sup> This makes it hard to quantify how many spies there really were, how broad the recruitment efforts were, and to what extent the Gestapo used spies. However, lack of knowledge is not a good reason to argue that spies were irrelevant for the Gestapo actions. Rather, it seems to me that the Nazis have been quite good at covering their tracks.

There were a small number of Jews among these spies. They were certainly instrumental, but not essential, in the Jews' persecution. Right after the *Anschluß* in March 1938, an anti-Semitic wave began, fomented by the countless advertisements from the Reich Commissioner Bürckel. During the course of the war, the Gestapo arrested and easily deported Jews for minor offenses

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<sup>773</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

such as not wearing the yellow star. In most cases, the denunciation of Jewish people led to their deaths.<sup>776</sup> It is nevertheless important to look at Jewish spies in the Viennese case; as Doron Rabinovici explained in his *Eichmann's Jews*, it was precisely in Vienna that Adolf Eichmann developed and tested his model for a Nazi Jewish policy from 1938 onwards, a policy which included incorporating the Jewish community into the Nazi machinery of destruction.<sup>777</sup>

Since many Viennese Jews who knew they were going to be deported had gone into hiding, “Alois Brunner, head of the Viennese Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung*), set up a force composed of Jews—the Jewish Police (*Judenpolizei*, or JuPo).”<sup>778</sup> The JuPo group leaders, known as *levyers* (*Ausheber*) or *grabbers* (*Packer*), were initially chosen from “among the appointed marshals (*Ordner*) from the city’s Jewish religious association, the Wiener *Kultusgemeinde*.”<sup>779</sup> In exchange for their work for the Nazis, “JuPo members were exempt from wearing the yellow star and granted special papers issued by Brunner.”<sup>780</sup>

So, the Nazis learned that Jewish spies could be valuable. Of course, they would not be listed among the *Vertrauensmänner*. They were considered “second-rate spies”: they had no special status and were not formally hired by the Gestapo. They received only temporary protection for as long as the Gestapo needed their services. One group of Jewish spies worked under Gestapo official Johann Rixinger,<sup>781</sup> head of Department II B (called IV B from 1942) and a key figure in

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<sup>776</sup> See “Denunziation als Todesurteil” in Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, 211–14.

<sup>777</sup> Doron Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews: The Jewish Administration of Holocaust Vienna, 1938–1945* (Cambridge, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

<sup>778</sup> Beate Meyer, Hermann Simon, and Chana Schütz, *Jews in Nazi Berlin: From Kristallnacht to Liberation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 249.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>781</sup> See also WStLA, Volksgericht, A1 – Vg Vr-Strafakten, Vg Vr 1866/46, Criminal Procedure against Johann Rixinger (no date).



they were willing to pay.<sup>785</sup> He followed this pattern with several victims, such as Walter Lackenbacher and Othmar Bauer.<sup>786</sup>

Klinger also came into contact with the anti-fascist group led by Ella and Kurt Lingens and Karl Motesiczky and enabled their arrest on October 13, 1942.



*Figure 49: Ella Lingens*<sup>787</sup>

They trusted Klinger when he offered to help Motesiczky's uncle, the banker Johann Lieben, escape to Hungary.<sup>788</sup> The Lingenses were in close contact with the Polish Resistance network through a person named Jurkowski. The latter had asked Ella if she had any contacts who would help a group of Polish Jews escape. The Lingenses sent members of the Polish Resistance to meet up with Lieben and Klinger. Klinger promised to obtain fake passports for the Poles who wanted

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<sup>785</sup> Tausendfreund, 252–53.

<sup>786</sup> See documents of the trial against Gestapo official Karl Zeitelberger (secretary of the criminal police) in DÖW, 19841, Criminal Case of Vienna's Landesgericht or Regional Criminal Court as People's Court against Karl Zeitelberger (Gestapo Vienna), especially Folders 5, 11, and 20. Klinger managed to find where Othmar Bauer had hidden his gold and money, and disclosed the location to the Gestapo. Bauer was arrested and beaten by Zeitelberger and two other Gestapo officers, Koch and Poscher from the Judenpolizei. The subletter Anna Schmidt was a witness to the beating.

<sup>787</sup> Source: Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, 349.

<sup>788</sup> See DÖW, 7245/b, Ella Lingens's statement in "Report on Karl Motesitzky about His Help for Jews.

to flee. As the first Polish people came to Vienna, they were arrested because Klinger had denounced them to the Gestapo.<sup>789</sup>

Other victims of Klinger included Alfred Freisinger, a Jewish social democrat, and his wife Hermione. Freisinger had already been imprisoned in Dachau in 1938 because of his activities for the Socialist Democratic Party. After his return, he became politically active again, distributing an illegal workers' newspaper and giving foreign radio reports. Freisinger met Klinger in the course of his work; and the latter gained Freisinger's trust before having him arrested by the Gestapo and returned to Dachau. Freisinger survived the Holocaust.<sup>790</sup> Klinger frequently invited Freisinger and his wife to his parties; these social gatherings were one of the standard tricks he used to befriend his victims, as Otto Himmler recounted in a letter on July 7, 1948. Also invited to Klinger's parties, Himmler was later deported to Auschwitz with his wife. He survived, but his wife died there.<sup>791</sup>

Klinger also gave statements against "race traitors," such as one against Reinhold Tajoburg on September 30, 1941. Tajoburg was an office worker at the German Reichspost. He was having an affair with a Jewish woman named Therese Sara Orlik and had used his Aryan ex-wife's papers to obtain a passport for Therese.<sup>792</sup>

The archival documents make it somewhat easy to list Klinger's crimes. But how are we to evaluate his ethical responsibility? Did he have alternatives? Could he have tried to escape before resorting to cooperating with the Gestapo? The answer lies in the archives, specifically those of the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*—the Viennese Jewish community's representative body—to

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<sup>789</sup> Ibid.

<sup>790</sup> See appeal against the revocation of the official certificate of Alfred Freisinger, dated August 9, 1949, in DÖW, 18053, Alfred Freisinger's Applications for the Official Certificate (October 14, 1946).

<sup>791</sup> See letter from Otto Himmler, dated July 7, 1948, in *ibid.*, Alfred Freisinger's Applications for the Official Certificate.

<sup>792</sup> See Klinger's statement of September 30, 1941, in DÖW, 51902, documents Concerning Reinhold Tajoburg.

whom the Jews had to address their *Auswanderungsfragebögen* or *emigration questionnaires*. Among these *Auswanderungsfragebögen*, there is one from Rudolf Klinger and Emma Klinger, his wife.<sup>793</sup> But migration was not a real possibility. Rabinovici explained that the *Kultusgemeinde* was actually central to Eichmann's plans; after Austria's annexation to the Third Reich, the Nazis initially closed it down, but Eichmann "reopened the *Kultusgemeinde* office so that the Jewish administration could expedite the persecution and announce and communicate the countless discriminating laws to the Jews."<sup>794</sup> If Jewish functionaries had initially entertained the hope that working there would allow them to help other Jews emigrate, they were wrong. Eichmann reorganized the office according to the "Führer principle": "It was no longer an elected body representing the community but the implementing instrument of the state authority. Löwenherz assumed all rights and obligations that had previously been exercised by various committees."<sup>795</sup> Josef Löwenherz—a Jewish functionary who had been arrested and whom Eichmann had released from prison—was forced to be Eichmann's puppet, ultimately compiling the lists of the Jews to deport together with the apparatus of the *Kultusgemeinde*.

Klinger was not the only Jewish man whose recourse was to work for the Gestapo in Vienna. Another was the legal consultant Dr. Michael Stern (1897–1989), tasked with researching the Jews' hidden property holdings, tracking down their illegal transactions, and even investigating what happened in the Vienna Archbishop's Office.<sup>796</sup> Stern survived; his witness statement is contained in the Gestapo clerk Johann Rixinger's court proceedings.<sup>797</sup> Stern said he had known

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<sup>793</sup> IKG, A/W 2590, Dossier 12017, Rudolf & Emma Klinger's *Auswanderungsfragebögen* or *Emigration Questionnaires* (May 29, 1939).

<sup>794</sup> Rabinovici, *Eichmann's Jews*, 75.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>796</sup> Tausendfreund, 255–56.

<sup>797</sup> See "Zeugenvernehmung" dated April 5, 1946, on p. 147 of the previously cited Criminal Procedure against Johann Rixinger, in WStLA, Vg Vr 1866/46.

Rixinger personally since the end of 1942.<sup>798</sup> Apparently it was through the mediation of a certain Erich Führer—another Viennese lawyer and a friend of the then head of the Gestapo headquarters in Vienna—that Stern was granted permission to “intervene on behalf of the Jews in the Jewish section,” as he put it.<sup>799</sup> Stern appeared to be defending Rixinger in the rest of the statement, arguing that even if the “traffic with the Jews—especially traffic that involved the *Kultusgemeinde*—was his responsibility,” Rixinger delayed deportations. He attributes “the decision-making power in the negative sense” (by which he means “actual deportation or instruction to forward the application for admission to a concentration camp”) to the head of the Jewish department, SS-Sturmbannführer Hans Dörhage. Stern also says that Rixinger became even more reticent to let the deportations continue towards the end of the war, sabotaging the deportation of 500 non-Jewish spouses and “mixed” children to Styria.<sup>800</sup>

Stern—who was probably more resourceful and better connected than any other Jew who spied for the Gestapo—was lucky to survive. The archives of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for

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<sup>798</sup> Ibid.: “Ich kenne den Kommissar Rixinger persönlich seit Ende 1942.”

<sup>799</sup> Ibid.: “Durch Vermittlung Dris. Erich Führer, der ein Studienkollege von mir und ein Du-Freund des damaligen Leiters der Gestapo, Leitstelle Wien war, wurde mir Ende 1942 die Erlaubnis erteilt, für Juden in der Judenabteilung intervenieren zu dürfen.”

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.: “Der Verkehr mit den Juden, insbesondere mit der Kultusgemeinde, oblag allerdings Kommissar Rixinger, war aber von allem darauf zurückzuführen sein dürfte, dass die beiden reichsdeutschen Beamten mit Juden überhaupt nichts zu tun haben wollten. Was das Verhalten Rixingers gegenüber Juden anlangt, so war er zweifellos das retardierende Moment in der Judenabteilung. Einweisungen in ein [Konzentrationslager] erfolgten - um bei dieser Gelegenheit einen vielfachen Irrtum richtig zu stellen - niemals, zumindest nicht mehr in jener Zeit, da ich schon intervenieren konnte, durch die Wiener Gestapoleitstelle, sondern ausschliesslich durch das Reichssicherheitshauptamt in Berlin. Nur der Antrag auf Einweisung in ein Konzentrationslager gingen von Wien aus. Aber auch diesbezüglich hatte, soweit ich beurteilen konnte, das Entscheidungsrecht im negativen Sinne, [das heißt] tatsächliche Verschickung, bzw. Weisung, den Antrag auf Einweisung in ein Konzentrationslager weiterzuleiten, der Leiter der Judenabteilung, Kriminalrat Dör[r]hage. Nur wenn Rixinger Bedenken hatte oder den Antrag auf Einweisung in ein Konzentrationslager aus anderen Gründen schon, wenn möglich, beim Sachbearbeiter verhindern wollte, intervenierte Rixinger in einen oder anderen Fall direkt mit Umgehung seiner direkten Vorgesetzten bei Oberregierungsrat Dr. Ebner, dem Leiterstellvertreter der Gestapo, Leitstelle Wien, früherem Abteilungsleiter der Judenabteilung, der schon Jahre früher bei einem Bezirkskommissariat in Wien mit Rixinger zusammen gearbeitet haben soll und ihm daher offenbar freundschaftlich verbunden war. Gegen Ende des Krieges wurde Rixinger, wenn ich so sagen kann, retardierende Haltung immer schärfer. Er hat zuletzt den Abtransport von circa 500 jüdischen Versippten und Mischlingen in die Steiermark, welche von Berlin befohlen war, durch seine Kommissionierung sabotiert und die Verschickung, die noch Anfang 1940 hätte stattfinden sollen, verhindert.”

