

**Occupying Puglia:
The Italians and the Allies,
1943-1946**

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Abstract

In recent years there has been a revival in the study of the civilian experience of war. Compared to other belligerent countries such as Germany, Italy's experience of Allied bombing and occupation has been neglected. Such an absence from the historiography is unjustifiable; Italians were bombed intensely and endured a long occupation and reconstruction by the Allies. This led to the development of complex relationships between the two groups.

This study hopes to contribute to the revival of interest in the social history of the civilian in war, by focusing on the region of Puglia in southern Italy from 1943 to 1946. The south was the first area to experience direct contact with the Allies with the implementation of operation *Husky* (the invasion of Sicily) in July 1943. Once the Allies began their occupation of the south, they were unable to alter their attitude toward the Italian civilians despite the fact that Italy became from 8 September a co-belligerent. The study of the Allied occupation at a social level can demonstrate how the perception of the occupier and the occupied was constantly in flux, changing and adapting itself to different situations.

By focussing on public health, protest, crime, bombing and reconstruction, this study reconstructs the daily life of Allied servicemen and Italian civilians and demonstrates the multifaceted society that developed during the occupation.

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Abbreviations

ACC- Allied Control Commission

ACS- *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, Rome

AFHQ- Allied Forces Head Quarters

AHRC- Arts and Humanities Research Council

AMG- Allied Military Government (Abbreviation used in the documents to indicate both AMGOT and ACC)

AMGOT- Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories

CAO-Civil Affairs Officer

CIC-Counter Intelligence Corps

CLN- *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*, National Committee of Liberation

CMP- Military Police

CCRR- *Carabinieri*

GDS- *Governo del Sud*

IWM- Imperial War Museum.

MFAA -Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section

MI- *Ministero dell' Interno*

PCI- *Partito Comunista Italiano*, Italian Communist Party

PCM- *Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri*

PNF- *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, National Fascist Party

PS- *Pubblica Sicurezza*

PSI- *Partito Socialista Italiana*, Italian Socialist Party

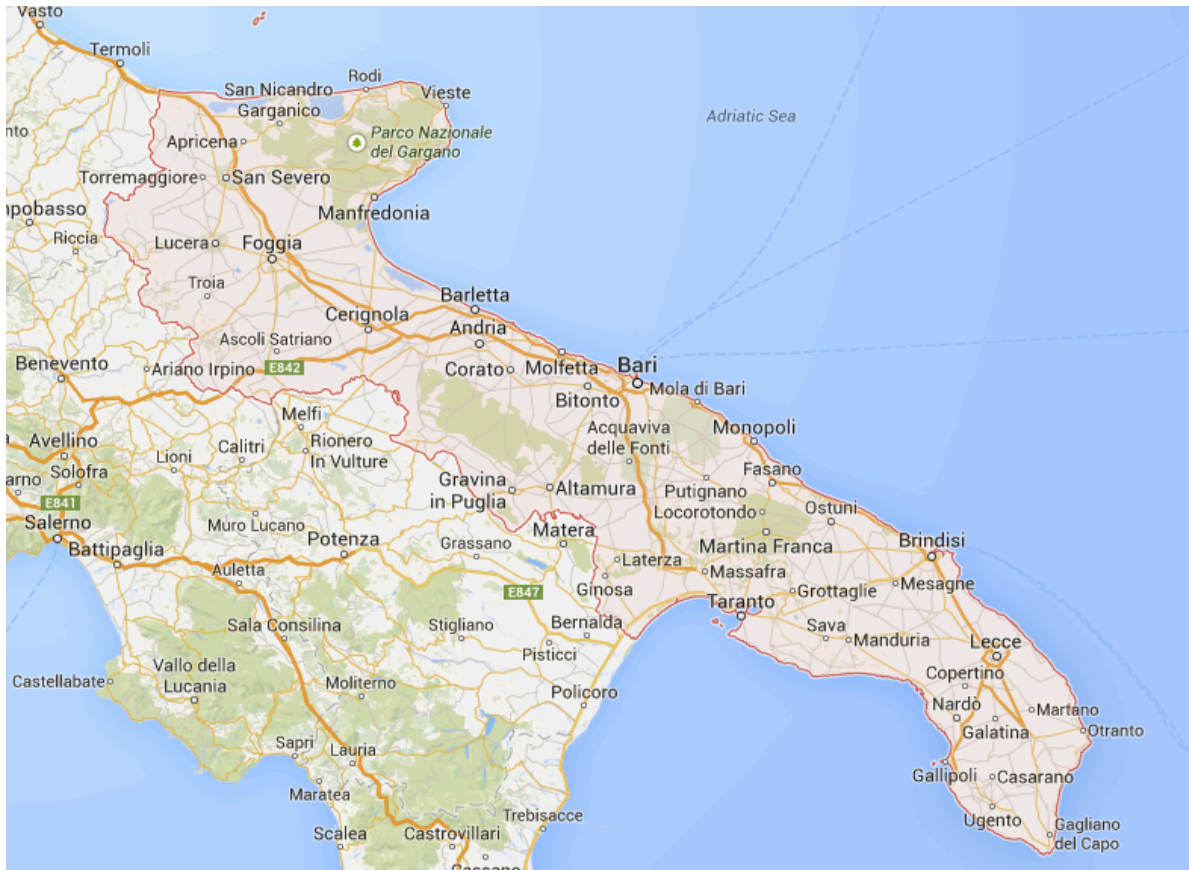
PWB- Psychological Warfare Branch

RAMC-Royal Army Medical Corps

SOE- Special Operations Executive

TNA- The National Archives

Map of Puglia



Map Data © 2015 Google

Introduction

‘We encountered no difficulty. The Italians whether soldiers or civilians, welcomed us as liberators.’¹

This quote from the diary of Major Greenlees, an English officer in charge of Radio Bari is typical of the welcome many Allied personnel received upon their arrival on Italian soil. The influx of Allied armies was viewed as the end of the war and as the answer to the severe problems that were confronted by the population. However, liberation signifies the shortest time period of Allied involvement in the *Mezzogiorno*. The liberator swiftly became the occupier, as the Allied armies advanced north through the peninsula. The Allies had invaded Sicily on 10 July 1943, confident that Italy would be conquered easily and rapidly, with Rome being reached by Christmas. Nonetheless, this conviction was misplaced, as in the words of General Mark Clark ‘Italy turned out to be a tough old gut.’² Rome was not liberated until 4 June 1944 and the northern half of the peninsula not fully freed from German occupation until April 1945. The war moved north in destructive waves, with long periods of stalemate in between, most noticeably at the Gustav and Gothic lines respectively. Consequently, it was necessary for the Allied Military Government (AMG) to set up an occupation regime in the south of the country. The *Mezzogiorno* became the de facto logistics base for the front line armies and staging area for supplies and troops. Subsequently, the Allies featured consistently in the daily lives of southern Italians for over two years. This led to a complex set of relationships between Allied troops and civilians; Allied soldiers frequently felt sympathy for the plight of the Italian people. For example, whilst stationed at an airbase outside of Foggia, airman G. C. Tylee hired a local woman (who lived next to the

¹Diary of Major I. G. Greenlees, 89/1/1, Imperial War Museum (IWM), 168.

²Philip Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini, The Italians and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127-129.

base) to do his laundry. He wrote in his diary that although she was about 40, she looked about 50. The *Signora* had lost her left leg below the knee in a bombing raid and now had only a wooden peg in its place. He described how gaunt and thin she was, but commented that his clothes had never been cleaner. When Tylee left the area he gave her a can of bully beef in thanks, after which she cried. He felt embarrassed as to him it was a small gesture.³ This example reveals the reciprocal and sympathetic co-existence of some troops and Italian civilians. Conversely, not all Allies shared Tylee's attitude towards Italians. For instance, Major Zorab an ophthalmologist in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) wrote upon his arrival in Taranto on 29 September 1943:

I do not like the Italians so much as the Sicilians. They are not so friendly and now that they are our allies they are rather full of themselves. The town is crowded with Iti [sic] sailors who just do nothing but strut about in their nice white suits. The women are most puddingly [sic] and pregnant though some have good figures. All however, are black haired and greasy faced.⁴

These descriptions of his arrival in Taranto are not flattering. Zorab appeared to resent that his former enemy was now a co-belligerent; a sentiment shared by many soldiers in the first few months of the liberation. Moreover, it is interesting to note that Zorab considered Sicilians as fundamentally different from mainland Italians. Perhaps this was because of the less than enthusiastic welcome received, as opposed to Sicily. This was a result of the nature of the liberation in the two areas. The Allies simply landed at Taranto and faced little German resistance; conversely they had encountered fierce German opposition in Sicily. Therefore, the Allies were welcomed more fervently when they had had to fight to liberate an area. This

³Diary of G. C. Tylee, 89/12/1, IWM, 156.

⁴Diary of Major Zorab, 06/11/1, IWM, 25.

thesis will explore both Italian and Allied attitudes towards each other and how they manifested themselves under the daily life of the Allied occupation.

Narratives of the Italian campaign

Consistently, narratives of the Second World War have focused on the military campaigns of the Allied and Axis armies. The experience of the Italian population, however, has been neglected, particularly in English. The physical and psychological effects of bombing have recently become a topic for enquiry, but the study of the Allied occupation of Italy is largely overlooked. Moreover, existing material in both English and Italian fails to consider key aspects of the Allied occupation of Italy, and specifically of the occupation of Puglia. For example, important issues such as public health, crime, and wartime reconstruction are absent in the existing accounts of the Allied occupation.

In English, the key objects of historical enquiry on Italy in the Second World War are the Allied military push to liberate the Italian peninsula and the Wehrmacht's determination to halt the Allied advance. Consequently, there exists substantial literature on the Allied military campaign and their progression through Italy from their invasion of Sicily on 10 July 1943. Accounts of the military campaign are generally personal descriptions written by Allied servicemen.⁵ Numerous studies have concentrated on a particular regiment, event or landing to narrate Italy's experience of the war. Bidwell narrates the Italian campaign as a tug of war between the Allied and Axis sides and Lamb's *War In Italy 1943-45* describes the military campaign, with a focus on the political events and decisions that led to the invasion,

⁵See for example Hugh Pond, *Salerno* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1974); Eric Newby, *Love and War in the Apennines* (St Ives: Harper Press, 2010).

including an in-depth discussion of the Casablanca conference in January 1943.⁶ His research has exposed the savage nature of the Italian campaign and given consciousness to the experiences of the troops who fought in it. Consequently, the studies that take a military point of view have assisted the exploration of the campaign and provided social historians with a wide-ranging understanding of the military events that affected Italian civilians. This study is different in that military events are not the focus, but they remain in the background of the lives of Puglian civilians. This investigation will engage with how military actions affected the daily lives of citizens rather than their impact on the Italian campaign and the Allied war effort. Elena Agarossi's reflections on the armistice of 8 September 1943, as a symbol of a deep-rooted crisis of the nation, demonstrated the importance of the political shift for Italian civilians.⁷ Although her work is centred on political events, Agarossi presents knowledge of their consequences for Italian civilians in their daily lives too.

Follain's work widens the field of enquiry in terms of military history. Follain presents an account of the battle for Sicily in July 1943, but also takes into consideration the impact of the invasion on Sicilians. He gives voice to Sicilians by using oral testimonies, many of which sought refuge in a Roman amphitheatre or in the caves of Mount Etna in July 1943.⁸ Cities and towns such as Messina and Troina were reduced to rubble and civilians' attempts to flee the bombs were hindered by the breakdown of the public transport system.⁹ This study has significance for my investigation of the liberation of southern Italy, as it places the civilian at the centre and not as a secondary consideration to the movements of the military.

⁶ Graham D. Bidwell, *The Tug of War: The Battle of Italy 1943-45* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986) and Richard Lamb, *War In Italy 1943-45: A Brutal Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷Elena Agarossi, *A Nation Collapses: The Italian Surrender of 1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

⁸John Follain, *Mussolini's Island: The Untold Story of the Invasion of Sicily* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2005), 16-50.

⁹*Ibid.*, 17 and 272-293.

Fussell's contribution to the study of the Second World War, although not particularly focused on Italy, has critical implications for the investigation of the mentality of the Allied occupying soldiers and bombers in Puglia. The air force base in Cerignola was home to 741 Squadron of the USAAF, who flew sorties over Germany in their B-24 bombers. Thus, the Allied airmen frequently encountered Italian civilians. An American soldier remembered: 'we watched the women standing in long lines with their pieces of cloth [...] waiting for their small allotment of flour.'¹⁰ His study of the 'psychological and emotional culture of Americans and Britons' and of the 'rationalizations and euphemisms that people needed to deal with an unacceptable actuality' is important to my understanding of the behaviour of soldiers and civilians during the occupation of Puglia.¹¹ Chapter 8, which discusses the problems of unwarranted drinking and the short supply of sex for the troops, takes a sympathetic tone and explains why troops indulged in poor behaviour. Fussell explains that the habit of drinking excessively was due to the need to cope with difficult duties, for instance killing enemy combatants, or to overcome fear, and that the freedom of being away from polite society encouraged the troops to drink to excess.¹² The reasons for unnecessary drinking, which in many cases resulted in unruly and occasionally criminal behaviour are significant to my work, as they provide one reason for the occurrence of Allied crime during the occupation of Puglia. Moreover, Fussell argues that the complications caused by sexual deprivation, namely prostitution and venereal disease were not an issue for front line troops only. In fact, it was 'stigmatized as a real echelon problem'; Puglia was a large base for all branches of the armed forces, such as the American 15th Air Force Bomber Group and British

¹⁰ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Wild Blue: 714 Squadron-on a Wing and a Prayer over Occupied Europe* (Reading: Pocket Books, 2002), 137.

¹¹ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), x.

¹² *Ibid.*, 96-102.

Eighth Army.¹³ Subsequently, problems with prostitution and VD were common, and my thesis will seek to understand the reasons behind the troops' behaviour.

Furthermore, Fussell marks an important contribution to the understanding of stereotyping or the 'type casting' of nations during the conflict. He argues that soldiers and civilians alike reduced type casting to a 'simplified sketch featuring a limited series of classifications into which people, in the process are dehumanized and deprived of individuality or eccentricity are fitted.'¹⁴ The approach Fussell takes is to consider how both the Germans and the Americans saw the Italians, and he explains how negative perceptions of Italy's poor military performance permeated down to the troops. For the Allies, this negativity was a useful psychological function in defining the enemy. Italians were seen as hapless rather than dedicated fanatics. Positive connotations of Italy as the birthplace of modern civilisation and ideas of the Italians as lively and joyful added to the complex understanding of Italians during the war.¹⁵

My research will demonstrate that the perception of the other was highly localised as one area could develop a far more genial existence with the Allies than the other. However, my thesis will make clear that this variety of local perceptions co-existed with national stereotypes, which were often promoted by the military authorities. For example, an Allied pamphlet distributed to both American and British troops before the invasion of the Italian mainland on 9 September 1943, entitled 'A Soldier's Guide to Italy', was designed to aid the average soldier during the invasion and occupation of the Italian mainland. In the section of the pamphlet devoted to character traits, the Italians are stereotyped as excitable, prone to mass

¹³Ibid., 108.

¹⁴Ibid., 115.

¹⁵Ibid., 125.

enthusiasm, intrinsically not law abiding and lacking in discipline.¹⁶ Therefore, according to the Allies bombing raids would prove particularly effective. This was a belief shared by British military and political leaders since as early as 1940.

The bombing of Italian cities began essentially instantaneously after Mussolini declared war and continued until 1945. Throughout the war, Italy was bombed in the majority by the Allies: the Americans largely bombed the South and normally during the day whereas the British were more responsible for the bombing of the North and normally at night.¹⁷ The physical and psychological damage that Italian civilians endured throughout the air war has received little attention by the historiography in English, while the majority of works has focused on the bombing of Germany.¹⁸

There only exist two articles in English on the bombing of Italy. One is by Stephen Harvey, who suggests that ‘the bombing had a decisive effect on the Italians ability and willingness to continue the war.’¹⁹ Harvey’s main point is that the bombing was the principal reason in the collapse of Italian morale and loss of faith in the regime in 1943. The other article, by Baldoli and Fincardi shows how civilians were psychologically affected by bombing in Italy. In shifting the focus to civilians’ reactions to Allied propaganda and rumours, the article demonstrates how Allied propaganda was able to convince Italians that the Allies had to use bombing and that there existed a link between bombing, democracy and liberation.²⁰ Therefore, Baldoli’s and Fincardi’s arguments contribute to the study of the Allied

¹⁶ ‘A Soldier’s Guide to Italy’, FO898/479, The National Archives (TNA).

¹⁷ Claudia Baldoli, Marco Fincardi, ‘Italian Society under Anglo-American Bombs: Propaganda, Experience and Legend, 1940-1945’, *The Historical Journal*, 52, 4, 2009, 1017-1038.

¹⁸ For example see: Anthony C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 273 and Herman Knell, *To Destroy a City: Strategic Bombing and its Human Consequences in World War II* (Cambridge: De Capo, 2003).

¹⁹ Stephen Harvey, ‘The Italian War Effort and the Strategic Bombing of Italy’, *History*, 70, 1985, 32.

²⁰ Baldoli, Fincardi, ‘Italian Society under Anglo-American Bombs’, 1035.

occupation of the south, as they provide insight into how the Allies were perceived before the liberation and subsequently how this could affect the occupier-occupied relationship. This investigation is important to my research as it demonstrates the attitudes of Italians towards their future occupiers. Consequently, I will seek to assess to what extent opinions changed or remained the same once the occupation began.

New research into bombing in the Second World War by a three-year AHRC project, entitled ‘Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945’ and based at Exeter, Newcastle and Reading universities, has made a necessary contribution to the study of the bombing of Italy. The resulting conference book published by the project makes it clear that the aim of the task was to explore the ‘immediate effects and short term consequences of bombing’ and to demonstrate that bombing had ripple effects far beyond the immediately targeted areas.²¹ This perspective on bombing ‘from below’ examined the relationship between state and civilians, cultural responses to bombing, societies under bombs and popular perceptions of bombing. This project has moved the research perspective from the military capability of bombing to the political and moral issues or the discussions of the impact on civilian morale.

Studies of bombing in Italian are often local studies of a particular city, town or village. The dominance of Rome and Naples in local studies is a trend that has continued into the recent historiography.²² One example is Gentiloni Silveri’s and Carli’s book *Bombardare Roma*. The authors focus on the politics of the decision to bomb Rome, using Allied documents and correspondences; the correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill consistently

²¹Richard Overy, ‘Introduction’ in Claudia Baldoli, Andrew Knapp, Richard Overy (eds.), *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945* (London: Continuum, 2011), 1.

²² Some example of local studies include: Filippo Bardelli, *Quando l’inferno cadde dal cielo: Arcidosso* (Arcidosso: Edizioni Effgi, Archivi, 2009) and Gabriella Gribaudo, *Guerra Totale. Tra Bombe Alleate e Violenza Naziste. Napoli e il Fronte Meridionale 1940-44* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005).

contained concerns over the political and military implications over the bombing of Rome.²³ Another scholarly investigation on the subject was undertaken in the early 1990s by Cesare De Simone, who considers the reasons for the decision to bomb Italy's capital, but focused on the experience of civilians during the first phase of the bombing of Rome.²⁴ Although De Simone's book is a very specific study of a few weeks of Rome's history, it is important in demonstrating how local communities could react to bombing and their attitude towards the Allies. Furthermore, this study is important in showing how quickly a city or area could be devastated by the war. Comparisons can be drawn between Rome and the major towns and cities of Puglia. Bombing and the activities of ground forces unequivocally devastated many of Puglia's urban centres. These dismal circumstances caused widespread hunger and the breakdown of sanitation; I will use De Simone's model of micro history in my analysis of Puglian cities.

Also useful to my work is recent research by Andrea Villa, who reflects on the experiences of the Allied bombers before and after the liberation, when air force bases were set up all over southern Italy. Villa uses archival sources, diaries and oral testimonies to explore the training of the bomber crews, their observations on the population and their attitudes towards them. For example, the servicemen concluded that the Italians were sociable because the Allies represented both the end of the war and the promise of food.²⁵ In shifting the focus to the Allied servicemen, Villa explains the lifestyle of those stationed at air force bases in the south, and how the position of the bases and the large number of troops present affected the lives of the local population.

²³Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, Maddalena Carli, *Bombardare Roma: Gli Alleati e la 'città aperta' (1940-1944)* (Bologna:Il Mulino, 2007), 11.

²⁴ Cesare De Simone, *Venti angeli sopra Roma. I bombardamenti aerei sulla città eterna (19 luglio e 13 agosto 1943)* (Milan: Mursia, 1993).

²⁵Andrea Villa, *Guerra aerea sull'Italia: 1943-1945* (Milan: Guerini e Associati, 2010), 103.

This thesis will also analyse the bombing by the Allies during the liberation of Puglia and during the German occupation to highlight the physical and psychological damage inflicted on the region by bombs. In addition, during the occupation the AMG attempted to protect Puglia from bombs by digging air raid shelters and instituting blackout regulations. However, as chapter one will show the Allies did not always follow the regulations themselves and civilians thought them to attract German raids as a consequence. The use of Puglia as an area for the setting up of Allied bombing ranges, which were used as target practice for bombing raids over Germany will be examined, to show with what little regard the problems of the populace were considered by the Allies.

Puglia is a region almost entirely neglected in the historiography of the Second World War, which has thus far mostly concentrated on Naples and Sicily. There exist only two works on Puglia, both of which concentrate on the Bari gas explosion in December 1943. On the evening of 2 December 1943 the Allies and population of Bari were completely caught unaware by a German air raid directly at the harbour. At the time the harbour was full of cargo and supply ships, which brought the necessary supplies for the Allied advance through the southern half of the Italian peninsula. Unbeknownst to the population and almost completely to the Allied armed forces, the US ship *SS John Harvey* was carrying a lethal cargo of mustard gas bombs. The bombs were in Italy in the event that Hitler decided to use chemical warfare. Tragically the ship was hit, caught fire and subsequently exploded, emitting the poisonous content of the bombs into the water and atmosphere.

A survivor of the disaster, George Southern, authors the more recent of the two narratives. He reports on the event in chronological order through his own experience and that of other comrades or survivors, who gave oral testimonies about the event when interviewed in the

1990s. The tone adopted by the book is one of condemnation of the higher Allied authorities, which authorised the cover up of the presence of mustard gas on the ship *SS John Harvey*. However, he praises the service personnel and civilians who were caught up in the bombing and subsequent explosion. Southern's aim is to produce a detailed account 'from the horse's mouth' and his narrative provides specific details of the event and its aftermath, both short- and long-term.²⁶ The detailed and vivid information found in his book is important to my thesis, as the Bari gas explosion was in all probability the most significant event of the occupation of the city: it had a ripple effect on issues such as Allied-Italian relations, the circumstances of health and hygiene, and crime.

Glenn Infield's work *Disaster at Bari* is equally useful in supplying information on the trajectory of the event and details of daily life in Bari, but it is somewhat problematic. The author (a former US Air Force Major) has adopted a similar approach to Southern, as he uses personal testimony to bring the event to life. However, it is largely a work of fiction and mostly unreliable.²⁷ These two books leave uncertainty as to the precise impact of the gas explosion on the civilian population. My research aims to clarify the event and its aftermath and implications for both Allied servicemen and Italian civilians.

Allied Military Government

The Allied Military Government (AMG) set up an occupation government initially in Sicily and then the Italian mainland in 1943. This organisation was geographically extended with the success of the Allied armies. General Dwight D. Eisenhower recommended a policy of joint Anglo-American responsibility under an agreed 'single effective' system to function

²⁶George Southern, *Poisonous Inferno: World War II Tragedy at Bari Harbour* (Bodmin: Airlife Publishing Ltd, 2002), foreword.

²⁷Glenn B. Infield, *Disaster at Bari* (Aylesbury: New English Library, 1976), 29.

under an Allied commander. Named the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT), it largely involved the deployment of Civil Affairs Officers (CAOs) separated into six divisions: Financial, Civil Supply, Public Health, Legal and Public Safety and Enemy Property.²⁸ Despite this large apparatus of government, AMGOT doctrine emphasised indirect rule.²⁹ The principal priority remained the war effort. It was imperative that law and order were maintained in order to facilitate smooth transportation of supplies and personnel to the front. Orders given to those invading Sicily during operation Husky in July 1943 were maintained through the liberation. Troops were told to be benevolent, as far as military considerations would allow.³⁰ This directive can also be applied to the attitudes and behaviour of AMGOT officers during the occupation.

AMGOT was dissolved in February 1944 due to organisational problems and became the Allied Control Commission (ACC), which organised the occupied zones into regions. For example at this time Sicily was Region 1, Southern Italy was Region 2 and Campania was designated its own region as Region 3. Following a similar structure to AMGOT their aims were fivefold: to organise military government operations under the armies in direct support of combat troops; to give any immediate practicable help possible to the civilian population in order to prevent disease and unrest; to prepare the governmental administration and economy to be turned back to local authorities as quickly as possible; to supervise the execution of the terms of the armistice; and to act as spokesmen of the United Nations to the Italian Government.³¹ This spelling out of Allied priorities coincided with the handover of occupied territories to the Italian authorities. The Italians were now responsible for the daily

²⁸Charles Reginald Skinner Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy, 1943-1946* (London: H.M.S.O, 1957), 1-2 and 4.

²⁹Harry L. Coles, Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, book 1 (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2005), ix.

³⁰Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy*, 10.

³¹Thomas R. Fisher, 'Allied Military Government in Italy,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 267, Military Government, 1950, 114.

running of regions, with the Allies acting as an ‘advisory’ body. However, in reality the ACC played an active role in terms of policy making and daily maintenance of the supplies and law and order. Therefore, by examining the Allied occupation, insights can be drawn on the daily lives of Italian civilians and Allied servicemen during the latter years of the conflict. The study of the Allied occupation at a social level can demonstrate how the perception of the occupier and the occupied was constantly in flux, changing and adapting itself to different situations. Consequently, the study of the occupation is useful in determining how different areas and peoples react to wartime situations and how this affects how they perceive and interact with their liberators/occupiers. Research by Morgan and Ellwood take a social perspective of the history of Italy during the years 1943-1945, but mostly deliberates on political events. Morgan’s narrative pivots around the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice of 8 September 1943 and intends ‘to be as bottom up as it can be.’³² In many aspects, this perspective is achieved. Morgan examines the economic impact the arrival of the Allies had on the people of Naples and Rome, and contrasts the ways in which different reactions altered how each city perceived the Allies. Morgan demonstrates how Italy ceased to exist as a nation during the period, and that amongst the population the dissolution of a sense of nationhood took place.³³ Ellwood similarly devotes some time to the occupation, and seeks to explain what it meant for the Allied High Command. Ellwood reflects that the structures of control set up in Italy were designed to bring about the total occupation of an enemy territory;³⁴ this is insightful of how the Allies viewed the occupation of Italy and the Italians. Ellwood is critical of AMG, arguing that civil affairs were relegated to a minor role and filled with officers that would have been more suited to a Grand Tour.³⁵ Both historians have contributed to the understanding of the Allied role in Italy during the occupation and of the

³²Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini*, 9-10.

³³*Ibid.*, 122.

³⁴David Ellwood, *Italy 1943-45* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), 54-55.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 50.

social conditions of the population. Hence, their research constitutes compulsory reading for an exploration of the experience of Puglia under the Allies and of the relationship between troops and civilians. Though, neither historian considers how the day-to-day occupation manifested itself in towns and cities, and whether the Allies made any attempt at reconstructing the bomb-damaged country during occupation. Further detailed research is thus needed to clarify the nature of the Italian and Allied experience of occupation.

Gloria Chianese's work, which incorporates the experience of the end of the war and the liberation in southern Italy, is also important to my thesis.³⁶ It is significant that Chianese chooses to research beyond the war years; the Allies were still present in the south in 1946 and the war had consequences that affected the immediate post-war period. The transition from war to peace and the handing back of all control to the Italians was a crucial moment, as Guido Crainz demonstrates in his exploration of the consequences of the war beyond the immediate war years. In particular, he traced the clamour for agrarian reform in the sharecropping regions of Italy.³⁷ Chianese argues that people demonstrated the ability to adapt and be flexible during the occupation.³⁸ The authority of AMG to constantly prioritise the needs of the military campaign over those of the population meant that the urgencies of the people remained in the background.³⁹ This priority is telling of the way in which the AMG controlled the south of Italy and builds on Ellwood's theory that the south was treated as an enemy territory. My thesis will directly contribute to Chianese's and Ellwood's work, as I will use the Allied handling of the wartime reconstruction and public health policies to argue that the military was first and foremost concerned with military matters. In the instance of the Italians receiving some benefit, for example as a result of efforts to control the

³⁶ Gloria Chianese, *“Quando uscimmo dai rifugi”: il Mezzogiorno tra guerra e dopoguerra (1943-1946)* (Rome: Carocci, 2004).

³⁷ See Guido Crainz, *L'ombra della guerra: Il 1945, l'Italia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007).

³⁸ Chianese, *“Quando uscimmo dai rifugi”*, 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

occurrence and spread of disease, I will argue that this was not the main purpose of these measures. In fact, the health and availability of combatants to send to the front line always remained the priority.

Another objective of ACC was the reconstruction of Italy and in particular the protection of Italian art and monuments. The wartime reconstruction of southern Italy carried out by the ‘liberators-occupiers’ is an area that has been so far unexplored in the historiography. Little is known about Allied plans, and about the execution of these plans, regarding buildings, utilities, homes and monuments that had been damaged by both Allied bombing and German retreat. Present historiography concentrates on the formation, implementation and consequences of the Marshall plan. Ellwood’s *Rebuilding Europe* focuses on the construction of the plan during the years 1945-48. He argues that among the population of southern Italy there existed a sense of helplessness and dependence and that consequently neither the Allied nor the Italian authorities thought to plan the reconstruction effectively.⁴⁰ As Harper argues, the problems caused by the length and destructiveness of the liberation campaign were ‘barely alleviated by a hapless Anglo-American military government,’ who brought about economic breakdown.⁴¹ Subsequently, more research is required into the war time AMG and their policies towards reconstruction, as well as an investigation into the experience of Puglia to provide a new perspective on the Allied regime and its role in the reconstruction of Italy.

Literature on the damage and reconstruction to historic monuments and works of art during the Second World War provides useful information to the Italian case. Lynn H. Nicholas’ seminal work *The Rape of Europa* takes a chronological approach to the fate of art and

⁴⁰ Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: Western Europe, America and the Postwar Reconstruction 1945-1955* (London-New York: Longman, 1992), 29.

⁴¹ John L. Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy 1945-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 25.

monuments during the conflict. In her examination of the Italian case, Nicholas is particularly informative in terms of the movements of Italian artistic treasures to the depositories or *recoveri* and the German approach to the issue.⁴² Nicola Lambourne's *War Damage in Western Europe* is an excellent example of research into reconstruction. She describes the destruction of classical architecture as 'the manifestation of the very civilisation that the bombers were trying to protect.'⁴³

Recent Italian research on the wartime reconstruction has identified an area of particular resonance: the role of Monuments Officers of AMG. Dagnini Brey's book *Salvate Venere!* focuses on Monuments Officers' attempts to assess damage to monuments and buildings of historic value in Italy during the later war years. Particular attention is paid to Naples and Florence. Dagnini Brey uses Naples as a case study to demonstrate the experiences of the Monument Officers, whose reaction to the monuments 'eviscerated' from the bombs was one of shock and consternation.⁴⁴ During peacetime many officers had worked in the arts or architecture and had a pre-existing affection for Italian artistic culture. For some, their wartime role was the 'bolstering of a sick friend, for others the beginning of a love story.'⁴⁵ This book has widened the field of enquiry on wartime reconstruction and supplied a new perspective, in the sense that the sole focus of the book is the Italian case. Italy is not relegated to a background issue behind Germany, Britain and France. This is an important step into research on the reconstruction, but it only considers one particular aspect. The reconstructions of housing, industry and basic civilian necessities have so far not been

⁴² Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (London: Papermac, 1995); see also Carlotta Coccoli, 'Danni bellici e monumenti italiani durante il secondo conflitto mondiale: le fonti dell'esercito alleato', in Coccoli (ed.), *Guerra, monumenti, ricostruzione. Architetture e centri storici italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), 158-174.

⁴³Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments during the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 1.

⁴⁴Ilaria Dagnini Brey, *Salvate Venere! La storia sconosciuta dei soldati alleati che salvarono le opere d'arte italiane nella seconda guerra mondiale* (Milan: Mondadori, 2010), 100.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 272.

explored. My research perspective is largely directed at reconstruction that affected civilians' everyday lives. For instance, I will examine the Allied policy for providing and reconstructing adequate housing and the restructuring of essential services such as the electricity and water supplies. My enquiry will endeavour to uncover the primary aims of the reconstruction, the extent to which reconstruction was carried out, and how the civilian population perceived it.

Key historiography on Southern Italy

Northern and southern Italy experienced a vastly different war post-8 September 1943. In the north, civilians lived under the Republic of *Salò* and German occupation, whereas in the centre and south of the peninsula, the Germans played a diminished role and it was the Allies who had the role of occupier. Consequently, historiography has often separated into either research on the northern or southern experience of the conflict. For this study it is the historiography of the south that is most important. Costantino Felice set a precedent for the study of the Gustav Line, the area south of Rome that extended across central Italy from the winter of 1943 to the spring of 1944. The Gustav line endured both aerial attacks and attacks by ground forces as the Allies attempted to breach the German defensive lines. As a result, the area was severely damaged and the population suffered from Nazi violence, bombing and the ground forces' attempts to breach the line. Felice states that the war in Abruzzo has usually been considered in military and political terms, such as following the Wehrmacht and the 8th Army; instead, he shifted the focus to the experience of civilians.⁴⁶ Indeed, Felice argues that Abruzzo experienced traumatic events such as mass evacuation and massacres. He characterises how the undisciplined German troops inflicted tyranny and violence on an

⁴⁶Costantino Felice, *Guerra resistenza dopoguerra in Abruzzo. Uomini, economie, istituzioni* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 9. See also Gabriella Gribaudo, *Terra bruciata: le stragi naziste sul fronte meridionale* (Naples: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003).

already constrained population, carried out with technical brutality and ferocity that culminated in the *terra bruciata* or ‘burnt earth.’⁴⁷ Felice further demonstrates how Allied bombing created total destruction, resulting in a position of solitude for civilians. The destruction caused a laceration of ties that they normally had with others and with nature.⁴⁸ The raids destroyed the communal ties that bound communities together, leaving them with no means of achieving aid from the local authorities.

Recent research by Tommaso Baris broadened the historiography of the Gustav Line. Similarly to Felice, Baris assesses the experiences of the people who lived in the battle zone, but his attention is shifted to the Lazio region. Baris reflects on the psychological impact of war violence on civilians. He transfers the focus to how the violent behaviour of the Germans and Allied raids affected public opinion and long-term memory. He surmises that the behaviour of the Germans, expressly in the last part of the occupation, overtook the fear of bombing and led the people to welcome festively the first Allied soldiers.⁴⁹ The existing stereotypes of the Americans as rich and of the British as arrogant persisted through the period of occupation and are remembered in the same way. The stereotype of the Americans as wealthy was present before the beginning of the conflict and stemmed from the experiences of Italian emigrants; some Italians wrote home of the riches to be found in America, others returned to their mother country bringing the stories of a land of plenty with them. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Americans were welcomed so enthusiastically.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Felice, *Guerra resistenza dopoguerra*, 104-105.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁹ Tommaso Baris, *Tra due fuochi. Esperienza e memoria della guerra lungo la linea Gustav* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 2003), 85.

⁵⁰ See Nicola Gallerano, ‘L’arrivo degli alleati’, in *I luoghi della memoria. Strutture ed eventi dell’Italia unita*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1997).

Research into the civilian experience of war and occupation in the south of Italy has recurrently concentrated on the experience of a particular city. This perspective has mostly focused on Rome and Naples, for example Alessandro Portelli's influential book on the Nazi massacre at the Ardeatine caves in Rome.⁵¹ Gloria Chianese's chapter 'Napoli nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale' in her edited conference book *Mezzogiorno 1943* is a good example of this kind of research perspective. Chianese points out that it is possible to investigate the circumstances of the conflict in Naples with two aims: to reflect on the socio-economic institutions in the atmosphere of the collapse of the regime authority, and to begin a comparison between the catastrophe of war and other moments of crisis for citizens in the last century. The event of war constitutes an opportunity to observe the behavior and choices of both the individual and the collective in a phase when relations with the state that were already weak were broken.⁵²

Maria Porzio in her book *Arrivano gli alleati!* discusses crimes committed by Allied troops in Naples and the Campania region, with specific emphasis on sexual violence. She argues that cases of rape and sexual assault are evidence that the Allies were not only liberators, but also conquerors ready to profane the bodies of Italian women.⁵³ However, this book also presents the more positive side of fraternisation of Italians with the Allies; she examines the number of genuine cases of love and marriage in Naples during the occupation. She recounts in detail the 'tortuous process' of applying to the military authorities for permission of marriage and the difficulties in overcoming religious and racial differences.⁵⁴ In addition Mafai, a communist woman and writer who lived through the war, commented on how the war

⁵¹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁵² Chianese, 'Napoli nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale' in Gloria Chianese (ed.), *Mezzogiorno 1943* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1996), 29.

⁵³ Maria Porzio, *Arrivano gli alleati! Amori e violenze nell'Italia Liberata* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 2011), 89.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 147-164.

revitalised good sentiments such as love. The proximity to death and destruction led people to appreciate peace and stability in their personal lives.⁵⁵ The discourse over marriage is an important counter balance to the situation of crime and violence during the occupation.

An important collection of essays in Nicola Gallerano's edited book *L'Altro Dopoguerra. Roma e Il Sud 1943-1945* is indispensable background reading for an enquiry into the Allied occupation of Puglia. The chapters cover the whole of the South, often centering on cities such as Rome (for example Piccioni's chapter on 'Roma e gli Alleati'). This research has encompassed a study of civilians' life in the *Mezzogiorno* and of the relations with their occupiers. De Marco's contribution on the Allied occupation of Naples makes evident that the occupation can be divided into four phases: to encounter local realities (what conditions were actually like, compared to projected reports); the gap between the administrative and recovery programme for Naples and the reality of the situation; the search for stability in terms of reforming administrative structures; and finally the exhaustion of the AMG push and the concern over the growth of the Left, which led the Allies to set up connections with the local Right.⁵⁶ The disillusionment with the Allies after the promises made, such as an end to widespread hunger, failed to materialise, leaving Naples the 'worst governed city in the world.'⁵⁷ The problem of rationing is considered in this and many of the chapters in the book; rationing is studied as a barometre for the conditions of life. My research will contribute to the discourse of how rationing affected the daily life of Italians, by examining how the shortage of rations and foodstuffs had on patterns of protest in Puglia.

⁵⁵ Miriam Mafai, *Pane nero: donne e vita quotidiana nella seconda guerra mondiale* (Milan: Mondadori, 1989).

⁵⁶ Paolo De Marco, 'L'occupazione alleata a Napoli' in Gallerano (ed.), *L'Altro dopoguerra. Roma e il Sud 1943-1945* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985), 261.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 262-264.

Puglia

‘For me the Puglia had always been one of the most beautiful and interesting parts of Italy.’

‘I grew more and more in love with Puglia.’⁵⁸

These comments from Major Greenlees, an officer stationed at Radio Bari, and Miss Knight, a Special Operations Executive (SOE) employee demonstrate their affection for the region. Puglia, the ‘heel of the boot’ borders the Adriatic Sea in the east, and is bordered by Molise (part of Abruzzi at the time) to the north, and Campania and Basilicata to the west. The region is today divided into 6 provinces: Foggia, Barletta-Andria-Trani, Bari, Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto, with the regional capital at Bari. Most of the region is given over to agriculture, with few industrial centres. Puglia grows olives, grapes, almonds and pears, and produces most of the olive oil and wine in Italy. However, the large flat rolling fields of the *tavoliere* (tableland) plain produce solely wheat.⁵⁹ After the fall of Mussolini on 25 July and the armistice of 8 September 1943 Puglia acquired special prominence as a region. King Vittorio Emanuele III and Marshal Pietro Badoglio (the Italian prime Minister since 25 July 1943) fled with the state administration and arrived at the coastal city of Brindisi on 10 September 1943 and set up their authority base there. Puglia was liberated fairly peacefully, the majority of the Germans based there having already absconded. Upon arrival in Foggia on 27 September 1943, the British eighth army were confronted with a deserted city. The *LA Times* reported:

⁵⁸Diary of Major I. G. Greenlees, 170, and diary of Miss Knight, 07/19/1, 37, IWM.

⁵⁹Zoe Ross, *Thomas Cook Traveller Guides: Puglia* (Peterborough: Thomas Cook Publishing, 2009), 6.

As tanks and armoured cars of the 8th army cruised gingerly past block after block of deserted ruins they finally encountered a civilian - a bearded man in tattered faded blue jeans. 'Hello, boys' said Pietro Romania, who use to live in New York. 'Make yourself at home.' Romania who said his brother Nicola lives in Flushing, related that a handful of German troops with armoured vehicles evacuated posts on the outskirts of Foggia between 11pm and midnight. The British took Foggia without firing a single shot, acquiring the most important airbase that the Allies have yet won in Italy.⁶⁰

This article is indicative of the friendly reception received by the majority of Allies arriving into Puglia in the autumn of 1943 and of the total abandonment of the region by the Germans. It is also symptomatic of the existing relations between the US and Italy. Many emigrants often returned to Italy after a period in America, as is revealed in the case of Pietro and his cousin. It was these civilians who were often hired as interpreters. Upon the liberation of the southern part of the peninsula AMG took control of the running of the southern provinces, with Puglia being a unique exception. AMG and Badoglio agreed that the four provinces of Taranto, Bari, Brindisi and Lecce would remain under the jurisdiction of the King and the Marshal; no proclamations establishing military government were posted, but AMG personnel were installed in all provinces as CAOs. This became known as the 'King's Italy.' Conversely Foggia remained in Region 2 (later incorporated into region 4 and 5) of AMG, as it was considered too important to hand over. In effect, despite their diminished role, the Allies played a substantial part in the daily life of these provinces, which will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

⁶⁰Daniel De Luce, 'Foggia Deserted City when 8th Army Rolls in', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 September 1943; see also "'Hello" at Foggia', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 29 September 1943.

Consequently, an in-depth analysis of the occupation of Puglia can reveal themes and patterns that are applicable to the Allied occupation as a whole, but give incomparable insights into its own unique situation. Kate Ferris' insights into the study of everyday life in Fascist Venice are remarkably applicable to the case of Puglia. For instance, she argues that studies that focus on an individual level help us to see the flexibility and non-unification of identities and mentalities.⁶¹ This can be applied to the examination of the relationships between Allies and Italians at a local level. Moreover, a micro study can change the ways in which we understand how power operates in modern societies. The historical 'big' picture is not complete 'unless it includes a small-scale view of how macro-policies, forces and events were subjectively experienced.'⁶² The regional perspective chosen in this thesis will answer questions relating to how people reacted and coped with Allied imposition and the consequences of the war itself.

A regional focus on the area of Puglia can change the nature of wider historiographical questions because micro studies restore the place of the individual to act dynamically and effect change.⁶³ This regional emphasis on Puglia helps to draw conclusions on the nature of occupation, by focusing on how everyday interactions between civilians and Allies manifested themselves on a daily level and can contribute to the wider history of social control, military medicine and patterns of protest. The regional approach allows issues to be explored in greater detail than more geographically wide-ranging studies. The findings and arguments can then be compared and contrasted to other regions. Social perspectives on the historical study of the civilian in war are important in providing 'history from below.'