Holocaust Studies (VWI) contain a curious exchange between Simon Wiesenthal and Heidi Bauernhauser, a woman claiming to be Stern's girlfriend, who wrote Wiesenthal several letters to convince him that Stern was not a friend of the Gestapo.<sup>801</sup> Bauernhauser's letters suggest that she was emotionally unstable, making it difficult to evaluate the credibility of her claims. Stern thus remains a quite ambiguous figure. The file in the VWI archives also contains an article about Erich Führer, which calls Stern "the main organizer of the Nazi money transfer to Switzerland."<sup>802</sup> The journalist who wrote the article mentioned in passing that "even under Hitler, Führer was a close friend and patron of the legendary Michael Stern, the future doyen of the lawyers of Vienna."<sup>803</sup> By contrast, the Austrian newspaper *Kurier* published an article in which Stern is depicted in more favorable terms:<sup>804</sup>

The brilliant lawyer Dr. Michael Stern, famous for his strong pleas as a defense lawyer, was one of thirty Jewish lawyers who were allowed to represent "non-Aryan clients" in Vienna between 1938 and 1945 as "legal consultants." Stern owed this to his non-Jewish wife Edith, who refused to divorce him and thus protected him from certain persecution by the Nazis. As a baptized Jew, he had to wear the Jewish star like his clients.<sup>805</sup>

The article cites some correspondence taken from the files of Stern's law firm—dissolved in 1999—that historian and journalist Peter Malina studied. The *Kurier* also noted that the material was used for an ORF documentary directed by Karo Wolm and Malina, who researched if any Holocaust survivors had been among Stern's clients. Apparently, Malina found evidence in the

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<sup>801</sup> VWI, Michael Stern's file (1965).

<sup>802</sup> Ibid., Robert Buchacher, "Nazi- und Judenfreund," *Profil*, March 17, 1997, 73, in Michael Stern's file: "Ein US-Geheimdokument bezeichnet den Wiener Rechtsanwalt Erich Führer als „Hauptorganisator“ des Nazi-Geldtransfers in die Schweiz."

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., Buchacher, 75: "Erich Führer war schon unter Hitler ein enger Freund und Schutzherr des legendären Michael Stern, des späteren Doyens der Wiener Rechtsanwälte."

<sup>804</sup> Margaretha Kopeinig, "Staranwalt Stern und die Nazi-Justiz," *Kurier*, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/staranwalt-stern-und-die-nazi-justiz/35.032.404>.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid.: "Der brillante Rechtsanwalt Dr. Michael Stern, berühmt für seine starken Plädoyers als Strafverteidiger, war einer von dreißig jüdischen Advokaten, die zwischen 1938 und 1945 als „Rechtskonsulenten“ in Wien „nichtarische Klienten“ vertreten durften. Stern verdankte dies seiner nichtjüdischen Frau Edith, die sich weigerte, sich von ihm scheiden zu lassen und ihn damit vor der sicheren Verfolgung durch die Nazis schützt. Als getaufter Jude musste er Judenstern genauso tragen wie seine Klienten."

documents that Stern used his Gestapo contacts to help his clients. However, the historian said that he was unable to determine if Stern was a Gestapo informer.<sup>806</sup> Stern was rarely successful in protecting his Jewish clients. Malina found that “more than 400 of his clients fell victim to the Shoah.”<sup>807</sup>

The supposed protection of the Gestapo did not last for most Jewish informers, and they were eventually deported. They were useless as Nazi informers after a certain period of time: specifically, when they lost access to confidential information within the targeted group of Jews. If they became reluctant to provide valuable intelligence, the Gestapo immediately disposed of them. Ella Lingens stated after the war that she heard “that Klinger allegedly, after the fact that he was a spy became too well known, was liquidated by the Gestapo.”<sup>808</sup> On January 28, 1972, she wrote to Herbert Steiner, who worked at the Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance in Vienna (*Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands* or DÖW), and further inquired about Klinger’s fate: “If you know something more authentic about Klinger and his fate, I would be interested.”<sup>809</sup> We know now that Klinger arrived in Auschwitz on October 7, 1943, where he later died.<sup>810</sup>

### The “Graspers” in Berlin

The Nazis recruited some Jewish people in Berlin to catch other members of their community. Jewish spies were called *Greifer*: *graspers* or *catchers*. According to Carsten Dams and Michael

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<sup>806</sup> Ibid.: “Ob er „Spitzel“ der Gestapo war, kann der Historiker nicht beantworten.”

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.: “Mehr als 400 seiner Mandanten wurden Opfer der Schoah.”

<sup>808</sup> DÖW, 7245/b, Ella Lingens’s statement in report on Karl Motesitzky about his help for Jews: “Nach dem Krieg hörte ich, dass Klinger angeblich, nachdem zu sehr bekannt war, dass er ein Spitzel war, von der Gestapo liquidiert worden sein soll.”

<sup>809</sup> DÖW, 50120/Nli2, Ella Lingens’s letter to Herbert Steiner, January 28, 1972: “Falls Sie Authentischeres über Klinger und sein Schicksal wissen, würde es mich interessieren.”

<sup>810</sup> See “Niederschrift” dated December 1, 1945 of the previously cited criminal procedure against Johann Rixinger, WStLA, Vg Vr 1866/46. In the paragraph about Rixinger’s V-Men, it is confirmed that Klinger was killed.

Stolle, “in Berlin 29 so-called Jewish ‘Graspers’ (*Greifer*) took up the offer and hoped through this ‘forced betrayal’ to improve their situation and that of their relatives—often, however, in vain.”<sup>811</sup>

After the “Factory Operation” (*Fabrik-Aktion*) of February 27, 1943 when the last of the Berlin Jews had been rounded up and deported, the Nazis considered Berlin *judenrein* (“clean of Jews”).<sup>812</sup> Yet there were still “between 5,000 and 7,000 Jews” who had “eluded arrest.”<sup>813</sup> So, the “Viennese method” was exported to Berlin and implemented by the Viennese SS *Oberscharführer* Ernst Briickler and Josef Weiszl, who also brought with them three JuPo members: Robert Gero, Walter Lindenbaum, and Wilhelm Reisz.<sup>814</sup> The first search patrol was “set up on the Auguststrasse premises of a Jewish home for children and the elderly.”<sup>815</sup> The Nazis threatened “100 Jews who were living in privileged mixed marriages” with deportation if they did not turn over the Jews who had gone into hiding to the Gestapo.<sup>816</sup> However, this arrangement was not a very efficient way to proceed, “and three weeks later the operation came to a halt.”<sup>817</sup>

“At the end of January 1943, Gero, Lindenbaum, and Reisz left Berlin along with the Viennese SS officials,” and Alois Brunner was left to “set up the network” alone “based on his Viennese experience.”<sup>818</sup>

To track down the Jewish people who had gone into hiding in a more systematic way, the Nazis created a specific “Manhunt Commission” (*Fahndungsdienst*) composed of Jewish spies.<sup>819</sup> The Manhunt Commission was initially housed in the transit camp for deportations on Große

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<sup>811</sup> Dams and Stolle, 69.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>814</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 249.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>819</sup> Dams and Stolle, 40; Tausendfreund, chap. 2.

Hamburger Straße and directed by Walter Dobberke. Dobberke found his new recruits among the camp's inmates, promising them that "their families would go to Theresienstadt instead of Auschwitz."<sup>820</sup> Unfortunately, the camp inmates did not realize that Theresienstadt was merely an intermediate step to the extermination camp.

One of the first Jews who joined the graspers was Gunther Abrahamson. His "task was to locate the addresses of underground Jews."<sup>821</sup> He checked around 15 addresses a day, then reported to Dobberke. He was joined by "Heinz Gottschalk, a 'first-degree Mischling' and former World War I flak officer."<sup>822</sup> After them, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn—with whom we became acquainted in Chapter Three—arrived at the camp.<sup>823</sup> Together with her second husband, Rolf Isaaksohn,<sup>824</sup> she became the best known of Dobberke's graspers.

Stella claimed at her trial to have protected her friend Samson Schönhaus—who had forged several false passports for the Jewish people that the Gestapo was searching for—from arrest by keeping Gunther Abrahamson from revealing his whereabouts to the Gestapo. Stella obtained what she wanted because the Gestapo hoped she would produce Schönhaus' whereabouts; her initial task remained to locate him, but in the meantime Dobberke arranged for her and her parents to skip the following transport to Auschwitz. Dobberke's representative, Commissioner Lachmuth, issued her a permanent pass which allowed her to leave the camp without security and without a Jewish star. She took advantage of the opportunity to connect with friends to find food for her parents who were left in the camp.<sup>825</sup> Since the search for Schönhaus was inconclusive, "Dobberke

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<sup>820</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 250.

<sup>821</sup> Ibid.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid.

<sup>823</sup> See "Lebenslauf," in BAB, DO/1/4060, Isaaksohn Born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid, no date.

<sup>824</sup> BAB, R/58/9684, Isaaksohn, Rolf Israel, no date; BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Band 6, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's Interrogation Protocol, no date.

<sup>825</sup> LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal Case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner Born Goldschlag, Divorced Isaaksohn, Divorced Kübler (1922–1994), main results of the preliminary investigation, page 37: "Auf seine Veranlassung hin erhielt die Angeschuldigte jedoch Gelegenheit, den Leiter des Lagers Große Hamburger Straße, SS-

gave Stella a list of names and addresses of other Jews for her to investigate.”<sup>826</sup>

Unfortunately, the deal that she had secured for her parents was short-lived. Her parents were deported to Theresienstadt in February 1944. She tried in vain to have them removed from the final deportation list or to have them moved to Bergen-Belsen, but despite her efforts, Stella’s parents were further deported to Auschwitz and died there.<sup>827</sup> Witnesses testify to an increasing tension between Stella and Rolf; Stella told Dobberke that her searches were unsuccessful and “clearly wanted to put an end to the collaboration,” while “Rolf [...] categorically denied her statements and claimed to be operating ‘very successfully.’”<sup>828</sup> The results of the preliminary investigation at the trial suggest that their wedding in October 1944 was a pro forma marriage so that the two could not be separated, and she was only allowed to leave the camp with Rolf after marrying him.<sup>829</sup>

A few other Jewish spies worked for Dobberke. Another striking example is Bruno Goldstein, born in Berlin on February 3, 1894. In December 1914, Goldstein was drafted into military service in Poznan (then Posen). He fought in Russia during World War I and was

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Hauptstürmführer Dobberke, zu sprechen, der veranlaßte, daß sie und ihre Eltern den folgenden Transport nach Auschwitz überspringen konnten. Durch Vermittlung des Abrahamsohn wollte die Angeschuldigte über den Vertreter von Dobberke, Kommissar Lachmuth, erreichen, daß sie und ihre Familie nach Theresienstadt gebracht würden. Lachmuth, der ihrem Schicksal Verstandnis entgegenbrachte, stellte ihr einen Dauerpassierschein aus, der ihr ermöglichte, das Lager ohne Bewachung und ohne Judenstern zu verlassen. Sie sollte weiterhin nach dem Verbleib des Schönhaus forschen, nutzte jedoch die Gelegenheit aus, Verbindungen mit Freunden aufzunehmen, um Lebensmittel für ihre im Lager zurückgebliebenen Eltern zu beschaffen und eine geeignete Untertauchmöglichkeit ausfindig zu machen.”

<sup>826</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 257.

<sup>827</sup> See main results of the preliminary investigation in previously cited Criminal Case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner Born Goldschlag, Divorced Isaaksohn, Divorced Kübler (1922–1994), LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, page 37: “Im Februar 1944 wurden die Eltern der Angeschuldigten nach Theresienstadt deportiert. Im Oktober 1944 erhielt sie die letzte Mitteilung, daß deren Abtransport nach Auschwitz erfolgt sei. Seitdem sind die Eltern verschollen.”

<sup>828</sup> Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 262.