⁶¹ Ferris, *Everyday Life in Fascist Venice, 1929-40* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

This thesis uses a wealth of archival material on the occupation of Puglia both in Italian and English. Material can be found in national and local archives in Italy and the UK. The evidence found in the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* in Rome consists of interior and air ministry files, local authority files (Government of the South) as well as Allied Control Commission microfilms and other Allied recovered material. Local archives in Puglia contain prefects', *carabinieri* and police reports. The National Archives at Kew include documents from the air ministry, war ministry, foreign office, cabinet papers, intelligence files, and documents from the British Committee for the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art. The Wellcome Library holds the records of Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and the Imperial War Museum has a vast body of diaries and letters of service personnel stationed in Puglia. The archival evidence provides a comprehensive view of the ideas, policies and opinions of those at the top, the higher echelons of the military government. However, archives also contains a wealth of material from Allied officers on the ground, the people charged with implementing the ideas and policies of the high command. This combination of sources make clear that decisions taken at the top were not always replicated at ground level. AMG officers focused on what was going on in their village, town or city and did not devote much time to the long-term concerns of the AFHQ. Their official documents, together with diaries and memoirs, demonstrate that discussions of policies or politics were not a priority as these administrators and troops had practical problems to deal with, such as social issues (for example lack of food) or the military operations.

The scope of this thesis is to examine a transitional period of Italian history, 1943-1946, from the perspective of the average Italian living in Puglia during this time. The time frame of this study is a deliberate method of ensuring that the relationship can be studied from Italy's two positions in the war, as an enemy and as a co-belligerent. It is important to study the everyday

experiences of the people from a social perspective as it forms part of a wider European picture of how people lived and survived during the Second World War. Moreover, it provides civilians with a sense of historical agency; they were not just passive bystanders of the war, but active participants who provoked change, both socially and politically.

Different themes of everyday life have been assigned to different chapters for structural reasons; however, they are not considered in isolation as themes consistently run through all the chapters. Chapter 1 researches how changes in the physical landscape and living space in the region affected the Allied-Italian relationship. It examines how bombing by both Allies and Germans had an impact on the lives of Italian civilians and Allied soldiers at a social level. Furthermore, this chapter analyses the Allied policies on requisitioning and reconstruction during the occupation. It scrutinises Allied motivations and priorities towards reconstruction, and focuses on the communications network, housing and the restoration of monuments and art.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine civil discontent during the occupation: the causes of civil disobedience, how people protested and to whom. My research investigates the different forms of protest and the reasons why Italians felt the need to protest and against whom, for example political reasons, hardship and workplace issues such as low or non-payment of wages. It is important to reflect on what happened during protests, how these protests or disturbances were dealt with, and on the attempts to meet the initial grievances of the protesters by both Allied and Italian authorities. Finally, I will consider graffiti and political propaganda as a form of protest, and will shed light on how this affected the Allied-Italian relationship.

Chapter 4 investigates Allied attempts to treat, prevent and control disease in Puglia. The Allies targeted malaria, typhus, smallpox, scabies and tuberculosis amongst other diseases. They embarked on a considerable public health scheme, whose primary aim was to ensure the health of the troops, with any health benefits gained by the Italian people as an opportune effect. Chapter 5 further explores the theme of medicine and public health, investigating in particular prostitution and control of venereal disease. It examines the Allied education programme targeted at troops: the closure of brothels; control of alcoholic beverages to reduce the opportunity of soliciting; and the actions taken against Italian women who had a venereal disease.

Finally, chapter 6 assesses the wave of crime that manifested in Puglia during the occupation. It will demonstrate how both civilians and Allies were involved in varieties of theft and violence on a daily basis; it will evaluate violent crime and the existence of traffic accidents. The purpose of this chapter is to examine trends in crime and how this affected the civilian and military experience of the occupation. It will show how aspects that are considered exceptional in a time of peace, such as transgressions of normal behaviour, become frequent and even commonplace in wartime. This chapter will furthermore assess the theme of traffic accidents during the occupation, which were common and caused many civilian victims.

Chapter 1

Bombing, Requisitioning and Reconstructing

Aerial bombing and actions by both Axis and Allied land forces left in many ways the material landscape of Italy almost unrecognisable. The British began bombing Italy immediately after the country declared war in June 1940; it was in February 1942 that Bomber Command decided to ‘destroy the morale of the enemy population.’¹ However, Britain had not entered the war with the idea of specifically targeting enemy civilians; in fact Neville Chamberlain had been reluctant to allow any bombing raid that might endanger the lives of ordinary people.² The move towards an acceptance of area bombing was a response to the inability of the British to launch any land offensive in the war. More specifically, Sebald argues that area bombing presented the British with the only way they could intervene in the war, as after Dunkirk in 1940 Britain’s position had become marginalised. However, in 1940 the basis of production was wholly inadequate and it took until 1942-3 before the RAF was capable of mounting any significant bombing offensives.³

Britain’s transfer towards area bombing was likewise influenced by a change in the higher echelons of the British Government. Chamberlain lost the confidence of the British people and resigned in May 1940 to be succeeded by Winston Churchill. This led to an immediately more assertive use of air power in the British war effort.⁴ The succession of Churchill was then followed by the appointment of Sir Charles Portal as Chief of the Air Staff on 25 October 1940, who significantly pushed the RAF towards lesser concerns for accurate bombing. From July 1941, under Portal, RAF crews were less attentive, which led to

¹Winfried Georg Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 17.

²Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 4.

³Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, 15-16.

⁴Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 32.

‘collateral damage’ caused to the housing and civilian facilities close to industrial targets.⁵ Wakelam has argued that Bomber Command had not been set up as an area bombing force, but for the majority of the conflict area bombing was the best stratagem ‘given the technology, personnel and training’ of the group.⁶ These limitations affected the reluctance to target civilians. Two statements made by Bomber Command respectively in 1940 and 1942 signify ‘a progressive, albeit partial, eclipse of humanitarian concerns in bombing policy.’ The restrictions included the directive of 31 May 1940 on targeting civilians were indeed relaxed on 20 October 1942 to include attacks on civilians morale.⁷ To this end, Italy was ruthlessly bombed for its military targets, which were often situated close to populated zones. The destruction that was caused to these inhabited areas was interpreted as unavoidable ‘collateral damage.’

However, the physical destruction of civilian infrastructure also had benefits in the minds of the British. Not only did civilians have to deal with physical destruction, but they also had to cope psychologically with the raids, which often were also meant to produce the collapse of the morale in the home front. Sir Arthur Harris, who was appointed Chief of Bomber Command on 22 February 1942, believed that the war should be won from the air and wrote in his 1947 account of Bomber Command that ‘the effect on Italian morale was enormous, and out of all proportion to the weight of the attack and to the extent of the damage.’⁸ This comment was spoken in hindsight, but was no doubt a primary aim for Harris before the ‘area’ bombing of Italy was stepped up in 1942. Harris like Churchill viewed Italy as the ‘soft underbelly’ of the Axis, which would break much more easily than Germany. Moreover, they believed that the Italians in general were not suited to war and were thus expected to

⁵Ibid., 39-40.

⁶Randall T. Wakelam, *The Science of Bombing: Operational Research in RAF Bomber Command* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 229.

⁷Baldoli, Knapp, *Forgotten Blitzes*, 33.

⁸Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 49 and Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, 141.

withdraw their support from Mussolini's regime as a result of intense bombing.⁹ Consequently, there was less anxiety amongst commanders over the bombing of Italy. Richard Overy suggests that as Italian morale was more brittle under Fascism than German morale under Hitler, bombing was justified, as there was the 'expectation of rapid and significant political consequences rather than a slow economic attrition.'¹⁰ Elena Agarossi argues that the British placed enormous trust in the destructive effects of aerial bombardment, which was static despite changes in the military situation.¹¹ This argument is reinforced by the persistence of bombing during the so called '45 Days' between the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice, which was designed to demoralize the population and therefore put pressure on Badoglio to negotiate for peace.¹²

Throughout the war, Italy was bombed mostly by the Allies: the Americans largely bombed the South and normally during the day whereas the British were more responsible for the bombing of the North and normally at night.¹³ The bombing proved to be inaccurate especially on the British side and the later practice of area bombing increased the destructive range of the campaigns.¹⁴

The American air forces' attitude towards the bombing of civilians in southern Italy was markedly different from that of the British. American policies, like the British, were embodied in their leaders and none more so than President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Unlike Churchill, who told Stalin that 'en passant he had no great respect for the Italian people' and Foreign Minister Anthony Eden who was 'almost psychopathic' in his dislike of Italy,

⁹ Gribaudi, *Guerra Totale*, 48.

¹⁰ Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 511.

¹¹ Agarossi, *A Nation Collapses*, 10.

¹² Baldoli, Fincardi, 'Italian Society under Anglo-American Bombs', 9.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini*, 3.

Roosevelt adopted a more cordial attitude towards Italians.¹⁵ At the outbreak of war in 1939 he issued an appeal to all belligerents to not permit ‘bombardment from the air of civilian populations or unfortified cities.’¹⁶ It is interesting to note that Britain at this time agreed to uphold Roosevelt’s appeal. As a result he was greatly admired and revered by the Italian people, which was evident in the mass outpouring of grief over his death in April 1945. For example, in Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto in Sicily, the piazza was renamed in Roosevelt’s honour after his death. Additionally, in a letter addressed to the Italian authorities on 16 April 1945, the CAO of Palermo stated that he realised that the death of Roosevelt was not just a blow to the US but to the whole world. He explicitly explained that he and the American people understood the ‘Italian grief at this great loss.’¹⁷

Anthony C. Grayling argues that once the USA entered the war, it was the ‘constant policy in the European theatre not to follow RAF example.’ This meant that accuracy was to be ensured as close as possible to avoid civilian casualties.¹⁸ However, this does not mean that raids did not cause ‘collateral damage’ but that the Americans made more of an effort to avoid such damage. For example, the US 8th Army Air Force flew by day so they could see the targets.¹⁹ The greater concern for precision bombing by the Americans over that of the British has led Grayling to conclude that the Americans targeted enemy industry and the British targeted enemy morale. However, in reality both the American and the British strategies inflicted civilian casualties on the population of Italy, as was the case for the civilians of France and Germany. Indeed, one of the main problems in maintaining accuracy was weather condition. The US crews needed clear weather to ensure precise targeting, but

¹⁵ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 39-40.

¹⁶ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 24.

¹⁷ Outgoing Message CAO Palermo to Mayor of Barcellona, 7 June 1945; CAO’s report concerning Roosevelt’s death, 16 June 1945, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

¹⁸ Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities*, 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

conditions were seldom ideal and thus from September 1943 American bombers were told to attack cities through cloudy skies, in the hope that the bombs would meet their targets.²⁰ In the Puglian case, Foggia and Taranto in particular became consistent targets of Allied bombing. For example, Taranto was the only Puglian city to be bombed in 1942 (four raids took place in June of that year). Foggia became the major target in 1943, when it was bombed thirteen times, consistently throughout the months of July-September.

Following the invasion of Sicily and the southern mainland, the threat to the physical landscape also came from the land. Manoeuvres to liberate Italy caused extensive damage, which would take years to reconstruct. This chapter will investigate the physical impact of both the air war and the military occupation of Puglia. It will seek to understand how civilians coped and adapted to the enormous changes inflicted upon their living spaces. The environment was not static, but, similarly to Italian-Allied relations, was constantly in flux; bombing, reconstruction efforts, explosions, and Allied military actions produced an ever-changing backdrop to civilians' lives. Primarily, this chapter will explore the impact of Allied bombing and liberation operations on Puglia and subsequently how this affected the daily lives of the *Pugliesi*. Following Allied occupation, the Germans began to attack Puglia from the sky. This chapter will discuss the German raid of 3 December 1943 and the resultant Bari explosion. A second explosion occurred in April 1945 and this chapter will assess how the presence of the Allies in the region posed a threat to the safety of civilians.

The occupation introduced additional negative physical aspects, namely the far-reaching policy of the requisitioning of homes and public buildings. This chapter will explore the impact of this policy on Italians and how it touched daily public life, for example the

²⁰Overy, *The Bombing War*, 346.

education of children. Furthermore, the Allied forces did not cease to alter the Italian countryside once they had liberated Puglia. Puglia became a vital region for training exercises and missions. The region was used for artillery practice, bombing ranges and military manoeuvres. Consequently, these initiatives added to the destruction of the countryside and disrupted the lives of those living close by. The Allied administrators attempted to institute a wartime policy of reconstruction. This chapter will analyse Allied motivations and priorities towards reconstruction and will focus on the communications network, housing and the restoration of monuments and art. Significantly, this chapter will demonstrate how changes in the physical landscape and living space in the region affected the Allied-Italian relationship.

Bombing

Puglia is not remembered as a region that was badly bombed during the Second World War.²¹ In general it is the destruction of the abbey at Monte Cassino, the bombing of Naples and the heavy area bombing inflicted on the industrial cities of the north that has featured in histories of the period. The situation in Puglia was complex, with some cities suffering heavily under the bombs, whilst others remained virtually untouched. For example, a raid on Foggia on 28 May 1943 left 300 dead, many of who were women and children, while a raid on Bari on 17 July 1943 killed three people.²² The principal reason to this ‘all or nothing’ pattern of bombing was a consequence of the different strategic importance placed on each individual city by the Allies. Before the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, Puglia had served as a logistics base, naval base and home to a series of Italian air force bases. Following the invasion of Sicily and the flight of the King and Badoglio to Brindisi, Puglia gained additional

²¹ Andrea Pane, ‘Danni bellici, restauri e ricostruzione in Puglia: Il caso di Bari, 1940-1955’, in Carlotta Coccoli, *Guerra, monumenti e ricostruzione* (Venice: Marsilio, 2009), 434.

²² Dino Tarantino, *Dal ‘regno’ alle ‘repubbliche’ del Sud. La Puglia dal fascismo alla democrazia 1943-1944* (Bari: Edizioni del Sud, 2006), 19.

importance. The area was no longer only a vital logistics hub; it was also the seat of the Italian government, and the Allies would need after their planned invasion of the mainland to supply ground forces and fly bombing sorties to Germany. Consequently, this led to an intensification of bombing. For example, between 16 August and 6 September Lecce, Ostuni, Bari, the Bari-Taranto rail line, Ginosa, Brindisi, Altamura, Gravina, San Pancrazio Salentino and Taranto (four times) were bombed.²³ However, it was Foggia that remained the principal target of the Allied Air Forces. They appeared to concentrate on destroying Foggia from 22 July 1943 to 25 August 1943, according to Andrea Pane and Dino Tarantino causing 20,000 victims of bombing.²⁴ Research by Gioannini, Massobrio and Baldoli and Knapp has shown this figure to be greatly exaggerated. They concede that it is enormously difficult to obtain accurate mortality figures for bombing in Italy. The fragmentation of local government during the war meant that registration of deaths was patchy at best; refugees from outside the area were frequently not even entered at all. Records that did exist were often destroyed in later raids or by the actions of ground forces. Further complications in recording deaths were the continual occasions when a body was left unrecognisable, or people died some days after a raid as a result of injuries; these deaths were exceedingly unlikely to be recorded as fatalities of bombing.²⁵ In 1957 ISTAT put the total death toll for the whole of Italy at 64,354 (32,082 men and 27,714 women), but suggested that a further 6,237 could be added, giving a total of 70,591 dead. However, Gioannini and Massobrio believe that this figure is too low; they have calculated a figure of between 80,000- 100,000 victims of bombing and have stated that it is impossible to be more accurate for the aforementioned reasons.²⁶ Therefore, the total of 20,000 victims for Foggia appears disproportionate and not supported by evidence.

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Pane, 'Danni bellici, restauri e ricostruzione in Puglia', 434 and Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 54.

²⁵ Marco Gioannini, Giulio Massobrio, *Bombardate l'Italia. Storia della guerra di distruzione aerea 1940-1945* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007), 491-492 and Baldoli and Knapp, *Forgotten Blitzes*, 260.

²⁶ Gioannini and Massobrio, *Bombardate l'Italia*, 492.

However, this exaggeration does not suggest that the experience of the *Foggiani* was anything less than horrific, as it is still possible to speculate that the death total was several thousand.

Dino Tarantino argues that Foggia was ‘literally tortured’ and that for the people of the city this period was a time of terror.²⁷ In particular, the raid of 22 July on Foggia produced devastating events. The railway station received a direct hit, causing a tanker stationed at platform two to explode, sending flames of petrol into the atmosphere and down into the under passage, where civilians had taken refuge. The temperature in the under passage remained so sweltering that it was impossible for the emergency services to enter until 15 days after the attack. They found only ashes.²⁸ Major Zorab, a British ophthalmologist stationed in Puglia during the first few months of occupation commented in his diary that:

I wish this was more of a town. It must have been nice at one time but has been smashed to hell by the RAF - all in 20 mins. Several thousand civilians were killed. The railway is an awful mess.²⁹

On his arrival into the city, a Foggia CAO officer described it as thus:

City of Foggia very severely bombed, and destroyed by the departing Germans. Very few buildings undamaged. No electricity or water, with the exception of well water, owing to the Germans having blown up Power and Transformer stations, and damaged Acquedotto Pugliese. Sewers damaged by bombing and numerous craters in roadways. From 1,500 -2,000 bodies under debris. Medico Provinciale states that

²⁷Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 20-21.

²⁸ Antonio Guerrieri, *La Città spezzata. Foggia, quei giorni del '43* (Bari: EDI Puglia, 2001), 108.

²⁹Diary of Major John Zorab, 06/11/1, IWM, 26.

have by now rotted away. Gangs of labourers have filled in bomb craters on principal streets, and convoys have passed through city satisfactorily so far, including large sized tanks. Very few people in city but some re-entering by side roads. Temporary notices posted at all main roads forbidding entry to the city by Lt Fender. (More official notices are being printed for all roads and streets leading to the city).³⁰

Returning soldier C. G. Fuiano describes his hometown as semi-destroyed, stating that it was a terrible sight to behold. He specified that he was lucky, as his family home was only damaged and not destroyed. His family had already fled to Bovino, some 40 kilometres southwest of Foggia, before he arrived home. Although still standing, the house no longer had a door, so he decided to seek out his aunt who still resided in the city. After a long march without finding anything to eat or drink he arrived at her house to a welcome sight: the bathtub filled with brown but drinkable water.³¹ Major Zorab's and Signor Fuiano's comments and the report by the Foggia CAO provide a vivid description of the destruction and chaos that was Foggia in the autumn of 1943.

The main motive behind the area bombing of the city can be determined through comments made by President Roosevelt. The *Western Daily Press* reported on 29 September 1943 that he had stated that Foggia was a significant military objective and that the capture of the city by the Eighth army was one of the 'most important Allied successes yet, from a strategic point of view.'³² On the same day, the *New York Times* featured a map indicating the importance of Foggia by demonstrating how far and wide Allied planes would be able to fly

³⁰Foggia Civil Affairs officer's Report, 2 October 1943, WO204/10002, TNA.

³¹ C.G Fuiano, 'Macerie e Desolazione', in Luigi Marangelli (ed.), *Quando a Foggia c'erano gli americani* (Foggia: Editrice Parnaso, 2012), 9.

³² 'Foggia is Most Important', *The Western Daily Press*, 29 September 1943.

from the base.³³ As Andrea Pane has argued, Foggia was indeed targeted because it was the key to controlling the Mediterranean and parts of continental Europe. Foggia was an important railway hub with links to the ports of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto, but more significantly it had a substantial airport and other ones close by, such as Cerignola.³⁴ Therefore, it was paramount that the Allies gained control of the city and surrounding area quickly. This was to be achieved by land forces, but it was believed that by using bombing to demoralise the population and destroy German supplies and utilities aided ground forces.

Not all Puglian towns and cities shared the same fate as Foggia. Taranto, with its large port was an Allied air force target, but did not suffer as extensively as Foggia. A successful raid by the RAF from Malta on 12 November 1940 inflicted damage to the Italian fleet and some of the old sections of the harbour. This continued until liberation, with Major Zorab describing the city as undamaged apart from the docks area.³⁵ However, this does not mean that civilians were not affected by the consequences of bombing. By September 1944, 354 families (approximately 1,700 people) had no roof over their heads. At the time of the Allied liberation Bari stands in stark contrast to the other cities of Puglia. Glenn Infield stationed in Bari described the city as a pleasant peaceful city, little changed by war.³⁶ Major Zorab's first impressions of Bari in September 1943 are particularly telling: 'Got to Bari and had a good lunch in hotel Mira Mare. This town has not been bombed and seems untouched by war. Good shops but no time for shopping.'³⁷

³³'British Seize Foggia Air Centre, Base for Wide Plane Operations: Guns Pound Germans at Dnieper', *New York Times*, 29 September 1943.

³⁴Pane, 'Danni Bellici, restauri e ricostruzione in Puglia', 434.

³⁵Ibid., 434 and Major John Zorab, 25.

³⁶Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 40.

³⁷Major Zorab, 06/11/1, IWM, 26.

This was because the Allies had chosen to bomb the airfields (especially the Palese airfield) outside the city and avoid bombing the city itself.³⁸ However, a raid on 26 April 1943 targeted the periphery of the city and in particular the railway. This attack resulted in 12 deaths and 14 wounded.³⁹ In her account of her wartime experiences, Mrs. A Street, who was stationed with SOE in Bari, stated that there was not much destruction in the city, as the Germans had not defended it.⁴⁰ However, this did not mean that the *Barese* population had no daily difficulties. Miss K. Knight, a member of the Bari PWB, wrote that the Germans had bombed the aqueduct. As a consequence,

The water did now come on for an hour once a day and one had to make certain that every available receptacle, including the bath if one had one was filled. The Desert Rats and most others who had fought across North Africa were used to water rationing, others were not and few of the local people had baths to fill; many did even not have a piped water supply. They converged on the fountains in the squares desperate to be front runners when the water came on; they would battle their way back for a re-fill; it was a free-for-all driving the weakest to the wall. Queues were unknown and there were desperate scenes as frantic young and old fought to fill big metal containers held by bare wire handles most of them courtesy of the army cookhouse.⁴¹

Although they had not shared the same levels of suffering experienced by civilians in heavily bombed towns like Foggia, the people of Bari were still affected by damage done to the water

³⁸Pane, 'Danni bellici, restauri e ricostruzione in Puglia', 436-437 and Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 40.

³⁹Vito A. Leuzzi, *Inferno su Bari. Bombe e contaminazione chimica: 1943-1945* (Bari: Edizioni del Sud, 2013), 8.

⁴⁰Mrs A Street, 95/34/11, IWM, 44.

⁴¹Miss K Knight, 07/19/1, IWM, 11.

supply. Therefore, it can be argued that although the city did not suffer in the extreme sense, civilians still encountered difficulties on a daily basis.

Bombing raids did not cease with the liberation of Puglia, as the Germans bombed Southern Italy from 1943. Cities and towns experienced bombing from both sides at different times, or in some cases at the same time, when a battle was intense over an area. Gribaudo shows that in Naples people celebrated the Armistice as the end of the war, but it was during this period that bombing was intensified. Concurrently, the Germans also intensified their bombing of the city. The worst German attacks on the city were on 1 November 1943 and 15 March 1944, when the raids killed 136 and 278 people respectively.⁴² After the liberation of a zone by the Allies the German air force, unable to bomb all liberated areas, would bomb an area that was strategically or materially important to the Allies, such as Naples or Bari. The Germans hoped to destroy military supplies, equipment and communications and to make the Allied administration of the territory more difficult. Therefore, the continuation of bombing meant that Italian civilians in the south experienced more terror and suffering.⁴³ However, civilians instantly had to look to the Allies, who had previously been the bombers, for assistance in dealing with the raids. This chapter will now consider how German bombing affected Allied and civilian life in Puglia during the occupation. The largest and most successful German raid on Bari in December 1943 will be treated separately as it had greater and far-reaching consequences.

The Germans bombed Puglia during the autumn of 1943. For instance, the Prefect of Bari Li Voti reported that on the evening of 6-7 November 1943 six bombs were dropped near the town of Capurso by enemy aircraft. The bombs fell into a wooded and pastoral area, thus

⁴²Gribaudo, *Guerra Totale*, 321-322 and 159.

⁴³In fact this continued, and for much longer, in the centre and in the north of Italy.

there were no victims.⁴⁴ The Germans had been aiming for the nearby airfields, industry or the port of Bari. Although in this case the bombs from the German raid caused little disturbance to the local people, the Germans sometimes received assistance in locating targets through Allied negligence of blackout rules. For instance, the Germans bombed Canosa and Molfetta simultaneously on 9 November 1943. While at Capurso there were no issues with blackout non-compliance, in Molfetta a regimental dance was taking place and the chief liaison officer conceded in a letter to the local prefect that it seemed probable that lights were visible. No air raid alarm was sounded. The dance took place in a building adjacent to the area that was hit. Witnesses reported seeing nothing to cover the windows of the edifice, meaning the light shone freely from the building. The disregard of blackout regulations and even the basic lack of a siren meant that the people of Molfetta were caught unaware of the raid. Locals were heard to comment that the troops needed to be told to observe the rules.⁴⁵ This incident caused negative feelings towards the Allies. For many civilians daily conditions were tremendously challenging and a raid brought about by an Allied party was resented. It may have been deemed inappropriate to hold a party at all. The Italian authorities reported that there were forty victims as a result of the Canosa raid and five in Molfetta, but that it was estimated that forty people still lay under the rubble.⁴⁶ Although there was little difference between the numbers of victims of each raid, it can be argued that psychologically the difference was significant. The fatalities at Canosa could not have been prevented as all regulations were enforced, conversely in Molfetta the deaths could be attributed to a lack of care by the Allies. Moreover, lack of action and delays in retrieving and destroying unexploded bombs amongst the ruins presented an additional danger. For

⁴⁴Prefect of Bari Report, 9 November 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 17, F.12, ACS.

⁴⁵ Telegram from Prefect to CAO of Bari, 7 November 1943, letter from Prefect to AC, 9 November 1943; letter from Chief CAO to Prefect's Office, 18 December 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944,, Busta 17, ACS.

⁴⁶Ibid.

example, the detonation of an unexploded bomb in Foggia in November 1944 killed one man aged 31 and a boy aged 13.⁴⁷ This event occurred over a year after the destruction of Foggia, which demonstrates the enormity of the task that faced the Allied occupiers regarding repairing the city.

The occupation of the Italian south by the Allied forces and of the north by the Germans meant that Italy ceased to exist as a nation state from 1943 to 1945. The splitting of the country into two zones and the prolonging of the war caused austere living conditions for the civilian population. These ramifications in the south were not only due to the war, but furthermore by the actions and policies of ACC. Morgan has argued that the Allies had the same logic of invasion and occupation as the Germans, also because, in line with terms of the Armistice of 8 September 1943, Italy was never a full ally. For example, on liberating Pesaro the Allies preserved the German policy of keeping the town fully evacuated.⁴⁸ Italy's status as occupied and co-belligerent country thus allowed the Allied high command to treat southern Italy, in many ways, as conquered enemy territory. This implied that the Allies were free to use Italian land and materials as they wished, without much concern for the population.

This occupation mentality is unmistakable in the setting up of bombing ranges from 1943 in Puglia. For example, documents from ACC between 30 December 1943 and 8 January 1944 provide details about the setting up of a bombing range. The exact location of the range is unknown, as the series of letters gives the location using co-ordinates from a map, which is not situated with the papers. However, one can surmise that the range was located near or in

⁴⁷Mayor of Commune of Sant'Agata report, 26 November 1944, Archivio del Comune di Sant'Agata b 518, Archivio di Stato di Foggia.

⁴⁸Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini*, 122-133.

Puglia, as copies of the letters were to be sent to Matera and Bari, suggesting that the range was in between the two provinces. The 15th Air Force requested that the area of the two possible ranges be cleared of all inhabitants and livestock by 31 December. The correspondence revealed no concern for the impact the request would have on the inhabitants of the area; the area was useful for military purposes so the civilians were expected to comply. This letter is dated 30 December 1943, giving the civilians just one day to pack up their lives and find accommodation for themselves and their livestock.⁴⁹ These actions would have diminished feelings of good will between civilians and soldiers, as the soldiers who were previously perceived as liberators had now turned into occupiers.

Once the bombing ranges had been cleared of their inhabitants, it was realised that some valuable pumping machinery had remained on the site. Consequently, Lt Colonel Fricker asked for 48 hours advance notice to remove the equipment. The reply from the 15th Air force was that to give 48 hours advance notice was not possible, but that if the equipment was extremely valuable and could not be removed in time then the range should be moved to another site.⁵⁰ This correspondence highlights how military necessity only dictated decisions: inevitably, there was no consideration for the people who had already been moved or for the potential moving of further civilians if a different site was to be used. It is an example of how Puglia, like the rest of southern Italy, was treated as conquered territory as the Allies requisitioned land and valuable equipment, as they deemed necessary.

The Prefect of Bari on 27 October 1943 reported another interesting case, which highlights the confusion that the existence of these ranges sometimes provoked among the population.

⁴⁹ Memorandum from AMG HQ Region 2 to Lt. Col Fricker, 30 December 1943, ACC microfilms, 513B, Scaffale 129, Naples (10260)\71, General (115)/41, ACS.

⁵⁰ Fricker to AMG HQ, 8 January 1944, and reply of HQ AMG, 12 January 1944, ACC microfilms, 513B, Scaffale 129, Naples (10260)\71, General (115)/41, ACS.

Four bombs had been dropped at the historic home of the *trulli*, Alberobello.⁵¹ Two did not explode and the identification markers appeared to be English.⁵² There are two possible explanations for this quandary: either the Germans had shrewdly written on the bombs in English to trick Italian civilians if the bombs did not explode; or, more likely, the Allies were using a bombing range for practice and dropping their cargo in the wrong location.

Bombing ranges were not the only installation set up in Puglia for target practice. Ranges set up at Panni, Troia, Sant'Agata and San Severo (all near Foggia) were used for artillery, tank and rifle practice. Although civilians did not live in the immediate vicinity of these ranges, they did live closer to these sites than those who had been removed from the bombing ranges used by the 15th Air Force. For example, the Foggia garrison requested that the local CAO officers of Panni Savignano warn the local populace that artillery practice would take place on 26 and 27 February and on 4 and 5 March 1944.⁵³ A letter from the Provincial Commissioner of Foggia to AMG Foggia Province succinctly sums up the Allied attitude towards these practice ranges:

As in the case of the Santa'Agata Range, this AMG is not particularly concerned in any discomfort or hardship which is imposed on civilians through the exigencies of training. It is again concerned, however, in saving crops from avoidable loss or damage, as this inevitably means increased imports into this country. In order to minimise loss of crops, it is requested that the following arrangements be approved

⁵¹ A *trullo* (plural *trulli*) is a traditional Puglian dry stone hut with a conical roof, which is found in the Itria Valley and Murge area.

⁵² Prefect of Bari, 'Incidenti aerei - Incursioni aeree', 27 October 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 17, F.12, ACS.

⁵³ Foggia Garrison to CAO Torre Maggiore, 24 February 1944; see also Foggia Garrison to CAO, 23 December 1943, Foggia zone- Public Safety (143)\ 14- Explosives and bombing, microfilms, ACS.

and incorporated in the Regulations of the Troia Range (area D on your tracing), and the Alberona Training areas (Areas E & F).⁵⁴

This missive is indicative of the majority of Allied regulations and policies throughout the occupation; since winning the war was the main priority, the angering of some Italian civilians appeared insignificant, even when appeasing Italians could have helped a smoother running of the occupation. Pre-invasion bombing, bombing by the Germans, Allied negligence and training exercises thus altered the physical and psychological impact of the war on Puglia during the occupation. However, it was the two explosions in the Bari harbour, one in December 1943 and the other in April 1945 that left a generally unscathed city shattered.

The Second Pearl Harbour: Bari 2 December 1943

Compared to Foggia and Taranto, Bari began the liberation largely unscathed, although it ended the occupation in a significantly more damaged state. Two explosions in the harbour caused a substantial physical alteration of the city. The German bombing attack on the evening of 2 December 1943 that led to the explosion of the *SS John Harvey* had a profound impact. To put the event into context the incidence has been described as the ‘Black Bomb of Bari’ and the ‘Second Pearl Harbour.’⁵⁵ This was a result of both the heavy raid and the presence of mustard gas bombs aboard the *SS John Harvey*, which was hit and exploded in the harbour, releasing the chemical weapon.

⁵⁴ Provincial Commissioner of Foggia to AMG Foggia Province, 19 April 1944, Foggia zone - Public Safety (143)\ 14- Explosives and bombing, microfilms, ACS.

⁵⁵ Diary of Miss K. Knight, 07/19/1, IWM; Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 131.

At the beginning of December 1943 the harbour at Bari was crammed with ships carrying supplies for the Allied armies: specifically, fuel for the 51st Air Force, supplies for the military hospital, military vehicles, clothing, post for the eighth army, explosives and tons of bombs and munitions.⁵⁶ Consequently, the city presented itself as a desirable target for a German bombing raid. By attacking Allied stores the Germans hoped to sever a vital Allied supply line. Glenn Infield and George Southern, contemporaries of the disaster and members of the Allied armies (and authors of the only two accounts in English), described the scene before the attack. The ships were so close together that they were touching each other and Southern commented that he had never seen such an array of war supplies.⁵⁷ Amongst these provisions were chemical weapons in the form of mustard gas bombs. Reports had reached Washington in the summer that Hitler was planning to use noxious gas in southern Europe. Consequently, the White House decided to send a shipment of mustard gas bombs to Bari to use in retaliation in the event Hitler deployed chemical agents.⁵⁸ This was not uncommon; throughout the conflict the Allies consistently moved stocks of poisonous gas close to the fighting fronts.⁵⁹ Secrecy was paramount and only a few officers on board the ship such as Lt Richardson, the cargo security officer, knew about the bombs.⁶⁰ Harris and Paxman have argued that both sides shrouded the existence of chemical weapons in great secrecy. In fact 'it was this policy of strict secrecy which led to the Bari disaster.'⁶¹ This policy continued despite the disaster and by 1945 the Americans had more than 10m lbs. of mustard gas and more than 3m lbs. of other gases located in the Mediterranean theatre.⁶²

⁵⁶Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 258-259.

⁵⁷Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 20 and George Southern, *Poisonous Inferno: World War II Tragedy at Bari Harbour* (Bodmin: AirLife Publishing Ltd, 2002).

⁵⁸Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 23-25.

⁵⁹Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret Story of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 119.

⁶⁰Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 29. See Infield and Southern for an account of how the ship reached Bari from the USA.

⁶¹Harris and Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing*, 119.

⁶²Overy, *The Bombing War*, 543.

It was believed that the Germans would not bomb the city: the British Command thought that the German air force, which had been defeated in the area, would not have the resources to mount an attack.⁶³ Therefore the Allies made no attempt to introduce a blackout in the port. Likewise, the population found comfort in the Allied assurances of safety, so did not expect to become targets.⁶⁴ Consequently, on the evening of 2 December 1943 the Allies and the population of Bari were completely caught unaware by a German air raid directly at the harbour. Tragically the ship was hit, caught fire and subsequently exploded, emitting the poisonous content of the bombs into the water and atmosphere. It is necessary to describe what happened during and immediately after the raid in order to understand the consequences for both civilians and Allied personnel in Bari.

The air raid, by over thirty German aircraft, began suddenly at 19.20 hours with no advance warning. The oil pipeline and petrol quay was hit resulting in ignition. The raid was severe and both the harbour and the city suffered damage. Ammunition and patrol ships were hit and subsequently exploded, setting fire to surrounding vessels. The *SS John Harvey* was hit early and many of the contents of the mustard bombs were thrown into the air and scattered on the sea and other ships. This left an oily mixture on the surface of the water.⁶⁵

The incident was reported in the American press on 6 December 1943. The *New York Times* reported that German planes had attacked Bari in all probability by glider bombs. However, the details were hazy. There was no mention of the large-scale devastation and presence of mustard gas bombs. It was not until 16-17 December that a greater number of details emerged in the American and British press. On 16 December 1943 the *Washington Post*

⁶³Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 35.

⁶⁴Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 259.

⁶⁵Undated and anonymous report on Bari Disaster, WO204/5452, TNA.

headlined with ‘Raid caught Bari Defenders Napping’ and described the event as a devastating sneak attack.⁶⁶ The subsequent day the press was filled with reports after an official statement made by the American War Secretary Henry L. Stimson. Headlines in American newspapers included: ‘Nazis Sink 17 Ships in Bombing of Bari’; ‘Score for the enemy- 17 Allied Ships Revealed Sunk. 1000 Killed, Hurt in Bari Raid’; ‘Nazi attack on Bari costs Allies 17 Ships.’ Similarly, the British press reported: ‘Destruction of 17 ships by a surprise dawn raid’, and: ‘Munitions Carriers Blown Up.’ The newspapers’ focus was on how many ships were lost and on its impact on the war effort. There was no mention at all about mustard gas and the number of casualties suffering from mustard gas burns. The reason for this omission was the cover up of the presence of the bombs, which will be discussed later.⁶⁷

At ground level the scene was catastrophic. Streets were covered with glass, stone and brick debris.⁶⁸ Damage was sustained to the medieval town, and the soldiers and citizens of Bari were thrown into chaos. Tarantino discusses how the scene was apocalyptic. Emergency services, the armed forces and volunteers worked through the night to remove the dead and wounded from the rubble. Children, dirty and covered in blood ran the streets searching for their families, breathless mothers called out for their children and people supported each other through the destruction and debris.⁶⁹ Major Howard wrote in his diary that:

Four out of five houses are destroyed, bombs fell among the buildings. [...] The stone of these houses is very soft and the demolition of the walls was heaped up like a great pile of sand. The buildings seemed to have been smashed in a gigantic battle and

⁶⁶*The Washington Post*, 16 December 1943.

⁶⁷*New York Times*, 17 December 1943; *The Washington Post*, 17 December 1943; *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17 December 1943; see also *The Sun*, 17 December 1943, *Aberdeen Journal*, 17 December 1943, and *Dundee Courier*, 17 December 1943.

⁶⁸ Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 91.

⁶⁹ Tarantino, *Dal ‘regno’ alle ‘repubbliche’ del Sud*, 262-263.

ground into a vast mound of dust. I don't see how anyone underneath these houses had a chance to escape, but I was told after 24 hours they recovered alive two humans and a small dog.⁷⁰

The *Oriente* theatre was hit causing panic as people rushed for the exits, 'knocking each other down, trampling those that were unfortunate enough to fall.'⁷¹ The situation was not much better in the shelters of the city. Southern described the frantic rush for the shelters as 'reminiscent of a capacity crowd leaving at the end of a football match.' When he reached a concrete shelter 'people were shouting and screaming at each other, some hysterical and scared out their wits, others praying and singing hymns.' However, finding shelter did not guarantee safety; many shelters along the seafront were destroyed with people crammed inside.⁷² Mrs. Street cowered with her SOE colleagues under desks and tables as 'every window in every building blew out.'⁷³ Allied personnel aboard ships jumped into the water in an effort to escape the flames and explosions and plunged unwittingly into the toxic mix on the surface of the sea. Likewise civilians jumped into the sea to avoid fire on land, unaware of the further danger. This greatly added to the number of people exposed to the chemical agents.⁷⁴

In January 1944 the *LA Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* featured eyewitness accounts of the disaster. Eyewitnesses agreed that when the *SS John Harvey* blew up the explosion swept Bari like a tornado.⁷⁵ Infield described the scene the following morning:

⁷⁰Diary of Major E. B. Howard, 05/48/1, IWM.

⁷¹Ibid., 94.

⁷²Southern, *Poisonous Inferno*, 71. See also Infield for other descriptions of shelters.

⁷³Mrs A Street, 95/34/11, IWM, 44.

⁷⁴Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 115.

⁷⁵*Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 1944; *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 January 1944; Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 103.

Drinking water was difficult to find, food nonexistent at the regular markets that had been demolished by the German planes. Children ran through the streets, some wearing bloody clothes, screaming for one of their parents. A few blocks away a mother crawled along a narrow, debris covered road of the old city, her ankle broken, searching desperately for the same children. Communications were entirely broken down. Families hunting each other had to depend on their own eyes. Even friends and neighbors were too busy with their own personal tragedies to help. Those who could salvage any of their belongings from their homes packed the goods on their backs or in carts they managed to scrounge and headed out of the city. Others did not even wait to try to salvage anything. [...] It was as though the city had a plague.⁷⁶

The scene described in the account by Infield is apocalyptic. The city was reduced to medieval living standards within hours. Bari may have escaped such damage by bombing and actions by liberation forces, but one German air raid and a series of explosions put the city on an even keel with the most damaged southern Italian cities such as Foggia, Messina and Naples. Both Allied personnel and civilians faced difficulties and hardships in the aftermath of the disaster. Miss K. Knight found the situation facing ordinary Italian civilians harrowing:

With so much damage, no water and no repairs to sewers and dockside buildings and installations, it was a small wonder that disease was rife in Bari. Rats and mice were taking over and there were very few dogs and cats to make it difficult for them. Flies were everywhere, and it was heart-rending to see babies in prams and toddlers with eyelids all stuck up with pus crying.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 135.

⁷⁷Miss K. Knight, IWM, 17.

Miss Knight exhibited sympathy for civilians and in particular Italian children, unable to understand the situation and help themselves. Her description indicates how the disaster had an impact on the public health of the city. Previously, unlike in Foggia the sewers had avoided damage, meaning that public health was better in Bari, but this was aggravated by the raid and explosion. It is no surprise that the medical authorities of Bari, both Allied and civilian faced a tremendous challenge in the aftermath of the event. By November 1943 medical services were plentiful in the area; Bari was a key location for the evacuation of frontline casualties and the treatment of regular non-war inflicted complaints. At the end of November the 54th British General hospital, 42nd West African section, 16th Indian Field Laboratory, Fifth Venereal Disease Treatment Centre, 34th Field Hygiene Section, 35th Antimalaria Control Unit, 26th American General hospital and the 3rd New Zealand general hospitals were stationed in Bari. The three New Zealand hospitals suffered significant damage as a result of the raid. Many windows lost their glass leaving damaged frames, doors were blown off and personnel were hit by flying debris.⁷⁸

An Allied medical report stated that 800 casualties had been admitted to hospital with 628 suffering from mustard exposure; of these, 69 died by 17 December 1943:

The casualties were covered in crude oil and under the supposition that they were suffering from immersion and exposure; they were wrapped in blankets and given warm tea. Surgical cases were given priority and those just covered in oil were left wrapped up in blankets for as long as 12 or 24 hours. No attempt was made to decontaminate or wash the mustard-in-oil solution from them.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 119.

⁷⁹Undated report on Bari Disaster by Lt Colonel Alexander of medical Corps, Medical Appendix, WO204/5452, TNA.

Despite the peculiar smell of garlic in the air, no one knew of the threat of the mustard gas. However, a few individuals on their own initiative did clean the oil from themselves and suffered only minor burns.⁸⁰ It was not until six hours later that those already in hospital or those outside began to notice symptoms from the mustard gas; eyes began to burn and water, patients could not tolerate light, within 24 hours eyes swelled, and people complained that they were blind. The skin of victims was also affected, becoming red and inflamed. This coincided with nausea and vomiting, which brought medical staff to suspect the presence of a possible chemical agent.⁸¹ Dr Gluck, an ophthalmologist at the 98th British Hospital, began to suspect as ‘rumours were heard during the morning, more or less confirmed by noon, that mustard gas had escaped.’⁸² Worryingly for patients and staff alike death could occur very suddenly:

Individuals that appeared in rather good condition, save for hypotaia (victim appears ‘floppy’ and rag doll like), conjunctivitis and skin erythema (redness of the skin), within a matter of minutes would become moribund (near-death) and die. [...] Cases that were able to talk and say they felt well would be dead within a few minutes.⁸³

Later in the month it transpired that people who had been rescued by ships leaving the port had been taken as casualties to Brindisi and Taranto. Those transferred to Brindisi were affected mildly, but conversely 102 people admitted in Taranto resulted in sixteen deaths by 15 December 1943.⁸⁴ An Allied document into the incident noted that the staff of the 98th British General Hospital made enquiries to the higher Allied authorities about the presence of

⁸⁰Ibid. Southern and Infield also state that the smell of garlic was profound.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Report on Bari Casualties, 19 December 1943, WO204/7613, TNA.

⁸³Medical Appendix, WO204/5452, TNA.