<sup>829</sup> See main results of the preliminary investigation in previously cited Criminal Case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner Born Goldschlag, Divorced Isaaksohn, Divorced Kübler (1922–1994), LAB, Series B Rep 058, Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, page 37: “Die Angeschuldigte will nun dem Isaaksohn „vollkommen ausgeliefert“ gewesen sein. Er soll es dabei verstanden haben, die Ehe mit ihr einzugehen. Durch diese „pro forma Ehe“ habe Rolf Isaaksohn zu verhindern versucht, daß sie sich von ihm trennte.”

dismissed as a sergeant at the end of the war in 1918. From 1926 he was entrusted with managing assistants in the Juvenile court (*Jugendgericht*) and discharging the prisoners in the district of Prenzlauer Berg. On June 5, 1931, Goldstein married Else Paysack and in 1939 they had a daughter, Denny.<sup>830</sup>



*Figure 50: Left to right: Bruno Goldstein (probably), Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn, and Rolf Isaaksohn on the Kurfürstendamm, 1940s<sup>831</sup>*

Goldstein was affected by the anti-Jewish legislation in 1933; he was first transferred to the tax office and then finally retired on December 1, 1935. He received a full retirement salary for a time because he had been a soldier on the front. He then became head of the “Jewish Winter Aid” (*Jüdische Winterhilfe*): an aid organization of Jewish communities and associations financed by

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<sup>830</sup> Tausendfreund, 125.

<sup>831</sup> Source: Meyer, Simon, and Schütz, 258.

donations and taxes from Jewish taxpayers. Jewish Winter Aid was formed at the end of 1935 after the Winter Aid of the German People had excluded so-called full Jews from all services.<sup>832</sup>

Goldstein's responsibility changed again in 1939, and he was commissioned to manage one of the Jewish community's clothing stores. These had been set up to procure work clothes for Jews who were not given clothes ration cards. The clothing stores were closed in the autumn of 1942; Goldstein, following the instructions of the "Reich Association of Jews in Germany," had to go to the *Sammellager* in Großen Hamburg Strasse 26: the same camp where Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn and Rolf Isaaksohn also ended up. Goldstein became a steward for the camp. He was responsible for maintaining cleanliness and order and had to prevent the other Jews from leaving the camp without permission. Stewards also had to carry out collection services on behalf of the Gestapo. They were split into two groups of 20 people each, who replaced each other. Goldstein became the head of one of these groups, while Martin Grabowski headed the other.<sup>833</sup>

Goldstein acquired considerable power over his fellow inmates in the camp as he was in charge of controlling security and housekeeping services. He also handled the lists of people destined for deportation. He had the keys to the various cells and took the camp inmates out of them when they were called for questioning. He was very careful to comply with the rules and regulations of the camp management; he reported the other inmates' mistakes, violations, and escape attempts, causing considerable consequences for them.<sup>834</sup>

Harry Schnapp, also employed as a steward in the camp, described in his witness testimony how Goldstein endeavored to enforce other Gestapo prohibitions; for example, he prevented the Jews who were going to be deported from sending a message to their relatives. This was something

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<sup>832</sup> For further information about the Jewish Winter Aid see Götz Aly et al., eds., *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland, 1933–1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008).

<sup>833</sup> Tausendfreund, 126.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid.

they often only had a chance to do at the last minute. They usually wrote a few lines quickly in the camp and then dropped the letter or card on the way to the train station, hoping that some random pedestrian would pick it up and bring it to the post office. According to Schnapp, Goldstein did his best to prevent these messages from being delivered. When the deportations happened, Goldstein usually stood in front of the Jews who were queueing and asked them to hand him all cards and letters that they had written. He had a wastebasket in hand to collect the forbidden messages and reminded the inmates that anyone who was found in possession of a message or was caught throwing away mail on the way could face severe punishment. Schnapp pointed out that “he confronted the inmates in a conspicuously cynical manner.”<sup>835</sup>

So, according to Schnapp, Goldstein made considerable efforts to please the Gestapo—Dobberke in particular—and carry out their instructions correctly. Because of Goldstein’s zealotry, Dobberke started using him for his investigative service (the aforementioned *Fahndungsdienst* or *Manhunt Commission*) in 1944. The many years Goldstein had spent working for the Jewish community made him particularly suitable as an investigator. Various witnesses later alleged that Goldstein had in fact volunteered for the job, bringing many people to the camp who were later deported. Witness Wilhelm Zöllner said that “through this activity from March to July 1944 he has many people on his conscience.”<sup>836</sup>

Goldstein himself denied ever having worked as an investigator. He claimed to only have accompanied Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn and Rolf Isaaksohn on Dobberke’s advice to prevent them from enriching themselves with the arrested Jewish citizens’ property. This is plausible, according

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<sup>835</sup> Harry Schnapp’s testimony from October 3, 1947, in LAB, Criminal case against Bruno Goldstein, Band 1, from page 66 onwards, cited in Tausendfreund, 127: “Er ist dabei in auffallend zynischer Weise den Lagerinsassen gegenübergetreten.”

<sup>836</sup> Wilhelm Zöllner’s testimony from March 5, 1947, in LAB, Criminal case against Bruno Goldstein, Band 1, page 35, cited in Tausendfreund, 129: “Durch diese Tätigkeit von März bis Juli 1944 hat er viele Menschen auf dem Gewissen.”

to Doris Tausendfreund, since there are reports that Isaaksohn had stolen and extorted money and valuables from his victims. Goldstein may have been sent out by the Gestapo to prevent Isaaksohn from further stealing. However, Tausendfreund notes that another witness, Edgar de Vries, who was arrested by Goldstein and Isaaksohn, described that the two men had stolen from him.<sup>837</sup>

The assertion that Goldstein did not officially belong to the *Fahndungsdienst* was also confirmed by Margarete Wüstenberg, who worked as a secretary for Department IV D1 of the Berlin State Police where the individual investigators were registered and received their IDs. Wüstenberg later testified that Goldstein never appeared at the control center and never received any ID.<sup>838</sup>

Whether officially appointed or not, Goldstein did work for the Gestapo in the camp. Despite his zealousness, he was deported with his family on July 20, 1944 to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, confirming the trend of the Gestapo not keeping its promises. The Goldsteins were subsequently sent from Bergen-Belsen to Theresienstadt on April 6, 1945. However, the train never arrived there. It was stopped on April 13 by the Red Army in Farlsleben near Magdeburg, and the prisoners were liberated.<sup>839</sup>

Goldstein returned to Berlin again in summer 1945 and tried to get his old job back at the Prenzlauer Berg district office. However, Werner Kreuziger, who was aware of Goldstein's work for the Gestapo and was employed at the time as a department head at the Prenzlauer Berg Youth Welfare Office (*Jugendamt*), reported him. Goldstein was arrested by the Soviet occupying forces. However, he was soon released because he was able to identify himself as a concentration camp inmate of the Bergen-Belsen camp. Goldstein moved to Neukolln and was hired by the district

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<sup>837</sup> Tausendfreund, 129.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid., 130.

office there. But as early as the end of 1945, according to a report from the Jewish community in Berlin, he was arrested again by the American occupation forces and brought to the Wannsee Internment Camp. The matter was handed over to the German judiciary at last.<sup>840</sup>

According to the arrest warrant, Goldstein was accused of “continuing to spy on Jewish citizens who were persecuted in 1943 and 1944 and, in knowledge of their future fate, turning them over to the Gestapo.”<sup>841</sup> On February 18, 1949, the jury at the Berlin Regional Court sentenced him to seven years in prison and the loss of civil rights for that period for “crimes against humanity.” He tried to appeal this judgment, but the appeal was rejected on July 23, 1949. He was released on November 20, 1951 because of his health problems. His wife and daughter also survived the war and emigrated to Israel.<sup>842</sup>

### **Jewish Spies in Italy**

In his work *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy*, Michele Sarfatti argued that Mussolini's policies toward the Jews were independently conceived and implemented, and not—as some historians have argued—a late concession to Hitler's obsession with the war against the Jews.<sup>843</sup> It is true, however, that “a higher portion of Italy's Jews survived the war than their counterparts in most other European countries.”<sup>844</sup> The situation radically changed in September 1943 after the German troops seized control of Northern and Central Italy, freeing Mussolini from prison and allowing him to form the Italian Social Republic or Republic of Salò: essentially, a puppet state of Nazi

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<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

<sup>841</sup> Ibid., 131: “in fortgesetzter Handlung in den Jahren 1943 und 1944 verfolgte jüdische Mitbürger bespitzelt und in Kenntnis ihres zukünftigen Schicksals an die Geheime Staatspolizei ausgeliefert zu haben.”

<sup>842</sup> Ibid.

<sup>843</sup> Michele Sarfatti, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>844</sup> Paul Vitello, “Italy's Treatment of Jews in World War II Is Reconsidered,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2010, sec. N.Y. / Region, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/05/nyregion/05italians.html>.

Germany. Sarfatti explained that, of all the cities in the territory of the Italian Social Republic, Rome was obviously the “most important” and the “most delicate” since the Pope lived there, it was the city “with the largest Jewish population,” and it was also “the only one where the Jews were heavily concentrated in one residential area.”<sup>845</sup> It is for this reason that “the specialized police unit commanded by Theodor Dannecker” had planned the raid of October 16, 1943 in Rome.<sup>846</sup> It is also for this same reason that the Jewish informers’ cooperation could make a real difference to the Nazis.

The reader was acquainted with Celeste Di Porto’s actions in Chapter Three, in particular her responsibility for disclosing the location of many Jews who were killed in the Fosse Ardeatine massacre. Historian Anna Foa was asked by the interviewer of the Italian TV program “Il Tempo e la Storia” if Di Porto’s was an exceptional case. Her answer is quite striking:

Unfortunately, not so exceptional. First of all, we have to think of another important and very well-known figure, that of [Mauro Graziadio] Grini who denounces many people in Trieste, in Venice, up to Milan and who was also a Jew. And then also in the trial against the gang with which Celeste Di Porto was affiliated, for example, the issue of the Jewish whistleblowers comes up. There were many Jews who were not informers, but there were also Jewish informers. One of the councilors of the community replies to a question from the president of the court—the same question that you just asked me—that unfortunately there are many Jews in the community who betrayed, who denounced others, and we know that there was a story also with complaints, lawsuits, and declarations of innocence of various people who were instead accused of being informers. However, there were a certain number [of Jewish informers].<sup>847</sup>

Mauro Grini, the other Jewish spy whom Foa mentioned, moved to Venice in 1944. He “had

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<sup>845</sup> Sarfatti, 186.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.

<sup>847</sup> Anna Foa in Michela Ponzani, “Celeste Di Porto: La pantera nera del ghetto,” *Il Tempo e la Storia* (Rai, October 21, 2016), [www.raiplay.it/video/2016/10/Il-tempo-e-la-Storia---Celeste-Di-Porto-la-pantera-nera-del-ghetto-del-21102016-b3eab543-0035-4239-8d8e-d08e2c82bd72.html](http://www.raiplay.it/video/2016/10/Il-tempo-e-la-Storia---Celeste-Di-Porto-la-pantera-nera-del-ghetto-del-21102016-b3eab543-0035-4239-8d8e-d08e2c82bd72.html): “Mica tanto eccezionale, purtroppo. Innanzitutto, dobbiamo pensare ad un’altra figura importante assai nota che è quella di [Mauro Graziadio] Grini che denuncia molte persone a Trieste, a Venezia, fino a Milano e che era anche egli ebreo. E poi anche nel processo contro la banda a cui era affiliata Celeste Di Porto per esempio la cosa degli ebrei delatori salta fuori. C’erano tanti ebrei non delatori, ma c’erano anche degli ebrei delatori. Uno dei consiglieri della comunità a una domanda del presidente della corte—la stessa domanda che m’ha fatto lei—risponde che purtroppo ci sono molti ebrei della comunità che hanno tradito, che hanno denunciato altri e sappiamo che c’è stata una storia anche con denunce, querele e dichiarazioni di innocenza di varie persone che furono invece accusate di essere delatori. Comunque erano un certo numero.”