⁸⁴Intermediate Report on N. Y. D. Dermatitis Cases, 15 December 1943, WO204/7613, TNA.

mustard gas on 3 December 1943, but this was ignored, although it did not deter staff from saying that a chemical weapon had caused the injuries.⁸⁵

The presence of mustard gas in Bari in December 1943 was consistently denied until the 1980s. ‘Strict censorship and a dearth of information’ prevented the hidden story of the disaster to be in public knowledge.⁸⁶ For example, a letter from the assistant chief of staff (to be widely distributed throughout the Allied administration) stated categorically that regarding ‘publicity concerning gas casualties at Bari’ the ‘exact terminology is immaterial as long as the fact of injury by chemicals is not stated.’⁸⁷ Therefore, the higher echelons of the Allied command were unequivocal in their belief that injuries caused by Allied supplies of chemical weapons should not be made public. In fact, Eisenhower ordered that the families of all those who had died from exposure be told that the cause of death was ‘shock, hemorrhage etc. due to enemy action.’ A strict complete postal censorship was imposed on all British and American bases, which was sanctioned by Roosevelt and the British War Cabinet. However, civilians fleeing the city carried the news throughout the southern regions.⁸⁸ It could be argued that the principal reason was that this incident was a potential public relations disaster that could be exploited by German propaganda. Indeed, Mildred Elizabeth Gillars, the American voice of Nazi Germany (‘Axis Sally’), did announce sarcastically on her nightly show that ‘I see you boys are getting gassed by your own poison gas.’⁸⁹ However, this statement would not have had much impact given the total silence by the Allies on the matter, and represented a failed propaganda effort by the Germans. The cover was so successful that many service personnel in Bari during the event only learned many years later about the true nature of the disaster. For instance, in her diary Miss K. Knight enclosed Eisenhower’s

⁸⁵ Undated Most Secret annexure on Bari raid, WO204/4353, TNA.

⁸⁶ Southern, *Poisonous Inferno*, 154.

⁸⁷ Letter from the assistant chief of staff, 1 January 1944, WO204/4353, TNA.

⁸⁸ Harris and Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing*, 122.

⁸⁹ Infield, *Disaster at Bari*, 189.

explanation of the event, where he admitted that there was mustard gas but that the vessel was ‘offshore and the escaping gas caused no casualties.’⁹⁰ The author accepted this explanation even though she was in the city at the time. However, she worked neither near the port nor for the medical service, so she was not in close contact with those affected.

The Bari disaster that occurred during the Allied occupation of Puglia had profound consequences for those living in the city at the time. The physical environment was severely affected by the loss of housing and public services. The health of those exposed and the strain on the Allied medical services proved a real test that was met successfully, but due to censorship their endeavours have not yet received the recognition the medical services deserved. The disaster at Bari in December 1943 was not the only major explosion to have a momentous effect on the city during the occupation. An explosion of an ammunition ship in April 1945 was another major calamity that evoked a sense of *déjà vu* for inhabitants.

Déjà Vu: The Second Bari Disaster, 9 April 1945

Approximately eighteen months after the Bari disaster, the city was once more subjected to a period of crisis and chaos. On 9 April 1945 at around 12.00 hours:

A sheet of flame shot up from the after end of the S.S CHARLES HENDERSON at Berth 14 and an explosion of considerable magnitude followed this. Extensive damage followed the explosion. Casualties were caused and fires were started both on ships and quays. The dock waters were littered with patches of burning oil, debris, casualties and survivors. The after part of the S.S. CHARLES HENDERSON disintegrated, the top deck of the poop being blown onto the foredeck of the S.S

⁹⁰ Knight, 07/19/1, IWM, 17.

SAMSPEED lying on Berth 13. [...] Casualties were suffered on all ships by falling debris and blast. A tidal wave followed the explosion and the fierce surging, which lasted for some five minutes, caused minor damage.⁹¹

The event was reported in both the US and British press. *The New York Herald Tribune* reported that 360 people had died and 1,730 were injured. On the same day, *The Sun* combined the casualty figures and stated that ‘possibly 1,867’ people were injured or killed. However, both newspapers agreed that only two persons had been on board the ship when it exploded; these were both Italian civilians who survived by being blown clear of the ship.⁹² The *Dundee Courier* reported that ‘about 1,000 families were made homeless.’ Many deaths occurred miles away from the site of the explosion as a result of broken glass and concussion.⁹³ The Bari local authorities compiled a list of the injuries sustained by Italian civilians; examples included:

Gianfrancesco, Domenico - fracture of upper left arm.

Genchi, Nicola Donato - abdominal contusion and laceration to right ear drum.

De Carne, Maria - wound to the back of the head (left side), fracture to upper left arm and fractures to the left ribs (one of only four women on the list of 71 people).

Dellino, Michele - Diverse contusions all over the body.⁹⁴

The *Courier* specified that the whole city was without windows. The roof of the medieval San Nicola Cathedral collapsed and the main hospital suffered extensive damage.⁹⁵ However,

⁹¹Undated and anonymous report on Bari docks explosion, 9 April 1945, WO361/759, TNA. Names of ships are capitalized in the original.

⁹²‘US Bomb Ship blast kills 360 and injures 1,730 at Bari, Italy’, *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 April 1945; ‘Ship Blows up in Bari Harbor’, *The Sun*, 13 April 1945.

⁹³‘360 Killed in Munitions Ship Explosion, Bari’s Second Disaster’, *Dundee Courier*, 13 April 1945.

⁹⁴Undated figures of injuries inflicted by the explosion, Busta 1734, Archivio Storico del Comune di Bari, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

unlike the Bari disaster of December 1943 this incident was not caused by an air raid or the secret existence of chemical weapons, but it was simply accidental, although it caused extreme devastation. Both *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* and the *Derby Daily Telegraph* reported the event as an accident and the Italian paper reported that the Allied Commission had taken a deep interest in the occurrence.⁹⁶

It can be argued that this explosion was the second catastrophic event to happen to the city of Bari as a direct result of the presence of the Allies. In December 1943, the harbour would not have been attacked had it not been a crucial logistics base for the Allied armies, and in April 1945 the port was still a supply base, including munitions. Therefore, the Allies could be held responsible for both disasters. It is possible that the Allied authorities understood this and consequently devoted a considerable effort to alleviating the situation.

A detailed report by the Bari liaison officer Dawson indicated that ACC had been working closely with Italian local government to help victims of the explosion. Indeed, Dawson was 'greatly impressed with the rapidity with which dishoused [sic] people had been accommodated and fed and law and order apparently restored and maintained.'⁹⁷ Significantly, he concluded that he and the Prefect had seen no signs of panic or 'jitteriness' amongst the population. The reason that the citizens of Bari were not angry or riotous was a result of the quick and efficient response by both Italian and Allied authorities:

Immediate steps were taken in conjunction with the Town Major 50 to re-house families who had lost their homes and the distribution of food supplies was got under

⁹⁵Dundee Courier, 13 April 1945.

⁹⁶'Explosion was Accident', *Derby Daily Telegraph* and *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 29 April 1945.

⁹⁷Bari LO report to ACC, 14 April 1945, ACC microfilms, Liaison Officer (119) \72, 73 & 86, ACS.

way. Capt. Jones who had no difficulty in calming people who had taken refuge there under the impression that a great air raid was taking place visited air raid shelters. The excellent work done and the coolness and efficiency displayed by the Allied Forces as a whole did much to restore order in a situation that might easily have become dangerously chaotic. The Prefect has expressed to me his appreciation of the assistance and cooperation he has had from the military authorities.⁹⁸

This report is evidence of the ability of both local and Allied authorities to work together to achieve the same aim. The actions of the Allies could have restored faith in the minds of civilians towards their occupiers and helped to dissipate any blame for the explosion; moreover, they did not cease in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Brigadier General James A. Mollinson wrote to Prefect Antonucci on 23 April 1945 in response to a letter from the prefect asking for aid:

Again I assure you that all possible cooperation, insofar as our operations permit, will be given to you. Real Estate and Billeting Officers of this Headquarters, will work in close coordination with the Headquarters, 54 Area, responsible for the allocation of property, as well as the civilian authorities, in order that the suffering of the people may be relieved.⁹⁹

This letter is suggestive that although ACC were still actively aiding explosion victims, the pace of their endeavours had slowed down, and that perhaps, now that the initial shock of the event was over, considerations were beginning to be turned more towards military needs. However, this does not mean that relief stopped. The Brigadier still promised assistance, and

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹15th Air Force Service Command to Prefect, 23 April 1945, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Busta 92, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

a letter from the Public Health Sub-Commission dated 29 April 1945 to the Liaison Office of Bari reported that the commission had just sent 1,000 blankets to the local medical authorities of the civilian hospital for use of explosion victims.¹⁰⁰

The two Bari disasters are examples of how the presence of the Allies in Puglia during the war could physically affect the environment of citizens. The populace lost what they had managed to avoid losing through war and liberation: their homes, utilities, food and lives. For their part the Allies lost a significant number of personnel and ships and endeavoured to help restore the city to its pre-occupation state. Both these calamities are examples of how war and occupation can affect a city after hostilities have ended. They are evidence that even though the region had been liberated the war was not over. It is difficult to draw a general opinion on how this would have affected the Allied-Italian relationship. For some civilians it caused resentment, because the reason this tragedy had occurred was due to the Allied presence. Contrastingly, others viewed the Allied presence as necessary and believed they did everything they could for the city population after the disaster. The differing and complex opinions of the event are clouded by the fact that no one really knew what had happened. The relatives of those affected by mustard gas knew, but in general the population were unaware of the true events of the explosion. The most likely interpretation at the time was that the bombs were chemical weapons deployed by the Germans.

Requisitioning

The influx of thousands of Allied personnel into the region of Puglia in September 1943 introduced the question of where to accommodate them. For the Allied command the solution

¹⁰⁰Public Health Sub-Commission to Liaison Office of Bari, 29 April 1945, microfilms, Liaison Officer (119) \72, 73, 86, ACS.

was simple - requisition Italian homes. The logic was never in doubt that the Allies needed the buildings above civilians in order to carry on with the war effort. The acute scarcity of housing for civilians in cities and towns such as Foggia made no difference to the attitude towards immediate requisitioning. For example, an Allied report into the conditions in Foggia stated that ‘shelter is one of the paramount problems. It is aggregated that 60% of the homes are uninhabitable and a good deal of the remainder of the buildings are occupied by Allied troops.’¹⁰¹

This does not mean that ACC did not attempt to find housing for civilians, but that they would always put the billeting of soldiers first. Diaries of Allied personnel stationed in Puglia during the occupation indicate how easy it was to occupy an Italian home. For example, Major Greenlees settled in a large hotel in Bari, where American and British officers had requisitioned an entire floor. Miss K Knight, who worked for the British PWB commented that her friend ‘Red’ shared a ‘very comfortable’ flat with some other American soldiers and whilst her flat had the same basic floor plan, it was ‘less opulent’ having been damaged in the explosion of December 1943.¹⁰² Both Major Greenlees and Miss Knight did not comment on the fact that they were taking living space from Italian civilians. However, some Allied personnel did communicate their feelings about occupying Italian families’ homes. Mrs. Street of SOE wrote in her wartime memoirs that, upon arriving in Bari, ‘Bill took us to a flat which had been commandeered for us, and one felt sorry for the Italian family being hustled out, furniture and all to make way for “les girls”.’¹⁰³

Although her entry was more sympathetic to the plight of the family, she did not question the reasons why they had to ‘commandeer’ the flat; the belief that it would help SOE with the

¹⁰¹Undated report on Foggia by CMP, WO204/10002, TNA.

¹⁰²Major Greenlees, 89/1/1, 180 and Miss K. Knight, 07/19/1, 16, IWM.

¹⁰³Mrs A. Street, 95/34/11, IWM. 44.

war was reason enough. These diary entries and memoirs are demonstrative of the ease with which homes were requisitioned from civilians to provide accommodation for troops in Puglia. For instance, a report on Allied accommodation dated 26 November 1944 is explicit that the needs of United Nations forces should be priority and forces would have to ‘make best use of what there is.’¹⁰⁴ The Allied forces also requisitioned and utilised a substantial number of public buildings. In particular, school buildings were widely used throughout the region for a variety of purposes. For example, Major Zorab operated his eye clinic from a school building in San Severo, and in Ruvo di Puglia the Allies occupied two schools. However, school buildings were frequently too damaged to be requisitioned. For example, in Taranto the school buildings of Massafra and Laterza were damaged, with destruction to windows, furniture and the roof.¹⁰⁵ In Ruvo the situation forced the mayor to ask if the buildings could be derequisitioned, as it was ‘impossible to find school rooms.’¹⁰⁶ Consequently, this policy caused some resentment amongst civilians, who saw the requisition of schools as a clear disregard for the education of children. A memorandum on Allied troops in Italy from May 1944 stated frankly that:

The attitude of the civilian population towards the Allied forces has deteriorated appreciably since our occupation. [...] Resentment is largely due to economic reasons. There are, however, contributory causes which might be dealt with. These include: [...]

1. The attitude of the individual officers and men, and of some units to the Italians in their area.

¹⁰⁴Report on Allied accommodation to AFHQ, 26 November 1944, WO204/4658, TNA.

¹⁰⁵Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici, Ufficio del Genio Civile di Taranto, ‘Programma generale relativo alla riparazione dei danni causati dagli eventi bellici nella provincia di Taranto’, 14 August 1944, Genio Civile, Busta 1422, Archivio di Stato di Taranto.

¹⁰⁶Major Zorab, 26 IWM; Prefect of Bari, October 1944, ACC Microfilms, Bari Province- General (115)\11-17, ACS.

2. Drunkenness and insulting behaviour by these troops, looting etc.
3. Anti-Italian articles in service newspapers.
4. Hasty and inconsiderate requisitioning of premises.¹⁰⁷

Although requisitioning is number four on this list, it was still considered a significant factor in the depreciation of Italian opinion towards the occupation. For example, an Allied document from 29 August 1944 is evidence of the Allied, in this case British, attitude towards civilians. Major B. Passingham travelled across occupied Italy to visit AMG officers in order to enquire whether there were any chief complaints from the civilian population. He stated that many had received complaints that the apparent requisition notes for goods taken by the British forces were signed in a fictitious manner, 'such as "Hollywood Star," "Uncle Sam," "Churchill" and "Thank you."'"¹⁰⁸ These fictitious notes indicate that many troops also demonstrated apathy towards requisitioning goods and homes from civilians. With their fraudulent note, there was no way in which Italians could be compensated for the goods taken, as simply there was no way to prove what had been requisitioned. The forces involved would have been instructed in the correct protocol, so by going against procedure, even if their intentions were not malicious, they were knowingly causing suffering to their victims. It was incidents of this nature and the 'hasty' commandeered of the few homes available that led to negative public opinion.

Throughout the occupation the calls for derequisitioning by Italians did not cease. For example, in February 1945, Vito Bolognese, the director of the Margherita and Oriente cinemas in Bari, appealed to the Bari CAO to derequisition the cinema for civilian use. However, the reply informed Signor Bolognese that the office had already applied to move

¹⁰⁷Memorandum on Allied troops and Propaganda in Italy, 19 May 1944, WO204/6731, TNA.

¹⁰⁸Civilian claims, 28 September 1944, WO204/3666, TNA.

the medical supplies stored at the cinema, but the Area commander had denied it. Captain Jones apologetically stated that: 'we are afraid that there is not much hope for you.'¹⁰⁹ This appeal establishes that the Allies took not only homes and public utilities but also the few means of entertainment in the city. Furthermore, on occasion an apartment could be derequisitioned, but the soldiers would not leave. For example, Allied forces occupied the first floor of Via Mele 171 in Bari, and, after the flat was released on 30 January 1945, they did not leave, but paid rent for the rooms and furniture to the Italian owner. This example shows that although the flat owner did not get his apartment back in his possession, at least he now received some form of recompense.¹¹⁰ In November 1946 Signor Perrone of Foggia, who was connected to a wealthy and powerful family, appealed to the Allies to have his home in Foggia derequisitioned. In his memorandum he stated that he had fled Foggia for Rome to avoid bombing raids, and when he decided to return upon the liberation the city, he found that his premises had been requisitioned and were being used by American officers. The situation had remained the same, while Signor Perrone was forced to rent in Rome at great expense. He appealed to the Allies that he could no longer stay in Rome, but could not return to Foggia without his home being released as 'Foggia is suffering more than any other Italian city from the building crisis.' The appeal asked that the request be granted or at least to grant the family one floor of the property, as had been the case for other homes in Foggia.¹¹¹ The response from the Allies was unequivocal that until 'at such time as the complete close out of Foggia is effective, all real estate will be derequisitioned. The probability is that the subject villa will be derequisitioned about 15 February 1947.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Appeal by Signore Bolognese, 7 February 1945 and reply by CAO Bari, 10 February 1945, ACC Microfilms, Brindisi Zone General (115)\15, ACS.

¹¹⁰ Bari Zone Town Major to AC Southern Region, 30 January 1945, ACC Microfilms, Brindisi Zone General (115)\15, ACS.

¹¹¹ Letter and memorandum regarding the Perrone home, 21 November 1946, WO204/10590, TNA.

¹¹²Informal Routing Slip, Perrone Property, 2 December 1947, WO204/10590, TNA.

The rejection of this request may have been due to the fact that the Allies knew that withdrawal from the area was near, thus they did not see the reason to find the American officers new accommodation for two months. Moreover, the property was a villa and not a small apartment, and given that the appeal came from one of the most powerful and well-known families in the country, it is possible that the Allies did not believe that staying in Rome was causing the Perrone family substantial hardship. Regardless of who the family was connected to or how much capital they had, they were still without their home for three and a half years.

Conversely to the derequisitioning of homes, the release of public buildings provided an opportunity for local authorities in Puglia to obtain vital equipment that was in short supply in the country. The prefect of Bari wrote to the CAO with reference to the *Policlinico* hospital in Bari, arguing that:

It is not possible to obtain hospital fittings or equipment in ITALY and unless adequate such equipment is left in hospitals which are de-requisitioned by the Allies, hospitals cannot function. It would be therefore greatly appreciated by the local authorities that when the local Policlinico Hospital in BARI is eventually de-requisitioned, as much fittings and equipment be left in a way to enable the hospital to function. The Italian authorities are of course prepared to pay for what equipment they take over.¹¹³

The local authorities in Bari were able to use the release of Allied-occupied buildings as a chance to replenish medical supplies, as they knew that without Allied assistance it would be

¹¹³Translated letter from the Prefect of Bari to CAO, 15 February 1946, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone (10210) Liaison Officer (119)\ 119, ACS.

extremely difficult to secure any supplies for vital local government functions. The authorities of Puglia had relied on Allied services and supplies for over three years and were well aware that a dearth of materials was to be found outside of Allied channels. In essence this is one aspect of requisitioning that could have positive results for Italian civilians.

Extensive requisitioning of homes, public buildings and utilities had a significant impact on the life of civilians in Puglia. This was not a phenomenon restricted to Puglia or in fact the Allies. Northern Italians experienced a similar fate under the German occupation.¹¹⁴ In northern Italy the build up of German troops from 1943 caused a housing shortage. This continued throughout the German occupation, as frequently German soldiers took houses and buildings inhabited by civilians and in particular evacuees. In essence, requisitions altered the physical space available to civilians and forced people to leave their belongings behind. It complicated the provision of education for children, and put the Allies in the position of main provider for basic needs. Their policy consistently placed the citizens of the region in a subordinate role to military needs. It made no difference whether a town was untouched by bombs with housing in good supply or had very little habitable homes left standing. Later in the occupation efforts were made to help alleviate the housing crisis particularly in Foggia. This was once the Allies were settled into the area and after proclamations from the higher command of ACC that the policy was causing bitterness amongst the Italian population. Moreover, the policy of addressing the housing predicament was part of a larger plan for the wartime reconstruction of Puglia.

¹¹⁴Baldoli and Knapp, *Forgotten Blitzes*, 84.

The Allies and the Reconstruction of Puglia, 1943-1946

The extensive bombing of the Italian south by the Allies and on a smaller scale by the Germans left the southern half of the country in dire need of domestic and industrial reconstruction. The problem of reconstructing towns and cities fell to AMG, from their liberation of Sicily in July 1943 to their withdrawal from the country in 1947. The wartime reconstruction is an issue neglected in the historiography of Italy in the Second World War; restorations undertaken during the last war years are absent from studies of the rebuilding of Italy, which tend to focus on the initial post-war period and the Marshall Plan. The policies implemented by AMG and the Italian reactions to them need to be considered if the regeneration of Italy is to be put into its proper context. De Cecco argues that, contrary to what is widely believed, the situation was not at all desperate, especially when compared to other belligerent countries.¹¹⁵ Conversely, Ellwood suggests that the length and destructiveness of the war left a great sense of helplessness and dependence when faced with the issue of reconstruction.¹¹⁶ In some ways both of these arguments are justifiable; for example, in comparison to the destruction of German cities such as Hamburg or Dresden, Italy's situation can be argued to be less destructive.¹¹⁷ However, the devastation caused by the bombing was still immeasurable in terms of the impact that it had on the civilian population.

This chapter will assess the reconstruction carried out by the Allied administration in Puglia and how this affected the Allied-Italian relationship. It will consider how the Allies tackled the significant problem of removing debris and repairing the region's communications

¹¹⁵ Marcello De Cecco, 'Economic Policy in the Reconstruction Period 1945-51', in Stuart J. Woolf (ed.), *The Rebirth of Italy 1943-1950* (London: Longman, 1992), 158.

¹¹⁶ Ellwood, *Italy 1943-45*, 15.

¹¹⁷ See Jeremy M. Diefendorf, *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1990); Axel Frohn and Hermann-Josef Rupieper (eds), *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

network and the tentative attempts made to solve the housing crisis. Lastly, this chapter will reflect on the attitudes and endeavours of the monuments officers in Puglia with regards to the historic monuments, buildings and artworks of the area.

A comment by John Chabot Smith in the *New York Herald Tribune* in July 1945 is indicative of the attitude of the planners on arrival to a liberated area: ‘Everyone said win the war first. Now no one knows what to do.’¹¹⁸ Although he was referring to the longer-term plan for reconstructing Italy, this could be applied more generally to newly liberated areas during the war. The ACC staff in charge of reconstruction had similar outlooks as they entered bomb-damaged towns. However, the staff was given some guidelines as to how to proceed. An AFHQ directive to the ACC stated that:

No industrial rehabilitation will be undertaken in Liberated Italy which is not:

A - absolutely necessary to military needs or

B - Essential to the minimum civilian needs.¹¹⁹

This directive from AFHQ undoubtedly affected how the ACC perceived their role in reconstructing the south, and shows that in the first instance the AMG intended to carry out as little reconstruction as possible. As usual, the Allies’ first priority was military need, and saw their presence in the south as occupiers of defeated enemies.