an office in the local SS command” and his task was to locate Jews from his home city of Trieste who had fled to Venice where they hoped not to be arrested.<sup>848</sup> Similar to the Jewish *Greifer* in Berlin, Grini was given a list of potential addresses to check out, so he “carried out a door-to-door search of hotels, boardinghouses, and inns” and “would also lurk in strategic places” to find his targets.<sup>849</sup> By March 1945, he was in Milan, where “he appeared in the bulletin published by the Corpo Volontari della Libertà (the Resistance’s Freedom Volunteer Corps).”<sup>850</sup> The bulletin mentioned that Grini: “specialize[d] in capturing fellow Jews whose acquaintance he ha[d] previously made”; that he had “contributed to the arrest of around 300 Jews in Trieste, 100 or so in Venice, and in Milan he [caught] an average of two a day”; and that he “earn[ed] 7,000 lire for every Jew he help[ed] arrest.”<sup>851</sup> Sullam recounts the testimony of Egon and Walter Sussland, who observed Grini’s modus operandi in Venice:

He would stroll through Venice, and upon meeting an acquaintance, would greet him and then continue on his way. But he was obviously being followed by a tail responsible for shadowing the acquaintance in question, who would let down his or her guard after seeing Grini walk off. This system sought to ensure that there was no risk that others would go underground after the first arrest. In fact, after expressly broadcasting his intentions, Grini would leave Venice for a few days, then return unexpectedly to ensnare his victims.<sup>852</sup>

A Canadian acquaintance of the Susslands also told them that a drunk Grini had confessed to him at a party to “receiving 7,000 lire for every captured Jew, in addition to a fixed monthly fee of 10,000 lire, and to responsibility for the arrest of at least 1,400 people to date.”<sup>853</sup> Sullam wrote that these figures were probably inflated, but between the number of arrests attributed to Grini by the bulletin published by the Milanese Resistance and the fact that many of these arrests involved

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<sup>848</sup> Sullam, 136.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., 139.

entire families, we can infer that “his victims numbered in the hundreds.”<sup>854</sup>

Grini was convicted of collaborationism and sentenced to death by firing squad by the Milan Court of Assizes in the spring of 1947.<sup>855</sup> Sullam wrote, however, that he may have already been dead by then, “killed at San Sabba, the transit and extermination camp created and run by the Germans in Trieste,” once again proving that Jewish informers were likely to end up dead like the victims of their collaboration.<sup>856</sup>

Yet, for the Holocaust survivors, it was very hard to acknowledge the existence of Jewish informers. It is excruciatingly painful to conceive that they were betrayed by their own. “It does not seem to me at all that there were Jewish informers,” declared Auschwitz survivor Piero Terracina.<sup>857</sup> When asked about Celeste Di Porto, Terracina refused to condemn her, too, despite the overwhelming evidence at the trial:

I knew that Celeste Di Porto’s father had been deported; he had been arrested by the SS, and I always wondered: could Celeste not have intervened, if she really had this power, with someone of the SS to save her father?  
I don’t feel I can condemn a person just based on hearsay.<sup>858</sup>

Unfortunately, Celeste Di Porto had reasons to want her father deported, as Anna Foa explained. Her father spoke with another young man detained in Fossoli—a transit camp before the final deportation—and told him his story. He recounted that, during his last days in Rome, everyone went to see him and asked him to intervene on their behalf or on behalf of those who had been arrested. Di Porto’s father did not understand why they expected him to have any power at

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<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> “Non mi risulta assolutamente che ci siano stati degli ebrei delatori,” in Ponzani, “Il Tempo e la Storia - Celeste Di Porto.”

<sup>858</sup> “Io sapevo che il papà di Celeste Di Porto era stato deportato; era stato arrestato dalle SS, e mi sono sempre domandato: possibile che Celeste non sia intervenuta, se veramente aveva questo potere, verso qualcuno delle SS per salvare suo padre?”

Io non me la sento di condannare una persona soltanto per i ‘si dice’,” in Ponzani.

all, until someone told him what his daughter was doing. He confronted her, beating her wildly, at which point she told him: “Next time you do it, I will have you arrested.” A few days went by, and the legend says that he gave himself up to the Nazis out of shame for his daughter’s betrayal; other testimonies say that he was actually arrested in a cinema. Historians have been unable to retrieve the exact information about the arrest. All the Roman Jews avoided him in Fossoli because he was the father of a spy. When he arrived in Auschwitz, he was immediately sent to the gas chamber.<sup>859</sup>

### The Different Case of France

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, there were two organizations for the repression of Jews in Vichy France during the German occupation: the *Institut d’étude des questions juives* (*Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions*), hereafter IEQJ, and the *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (*General Commission for Jewish Questions*), hereafter CGQJ. The IEQJ was officially inaugurated on May 11, 1941. It was dissolved at the end of 1942 and the CGQJ absorbed most of its functions, but before that the IEQJ was an independent institution. The CGQJ was officially founded on March 29, 1941 and disbanded on August 17, 1944, just two days before the Liberation of Paris. While the CGQJ has already been largely studied, especially in Laurent Joly’s works,<sup>860</sup> the IEQJ’s activities still seem rather unexplored.<sup>861</sup>

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid.: “Il padre di Celeste ha parlato con un altro giovane deportato a Fossoli, prima di essere mandati via e ha raccontato la sua storia [...] Gli ha raccontato, fra l’altro, di come tutti andavano da lui a chiedergli di intervenire a favore di questo e di quello arrestato e lui diceva “Perché proprio da me?” “Io non posso far niente!” E poi finalmente qualcuno gli dice di Celeste. E allora lui l’affronta e lei gli dice “Non ti intromettere!” Lui la picchia selvaggiamente [...] e lei gli dice “La prossima volta che lo fai ti faccio arrestare”. Passano pochi giorni e la leggenda dice che si sia consegnato, altre testimonianze che sia stato arrestato in un cinema. Il vecchio viene arrestato e mandato prima a Fossoli, dove tutti lo evitano, i romani, perché è il padre della spia, e poi ad Auschwitz, dove viene subito mandato nella camera a gas.”

<sup>860</sup> Laurent Joly, *Vichy dans la solution finale: Histoire du commissariat général aux questions juives, 1941-1944* (Paris: Grasset, 2006); *Dénoncer les juifs sous l’occupation: Paris, 1940–1944* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2017); *L’État contre les juifs*.

<sup>861</sup> About the IEQJ, there is only a book by Joseph Billig—basically an inventory of the archives of the IEQJ (*L’Institut d’étude des questions juives, officine française des autorités nazies en France: inventaire commenté de la collection de documents provenant des archives de l’Institut conservés au C.D.J.C.*, Paris: C.D.J.C., 1974)—and an article by

The IEQJ realized that there was a bit of confusion as to the difference between its functions and those of the CGQJ, so it addressed the issue with a press release:

THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF JEWISH QUESTIONS, 21 rue de la Boétie Paris 8ème, has been led to note that there is in the minds of the public a confusion between the aims and the activities in which the Institute is engaged and to which it is devoted and those within the domain of the Commission for Jewish Affairs, 1, Place des Petits Pères. Indeed, the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions is an eminently French association, regulated by the law of July 1, 1901, composed of resolutely anti-Jewish men of good will who know thoroughly and in all its aspects the Jewish question, and who are determined to solve whatever the cost, and by all means the Jewish question in France, and without subtle exceptions [...].<sup>862</sup>

If the main focus of the CGQJ was to introduce anti-Jewish legislation, the IEQJ's main task consisted in spreading anti-Semitic propaganda (especially by publishing their magazine *Le Cahier jaune*). However, the Institute was directly funded by the intelligence service of the German Embassy and Theodor Dannecker—the Paris chief of section IV J of the Gestapo, directly responsible for the “Jewish question.” The barely 25-year-old Dannecker had been chosen by none other than Adolf Eichmann, architect of the Jews’ deportation, to lead the French branch of the Jewish Affairs Section of the Gestapo. Dannecker was also in charge of the persecution of the Jews in Rome in 1943.

Laurent Joly wrote that Dannecker was a “pure product of the SS school.”<sup>863</sup> Born in 1913, he had a poor secondary education and ended up working for a textile merchant. He was first a member of the NSDAP in 1932, and then in 1934 he became a permanent member of the SS in

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Stéphanie Dassa, Valérie Germon, and Cédric Gruat, “L’Institut d’étude des questions juives : raison d’État et passion antisémite franco-allemande sous l’occupation,” *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah* 179 (December 2003): 120–77.

<sup>862</sup> MS, IEQJ (1940–1943), XI-34, press release establishing the distinction between the *Commissariat Général Aux Questions Juives* and the *Institut d’étude Des Questions Juives*, August 21, 1941: L’INSTITUT D’ETUDE DES QUESTIONS JUIVES 21 rue de la Boétie Paris 8ème a été amené à constater qu’il existe dans l’esprit du public une confusion entre les buts et les activités auxquels se livrent et se consacrent l’Institut d’Etude des Questions Juives et ceux qui sont du domaine du Commissariat aux Affaires Juives 1, Place des Petits Pères. // En effet, l’Institut d’Etude des Questions Juives est une association éminemment française, réglé[e] par la loi du 1er Juillet 1901, composée d’hommes de bonne volonté résolument antijuifs et connaissant à fond et sous tous ses aspects la question Juive, décidés à faire résoudre toute que coûte, et par tous les moyens la question Juive en France, et sans dérogations subtiles [...].”

<sup>863</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la solution finale*, 64: “produit de l’école SS.”

one of the regional sections of the SD [*SS-Sicherheitsdienst*, the SS Security and Intelligence Service of the Gestapo]. Dannecker joined the SD section in Berlin that was specifically devoted to the “Jewish questions” in March 1937. This service was directed by a young intellectual, Herbert Hagen, and was attached to the service dealing with “Ideological Adversaries” directed by Helmut Knochen, who even had a degree in English literature. Dannecker handled questions related to the “assimilated Jews” while Eichmann dealt with “Zionism.” Dannecker and Eichmann were then transferred to the service of Jewish affairs of the Gestapo: the service IVB4.<sup>864</sup>

Although the Jews’ persecution in France was orchestrated in a different way and did not rely on the use of Jewish spies, the testing ground for “solving the Jewish question” had always been Vienna. In 1938, Dannecker, Eichmann and Hagen set up the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna. Dannecker continued to collaborate strictly with Eichmann; on July 3, 1940, he and Eichmann met with the leaders of the Jewish communities in Berlin, Prague, and Vienna, where the Jewish leaders learned of the Nazi plans for a “total solution to the Jewish question.”<sup>865</sup>

Always in direct contact with Eichmann, Dannecker focused on France and took over the Prefecture of Police at the beginning of October 1940, making sure that the men he personally appointed directly handled the persecution of the Jews. Dannecker’s ultimate objective was the creation of a “Central Jewish Office,” the guidelines for which he outlined in a very dense report dated January 21, 1941. He was concerned by what he considered to be a too lax application of the statute of the Jews in France. He believed that to remedy the situation, it was necessary to establish this Central Jewish Office as soon as possible.<sup>866</sup>

This French anti-Semitic institution was supposed to take charge of anti-Jewish policy

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<sup>864</sup> Ibid.

<sup>865</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid., 66.

throughout the territory and include: a police section, integrating the service of Jewish Questions of the Prefecture of Police; an economic “aryanization” section; and concentration camps for Jews. Dannecker believed, however, that the structure of the institution had to remain “French,” and the French had to seem to be in charge. This opinion was shared by Helmut Knochen’s deputy, Kurt Lischka, as evidenced by his remarks in a conference of January 30, 1941 with the *Militärbefehlshaber* (MBF, the German general staff) in France.<sup>867</sup>

Dannecker’s desires were satisfied very soon. On March 5, 1941, Vichy’s deputy leader François Darlan had dinner with German ambassador Otto Abetz in Paris. The German strategy of giving the Vichy government some form of recognition is evident in this meeting too. This was a big deal for Darlan; for the first time, a Vichy leader was meeting a German ambassador as the representative of a recognized government. Abetz’s task was clear: to launch the project of the Central Jewish Office.<sup>868</sup>

After the dinner, the ambassador reported that Darlan appeared to be willing to let the French government take responsibility for such a structure. The ambassador pointed out, however, that Marshal Pétain was hesitant on the issue. He did not want the same treatment to be inflicted on long-established Jews in France, and in particular on those who had distinguished themselves in the war (presumably the First World War) for France as immigrant Jews.<sup>869</sup> The French appear to be struggling with two fundamental questions: Which Jews deserved to be considered French and therefore spared from persecution? And would persecuting them be a “betrayal of your own” since they had fought for and alongside the French in the war?