However, the ACC did take reconstruction seriously and this is evident in their need to document the situation both prior and after occupation. In November 1943 the British Army Film Unit was instructed to ‘make a film of the military administration in Italy, incorporating

¹¹⁸ Ellwood, *Italy 1943-45*, 60.

¹¹⁹ Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy*, 25.

reconstruction of some towns after heavy bombing’, with filming to commence at Reggio Calabria on 9 December 1943 and then to continue on the Italian mainland. The film was a joint Anglo-American venture, which would be used by PWB.¹²⁰ The Allies were continually concerned with the opinions of Italian civilians and this is evident in the intended destination of the film: the PWB. The film demonstrates that the various sections of the ACC had to prove what work had been undertaken.

Therefore, during the last two years of the war and during the initial post-war period before the implementation of the Marshall Plan in 1948 the Allies did carry out reconstruction in the south. The reconstruction by the Allies can be grouped into three categories: the clearing of rubble and the repair of rail tracks, reconstruction of housing, and the protection and restoration of monuments and fine art.

Rubble, Roads and Railways

The removal of debris and rubble and the clearance of roads were dependent on local conditions. For example, in Foggia this task constituted a major priority and undertaking by the Allies in conjunction with the civilian authorities. Conversely, prior to the Bari disaster the streets of Bari were almost exclusively rubble free. Bomb debris was the initial reconstruction task, as no works could be carried out until the rubble was cleared. This proved a hindrance to the Allies repairing the communications network, particularly in the Foggia area. The removal of debris was not carried out on a daily ad-hoc basis, but local Italian companies were given contracts to undertake the work. This freed up the military and provided desperately needed employment for Italians. For example, a memorandum from the Allied Air Force area command for Foggia to the AMG Provincial officer dated 11 June 1944

¹²⁰ACC Memorandum from HQ AMG to Region 2, 19 November 1943, ACC Microfilms, 619B, Scaffale 149, Bari Zone (10210) General(115)/16, ACS.

outlined the contract for debris removal in the city. The contract had been awarded to Mario Vincenzo Inglese for four months, beginning in January 1944. However, the letter complained about some irregularities on the part of Mr Inglese. It stated that he had been paying higher wages than the authorised Allied wage scale allowed, but more importantly he had attempted to defraud the Italian tax and welfare authorities. The memorandum reported that:

The contractor has kept an incorrect set of accounts, including pay-book, for the purposes of deceiving the Italian government tax and welfare offices. [...] the 'phoney' pay-book was kept by contractor INGLESE in order not to have to pay the legally required fees to the various institutions for workman's and families' protection and welfare.¹²¹

This example underlines the issues that the Allies faced when confronted with relying on Italian contracts for the removal of debris. The Allies did not have unlimited funds, so they were strict in how their money was spent. It appears that the Allies were happy to pay a reasonable fee to Italian companies, but were concerned with the nature of how the money was used. It surprised the Allies that engineer Inglese would fraud the Italian government to avoid paying fees that would provide aid to his own workers.

Once the debris was cleared the repair work could begin. The Allies' unquestionable priority was to repair the communications network, a vital lifeline of troops and logistical support to the armies fighting their way up the peninsula. An article in the *Western Daily Press* on 29 September 1943 demonstrates the importance of the road network in the northern part of

¹²¹Memorandum from the Allied Air Force area command for Foggia to the AMG Provincial officer, 11 June 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone- General (115)\ 55 Reconstruction Policy, ACS.

Puglia. It stated that the Castelnuovo road junction had been destroyed, providing a major headache for Allied road transport as eight roads met in Foggia, including one leading to Naples and one to Rome.¹²² Consequently, the reconstruction of road networks was of paramount importance, though not without problems. For instance, a report on the situation in Region 2 from July 1944 affirmed that there was a severe shortage of supplies of road construction machinery and tools, despite some being made available for use by the Allies.¹²³ Machinery was in constant short supply throughout the occupation, with Italian materials non-existent and often Allied provisions carefully kept for themselves. However, the road networks were restored in Puglia:

Maintenance on patching all military highways continued satisfactorily, bridge repair was slow but would be speeded up when cement released. Genio Civile (Italian Civil Works Body) were improving and now have responsibility for provincial and communal highways- Allies aid in transportation, supplies and supervision. Roads-condition and maintenance have reached a point of excellence.¹²⁴

This report is evidence that the Allies, in conjunction with the Italian civil authorities, were able to restore the road network in Puglia to a high standard. It is also demonstrative of the separation of roads into 'military' and 'communal.' The reason for the segregation was to avoid civilian traffic slowing down the military, but this separation also resulted in the division between roads for the occupiers and roads for occupied. Italians felt some resentment at being banned from certain roads, which would have inevitably been repaired before those of communal use.

¹²²*Western Daily Press*, 29 September 1943.

¹²³Report on situation in Region 2, July 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

Parallel to the restoration of the roads in the region was the reconstruction of the rail system. The Germans had systematically destroyed railway lines that had not been damaged by bombing in order to hinder the Allied advance. The Office of the Director General of ACC reported in February 1944 that the Naples to Foggia line (line 91) had clearance repairs and the restoration of operating facilities were still in progress. The Allies had set up maintenance using Italian labour supervised by the US military.¹²⁵ The fact that American soldiers rather than Italian foremen supervised the Italians is evidence of the Allied attitude of treating Italians as friends and foes at the same time. The Allies were happy to employ civilians, but did not trust them to be unsupervised. The presence of the US military is also indicative of the importance of the railways. Some lines were already back in operation by 15 February 1944; for instance, line 86 Barletta-Foggia-San Severo-San Salvo was open for service as San Vito Lanciano. Line 297 Barletta-Spinazzola had been completed and was open for full service after the completion of the restoration of the Minervino Bridge. Furthermore, line 296 Spinazzola-Gioia del Colle was satisfactory for service, except at Pioggorsini where Italian civil railway men under the supervision of the Bari *Compartimento* were repairing a damaged bridge.¹²⁶ This line was not a vital line out of the region to the frontlines; therefore this is why the Italian local government was entrusted with its reconstruction. Not all railway lines were repaired. For example, the Avellino-Foggia line was deemed too severely damaged to practically repair it. With the reopening of line 91 Naples-Foggia, the Allies were able to move supplies and personnel across the country so they decided against repairing the Avellino line.¹²⁷ There are no discussions in the Allied documents of how this would affect the mobility of those living along the line. Simply, it was not a military priority so civilians

¹²⁵Office of the Director General, 15 February 1944, Status of reconstruction of the railways, WO204/2147, TNA.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Reconstruction priorities, 4 November 1943, WO204/2147, TNA.

would have to find an alternative way to travel in the area. Reconstruction of the travel system in Puglia was an Allied priority, but the administration was also faced with the mass shortage of housing in damaged cities.

Housing

The Allied bombing campaign, actions by ground forces and unique events such as the Bari disaster instituted a housing shortage in southern Italy. For example, in Campania the newspaper *Il Paese* criticised the Allies in August 1945 arguing that Naples was in need of housing and not streets; the streets should be repaired after the population had homes.¹²⁸ Early in the year an unnamed university Professor had also commented (in a letter to the Allies) that housing should be a priority.¹²⁹ Indeed, Puglia was suffering from a lack of civilian accommodation. Censored letters from Bari demonstrate that residents complained about the housing problem and in particular that homes were in short supply.¹³⁰ The principal reason for the lack of reconstruction of houses was a consequence of ACC priority to repair roads and buildings, which were related to military needs, over those of the civilians. It can be maintained that the military perceived that they needed roads more than they needed to repair homes, and this is why the AMG were less active in this area.

In fact, it appears that the reconstruction of homes during the last years of the conflict was designated problem for the Italian government. For instance, a report from the Director of Public Works and Utilities sub-commission to the vice President of the Economic Section on 30 August 1944 demonstrated the role of the Italian government in this matter:

¹²⁸Counter Intelligence Corps. Memorandum for the Officer in Charge, 20 August 1945, WO204/12625, TNA.

¹²⁹AFHQ PWB, Naples Area, 6 April 1945, Information and Censorship section, WO204/12625, TNA.

¹³⁰ACC Censorship Report, 6 September 1944, WO204/1232, TNA.

The Italian government has set up an organisation to begin to provide the most urgent housing. However, as everyone must know, very little can be accomplished along these lines while the war is still on, because the Armies will not release critical materials needed for their campaigns, and of which there is a shortage.¹³¹

The Allies had little faith in the abilities of Italians to undertake such vast reconstructive projects. The report further remarked that:

It naturally follows that expert allied supervision of such work will be required so long as the Allies have an interest here, or an interest in the proper economic rehabilitation of Italy. [...] While Italy has some very good engineers, they have never had to plan vast projects as we have done and, for that reason, lack the broad vision and training in the effective co-ordination of such vast undertakings.¹³²

These remarks designate that Allies planners did not believe that the Italian authorities had the capacity to rehabilitate Italy without outside help. It is remarkable that the director stated that the Italians required Allied supervision, whilst the Allies had a stake in Italy. It is evidence of an occupier mentality that the Allies did not trust civilians to work unsupervised. Subsequently, civilian housing remained a negligible reconstruction priority whilst the Allied armies were fighting to liberate the Italian peninsula. The allocation of raw materials was deemed more essential for military supplies than for civilian needs. It was only after the end of hostilities and the implementation of the Marshall Plan that noncombatant housing became a priority.

¹³¹Report from the Director of Public Works and Utilities sub-commission to Vice President of the Economic Section, 30 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Works and Utilities (150)401, ACS.

¹³²Ibid.

Monuments and Fine Art

Before the endeavours to liberate Italy from Fascism and from Nazi occupation it became apparent that hundreds of thousands of historic monuments, pieces of fine art and sculptures were in real danger of being destroyed. This occurred as a result of aerial bombing, but also, from summer 1943, of the cataclysmic operations of ground forces. Regardless of feelings towards contemporary Italians, the Allies in general held the historic treasures of Italy on a pedestal as examples of past great civilizations. To protect these monuments from damage was to protect a part of world history. The Italian government had taken steps to protect its historic treasures since 1939. A decree of 6 June 1939 established that the most important works of art should be moved from cities and towns to safe repositories in the countryside. Immovable monuments were padded and packed up to avoid bomb damage. However, with the invasion of Sicily air raids were now complemented by the threat of land warfare, which meant that the repositories in the country were no longer safe. Marta Nezzo argues that damage to monuments in the south was devastating and that in particular Campania and Puglia suffered the most.¹³³

In order to protect Italy's monuments, the Allied authorities set up the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section (MFAA). However, during the Sicilian campaign the initiative was in its infancy and thus encountered some problems. Firstly, the officer sent to Sicily, Mason Hammond was a classics professor who had little knowledge of the monuments and artworks of the island. Secondly, Hammond did not arrive in Sicily until 28 July 1943, almost three weeks after the invasion had begun. Thirdly, it was impossible for Hammond to secure any transportation or supplies from the Allied armies. Finally, no one seemed to know what he

¹³³ Marta Nezzo, 'The Defence of Works of Art from Bombing in Italy during the Second World War' in Baldoli, Knapp and Overy (eds), *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe*, 105-110.

was supposed to do.¹³⁴ Fortunately many of these issues were resolved by the time of the invasion of the Italian mainland. The consequences for MFAA were that now Monuments officers would be attached not only to MFAA headquarters, but also to the fifth and eighth armies in the field.¹³⁵ Furthermore, each region now had their own dedicated monuments officer to help to reconstruct and rehabilitate its monuments.¹³⁶ However, Carlotta Coccoli argues that the motivations of the Allies still remained a form of ‘*Pronto Soccorso*’ (First Aid) in the first instance; to prevent further damage and undertake what reconstruction they could. Many were hindered by a lack of materials and funds.¹³⁷ During peacetime many Monuments officers had worked in the arts or architecture and had a pre-existing affection for Italian artistic culture. For some, their wartime role was the ‘bolstering of a sick friend, for others the beginning of a love story.’¹³⁸ In addition to examining officers’ feelings and activities, Dagnini Brey points out that their role was considered noteworthy, but secondary to military objectives and in Naples, where the majority of the city was in turmoil, even frivolous.¹³⁹

It is now important to examine some of the efforts of the Monuments officers and their counterparts in the Italian authorities in Puglia. For example, the most noteworthy cathedrals and churches of Puglia are included in a report compiled on the monuments of southern Italy. The document detailed that the chapel nave of Bari Cathedral was under repair and many roof tiles were loose following the German air raid of December 1943. In Brindisi, the *campanile* (bell tower) of the Cathedral had already been repaired, but the church of Gesù Cristo had a

¹³⁴Robert M. Edsel, *Saving Italy: The Race to Rescue a Nation’s Treasures from the Nazis* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2013), 43-46.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁶Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 234.

¹³⁷Carlotta Coccoli, *First Aid and Repairs: Il ruolo degli Alleati nella salvaguardia dei monumenti italiani*, 14-18.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 272.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 79. See Dagnini Brey, *Salvate Venere!* for a more detailed explanation.

damaged roof from bomb damage.¹⁴⁰ It is pertinent that Foggia is not recorded in the list. It is possible that the reason behind the omission of Foggia is that the monuments were beyond any form of ‘*Pronto Soccorso*.’ Andrea Pane has shown how the historic old centre of Bari with its cobbled medieval streets suffered damage from the raid of 3 December 1943. Indeed, hundreds of historic houses were in danger; this provoked an extraordinary dividend of ten million Lire from the head of the Italian government Ivanoe Bonomi.¹⁴¹ It is significant that this money came from the Italian government and not the Allies. It is demonstrative of the Allied system of priorities when it came to reconstruction. For the Italian government it indicated a desire to preserve the past, but also to appease the population: it also presented a good propaganda opportunity, and led to the old part of the city being repaired by May 1944.¹⁴²

Allied attempts to reconstruct and repair-damaged monuments in Puglia and southern Italy highlight how the Allied personnel viewed Italy and its past. However, it does not explain what the civilians thought about Allied efforts. Nicholas has suggested that upon arrival into a town or village the welcome was not always warm for Monuments officers. In fact, she argues that in many places they were not well received.¹⁴³ This is understandable when we consider the context of the situation the civilians had to confront: as there was an extreme shortage of food and supplies, it is comprehensible that they would have seen the arrival of MFAA before the appearance of rations as illogical and wasteful of Allied resources. It would have appeared to Italians that the Allies had their priorities mixed up. A cartoon from *Il Partigiano*, a national communist newspaper from 27 November 1944 indicated that some Italians perceived the Allies as hypocrites. The cartoon features some Allied soldiers looking

¹⁴⁰ List of damages to monuments and art in the southern mainland, T209/17,TNA.

¹⁴¹ Pane, ‘Danni bellici, restauri e ricostruzione in Puglia’, 437.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, 249.

at ruins with guidebooks and wondering where everything was. The title is 'Foreign Judgment' and the caption reads: 'Goddam, always cheats these Italians. In the tourist guide it is written that there is a nice city with palaces and gardens, on the other hand there is nothing.'¹⁴⁴ This piece of satire pokes fun at the fact that many Allied soldiers enjoyed sightseeing in Italy whilst on leave, but did not see the irony that in many cases bombing and land operations had destroyed many places listed in the guides. For example, in his wartime diary, Major Howard details his trip to Alberobello, home of the famous *trulli* houses and now a UNESCO world heritage site.¹⁴⁵ The cartoon further demonstrates that the Italians were perceived as both inferior and swindlers.

Conclusion

Bombing, destruction and reconstruction had a catastrophic effect on Puglia. Although the region was not one of the most highly bombed areas of the country, it nevertheless did experience bombing and devastation, in particular Foggia was almost wiped out. For other cities, such as Bari, it was the Allied presence in the local vicinity that brought about damage and disaster. These events and disasters altered the physical and psychological landscape of Puglia, transforming civilians' lives and their relationship with their occupiers. The Allies for their part endeavoured to reconstruct the ruined landscape, with particular focus on roads and utilities; in basic terms whatever was vital to the war effort was repaired first.

¹⁴⁴'Foreign Judgement', *Il Partigiano*, 27 November 1944, A5G SGM, Italia Liberata 1944-1948, Busta 2, ACS.

¹⁴⁵Diary of Major Howard, 05/48/1, 42, IWM.

Chapter 2

Civilian Protest

Protests have occurred throughout modern Italian history, from the nineteenth century struggles for independence to modern-day political rallies. Similarly to other European countries, demonstrations in Italy have not been restricted to one social group or class, as peasants, workers and the middle classes have all used public remonstrance as a means to air their grievances.

From the spring of 1943 in particular, Italian civilians began to protest openly, for the first time, against Mussolini and the Fascist regime. During the first years of the conflict, the Fascist party sought to keep Mussolini insulated from the responsibility for the increasing difficult economic circumstances. Paul Corner argues that Mussolini ‘was a carefully engineered political construct’ and that people believed that the *Duce* was deliberately kept ignorant of the facts or badly advised by the Fascist leaders or *gerarchi*. Corner proposes that in 1939 Fascist informers began to comment that the regime was losing support and that by November 1940 spies noted that people started to criticize Mussolini and to utter phrases like, ‘it’s impossible Mussolini doesn’t know how things are.’¹ Conversely, Duggan argues that in some small rural communities the cult of the Duce appeared to have remained largely intact until July 1943. However, he points out that in the major cities there were earlier signs that his charisma was crumbling. Instead of blaming other Fascist leaders for Italy’s problems, the public began to accuse Mussolini himself.²

¹ Paul Corner, *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini’s Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 250-271.

² Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini’s Italy* (London: Bodley Head, 2012), 381.

Colarizi argues that the arrival of the Americans into the conflict in December 1941 signaled a decisive development in Italian public opinion towards the regime. The thin link that still secured the masses to the regime definitely snapped.³ Although it was only in March 1943 that Italian workers went on strike against the war and the regime, Colarizi shows that signs of the storm to come could be seen as early as the spring/summer of 1942. Discipline in the factories was precarious, and she argues that the chance of a possible communist victory in Italy encouraged workers to rebel against the dictatorship. Lack of bread and the Axis defeat in Russia were the two principal motivating factors that caused working class protest to explode at the beginning of March 1943. On 5 March 1943 the factory workers in Turin went on strike. This was followed by strikes by industrial workers in Asti, Alessandria and Vercelli on 9 March and in Milan by 22 March. For the whole of March workers' strikes continued and were found from Sicily to the Alps.⁴ Claudia Baldoli suggests that 'before becoming political, the protests were "existential": in response to a regime which asked for sacrifices in order to win the war, workers began instead to argue that it was necessary to abandon the war altogether.'⁵ The events in March 1943 demonstrate the loss of faith in the regime by the industrial population of the country, a group that was vital to the war effort.

Discontent continued after the Allied invasion and occupation. Civilians now complained to the Allied government and the newly formed Italian government under both Badoglio and his successor Bonomi. Food shortages, land reclamation, contracts of employment and political beliefs were the chief reasons why civilians decided to take to the streets in protest. For many Italians the arrival of the Allies heralded the end to their suffering. Therefore, when the situation improved little, people voiced their anger in both the private and public sphere. The

³Simona Colarizi, *L'Opinione degli italiani sotto il regime: 1929-1943* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1991), 363.

⁴Ibid., 386-391.

⁵Claudia Baldoli, 'Spring 1943: the Fiat Strikes and the Collapse of the Italian Home Front,' *History Workshop Journal*, 72, August 2011, 187. See also Baldoli, 'Bombing the FIAT: Allied Raids, Workers' Strikes, and the Italian Resistance', *Labour History Review*, 77, 1, 2012, 75-92.

southern region of Puglia witnessed protests, strikes and demonstrations throughout the Allied occupation. Extreme living conditions forced the population to protest to both the Allied and Italian authorities in an attempt to improve their daily existence. The Allies attempted to alleviate the extreme hardships confronted by the people, although the guarantee of public order behind the front lines always remained their primary concern.⁶

AMG was aware of the risk of public demonstrations. They understood that the economic situation would be a potent reason for civil unrest. American public opinion researcher Hadley Cantril devoted an article to the subject in the winter of 1943. In this article he argued that social and political upheaval, a sense of confusion of what was going to happen, economic deprivation and disappointment about the occupying government all contributed to a situation of chaos. Therefore, it was imperative that the troops were sympathetic and attempted to understand the circumstances of the people.⁷ In the case of Italy, Cantril planned out a strategy of how to prevent and cope with protests and riots. Overall, he advocated a policy of collecting local information in order to satisfy the needs of the public whenever possible; of targeting specific disaffected groups; and, in extreme cases, of enforcing 'strict discipline' and exerting 'iron control.'⁸ In many ways local AMGOT personnel adopted these suggestions, but how civilians responded was specific to local conditions. A key concept shared by those employed by AMG was that protest was dangerous to the stability of the Allied occupation, and thus to the war effort.

Consequently, the Allies took civilian disturbances seriously, as public order was a major aspiration of the higher Allied authorities. For example, the No2 AMG Proclamation in the

⁶ Chianese, "*Quando uscimmo dai rifugi*", 94.

⁷ Hadley Cantril, 'Causes and Control of Riot and Panic', *The Public Opinion Quarterly: The Occupation of Enemy Territory*, 7, 4, 1943, 669.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 672-674.

province of Foggia, signed by the Provincial Commissioner Clive Temperley on 1 April 1944, was explicit in its denunciation of civil disobedience. The poster made it clear that anyone inciting rebellion, strikes or demonstrations against the AMG could have found themselves in front of the Allied Military Courts and could have faced the death penalty. It is interesting that inciting demonstrations against the Italian authorities was not discussed in such clear terms. Conversely, the proclamation merely stated that inciting public disorder was an offence and that no one was allowed to resist the *carabinieri*. Therefore, the Allies were in support of local Italian law enforcement, but the source of this support was largely self-serving. For instance, any person who was found in possession of arms, who had not already handed them in would face the courts and possibly the death penalty.⁹ The removal of weapons from locals would assist the *carabinieri* in their daily task of keeping public order, which would subsequently benefit the Allied occupation. However, this proclamation did not deter civilians from public disorder. In fact, people found varied ways to contest both the Italian and Allied authorities.