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<sup>867</sup> Ibid.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>869</sup> Ibid., 71: “Il a cependant fait remarquer que la position du Maréchal Pétain sur la question juive présentait de grandes hésitations. Le Maréchal voudrait que ne soit pas infligé aux juifs installés de longue date et à ceux, français, qui se sont distingués à la guerre pour la France le même traitement qu’aux juifs immigrés.”

Abetz concluded that, despite Pétain's position, it was still preferable to leave the creation of the "Central Jewish Office" to the French government so that it acquired a recognized legal basis all while being under the influence, and ultimately control, of the Nazis.

Abetz's confidence in Darlan's willingness to cooperate was well placed. On March 8, 1941, the Vichy Council of Ministers announced: "The Council of Ministers has decided to create a General Commission for Jewish questions."<sup>870</sup> In less than three days, Admiral Darlan had accepted the project Abetz submitted and had this decision ratified by the Council of Ministers. Joly notes that, in Darlan's mind, this was a way to improve relations between the Third Reich and France so that the Germans would fully accept the Vichy regime's legitimacy.<sup>871</sup>

Marshal Pétain struggled to justify himself to the Grand Rabbi of France, Isaiah Schwartz, whose alarmed visit he received on March 15, 1941. Not knowing how to answer his questions, he turned to one of his obsessions: a traditional vision of France. "The fault you [Jewish people] have is not to be integrated into French nationality," he said to Schwartz.<sup>872</sup> "You have no crafts, no peasantry: by that you are separated from the nation."<sup>873</sup> Pétain's incoherent solution for appeasing his guilt about persecuting the Jews who had contributed to France's war effort was to claim that they did not contribute to the nation's traditional activities.

The *Commissariat général aux questions juives* (*General Commission for Jewish questions* or CGQJ), officially established by the law of March 29, 1941, was the first direct response to Dannecker's plans for the Jews' persecution in France. Why look at the IEQJ instead, then? The French National Archives of Pierrefitte-sur-Seine hold the papers seized from the IEQJ in the F7 series. The papers were transmitted to Judge Muller, charged with ruling on the crimes of the

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<sup>870</sup> Ibid., 72: "Le conseil des ministres a décidé la création d'un Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives."

<sup>871</sup> Ibid.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid.: "Le tort que vous avez, c'est de ne pas être intégrés dans la nationalité française."

<sup>873</sup> Ibid. "Vous n'avez pas d'artisanat, de paysannat : par là vous êtes écartés de la nation."

people associated with the IEQJ, in 1947. The general inquiry that opens this set of papers states that the IEQJ benefited from a general police information service comprising commissioners and district chiefs, paid by the Gestapo and working under its authority. Later, the inquiry reads as follows:

From the documents found in the archives left by the Germans, it appears that the Institute has prepared detailed and accurate reports of denunciations against the families Harry BAUR, ROTSCCHILD, MANDEL, AMAR, LOCATELLI, LEDERIAN, Paul Louis WEILER, Louise WEISS, etc ...; staff of the various administrations, of the *Préfecture de Police*, the *Commissariat General aux Questions Juives* (asking among other things for the imprisonment of Xavier VALLAT who was considered to be a “snuffer” of the Jewish question), the networks of Resistance (notably that of the “*Armée du Salut*”), etc.<sup>874</sup>

This is why I chose to focus on the lesser known IEQJ; the Nazis did not create a service employing Jewish spies but subtly relied on this institution to have Jewish people arrested in a period when a more overt persecution would have been counterproductive. The Nazis did this because the Vichy regime was still struggling to define itself and determine who belonged to its definition of the nation.

According to Laurent Joly, the IEQJ was “the product of anti-Semitic initiatives launched in occupied Paris since July 1940, notably under the leadership of Paul Sézille.”<sup>875</sup> Sézille had a long anti-Semitic “curriculum vitae”: he had been the deputy delegate of the 17th arrondissement section of the “Anti-Jewish Rally” (*Rassemblement antijuif*) and the director of the movement’s library. Therefore, he immediately attracted the Nazis’ interest, and Dannecker’s in particular.<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>874</sup> AN, Series F7, Box 15311, Jews (1941–1948), Investigations of members and collaborators of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions: “Des documents découverts dans les archives laissées par les Allemands, il ressort que l’Institut a établi des rapports détaillés et précis de dénonciations à l’encontre des familles Harry BAUR, ROTSCCHILD, MANDEL, AMAR, LOCATELLI, LEDERIAN, Paul Louis WEILER, Louise WEISS, etc... ; du personnel des diverses administrations, de la Préfecture de Police, du Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives (demandant entre autres l’internement de Xavier VALLAT qu’il estimait être un « étouffoir » de la question juive), les réseaux de Résistance (notamment celui de l’Armée du Salut) etc...”

<sup>875</sup> Joly, *Vichy dans la solution finale*, 102: “est le produit des initiatives antisémites lancées dans le Paris occupé depuis juillet 1940 sous la houlette notamment de Paul Sézille.”

<sup>876</sup> Billig, 17.

For the latter, the potential value of the IEQJ was to hide anti-Semitic action under a French, rather than Nazi, label. The aforementioned press release presented it as “an eminently French association,” even citing Pétain’s “noble” words as its inspiration: “The Jews were the harmful and dissolving elements of the French Nation.”<sup>877</sup> But though Marshal Pétain provided the inspiration, the Institute was really “an intelligence device of the SD” which had significant implications for police intelligence activities.<sup>878</sup> The frequent exchanges between Séville and Dannecker prove that the IEQJ was drawing up lists of Jewish people for the Nazis. For example, on July 25, 1941, Séville wrote to Dannecker that, following a desire the latter had expressed, “the census of the most dangerous foreign Jews, that is to say the Polish Jews who make up the majority of the Jews in Paris, [was] on the right track.”<sup>879</sup> His associate, Monsieur de Bonnières, had already drawn up 2,000 files on Polish Jews and they had started investigating Polish Jews in the different professions.<sup>880</sup>

Even the anti-Jewish propaganda, which for Dannecker was secondary to intelligence, had to be under the strict control of the Nazis.

Dannecker elaborated on this point:

In order for propaganda to be carried out in its true sense, that of serving to achieve these political goals, it was also agreed in this sector with the Commander of the Propaganda Department in France and with the Leader of the Propaganda Squadron in Paris, that the Institute will be responsible for propaganda only through the intermediary of the head of the

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<sup>877</sup> MS, see previously cited press release establishing the distinction between the *Commissariat Général Aux Questions Juives* and the *Institut d'étude Des Questions Juives*: “L’Institut d’Etude des Questions Juives fait siennes les nobles paroles du Vénéralé Chef de l’Etat le Maréchal Pétain « Les Juifs ont été les éléments nocifs et dissolvants de la Nation Française »”

<sup>878</sup> Billig, 43: “un appareil d’information du SD [*SS-Sicherheitsdienst*, le Service de Sécurité SS et de Renseignement de la Gestapo] avec tout ce que cela comportait comme activités de renseignements policiers.”

<sup>879</sup> “MS, IEQJ (1940-1943), XI-118, Letter from Captain Paul Sézille to the SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker, July 25, 1941: “Conformément au désir que vous avez exprimé, je vous rend compte que le recensement des juifs étrangers les plus dangereux, c’est-à-dire les juifs polonais qui composent d’ailleurs à Paris la majeure partie des juifs, est en bonne voie d’exécution.”

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.: “1. 2.000 fiches ont déjà été établies par M. de BONNIÈRES sur les juifs polonais. // 2. Des investigations ont commencé pour le dénombrement de ces juifs polonais dans les différentes professions.”

Jewish affairs of the SD or in his presence.<sup>881</sup>

Dannecker intended the IEQJ to act as a supra-political body and “a first-rate informer.”<sup>882</sup> This is what he wrote in his global report of July 1, 1941, arguing that increasing knowledge of the French situation and “state of mind (*Stimmung*)” demonstrated that it was necessary to create a “French supra-political apparatus (*überpolitischer französischer Apparat*),” which could serve as an “informant (*Nachrichtenbringer*) for the work to come.”<sup>883</sup>

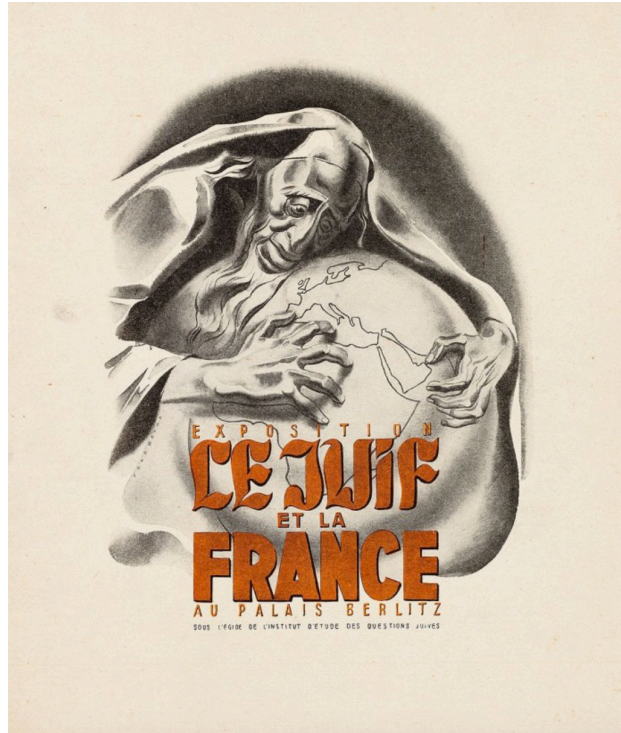
The French general public learned about the IEQJ’s existence thanks to the exhibition “The Jew and France” (*Le juif et la France*) on display from September 5, 1941, to January 15, 1942, in Paris.

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<sup>881</sup> Billig, 43: “Pour que la propagande se fasse dans son véritable sens, celui de servir à atteindre ces buts politiques, il a été convenu aussi dans ce secteur avec le Kommandeur de la Propaganda-Abteilung France et avec le Führer de la Propagandastaffel Paris, que l’Institut ne sera chargé de la propagande que par l’intermédiaire du responsable des questions juives du SD ou bien en sa présence.”

<sup>882</sup> Dassa, Germon, and Gruat, 123: “un informateur de premier ordre.”

<sup>883</sup> Billig, 15: “La connaissance de plus en plus ample de la situation, de l’état d’esprit (*Stimmung*) et des résistances a démontré qu’il était nécessaire de créer un appareil français supra-politique (*überpolitischer französischer Apparat*), qui pourra servir d’informateur (*Nachrichtenbringer*) pour le travail à venir.”



*Figure 51: Poster of the exhibition “The Jew and France”  
by René Peron (1904–1972)<sup>884</sup>*

The exhibition clearly showcased the new “scientific” orientation of the Institute as an anti-Jewish propaganda center.<sup>885</sup> Sézille wrote to Dannecker that the exhibition needed to tackle “not only the Jewish question” but also the current threats posed “by Jewish, Bolshevik, and Communist propaganda,” highlighting the connection that the Nazis had drawn between their racial and political targets.<sup>886</sup>

But the real logic behind the instrumental use of the IEQJ resonated with Nazi intelligence goals. Sézille had created a veritable “IEQJ Investigation Service,” with a “Special Research

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<sup>884</sup> © Paris - Musée de l'Armée, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Christophe Chavan. Source: Alexandre Sumpf, “L'exposition ‘Le Juif et la France’ à Paris,” *L'histoire par l'image*, February 2016, <https://histoire-image.org/fr/etudes/exposition-juif-france-paris>.

<sup>885</sup> Dassa, Germon, and Gruat, 126.

<sup>886</sup> MS, IEQJ (1940-1943), XI-32, Letter from Captain Paul Sézille to the SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker, August 25, 1941: “Il y a non seulement la question juive qui doit rentrer en ligne de compte, mais aussi la situation politique et nous assistons en ce moment à un mauvais état d'esprit rendu encore plus nocif par la propagande juive, bolchévique et communiste.”

Section” headed by Commissioner Longue and comprising six “District Chief Inspectors.”<sup>887</sup> Dannecker’s ambitions were even broader, as he “hoped to develop police activity within the IEQJ that would go beyond the tasks of the Special Section.”<sup>888</sup>

The IEQJ was dissolved barely 13 months after its creation, close to the date of the departure of the first convoy which left Compiègne for Auschwitz—a fact to which Stéphanie Dassa, Valérie Germon, and Cédric Gruat drew our attention: March 27, 1942.<sup>889</sup> This is not coincidental. It appears that Nazi intelligence (*Sicherheitsdienst*) no longer needed the services of the IEQJ to carry out the Holocaust in France. The industrial and massive system of deportation to the East had been set up and was well under way. The general inquiry into the IEQJ papers transmitted to Judge Muller also notes that the Institute’s collusion with the Gestapo had become all too apparent:<sup>890</sup> just as they liquidated the uncomfortable Jewish spies, the Nazis dissolved the troublesome tool.

## Conclusion

This final chapter offered two perspectives: that of the Jewish spies and the Nazi and Fascist persecutors. Both the sides resonate with the overall argument of this dissertation: spies underscore a relationship to the universe of terror that the Fascist and Nazi regimes carefully built. Spies submitted to this terror in the hope of gaining something for themselves, but their allegiance to each of regime is somewhat ambiguous. The Jewish spies did not always enforce the persecutors’ plans, but at the same time the persecutors proved to be untrustworthy as they end up not

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<sup>887</sup> Billig, 121.

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

<sup>889</sup> Dassa, Germon, and Gruat, 131.

<sup>890</sup> AN, Series F7, Box 15311, Jews (1941–1948), Investigations of members and collaborators of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions: “la collusion avec la Gestapo était devenue par trop apparente.”

maintaining their promises.

Jewish spies accepted to spy for their persecutors in most cases because they hoped to save themselves or save their families. Most were still deported or killed in the end. While it may be hard to define one single, common motivation that led Jewish people to spy on their own, it is not hard to recognize a pattern in how the Fascists and the Nazis enforced their repression. Their proactive terror state involved taking advantage of the very communities it was targeting. Jews who had gone into hiding could only be located through other Jews, and so it made sense for the perpetrators to recruit spies within the Jewish community. This veritable system, tested by Eichmann in Vienna, was exported into Germany and ultimately applied in Rome in 1943 by the Nazis in collaboration with the Fascists.

In France, on the other hand, the Nazis relied on the Vichy government and its organizations to enforce the repression. They found it more convenient to portray an increase in anti-Semitic policies as French—a product of the Vichy government—rather than an obligation imposed by the Nazi occupier. The *Institut d'étude des questions juives* also presented a convenient pseudo-scientific façade and allowed its officers to “ground” the persecution of the Jews in “rational” arguments. The exhibition “*Le juif et la France*” served the purpose of acquainting the public with this pseudo-logic.

All these cases prove that simply relying on spontaneous denunciation was not enough for the Nazis. They pursued active persecution by employing Jewish spies in Austria, Germany, and Italy, and by subjugating Vichy’s anti-Semitic institutions to their policing needs. Even in Vichy France, denunciations were not always spontaneous, but carefully orchestrated and overseen by Dannecker, who regulated everything, including propaganda.

Throughout the chapter runs the issue of betraying your own. Jewish spies were accused of

betraying their own community to their persecutors, with traumatic consequences for their individual and their community's sense of identity.

In the case of France, Pétain's betrayal was towards those Jews who had been living in the country for a long time and had contributed to the French war effort. The only way to exclude them from the definition of who belonged to the nation was to claim that they were not French enough because they did not engage in the traditional activities that foundational to the nation, according to the Marshal's ideology.

Robert Paxton showed how the French defeat increased "a defensive xenophobia that had been already growing through the 1930's."<sup>891</sup> France had heavily relied on foreign workers to cope with an insufficient labor force before the depression, unemployment "turned foreign workmen into an object of hostility and retaliation."<sup>892</sup> There was also a flood of refugees—especially Spanish loyalists—in the late 1930s. But once again, if France had traditionally welcomed exiles, "the war [...] made them an embarrassment" as they were a detriment to neutral relations with Franco's Spain.<sup>893</sup> So, the Vichy government became more xenophobic, even setting up "its own concentration camp system": the government gave itself "the power to intern all foreign men between the ages of 18 and 45 as long as there was an excess of labor in the economy." Next, it "roll[ed] back the naturalization process by which a number of these refugees had become French citizens."<sup>894</sup>

It is obvious that the Jews were the next likely target. However, as Paxton points out, without pressure from the Nazis, "Vichy would probably have stopped short at job discrimination and

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<sup>891</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 197.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>893</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

measures calculated to hasten the further emigration of foreign Jews.”<sup>895</sup> Vichy would have continued to exempt “Jewish war veterans and long-established families from some of the rigors of the law.”<sup>896</sup> Therefore, conceding to the Nazi pressure meant betraying those Jews that Pétain had originally decided to spare from the harshest persecution: those Jews who had fought alongside the French in the war and considered themselves to be French. This was key to the Nazi terror and understanding of surveillance; the threat had to be omnipresent and come from within—from the place these Jews called home—and not from an outside occupying force. Thus Dannecker’s “French supra-political apparatus” came in handy: the general inquiry of the papers transmitted to Judge Muller reveals that the IEQJ denounced thousands of people.<sup>897</sup>

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<sup>895</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>897</sup> AN, Series F7, Box 15311, Jews (1941–1948), Investigations of members and collaborators of the Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions: “Des quelques 4.000 pièces saisies et transmises jusqu’ici au Juge d’Instruction chargé de l’affaire, M. Muller, il ressort des milliers des dénonciations.”

*Epilogue*  
**Convictions, Acquittals, and Appeals:  
The End of the Spies**

**Abstract**

What happened to the spies at the end of World War II? Were they tried and convicted, or did they manage to get away? This study stops at 1945 so these are questions for further research, but it is possible to find some initial answers by looking at what happened to the archival materials that I analyzed. This conclusion follows the trail of some of the police and trial records, noting how they were used by both prosecutors and spies to argue their cases. It also uses the incomplete and partially unsuccessful postwar purges to further restate one of the main arguments of the dissertation: the importance of the proactive nature of the terror state that the Fascist and Nazi regimes put in place. The regimes collapsed, but the many strands of their networks of collaborators were too hard to prosecute. It was easier to reabsorb them into the new governmental and police structures.

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**Purges in Italy and France**

What happened to the spies after World War II? Although this study stops at 1945, some of the documents I analyzed—notably the French ones—were post-war issued from court trial records. I believe that these sources open avenues for further research.

Only in some cases were the spies tried and convicted. Trial documents exist, for instance, for Jacques Desoubrie, René Hardy, Mathilde Carré, and Robert Alesch. There were never any trials and thus no court records for the spies who got away. As a result, information about their post-war lives is harder to come by.

The court records from the trials of convicted spies at the French National Archives were produced by the *Cour de justice du département de la Seine*. The French courts of justice, as *tribunaux d'exception*, were one of the measures instituted at the Liberation to punish the acts of collaboration. They were established by the ordinances of June 26, 1944—concerning the repression of acts of collaboration—and of November 28, 1944—modifying and codifying the texts concerning the repression of acts of collaboration. These courts were usually made up of five

members: a presiding magistrate and four jurors. All potential jurors appeared on a list drawn up by a commission, comprising the first president of the court of appeal and two representatives, that the departmental release committees within the jurisdiction of said court appointed. Additionally, a government commissioner performed the functions of the public ministry. An investigating judge lead the investigation assisted by the judicial police. The French courts of justice were responsible for trying the perpetrators of acts committed between June 16, 1940 and the Liberation.<sup>898</sup>

A certain number of these sentences were erased by two laws granting amnesty: one on January 5, 1951 and the other on August 6, 1953. The *Cour de justice du département de la Seine* operated from October 17, 1944 to January 31, 1951.<sup>899</sup>

The processes for purging of Nazi and Vichy criminals and collaborationists in the French case can be easily compared with those of Italy. They shared similar issues. Valeria Galimi writes that in France, just as in Italy, the definition of collaborationism was complicated by the presence of two governments—Vichy and the Italian Social Republic—that both had their roots in pre-war politics and a climate of civil war in the last phase of World War II.<sup>900</sup> While in France the most recent publications do emphasize the unregulated nature of the purging process, it is in Italy that this interpretation has had the greatest success, notably with the publication of Giampaolo Pansa's *Il sangue dei vinti* (*The Blood of the Vanquished*) in 2003. More than 300,000 copies were sold in a few months.<sup>901</sup> The unequal distribution of the Nazi occupation in Italy and France further complicated rooting out collaborators after the war. There are also parallels in the construction of

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<sup>898</sup> État général des fonds des Archives nationales (Paris), Série Z, Juridictions spéciales et ordinaires, Z/6, Cour de justice du département de la Seine, 2008: [http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/chan/chan/series/pdf/Z6\\_2008.pdf](http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/chan/chan/series/pdf/Z6_2008.pdf)

<sup>899</sup> Ibid.

<sup>900</sup> Valeria Galimi, “Collaborationnisme et épuration judiciaire en Italie et en France,” in *Le XXe siècle des guerres*, ed. Valeria Galimi et al., 1st edition (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 2004), 375.

<sup>901</sup> Giampaolo Pansa, *Il sangue dei vinti: Quello che accadde in Italia dopo il 25 aprile* (Milano: Sperling & Kupfer Editori, 2003).

memories and narratives surrounding the end of the war. The Communist parties played a prominent role in both countries' post-war political culture because of their significant contribution to the Resistance and the Liberation.<sup>902</sup>

There are also major differences between France and Italy. In France, the new republic had to distance itself from the Third Republic's failure. Italy, on the other hand, abandoned the monarchy and built a democratic political system for the first time. While Nazi collaboration clearly occurred between 1940 to June 1944 in France, it is more challenging to clearly date the end of the collaboration in Italy because of the armistice signed by the Badoglio government with the Allies in September 1943, which also led to the creation of the Italian Social Republic. Finally, Italy's dual character as both an occupied country and occupying country further complicated its situation. France represented a model for Italy in the debates and discussions on the purging process. On September 18, 1944 at the lynching of Donato Carretta—director of the prison of Regina Coeli in Rome—the crowd shouted: “Paris, Paris, we must do as in Paris!”<sup>903</sup> Those who incited revenge therefore referred explicitly to the violence committed in France after Liberation.<sup>904</sup>

While the institutions set up to carry out the purging process were very similar in the two countries, the results differed. French courts judged around 50,000 cases by December 1948, with an 80% conviction rate and 791 death sentences. In Italy, courts convicted less than 30% of the roughly 20,000 cases and issued only 91 death sentences.<sup>905</sup> Finally, amnesty emerged as the most significant difference between Italy and France. The former country was the first to apply the

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<sup>902</sup> Galimi, “Collaborationnisme et épuration judiciaire en Italie et en France,” 377.

<sup>903</sup> Gabriele Ranzato, *Il linciaggio di Carretta: Roma 1944: Violenza politica e ordinaria violenza* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1997).

<sup>904</sup> Galimi, “Collaborationnisme et épuration judiciaire en Italie et en France,” 377–78.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*

amnesty with the presidential decree of June 22, 1946 as way to forget the memory of Nazi collaboration.<sup>906</sup> In contrast, amnesty did not arrive in France until the two laws of 1951 and 1953.

### **The Hunt for Nazi Criminals and the Elusive Archives of the Gestapo**

What about Nazi spies within Germany? Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle demonstrate that at the end of WWII the “network of persecutors, supporters, helpers, and facilitators” of the Gestapo essentially disappeared, leaving behind “the ideal type of the Nazi criminal [which] was from now on an SS man in the service of the Gestapo, who had murdered Jews, opposition, or resistance members in occupied Europe or in the German Reich.”<sup>907</sup>

By focusing exclusively on the Gestapo, the purging process in Germany facilitated forgetting crimes committed by other police departments, even if the latter had supported the Gestapo apparatus.