Food Situation

The picture that liberated Italy presents today is one of economic paralysis and stagnation. There is not enough to feed the people; the food that there is cannot be properly distributed.¹⁰

This statement from a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) observer's report of conditions in liberated Italy, dated 4 October 1944, gives a sense of the deprivation and difficulties that faced civilians during the occupation. In Sicily and the south, the occupation regime had been in place for over twelve months, but food problems

⁹ Proclamation of AMG No2, Provincial Commissioner Clive Temperley, 1 April 1944. MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 4, F. 202, ACS.

¹⁰UNRRA Observer's Report into Conditions in Liberated Italy, 4 October 1944, WO32/11163, TNA.

continued to dominate daily life. In fact, the report stated that the present overwhelming problem for civilians was how to find enough to eat. In the south rations provided a meagre 1,000 calories per day, with the Italian authorities assuming that the rest of the daily calorific intake would be made up to 2,000 calories through the open market. The report is defamatory of this plan as it states that produce on the open market was scarce and hindered by transport problems.¹¹ However, the nutritional situation had been perilous before the arrival of the Allies. The economic situation had caused prices to spiral out of control and from 1940 to 1942 the cost of living increased by 43%, while in food products the rise was an alarming 67%.¹²

Zamagni shows how individual patterns of consumption became stagnant during the Fascist period. The main overall reason for this trend can be traced back to the economic and demographic features of the inter-war period. She argues that the adverse economic climate, the impossibility of emigration and the process of rearmament meant that wages and salaries could not increase, and that savings were affected by a cycle of unemployment and inflation. This culminated in a dramatic fall in incomes in 1943-1945, and thus by 1945 individual consumption was 54% of the 1939 level.¹³ The extreme fall in consumption is indicative of the hardship endured by Italian civilians during the conflict.

By 1943 the availability of foodstuffs had become a critical issue for civilians, not just in Puglia, but also throughout the peninsula. Civilians struggled to acquire enough food to feed their families. The derisory rations provided by the Fascist state and the high prices and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Colarizi, *L'Opinione degli italiani*, 375.

¹³ Vera Zamagni, *The Economic History of Italy, 1860-1990: Recovery after Decline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 308-310.

scarcity of daily commodities resulted in a population suffering from hunger and malnutrition. The Fascist rationing system was inept and inefficient and had failed to furnish Italians with a stable food supply. A sense of the severity of the situation can be attained from figures of levels of individual consumption during the Fascist period and the war years. Individual consumption only increased by 6% between 1923-1939, which was then followed by a reduction of 15% in the period 1939-1942. These figures reflect the inability of civilians to purchase essential items and are also demonstrative of the substantial fall in wages for the population. Zamagni argues that the main reason for the overall stagnation during the Fascist period was the economic and demographic features of the inter-war period. Therefore, confronted with the extremely high prices during the conflict, a lack of savings and adequate rations, civilians had little hope of finding sufficient levels of food and maintaining their pre-war standard of living.

The Second World War was not the catalyst in the radicalisation of Fascist food policies. In fact, Helstosky shows how the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 was the major reason why the state chose to radicalise food policies. She argues that Italians began to see a steady decline in their standard of living, which did not end until the post-war era. The period 1935-1945 can be categorised by food shortages, high prices and consumer deprivation.¹⁴ Fascist policy consistently reduced the amount of food available, in an attempt to persuade people to adopt a more frugal lifestyle and to benefit the Fascist effort towards autarky. Food imports had been cut by a third as a direct result of the UN sanctions placed upon Italy following the invasion of Ethiopia. These sanctions proved influential, as Italy now had no access to imports of cheap wheat supplies.¹⁵

¹⁴Carol Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 91.

¹⁵Ibid., 92.

Mussolini and the PNF used the regime's propaganda machine as a facility to influence the eating habits of the Italian population. Propaganda praised an assumed willingness to adopt a more austere lifestyle and presented austerity as patriotic and beneficial for the nation. From 1935 simplicity was advocated and the ideal diet was presented as consisting of only domestic produce.¹⁶ By advocating Italians to eat only a diet of domestic produce, the state hoped to alleviate the problem of obtaining imports and luxury goods not cultivated or produced in Italy.

Miriam Mafai comments that the Fascist kitchen was a frugal one, which appeared evident in the actions of the state and the obtainability of food both before the Second World War and during the initial years of the conflict.¹⁷ Foodstuffs became steadily more difficult to find. By 1939 many bars were unable to make espresso with coffee beans, instead resorting to the grinding of chicory or barley.¹⁸ The Fascist government introduced price controls to calm consumers and check inflation, and in 1935 introduced 'Meatless days' every Tuesday and Wednesday, when the sale of meat was forbidden.¹⁹ Mafai has pointed out that the introduction of meat-free days did not represent a major sacrifice, as many Italian civilians did not consume a large quantity of meat.²⁰ Rationing was introduced with coffee and sugar in early 1940. Oils and fats were added to rationing in October 1940, rice and pasta at the end of 1940 and significantly bread on 1 October 1941.²¹ Colarizi argues that the rationing of bread had a devastating effect for the population of the Mezzogiorno, as it was the essential component of the diet of the poor. The effect of this was that for northern Italians rationing

¹⁶Ibid., 94-100.

¹⁷ Mafai, *Pane nero*, 77.

¹⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹⁹ Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 94.

²⁰ Mafai, *Pane Nero*, 75.

²¹ Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*, 106.

meant ‘tightening the belt’, but for southern Italians it signified real hunger.²² The autarky policy especially harmed the south, and in 1951 conditions were in many respects worse than in 1941.²³

The outbreak of the Second World War further decreased the amount of food Italians could consume. The Fascist grain requisitioning system, the *ammassi*, was stepped up and Nazi Germany drained Italy of manpower and food. The Germans viewed Italy as a source of resources when allied with Italy, and increasingly so after the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice. Albert Speer came to Italy in September 1943 with the authority to take all the necessary measures in order to guarantee the war economy in Italy. In reality this entailed the exporting of useful machinery and installations to be used in the Reich. Anything that could not be moved was to be destroyed.²⁴

By 1941 food shortages were thus common and there was widespread disillusionment with the regime’s food programme. In the south, Colarizi revealed how protests became a daily occurrence in many areas. In March 1942 in the provinces of Caltanissetta, Agrigento and Matera hundreds of thousands of women descended into the piazzas to protest against the requisitioning of their produce, high prices and the *ammassi*. Letters intercepted by the Fascist government indicate how the same issues were also present in the north of the peninsula. The more politicised masses of the north were more heavily scrutinised by the regime and, compared to those in the south, their protests were less violent. However,

²² Colarizi, *L’Opinione degli italiani*, 379 and 377.

²³ Giovanni Iuzzolino, Guido Pellegrini and Gianfranco Viesti, ‘Regional Convergence’ in Gianni Toniolo (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy since Unification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 582.

²⁴ Lutz Klinkhammer, *L’occupazione tedesca in Italia 1943-1945* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1993), 70.

northern Italian women also stood in the front row of discontent, with protests ranging from small episodes in local markets to collective demonstrations at town halls.²⁵

Following the collapse of the Fascist regime and the Armistice of 8 September 1943 the situation did not improve. Many Italians now looked to the arrival of the Allies as the end to their dietary problems. Paul Ginsborg argues that there were widespread expectations that the Allies would assuage the extreme economic hardships.²⁶ However, Isobel Williams suggests that in Sicily expectations were not high. This judgment is based on the fact that Sicily had been a battleground until mid-August 1943 and that the food situation was precarious and had been so before the invasion.²⁷ However, through the course of the conflict the majority of Italian territory became a battleground at some time or another as the liberation progressed north through the country. Therefore, expectations were high, specifically since the Allies and in particular the Americans were associated with an abundance of food. Consequently, their arrival and the supplies they would bring with them were supposed to constitute the end to the problem of hunger. Tommaso Baris in his study of the Lazio region demonstrates that in memories of the arrival of the Allies, the first image of the American soldier or GI were simply linked to food. Specifically, people remembered the ample availability of provisions and rations that the Americans brought with them.²⁸ Upon arrival in Puglia, the Allies were confronted with a civilian population under extreme economic hardships. Bombing and the actions of ground forces had devastated the region during the liberation of the area. The extreme scarcity of food was made more problematic by the exorbitant rise in food prices and

²⁵ Colarizi, *L'Opinione degli italiani*, 380-381.

²⁶ Paul Ginsborg, 'The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question in Southern Italy, 1943-1948', *History Workshop Journal*, 17 (1984), 87.

²⁷ Isobel K. Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy during the Allied Occupation 1943-1945', PhD Thesis, University of Wales, 2005, 219.

²⁸ Baris, *Tra due fuochi*, 87.

the lack of employment. Incidentally, it is likely that much of the Allied provisions would have been for the armed forces themselves.

AMG were aware of the problems regarding the acquisition of food; however, they did not fully appreciate the scale of the issue until the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and the push into the mainland in September 1943. Those officers and personnel attributed with the task of controlling rationing and welfare were given basic guidelines by the higher echelons of the AMG. An AMG booklet from September 1943 directed at officers only was entitled 'Plans, Proclamations and Instructions' and was designed to give rudimentary orders on how to occupy liberated Italian regions. The booklet is not restricted to one specific subject, but covers aspects of industry, work and health. The General Administration Instruction Number Five discussed civilian supply and resources and it is useful in revealing the Allied attitude towards civilian requirements. For example, the main objective was to make the area or region self-sufficient with regards to the minimum required civilian needs. In the first instance this objective was to be achieved by maintaining the rationing system and price controls already in place. In Lucera, a town in the province of Foggia, the rationing of bread and flour was returned to normal by 2 October 1943.²⁹ This would be followed by the placement of all warehouses and channels of food supply under Allied guard and ultimately Allied control. The booklet is firm in ordering the warehouses to be placed under guard within 48 hours of arrival into a territory. A CAO Officer arrived in Foggia on 30 September, and, following a meeting with the Prefect and the King of Italy, met with the chief of the *Ufficio dell'Alimentazione*, the food office. The meeting concerned the food situation and took place hours after the officer's arrival, which demonstrates the significance of this issue. In this case the news was positive; foodstuffs were plentiful in the province with the major

²⁹Report on Lucera town situation, 12 October 1943, WO204/10002, TNA.

problems being transport and no electricity at the mills. Therefore, even if food supply was considered adequate, logistical problems could cause a major headache for the authorities and limit how much food arrived to civilians.³⁰ The printed order in the booklet is indicative of the importance the Allies designated the food supply. The occupying government understood, before their entry into Italy, the significance of being able to feed the Italian population before Allied supplies arrived, which in the booklet was estimated to take 90 days after the liberation of a region.³¹ It can be argued that if the Allies were seen to be organised and able to provide food for newly liberated civilians, the initial phase of the liberation/occupation would continue to see Italians place their hopes and trust in the new occupying force.

The new officers in charge of overseeing the initial transition from Italian to Allied authority were also made fully aware of the real possibility of the need for general relief and aid on behalf of civilians. The AMG booklet dedicated a section to aid, under the heading of ‘General Relief.’ The objective of the higher Allied authorities is clear in its indication of how officers and junior personnel should consider hunger. The purpose of the objective is to ‘prevent starvation so far as is practical.’³² Therefore, the Allies must prevent people from physically starving, but only if it was possible through the resources initially available to the AMG. This objective exhibits the desire of the Allies to prevent severe deprivation, but in the first instance, not to address the wider problem of rations and shortages.

The directive given in the instruction booklet was consistent with the overriding sense that the AMG did as little as was conceivable to meet civilian needs. The first priority of the Allies was the military campaign and the health and wellbeing of their armed forces.

³⁰Civil Affairs Officer Report upon arrival in Foggia, 2 October 1943, WO204/10002, TNA.

³¹AMG Booklet, September 1943, ‘Plans, Proclamations and Instructions’, WO220/351, TNA.

³²AMG Booklet, WO220/351. See also Memorandum on Civilian Supply in Occupied Territory to all Concerned, 16 December 1943, WO204/7706, TNA.

However, it was not the intention of the Allies to refuse to assist civilians if there was a tangible need, and this need did not influence the army's ability to feed itself. In the instruction booklet there exist guidelines on how to work with the Italian Communal Assistance Board and set up weekly cash payments for families in need. A public health directive suggested that in areas completely devastated by bombs, it might be necessary to set up a mass-feeding programme. The programme should consist of units equipped for 200 individuals, with guidelines on the number of staff required and the minimum amount of calories essential for average Italian civilian.³³

Food Protests

Severe food scarcity, high prices, poor rations and an occupying force instructed to limit civilian nutritional aid, all contributed to the consistent appearance of protests over poor dietary conditions in Puglia. Demonstrations that complained about the lack of food and about high prices were common and were geographically wide-ranging. Public objections of this nature occurred constantly throughout the occupation. The constancy of discontent about food indicates the severity of the situation; even two years after the arrival of the Allies, lack of food was a real issue for both civilians and the Allied Control Commission. The chief protagonists of protests were women and children or young adults.

It can be argued that the pre-eminence of women in protests was a result of the domestic sphere still being the domain of women. The burden of acquiring sufficient food to feed their families was the woman's job. It is interesting to note that E. P. Thompson, in his seminal essay 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', explains how it

³³AMG Booklet, WO220/351, TNA.

was predominately women who were the initiators of protests and riots.³⁴ Italian women in Puglia were continuing a tradition of women - and peasant women in particular - as being the instigators and perpetrators of disturbances linked to food and market prices.

Southern Italy still operated within a traditional patriarchal society and Fascism had used propaganda to reinforce traditional gender roles and to encourage women to stay at home and become 'prolific mothers.' However, Perry Willson established how many women became 'unprecedentedly active in the public sphere.' For some women a political cause was behind the move into public visibility, but others were forced out of the safety of their homes by the situation around them: these women were driven by the need to survive.³⁵ Inevitably, it was women who, motivated by frustration and the will to feed their families, confronted both the Italian and Allied authorities. The consistent appearance of children can be simply attributed to the fact that they were too young to be left alone at home. In the case of older children and youths, accompanying their relatives in protest was a way to assist the family. Conversely, youths could also attend as a means to counteract boredom or express their frustration.

The principal complaints during protests centred upon three issues: demand for more rations, a reduction in prices, and the immediate distribution of food. In other words, the grievances aired by civilians during demonstrations were not for luxury foodstuffs, such as sugar or chocolate, but for basic necessities of the Italian diet: bread, oil and pasta. Mafai revealed that bread was the principal food during the conflict. Bread was consumed with every meal and used in a number of ways, for example soaked in milk for breakfast, in a sauce for lunch and in a broth for dinner.³⁶ Italian women adapted to their situation and found ingenious ways to

³⁴ Edward Palmer Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50, 1971, 115.

³⁵ Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth Century Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 96.

³⁶ Mafai, *Pane Nero*, 79.

vary how they ate. In Puglia, the war was not the reason why bread was the main food. In fact, bread had formed the main staple of the masses of peasants and day labourers since the late nineteenth century. After the First World War, the bread rationed began at 350 grams per person per day and was twice reduced until it was a paltry 200 grams. Officials from Puglia complained to Parliament that while the ration was sufficient for other regions in Italy where wheat-based products made up only one item in diet, it was wholly inappropriate for Puglia. In Puglia, bread was the only foodstuff regularly eaten by the local population.³⁷

A Civil Censorship Section report for the four weeks ending on 5 August 1944, where 359,400 letters were scrutinised by the civil censorship group of the US army, can provide further understanding of civilians complaints. The report concluded that as far as the food situation was concerned, the circumstances were particularly serious in Bari, Palermo and Siracusa. 'At Bari, for example, unfavourable comments were nearly twenty times more than the favourable.' It furthered commented that the chief complaint in most centres was high prices and that even where food was comparatively abundant it was out of reach of the people. The author was sympathetic, as he pointed out that ration cards offered a small variety and quantity of food and that there existed genuine hardship. For example:

Living here is very expensive, bread sells at 90 and 100 lire per Kg. Fish for 150 and 200 lire and the same applies to other food items. (27/7/44 - Triggiani, Bari).

Moreover,

Everything can be found here, but at very high prices [...] as to fruit we have never seen such prices before. (27/7/44 - Canosa di Puglia, Bari).

³⁷Frank M. Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates in the South of Italy: Apulia, 1900-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 161.

The role of the black market contributed to the excessively high prices. For instance,

Only those who engage in trade (i.e. Black Market) live well. Many people go from here to Naples with vehicles, taking olive oil, macaroni and flour and return here bringing skins, clothing materials and drugs which they sell at exorbitant prices. (27/7/44 - Bari).

However, not all civilians in Puglia were unhappy at the state of affairs. A letter from Taranto commented that,

The Allies have conducted themselves towards us like true friends, and they have never let us suffer from hunger [...] The Allies have even thought of keeping our morale high by inviting us to receptions. (22/7/44 - Taranto).³⁸

It is not possible to know the identity of the author of this letter, but it can be suggested that the writer was higher up the social scale than many civilians. This can be inferred from the repeated invitations to receptions, dances or parties organised by the forces themselves. It appears that citizens happy at the dietary circumstances were in the minority, thus the majority of the discontented civilians made their objections known to the Italian and Allied authorities.

On 26 March 1944 at Capurso, a town near to Bari, women and children marched to the Municipio, the local council building, in order to demand an increase to the bread ration and

³⁸Civil Censorship Section for period ending 5 August 1944, WO204/12232, TNA.

a greater distribution of pasta. The report stated that prompt intervention by the *carabinieri*, with promises that the Prefect would consider the demands of the women, avoided the occurrence of any incident.³⁹ In Noci, a central town some 60km from Bari, a group of fifty women went to the Italian authorities to complain against the poor distribution of pasta, high prices and the lack of daily help for families with members in the military. Similarly, in Corato, an inland town situated in the province of Bari, 1000 women and recalled servicemen gathered on 17 January 1944 to demand a rise the military subsidiary. The Prefect intervened with promises that he would address their grievance.⁴⁰ Riots occurred even before the fall of Fascism and the occupation: in Ostuni, a town known as one of the *città bianche* (white cities) near Brindisi, 50 women protested on 4 April 1943 over the lack of bread and general foodstuffs. The report said swift armed intervention avoided any rash actions. However, some youths threw stones causing damage to the prefecture building.⁴¹ It can be argued that protests often allowed youths to vent their frustration in a physical manner. These examples are typical of the many *carabinieri*, prefect and Allied reports that describe protests relating to food. The demonstrations follow a general pattern: a group of women and children march to the Italian authorities to demand greater rations and lower prices.⁴² In many cases, civilians directly protested to the Italian authorities, most notably the Prefect. However, an example from Monopoli, a coastal town south of Bari, on 2 December 1943 showed how 200 women and children purposely proceeded to the 'English Command' to criticise over the lack of the distribution of pasta that month. The report from 9th army Civil Affairs section described how

³⁹Prefect's report to MI, March 1944 'Ordine Pubblico in Capurso,' MI, PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 4, F.161, ACS.

⁴⁰Carabinieri Report, 28 March 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 7, F.423, ACS. See also Carabinieri Report Trani, 17 January 1944, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Busta 231, F.231, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

⁴¹Prefect's report to MI, 4 April 1943, 'Ordine Pubblico in Ostuni,' MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 7, F.440, ACS.

⁴²Similar protests also occurred at Spinazzola, Trani and Toritto between March and April 1944. See Busta 231, F.231, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari. Protests over the prices of commodities continued throughout the occupation. This is can be evidenced in protests in Corato (olive oil) and Adelfia (bread) in September and November 1946. See Busta 233, F5/4/2 and F5/1, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

armed intervention was necessary to disperse the demonstrators, while 300kg of flour were distributed in substitution of pasta.⁴³ December 1943 was early in the occupation and feasibly this is the reason why civilians directly approached the Allies. In this case, it would have not been possible to approach the Prefect, as the Allies were in control of all aspects of Italian civilian life and in many instances had replaced Italian authorities with new personnel. However, it is probable that in later protests throughout the region, once the Italian establishment had resumed a greater public role, it was easier to approach them. Civilians were discouraged from approaching the Allies by the Allies themselves. For instance, a letter to the *Questura* (the police headquarters) of Brindisi from the Allied liaison officer in the city complained that a group of women had made their way to the office of the Allied MP. The women made issue with the conduct of a local shopkeeper. However, this was not the focus for the Allies. The Allies informed the *Questura* that civilians should not be approaching the Allied police and that since it was a civil demonstration, the Italian civil authorities should have dealt it with.⁴⁴

The Allies officially handed back the liberated territories to the Italian Government in February 1944. A stipulation of the handover was that all officials be of Allied sympathies and that the Allies had no commitments to the Badoglio-King's regime after the capture of Rome.⁴⁵ In fact, in order to establish an administration of only officers supportive of the Allies, a purge of the civil service was carried out. Indeed, a Bari Prefect's report stipulated that all officers and individuals 'still' instituted by the Allies were now under Italian control.⁴⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* reported in March 1944 that the Allies and Italian

⁴³Letter by the Command of the IX branch of Italian armed forces, Civil Affairs Section, 2 December 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7, ACS.

⁴⁴Letter from Brindisi Liaison Officer to Questura (Italian Police Headquarters), Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7, ACS.

⁴⁵'South Italy Rule Given to Badoglio's Officials', 11 February 1944, *The Atlanta Constitution*, 2.

⁴⁶Prefect Report, Bari, 19 August 1944, Busta 2, F.34, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

authorities were ‘energetically’ clearing out Fascists from public offices.⁴⁷ Therefore, the Italian authorities were still subject to control and command by the Allied occupying forces. The Allies still oversaw laws, regulations, prices and public health. Therefore, civilians knew that in approaching the Municipio, their grievances could be heard or at least reported to the Allies, so civilians may have thought that there was a greater chance of some aid coming forth.