Despite Allied troops’ attempts to bring all the Gestapo to justice, a significant number of high-ranking officers managed to go into hiding or flee abroad, including even Klaus Barbie and Adolf Eichmann for a time. Barbie lived in Bolivia for 30 years under the name Klaus Altmann, even serving as a CIA agent.<sup>908</sup>

The United Nations Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes (later renamed United Nations War Crimes Commission) formed in London and Washington in October 1942, with the task of collecting “evidence of atrocities, massacres, and mass executions.” However, their task did not include actual pursuit of identified perpetrators.<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>906</sup> Mimmo Franzinelli, *L’ammnistia Togliatti: 22 giugno 1946: Colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007).

<sup>907</sup> Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 157.

<sup>908</sup> BDIC, F delta res, Box 0933, Klaus Barbie, 1971–1997.

<sup>909</sup> Dams and Stolle, 159.

Only allied military tribunals tried Gestapo members initially. Members mostly answered for crimes committed against foreigners in these courts, because “the allies had agreed during the war that the Nazi perpetrators should be punished in the places where the deeds had been committed” as established by “the ‘Declaration on Atrocities’ made at the Moscow conference of October 30, 1943.” Gestapo officers were also tried in British military courts in Germany. The famous Nuremberg Trial of the Major War Criminals concerned the highest-ranked Nazi officers “whose crimes could not be assigned to one geographical location.” The trial lasted from November 14, 1945, to October 1, 1946.<sup>910</sup>

Among the Nazi criminals, “the major Gestapo leaders were brought to justice,” but “less denazification happened at the lower level.” Dams and Stolle attribute this result to “the sheer number of cases” and “the extremely complex bureaucratic process involved.”<sup>911</sup> Amnesties and laws of termination (*Abschlussgesetzen*) helped the majority of Gestapo employees avoid punishment.

There are also parallels in the ways the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic dealt with the Nazi past. In the Federal Republic, “all dealings with the Nazi past were clearly influenced by a ‘politics of the past,’” which essentially meant leaving the past behind in order to start over. The majority of Gestapo members never faced prosecution. The GDR adopted a similar policy: “the East German Stasi regularly delivered evidence for show trials, at the same time it blocked investigations for Nazi perpetrators at home if they ran counter to the GDR’s propaganda image.”<sup>912</sup> As we saw, the GDR did prosecute Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn as a Nazi spy, and the documents issued from her court trial are at the Stasi archive.<sup>913</sup> But most

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<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>913</sup> BStU, Series MfS-HA IX/11, Box PA 3472, Band 1-12, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn’s Interrogation Protocol.

Gestapo officers remained unpunished. Many of them even secured reemployment in public service, especially when they possessed a particular set of skills or expertise—for example, if they could claim to be experts in enemy surveillance and counterespionage.

The *Vetrauensmänner* were even more elusive because the Nazis had protected their identities. Similarly, the Gestapo archives are intentionally incomplete and very few Gestapo informer personnel Files survive. The Nazis burnt the files in all but a few locations, such as the Rhine-Ruhr jurisdiction of the Gestapo (Duisburg), the Lower Franconia jurisdiction of the Gestapo (Wurzburg), and the Palatinate jurisdiction of the Gestapo (Speyer). In the United States, the 1999 passage of the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act opened up a series of documents, including those pertaining to the V-men, at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.. The bulk of this material is included in the “Himmler Collection.”<sup>914</sup>

### **Police Archives at the Center of the Fascist Spies’ Prosecution**

With the constitution of the Italian Social Republic, the German puppet state in the north of Italy, police archives followed the exodus of Fascist ministerial officials from Rome to northern Italy in September 1943. The documents included stacks of spy reports. Packed in heavy crates, the archival materials were divided between Valdagno in the province of Vicenza, Vobarno, and Venice. The majority of the material was in Valdagno in the custody of OVRA head Guido Leto, while the Venice materials were in the basements of the Palazzo Labia. Between 1943 and 1945, targeted withdrawals damaged the integrity of the material; in the weeks following the armistice many documents concerning anti-Jewish repression and about sixty files on key Fascist personalities (including Bocchini) were brought to Maderno on the orders of the prefect Antonio

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<sup>914</sup> Claire M. Hall, “An Army of Spies? The Gestapo Spy Network 1933–45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 2 (2009): 248.

Le Pera, director of the office for the Race of the Ministry of the Interior. In October, the secretary of Fascist hierarch Guido Buffarini Guidi, Coriolano Pagnozzi, who was closely linked with the Germans, took particularly delicate files from the repository, including one about Hitler. Colonel Herbert Kappler, head of German police and *Sicherheitspolizei* in Rome, also ordered several dozen files to be removed, including those relating to the regime's hierarchs, foreign policy issues, and Italo-German relations. Once the hostilities ceased, the carabinieri and a patrol of British soldiers commanded by Captain Baker watched over the Political Police Division's funds. They divided the records into about 400 crates weighing an average of 100 pounds each, and deposited them in Valdagno.<sup>915</sup>

These archives were witnesses of a sort to the Fascist spies' prosecution, with both the prosecutors and the Fascist spies trying to take advantage of them to argue their case.

Ever since entering Rome in early June 1944, Allied counterintelligence had been interested in examining the OVRA structure and operations, recovering important documents, and arresting many officials of the various inspectorates of the OVRA. The Allies were especially keen to acquire knowledge of the OVRA's overseas network, including any offshoots in the United States and England, and in establishing contacts with the espionage services of the Italian Social Republic both for military purposes and, especially on the British side, with the prospect of a partial post-war reconversion in an anticommunist function. US counterintelligence decided to officially arrest the officials of the OVRA on October 12, 1944; they were to be questioned on the operations of the special inspectorates, considered the Fascist equivalent of the Nazi *Sicherheitsdienst*. According to the calculations of the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC),<sup>916</sup> in were about 400 OVRA

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<sup>915</sup> Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia politica fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1999), 411.

<sup>916</sup> Ian Sayer, *America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter Intelligence Corps* (London: Grafton Books, 1989).

members in Rome, including civilian collaborators, officials, and agents; those the CIC deemed as the “most dangerous” elements fluctuated between 35 and 50 individuals.<sup>917</sup>

Meanwhile, Roman newspapers wanted to publish the lists of OVRA informers and stirred chaos with polemical articles about OVRA collaborators and alleged cover-ups that prevented their arrest. Pressed by these critiques, the Bonomi government was forced to issue a statement on January 17, 1945, specifying that in late summer 1944—some time after the Allies handed the Palazzo del Viminale back to the Ministry of the Interior—the General Directorate of the Public Security had received lists of confidants employed in spying—presumably informants—but not specifically OVRA informers. There were no prominent figures among the hundreds of names marked in the payment slips; these lists had been delivered to the High Commissioner for Sanctions against Fascism in order to allow them to carry out their purges. The Bonomi government justified not releasing the names by arguing that publishing them would have alerted the informants. If those individuals realized they were under surveillance, they might flee the area and more easily avoid prosecution.<sup>918</sup>

In the meantime, the Allies followed the issue closely. They were irritated that the Bonomi government hinted that they had assumed control of the Ministry of the Interior in June 1944, identified extremely important papers, and delivered them to the Italians only in part and later. But, for the time being, the government forbid the press from publishing any documents pertaining to the OVRA, especially in mid-February 1945 during the run-up to the concerted action to capture the most influential former OVRA collaborators. The occupation authorities issued severe censorship provisions: “newspapers must not publish anything with relation to OVRA without the

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<sup>917</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 412.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

approval of the AC of S. G-2.”<sup>919</sup>

### **Guido Leto’s Clever Cover-Up**

Pietro Nenni, who had lived in exile for almost 20 years, assumed the post of High Commissioner for the Punishment of Crimes and Offenses of Fascism on July 4, 1945. Guido Leto, head of the OVRA, was arrested and brought to the prison of Regina Coeli, where he started thinking about the best way to take advantage of the existing documentation on the OVRA—documentation that he obviously knew well—to save himself and his closest collaborators from prosecution.<sup>920</sup>

Leto got in touch with Nenni, who granted him an audience on August 8, 1945. The meeting was not especially cordial, but the High Commissioner did not fully understand Leto’s plan. In mid-September, the first archival papers returned to their appropriate location: the Palazzo del Viminale under the control of Emilio Sereni, commissioner for Upper Italy of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>921</sup>

Leto was well connected. When the archival documents arrived in the capital, he started reaching out to his contacts to ensure the documents received attention that served his purposes. Leto had selected them himself during the war, thinking about the picture that would be necessary to paint in a post-Fascist perspective.

The Allied counterintelligence seemed to be more aware of Leto’s machinations than Nenni. The Anglo-American secret services confronted Leto and subjected him to detailed interrogations from October 18 to October 26, 1945 at the Allied Headquarters, but committed themselves to secrecy on the information he provided. Those long talks, which took place in the absence of Italian

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<sup>919</sup> Headquarters 426<sup>th</sup> CIC Detachment, Memorandum for the Officer in Charge: OVRA Organisation,” February 18, 1954, PRO, WO 204, 12446, Ovra Agents, cited in Franzinelli, 413.

<sup>920</sup> Franzinelli, 417–19.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

officials, were essentially aimed at exposing the international branches of the OVRA. In fact, the reports with Leto's revelations (about 50 folders, at the head of each of which the word "Secret" stands out) are full of names of officials, trustees and confidants of the OVRA. Leto gave the impression that he was sharing a lot of information, but he controlled the narrative. The counterintelligence officer who handled the interrogations described him as "a placid middle-aged police official of gentle appearance and demeanor; he has a precise and orderly mind and a fairly good memory." However, the officer did not let himself be misled by Leto's affable character and good sense of humor and noted that Leto mentioned the archival evidence in support of his statements several times ("He repeatedly invoked the evidence of the police archives"), specifying that "[i]t should be noted that Source has a personal interest in presenting this picture of the inter-relationship, since it deprives him of the position of Head of the OVRA, a distinction which he is anxious to repudiate."<sup>922</sup>

Leto denied using agents provocateurs. As for the informers, he only provided names that the Allies already knew, i.e., the group leaders who were more exposed: Bice Pupeschi, Filippo Tagliavacche, and Virgilio Troiani. Regarding the contacts with the Nazis, Leto painted them as limited to the delivery of anti-Bolshevik publications to Kappler. Leto obviously downplayed his role. His accounts are reminiscent of the debate around Adolf Eichmann and Arendt's concept of the *banality of evil*.<sup>923</sup> Like Eichmann, Leto described himself as someone doing his job, properly executing the police chief's directives; he claimed to have had sporadic contact with Mussolini, stating that he met him only two or three times in Bocchini's company and at some public ceremonies. The subsequent criminal proceedings ended in his favor, also due to the shrewdness of Leto's lawyer. Leto's acquittal (he was essentially free after February 16, 1946) and the

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<sup>922</sup> Ibid., 420–21.

<sup>923</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

acquittals of his closest collaborators also meant the acquittal of a number of Fascist intermediate officials that Leto had protected.<sup>924</sup>

### **A Published List and a Storm of Appeals**

As I mentioned before, the list of 622 OVRA informers was finally made public on July 2, 1946. The original draft of this list, prepared by the Commission for the Identification of the OVRA Informers, contained about 900 names, selected from those who had operated as group leaders, direct trustees, collaborators or sub-confidants of the Political Police Division. The commissioners selected these 900 spies from columns and catalogs of the trustees of the Public Security, verifying their payment receipts and reports. Between April and May 1946, a third of the names were erased with the utmost discretion, yet in a botched way without indicating the selection criteria. The list was reduced to the 622 names that were officially published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*.<sup>925</sup>

The people named in this list of informers were given 60 days to challenge their inclusion in the list. Chaos erupted. Between July and August 1946, almost 300 applications were submitted to the Commission—the aforementioned ricorsi. The Commission examined these applications, checking the personal files kept in the police archives. The scale of the operation was not remotely comparable to the Stasi, but there were similar elements in that each plaintiff had the right to view their own dossier in order to prepare counterarguments.<sup>926</sup> We have seen some of the names that appear among these appeals. Cesare Neri's appeal was rejected. On the other hand, Monsignor Enrico Pucci had a positive outcome due to pressure from the Holy See, despite the contrary

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<sup>924</sup> Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 421–24.

<sup>925</sup> Franzinelli, 437; ACS, Fondo Gabrieli, Box 10.

<sup>926</sup> Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 546.

opinion of the Sanctions Office.<sup>927</sup> The most striking case of acquittal, as indicated in the introduction, concerned the lawyer Bruno Cassinelli, who was actually one of the most active informants for 20 years, yet managed to win his appeal.<sup>928</sup>

### **The Importance of the Role of the Spies**

Whether convicted or acquitted, the spies still played an important role, pointing to the Fascist and Nazi proactive terror state and proactive approach to persecution. In concluding this work, I would therefore like to return to this main argument. While spontaneous denunciations mattered, previous historiography overstated the idea of the “self-policing” state operating within a “consensus dictatorship” (*Zustimmungsdiktatur*).<sup>929</sup> We have seen that *Vertrauensmänner* and OVRA spies were particularly effective against the most active political opponents of the regimes, in particular the communists, the anti-fascist exiles abroad, or Resistance networks in Nazi-occupied countries.

I argue that the incomplete success of the postwar purges prove that this proactive terror state put these structures in place to last. Just as these spies had inhabited a gray area between persecutors and victims, postwar justice was also a gray area. The complex surveillance systems that the Nazi and Fascist regimes had carefully built were too embedded in society and politics to be completely eradicated. So some spies were convicted, but others were acquitted or not

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<sup>927</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 1073, Dossier Pucci, Enrico; Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Affari Riservati, Archivio Generale (1870–1958), Categorie Permanenti, 1894–1958, A1, Informazioni Su Persone 1911–1943, Box 1941, Dossier 85, Pucci, Enrico.

<sup>928</sup> ACS, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Polizia Politica, Fascicoli Personali, 1927–1944, Box 261, Cassinelli, Bruno; Casellario Politico Centrale, Box 1155, Cassinelli, Bruno; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Commissione per l’Esame dei Ricorsi dei Confidenti dell’OVRA (1946–1949), Box 13, Dossier 214, Cassinelli, Bruno.

<sup>929</sup> Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1935–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Robert Gellately, “Denunciations in Twentieth-Century Germany: Aspects of Self-Policing in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic,” *The Journal of Modern History*; *Chicago* 68, no. 4 (December 1996): 931–67.

prosecuted, and many were reabsorbed into the state bureaucratic apparatus. The Fascist and Nazi regimes' imperfect human surveillance tools—the spies—reinvented themselves or were recycled by the new governments.

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1. Celeste, known as “Black Panther”, former collaborator of the SS, on the day she was baptized in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi
2. A rare photo of Celeste at 16 years old. For her beauty, in the Ghetto of Rome they called her “Stella” (Star). It became “Stella Ria” (Evil Star) when she began to sell her people to the Germans

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Box 597, dossier 5024 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against Robert Alesch

Box 696, dossier 5374 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against Mathilde Bélard, widow Carré

Box 766/BIS, dossier 5575/1 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch

Box 766/TER, dossier 5575/2 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch

Box 766/QUATER, dossier 5575/3 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against the Gestapo of Avenue Foch

Boxes 818-20, dossier 5688 of the procedure instructed by the *Cour de Justice du Département de la Seine* against Jacques Desoubrie

**Service Historique de la Défense, Vincennes, France (SHD)**

GR 28:

P2 105, dossier on the PCF between 1942 and 1944

P3 19, dossier Fred Scamaroni

P3 76, dossier on the Brutus network

P3 113, dossier Musée de l'Homme

P3 192, dossier André Grandclément

P4 463 (7), dossier Pierre Brossolette

P8 190, dossier Dieudonné Josef (Gestapo of Trèves)

P8 414, dossier Sadil Antonia (Gestapo of Trèves)

P9 883, dossier on the Bonny-Lafont gang

P9 1328, dossier Albert Gaveau

P9 1669, dossier Alfred Gaessler

P9 1918, dossier Jacques Desoubrie

P9 3474, dossier Émile Marongin, “Elio”

P9 11735, dossier Henri Devillers

P9 13186, dossier Jean-Paul Lien

P9 13992, Maurice Martineau issue

P 9/11 572, Loustanau-Lacau issue

#### **Archives de La Contemporaine, Nanterre, France (BDIC)**

##### F delta res:

Box 0787, French Gestapo trial file after the Liberation. Police Department  
1944

Box 0888, Flora Operation  
1940 – 1977

Box 0933, Klaus Barbie  
1971 – 1997

#### **Archives Départementales de la Savoie, Chambéry, France (ADS)**

1382W 36, State propaganda concerning women and mothers

#### **Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris, France (MS)**

##### IEQJ (1940-1943):

XI-32, Letter from Captain Paul Sézille to the SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker  
August 25, 1941

XI-34, Press release establishing the distinction between the *Commissariat général aux questions juives* and the *Institut d'étude des questions juives*

August 21, 1941

XI-118, Letter from Captain Paul Sézille to the SS-Obersturmführer Dannecker  
July 25, 1941

DACJM Collection, Hardy's Case:

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 01  
A Information I. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 1-23

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 02  
A Information II. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 24-65

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 03  
A Information III. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 66-108

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 04  
A Information IV. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 109-142

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 05  
A Information VI. "Documents" Hardy's Case, Subfolders 12-26

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 06  
B Intelligence II. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 3-37

Box 1950\_05\_08\_000544, Dossier 07  
Form C. Intelligence B.I. Hardy's Case, Subfolders 1-2

DACJM Collection, Gestapo Paris series:

Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 05  
Rue de la Pompe, Arrests in Ivry  
August 14, 1944

Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 07  
Rue de la Pompe, Jewish Organization of Combat  
July 17-19, 1944

Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 08  
Rue de la Pompe, S/dossier L, Assassinations of Bois de Boulogne  
August 16, 1944

Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 09  
Rue de la Pompe, Dossier N, Berger Gang's Activity, Est of France  
September and October 1944

Box 1952\_12\_22\_000528, Dossier 13  
Rue de la Pompe, T.M.P. of Paris, Regulation

**Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands, Vienna, Austria (DÖW)**

873:

Materials about the Austrian armed Resistance

2616:

Materials about Austrians in the French Resistance

7245/b:

Report on Karl Motesitzky about his help for Jews (including Ella Lingens' written testimony)

15062/05:

Index cards in alphabetical order from Innsbruck's *Landesgericht* or Regional Criminal Court about the political prisoners with information on prisons  
1945 – 1948

18053:

Alfred Freisinger's applications for the official certificate  
Oct. 14, 1946 – Aug. 9, 1949

18961 (1 & 2):

Bergauer's criminal proceedings

19808:

Criminal case of Vienna's *Landesgericht* or Regional Criminal Court against Gestapo agent Rosa Friedl

19827:

Criminal case of Vienna's *Landesgericht* or Regional Criminal Court as People's Court against Kurt Koppel (Gestapo informer)

19841:

Criminal case of Vienna's *Landesgericht* or Regional Criminal Court as People's Court against Karl Zeitelberger (Gestapo Vienna)

20000/L 275:

Ella Lingens' request that charges against her be dropped because of war & deportation

20557:

Descriptions of the February 1934 fights (emphasis Ottakring and Sandeiten) by Hans Prybil, Josef Prager, Josef Gradl  
Feb. 1934

20642/11:  
Court proceedings of Vienna's *Landesgericht* or Regional Criminal Court against Rudolf Hitzler (Gestapo Vienna)

20689/29:  
Documents of the Reich Governor (*Reichsstatthalter*) of Vienna to various authorities concerning measures against Jews

21697:  
List of Gestapo informers with their procedure numbers of the *Volksgericht* (People's Court) 1948

30046/1912:  
Ruling of the *Volksgericht* or People's Court of Vienna about Philippine Steinecker (born on 04 Jan., 1915 in Neu-Kupnovice, Poland) Feb. 18, 1947

30046/2003:  
Ruling of the *Volksgericht* or People's Court of Vienna about Karl Spreitzgrabner (born on Oct. 02, 1911 in Feistritz am Wechsel) Mar. 21, 1947

30046/3227:  
Ruling of the *Volksgericht* or People's Court of Vienna about Friedrich Andre (born on May 13, 1914 in Blidenmarkt), Karl Hradetzky (born on July 26, 1894 in Vienna), and Alois Kattinig (born on June 18, 1884 in Gorizia, Italy) Nov. 22, 1951

50120/Nli2:  
Ella Lingens's letter to Herbert Steiner Jan. 28, 1972

50120/NMa09:  
Steiner's correspondence

51789:  
Procedure of Vienna's *Volksgericht* or People's Court against Kurt Koppel

51790:  
Documents of the procedure of Vienna's *Volksgericht* or People's Court against Grete Kahane

51840:  
Lambert Leutgeb's *Verhörprotokoll*

51902:  
Documents concerning Reinhold Tajoburg

G2598-1:

Rudolf Klinger's *Photographierschein* (Gestapo record)

**Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Vienna, Austria (WStLA)**

Volksgerecht, A1 – Vg Vr-Strafakten:

21 VR 1732/47, criminal procedure against Elisabeth Wieser

Vg 2 Vr 4574/45, criminal procedure against Anton Brunner

Vg 3 Vr 5068/45, criminal procedure against Rosa Friedl

Vg 8e Vr 761/55, criminal procedure against Bernhard Witke & Michael Oberhuber

Vg 11g Vr 4866/46, criminal procedure against Leopold Unzeitig

Vg Vr 1866/46, criminal procedure against Johann Rixinger

Article from *Salzburger Volksblatt*, "News of the day"

March 22, 1940

**Archiv des Wiener Wiesenthal Instituts für Holocaust-Studien, Vienna, Austria (VWI)**

Mautner, Otto's file

(Gestapo spy working in the Netherlands)

1962

Stern, Michael's file

(Jewish spy from Johann Rixinger's system)

1965

**Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, Vienna, Austria (IKG)**

A/W 2590, 116:

Dossier 12017, Rudolf & Emma Klinger's *Auswanderungsfragebögen* or emigration questionnaires

May 29, 1939 - 10 July, 1939

**Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde, Germany (BAB)**

Series DO/1:

Box 4060, Isaaksohn born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid

Karteikarte 4/290/54:

Isaaksohn born Goldschlag, Stella-Ingrid  
February 16, 1950

Series R/58:

Box 9684, Isaaksohn, Rolf Israel

Series R/3018:

Box 2174, Preparation for High Treason  
1937-38

**Landesarchiv Berlin, Germany (LAB)**

Series B Rep 058:

Box 1854, Handakte Band 4, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922 - 1994)  
1956-1987

Box 1855, Handakte Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922 - 1994)  
1956-1960

Box 1856, Band 5, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922 - 1994)  
1972-1992

Box 2486, Band 2, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922 - 1994)  
1956-1957

Box 2487, Band 3, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler (1922 - 1994)  
1957-1963

Box 2487, Band 1, Criminal case against Stella-Ingrid Gärtner born Goldschlag, divorced Isaaksohn, divorced Kübler, married Schellenberg (1922 - 1994)  
1956

**Archiv der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin, Germany (BStU)**

Series MfS-HA IX/11:

Box PA 3472, Band 4, Teil 2, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol

Box PA 3472, Band 6, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol

Box PA 3472, Band 8, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol

Box PA 3472, Band 10, Teil 1, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol

Box PA 3472, Band 12, Stella Kübler-Isaaksohn's interrogation protocol

### **Staatsarchiv Würzburg, Germany (StAWü)**

#### Gestapo Würzburg:

240: Hahn, Alexander Israel (born on 5.12.1871)

15314: Stern, Leopold Israel (born on 19.10.1892)  
Nov. 4, 1940

16010: Toch, Ernst (born on 06.12.1912)  
Nov. 4, 1940

### **National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA (NARA)**

#### Record Group 44, Records of the Office of Government Reports, 1932 – 1947:

PF-260: Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services, World War II Posters, "Keep Mum - She's Not So Dumb! - Careless Talk Costs Lives" (1942-1945)

PA-693: Office for Emergency Management, Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch, Bureau of Special Services, World War II Posters, "Don't Tell Aunty and Uncle or Cousin Jane" (1942-1945)

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