In Molfetta, a coastal town north of the port city of Bari, a Prefect’s report of 24 March 1944 entitled *Malcontento per mancanza generi* (Discontent over the lack of general food stuffs), described a remonstrance by 500 women and children at the Municipio who asked for an emergency allotment of flour. The army and the local Garrison Commander intervened and dispersed the crowd without the use of force. The commander subsequently approached the Supreme Allied Commander to enquire permission to immediately distribute half a kilo of flour per person. The Supreme Allied Commander acquiesced to the Garrison Commander’s request and consequently public order was restored. In addition, another event occurred in Lecce in April 1944, when 150 women demonstrated against the lack of vegetables and general foodstuffs at the public market. This prompted the Prefect to press the Allied authorities to obtain rations of pasta that the civilians had not received since November 1943. This report highlights the extent of deprivation in Lecce in this period, as the population had been without a pasta ration for six months.⁴⁸ Furthermore, it is evidence of the Allies’ inability to provide basic necessities for the civilians of Lecce seven months into the occupation of the area.

⁴⁷ ‘Purge of the Italian Public Services: Energetic Action Against Fascism,’ 29 March 1944, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8.

⁴⁸ Prefect’s report, 24 March 1944, MI, PS, Governo Del Sud, Busta 6, F.384, ACS.

Through protesting to the Italian authorities, the civilians of Puglia were able to reach the Allied command, and in many circumstances acquire some relief or promises of relief to come. In one case, Christian Democrat protesters in Corato in April 1946 carried both the Italian and American flags. Perhaps this was a genuine display of support for the US, or an ingenuous way to gain sympathy from the Allied command that would be informed of the protest.⁴⁹ From evidence of protests throughout the occupation, it can be suggested that the populace were fully conscious of their ability to reach the Allies. Moreover, civilians were not particularly directing blame at either Italian or Allied authorities, but were protesting to whichever governing body they thought would be most likely and able to help them.

An important question concerning food protests in Puglia is the extent to which these protests were political or apolitical. Were they simply driven by hunger and strife or was there an underlying political current to the actions of the protesters? The question is difficult as it is not possible to provide one answer for all protests about inadequate food supplies. However, it appears that in many cases the protests were compelled by the immediate extreme circumstances and not organised political events. The dire living situation faced by the civilians of Puglia forced them to react and appeal to the authorities for immediate aid. Although this argument can be applied to a majority of food protests in Puglia, not all were apolitical. Many protests, particularly later in the occupation had backing from political groups and thus followed a more organised pattern. It can be suggested that the political parties could exploit civilian grievances by arranging and conducting a protest on their behalf, in order to also raise political concerns and the profile of their association. Parties could also join in organic protests and attempt to make it seem that they were politically structured. The role of political parties will be discussed further in chapter 3.

⁴⁹Carabinieri Report, 29 April 1946, Busta 233, F.5/4/2, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

Patterns of protest during the occupation of Puglia have shown little incidence of violence or reckless behaviour on the part of the civilians, except for a few youths throwing stones. However, from both Allied and Italian documentation, it can be reasoned that a more proactive and forceful means of dissenting was present in conjunction with more peaceful demonstrations. If solutions to the severe food situation did not arrive, or levels of desperation reached greater heights, civilians in Puglia took matters into their own hands. People would attack lorries carrying food, break into bakeries and steal bread or commit similar acts of force in order to receive food.

A prefect's report dated 21 March 1944 describes one such event. On 17 March in Canosa di Puglia, a town between Bari and Foggia located in the province of Barletta-Andria-Trani, at 7.30am 'dozens' of women attacked two vans carrying bread from the public bakery and took possession of the bread. The following day a group of women invaded the bakeries of Sabino De Mauro, Mario Di Nunno and Lorenzo Masottina and removed 1400Kg of bread and 6000Kg of pasta. The interceding of the *carabinieri* was necessary to stop the women from taking further goods. It is interesting to note that in the follow up report to the Italian Interior Ministry, the prefect defended the actions of the perpetrators, stating that the reason why such crimes were occurring was the difficulty the lower and working classes were having in finding basic foodstuffs. The situation was further worsened by the lack of employment, the absence of the distribution of rations and the difference between wages and the actual cost of living.⁵⁰ This report reveals the extreme situation confronted by civilians during the occupation, forcing people to commit drastic actions in order to survive. Italian women were not afraid to commit crimes if they considered the situation desperate. In fact, women blamed

⁵⁰Prefect's Report, 21 March 1944, Canosa di Puglia, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 4, F.155, ACS.

the authorities for their own actions, as it was the circumstances caused by the war and the occupation that had triggered a disintegration of food supply. The presence of women in protests does not necessarily mean that incidents would always be calm and without confrontation.⁵¹

Stealing bread was not a crime restricted to one area; for example in Modugno, a town in the outskirts of Bari, in February 1944 a protest involved 1,000 people over poor living conditions. During the demonstration, a crowd invaded the Pietrantonio bakery and took away and damaged bread that was ready for the next day. Similar actions were then attempted at the warehouse of the Cavallo bakery, but were unsuccessful as the warehouse was secured through the use of machine guns.⁵² The securing of the Cavallo bakery through the use of sizable weapons demonstrates the tense atmosphere surrounding the issue of food. Similar incidents also occurred in Mola di Bari, a small coastal town located approximately 22 kilometres south of Bari, in February and March 1944. In February 1944 women assailed a truck carrying bread, then marched to the Municipio where the crowd smashed windows, invaded the anterior office and purposely ripped documents. In March women and children joined a workers' protest and forced their way into local bakeries.⁵³ This was evidence of the real threat that disgruntled citizens could pose to a business in the food industry, in particular to bakers. These incidents show how a large proportion of the Modugno and Mola populations were in dire economic straits.

Bakers were not the only objects of discontented inhabitants; mill owners were also targeted. The Pascale mill in Ginosa near Taranto became the subject of a Prefect's report to the

⁵¹Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 232.

⁵²Prefect's Report, 31 March 1944, Modugno, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 6, F.379, ACS.

⁵³Carabinieri's Report 21 February 1944, Mola di Bari, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 6, F.385, ACS.

See also, Carabinieri's Report, 28 March 1944, Mola di Bari, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 6, F.385, ACS.

General Food Commission on 6 November 1943. The report stated that people had presented themselves at the mill with the determined intention to grind up small quantities of grain without a grinding card. The protesters were insistent that in the nearby commune cards were not required. To avoid incidents the commissioner authorised the mill to grind the grain. Local variations in regulations could cause a sense of frustration and injustice. Civilians in the Ginosa commune felt annoyed that grinding grain was a more regulated and complicated process than in neighbouring areas, so decided to ignore rules in an attempt to establish equality.⁵⁴ The compliance of both Italian and Allied authorities in order to avoid public disturbance is a trend that emerges in Puglia. E. P. Thompson argues that group consensus over a particular issue can help to override fear of the consequences.⁵⁵ Although he applied this principle to eighteenth-century England, it is acutely relevant to Puglia. United behind a shared grievance or goal, civilians took matters into their own hands with little thought as to how the authorities would react and what the long-term consequences would be. Shared goals helped to create a barrier between the fear of retribution and the immediate desire for food, extra rations or lower prices.

The forms of protest in Puglia were in the majority nonviolent. Despite the theft of bread and breaking into premises, usually no one was harmed during these demonstrations or illegal acts. However, this was not always the case; for example, an incident in Lecce on 25 September 1945, almost at the end of occupation, resulted in a riot and several deaths. The cause of the event was local economic problems and the shipment of wine out of the

⁵⁴ Prefect's report to General Food Commission, 6 November 1943, Ginosa, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS. Similar events occurred throughout the occupation: for example, in Corato, on 16 March 1944, citizens seized 37Kg of bread destined for the black market. Carabinieri Report, 16 March 1944, Busta 231, F.231, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari. These events continued after the war; for example, in 1946, in Barletta, 100 unemployed protested to achieve assurances of work. Several attacked an Allied van carrying bread, but were quickly dispersed by the soldiers, while in Mola, 200 unemployed protesters went to the Comune and stormed their way in to see the mayor (*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 20 July 1946).

⁵⁵ Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd', 78.

province. It was not explicitly directed at the Allies. There are a substantial number of documents relating to this riot in the archives, although details differ slightly in some of the reports. For example, an incoming message sent to Allied Forces HQ the day after the riot claimed that almost the whole of Lecce was involved. The Allied HQ report from 27 September claimed that the riot involved 5,000 people, and lastly the Security Intelligence Summary from 6 October 1945 claimed the figure to be 10,000. This figure was reported in the *New York Herald Tribune* in September 1945. However, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, the southern Italian newspaper, had stated the early figure of 5,000. Although the exact figure remains unknown, it is possible to say that this constituted a large part of the Lecce population and a significant event for the town.

During the riot, the mob marched to the Prefecture building demanding reduced food prices and increased rations and was able to force its way in. Entry was achieved by disarming the *carabinieri* and the marines of the San Marco regiment. The crowd then attempted to burn down the building.⁵⁶ Williams has noted how during protests in Sicily in the same period, attempts to burn records and the municipal building were ‘neither accidental nor a mere expression of rage.’ In fact, she argues that with no records, it would be impossible for the authorities to know who had paid taxes; ration books revealed who had fulfilled their *ammassi* quota. The Allies noticed this trend.⁵⁷ The *ammassi* was the Fascist requisitioning system for collecting grain, which the Allies continued during the occupation and renamed *granai del popolo* or people’s grain. The example from Lecce is further evidence of the desire to be unaccountable to the authorities, as civilians ripped important documents in the

⁵⁶Incoming Message to AFHQ 29 September 1945, Security Intelligence Summary No 21 for September 1945 dated 6 October 1945. Incoming Message to AFHQ 29 September 1945, Memorandum for the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, 27 September 1945. Incoming Message to AFHQ 26 September 1945. All documents are located in WO204/12623, TNA. ‘10,000 Riot at Lecce, Italy’, *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 September 1945, 8; ‘La calma è tornata a Lecce’, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 27 September 1945.

⁵⁷Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy’, 222.

office that they invaded.⁵⁸ During the Lecce incident, civilians destroyed no records notwithstanding the attempts. Shots were fired on both sides, and once more reports differ on the number of dead and injured: they range from 4 dead and 14 wounded, to 3 dead and simply many wounded, 3 dead and 400 injured and finally 3 dead and 40 wounded. The next day reinforcements and 5 tanks arrived, RAF Lecce doubled its guard and Allied troops were confined to barracks. *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* reported that the funerals of three victims took place on 27 September. The funerals occurred under enforced calm and an early curfew was put in place to maintain order.⁵⁹

The Lecce riot is not an example of a commonplace event; it was a rare case of a desperate community taking matters into their own hands. Significantly, the riot was featured in the *Stars and Stripes*, a magazine for American GIs in Italy, with the headline ‘3 dead, 400 injured in South Italy riot.’⁶⁰ The fact that it became a feature in this magazine indicates that the extreme violence committed was uncommon. Moreover, it was conceivably featured to remind the troops to be attentive of how quickly the situation could change in an occupation environment. However, the Lecce riot was not an isolated example. The US press reported that anarchy was looming in Southern Italy in December 1946. In fact, simply naming the south to any Italian official would bring about a look of concern and consternation. Bari was one of the centres of unrest during this period, and *The Christian Science Monitor* reported that at the end of the month:

A great throng of men, women and children rioted through the streets, looting shops, wrecking businesses, attacking police stations and government buildings and threatening to lynch the city officials. The situation became so bad that the police with

⁵⁸Carabinieri Report, 21 February 1944, Mola di Bari, MI PS, GDS1943-1944, Busta 6, F.385, ACS.

⁵⁹ See note 55.

⁶⁰ Extract from *Stars and Stripes* magazine, ‘3 dead, 400 injured in South Italy riot’, in WO204/12623, TNA.

armoured cars were forced to fire into the throngs with submachine guns. Yet the whole affair started when jobless men sought an increase in the pitifully low food rations and dole received by them and tens of thousands of others. The riot was followed by a general strike- an increasingly frequent occurrence in Italy.⁶¹

The strike ended when the Italian Air Minister Mario Cingolani promised immediate issue of 11 pounds of flour per person, greater funds for unemployment benefit and an early start for public works projects, such as the long planned Bari-Naples highway.⁶² It is interesting to note that the Italian government employed the same tactics of breaking strikes and unrest as the Allies, giving in to demands and immediately distributing food. Unrest continued in 1947 and until then Bari remained a city in turmoil. A veteran offered his opinion on the reasons for the unrest to *The Hartford Courant* in March 1947. The Veteran, a former Lieutenant colonel in charge of economic and political intelligence in Italy stated that a riot could start over a slice of bread, but insinuated that the reasons were deeper than that. He claimed that the disruption was an outward manifestation of the desire of the people to have stronger American control in Italy, similar to what had occurred in Greece. In effect he argued that underlying issues, in particular political issues were often the principal motivation for protest and that the 'slice of bread' was just the trigger for discontent. With regards to Bari, he believed that 'the people of Bari [...] seem prone to riot on any and all occasions, though I believe that there would be less of it under American supervision than otherwise.'⁶³

⁶¹ Joseph G. Harrison, 'Anarchy Looms in South Italy Rioting: Anarchy Threatens General Strike', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 31 December 1946, 6. See also 'RIOTING IN BARI: 3,000 People Attack Town Hall', *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 December 1946, 7.

⁶² 'Bari (Italy) Food Strike is Ended', *The Sun*, 30 December 1946, 11.

⁶³ 'Veteran Says Bari Rioting Deed Rooted: Demonstration as Favoring Control by U. S. Bradbury', *The Hartford Courant*, 27 March 1947, 2.

Protests against the lack of food, inflated prices of food and the insufficient supply of rations were frequent throughout the occupation of Puglia. In the majority women and children, who appealed for assistance to the authorities, carried them out. In the majority of cases the populace appealed to the Italian authorities, but this is not demonstrative of their faith in the Italian system. It is the result of the Allies removing themselves from the forefront of local government and pursuing a greater role behind the scenes. However, Italians were still able to capitalise on the presence of the Allied government, by appealing to them through the Italian authorities. Throughout the occupation both the Allied and Italian authorities chose compliance rather than defiance regarding demands that were possible to redress and gave concessions in instances where civilians threatened the public order.

However, if help was insufficient or not forthcoming civilians often resorted to crime in order to survive. Citizens attempted to rebalance their situation by forcibly taking food or righting what they saw as local injustices. In most cases these were petty crimes such as theft, but sometimes anger and violence would boil over. The Lecce riot is evidence of this.

Williams argues that by the time of the handover to the Italian authorities the phenomenon of disturbances caused by food shortages seemed to be waning.⁶⁴ However, Puglia is only briefly included in her study as her main focus centres on Sicily and Campania. In Puglia demonstrations caused by food shortages did not wane with the handover, but were consistent throughout the occupation. Disturbances of this nature were still occurring in late 1945. Food shortages are just one aspect of civil disturbance in Puglia; protests due to work-related grievances were also commonplace.

⁶⁴Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 223.

Conclusion

Civilian protest in Puglia centred upon basic issues that were necessary for survival, such as the availability of food, rationing quantities, high prices, unemployment or employment issues such as contracts and wages. Civil discontent took the form of protest marches, demonstrations in the piazzas, land occupations, attempts to gain entry into the local authority buildings and strikes organised by workers. It does not appear that one form of protest was essentially always more effective than another. Rather different methods of protest achieved different results according to local area and time conditions. For example, protests over the lack of bread and foodstuffs tended to occur in the agro towns, where the majority of inhabitants worked on the land. Strikes for better pay and conditions were generally a feature of the ports and industrial areas. Desperate living conditions occasionally forced civilians to take matters into their own hands, such as the hi-jacking of the bakery vans.

From the documentary evidence it appears that civilians appealed to the Italian authorities more often than to the Allies. This was a product of the Allied administration withdrawing into the background after the handover of the liberated Italian territory in February 1944. However, this did not mean that the Allies were not concerned with the problems raised by the population. This is evident in the protests over emergency rations of food, when the Italian authorities appealed to the Allies for aid. The Allies did attempt to improve the living condition of civilians in Puglia by responding positively to such requests and by employing large numbers of people to work for the occupying government. However, even with the instigation of public works, unemployment remained an issue and was exacerbated by the repatriation of Italian servicemen and the withdrawal of Allied employment in 1945. Ultimately, the occupation of Puglia was a period of civil unrest prompted by the war situation. It can be argued that this increase in protest and civil disobedience is not unusual in

war, but in Puglia it was correspondingly based on longer standing issues such as agrarian reform in addition to shortages triggered by the war.

Chapter 3

Political Protest

Employment/Unemployment

After over twenty years of Fascism, the King and the Grand Council removed Mussolini from power on 25 July 1943. This event triggered an eruption of political activity in Puglia during the summer/autumn of 1943. This was aided by the setting up of *Fronte Nazionale d'Azione* (The National Action Front), an organisation set up by socialists, communists and *azionisti* (actionists) that has several objectives for the future of Italy: the conclusion of the armistice, removal of Fascism and the purging of the state administration, establishment of freedom such as speech, press and organisations, the war against Nazism and finally the revival of trade union activities. However, the Badoglio government continued to operate in a state of siege, denying essential liberties to the country.

In Puglia, national attempts at reintroducing free political activity were mirrored. During the '45 days' pre-Fascist parties and new political groups emerged. For example, the Bari section of the Action Party was ran by a group of intellectuals, including Giovanni Laterza and his sons (the family who founded the Laterza publishing house), Professor Tommaso Fiore, and lawyer Michele Cifarelli (later influential in Radio Bari). In Bari a key facet of support was found among the city's students, but Leuzzi argues that it was the older leaders of the parties that were able to make it a success. They achieved this by confronting the political situation and finding new and original ways to gain support and co-ordinate their activities.¹ Tarantino argues that this group was very active in promoting their ideas and subsequently groups were founded in Lecce ran by Alfredo Bernardini and in Foggia led by Michele Lanzetta.

¹ Vito A. Leuzzi, Lucio Cioffi, *Alleati, monarchia, partiti nel regno del Sud. Stampa e forze politiche in provincia di Bari tra restaurazione prefettizia e libertà* (Fasano: Schena Editore, 1988), 60.

Moreover, the Catholic antifascist liberals of Bari were drawn to the Christian Democrats (DC) and the reconstruction of this party in Puglia was quickly accomplished. In particular, the social composition of the supporters of the DC were elementary school teachers, white collar workers and professionals in general and in the countryside, artisans and peasants. Sections sprang up throughout the region during the '45 days.'²

However, it is perhaps the revival of the Communist Party (PCI) that is most significant. Many communist prisoners of the Fascist state were released (such as Giuseppe Di Vittorio) and upon their arrival home in Puglia began to cultivate the reinstatement of the PCI. Their efforts at revival touched all areas of region and the authorities, for example the Cerignola Police chief Senise began to report on their activities.³ The party was able to draw upon existing communist militants throughout the regions' provinces.⁴ It is important to note that the communists were not starting from zero, as clandestine communism had persisted throughout the Fascist period and Puglia was home to the 'zona rossa' (red zone): the area north of Bari centred around the triangle of Andria-Minervino-Cerignola, the area around Brindisi, and the large 'argro' towns surrounding Taranto were politically radical and traditionally communist.⁵ In conjunction with the Action Party and *Partito Socialista Italiano* (Italian Socialist Party, PSI), the PCI stressed the importance of the removal of those implicated in Fascism, denounced Badoglio and King (and called for his abdication) and pushed for the formation of a democratic government.⁶

² Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 58-60 and Leuzzi, Cioffi, *Alleati, monarchia, partiti nel regno del Sud*, 69.

³ Ibid., 60-61. The various communists responsible for PCI reconstruction in Puglia are as follows: Mario Assenato and Antonio Di Donato in Bari, Luigi Allegato and Antonio Bonito in Foggia, Giuseppe La Torre, Eduardo Voccoli, Nicola De Falco, Amedeo Renzulli, Fiorindo Lemma, Amedeo Zittano in Taranto and Giuseppe De Tommaso, Vittorio Palermo, Mauro Cosimo and Pasquale Galiano in Brindisi.

⁴ Leuzzi, Cioffi, *Alleati, monarchia, partiti nel regno del Sud*, 64.

⁵ Ibid., 61. This issue will be discussed further later in this chapter.

⁶ Leuzzi, Cioffi, *Alleati, monarchia, partiti nel regno del Sud*, 63-66.

The significant growth of the PCI at local levels throughout Italy hastened the party's involvement with national politics. For example, the party played a substantial role in the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* (CLN). Furthermore, following the liberation of Rome on 4 June 1944 and the Pact of Rome, the PCI acquired positions within the government. The Pact of Rome took place in June 1944 and involved the PCI, the PSI and the DC, who each sent a representative to speak on their behalf. Di Vittorio spoke for the PCI, Emilio Canevari for the Socialists and Achille Grandi represented the DC. The pact stressed the unity of all Italian workers 'regardless of political opinion or religious faith.' Ginsborg argues that this represented a significant victory for policy of co-operation between the parties.⁷ This agreement enabled Di Vittorio and Fausto Gullo (the new minister for Agriculture) to instigate the formation of the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL) and to attempt to reform the agrarian sector, which will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Importantly, the resurgence of political parties and ideas had an impact on the nature of strikes and protests in Puglia during the occupation. In particular, issues surrounding employment were a contentious subject. Grievances over pay, contracts and working hours led to strikes and protest by workers throughout the region. Puglia had a largely agricultural economy, with some industry near the major ports and cities such as Bari or Taranto. Therefore, a large proportion of the working population of Puglia was classed as peasants. In fact, most of this group consisted of labourers who worked on the large estates, dependent on the success of the harvest for work.

For example, a counter intelligence corps report for the Bari area from August to September 1945 stated that 'unemployment increased sharply from 25,000 to 40,000 and the rise was

⁷ Ginsborg, *Italy*, 61.

partially due to the drought that had affected Puglia that summer.’ This report indicates how lack of work in the fields due to adverse weather conditions affected unemployment figures. The report similarly blames the return of Italian servicemen and the departure of Allied units, who had employed a considerable number of civilians.⁸ This supposition had previously been explored in *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, which had incriminated the lack of rain in the Foggia, Bari and Lecce areas for the agricultural shortage of work. It warned that the sector was in the midst of uncertainty.⁹ Chianese shows how Puglia and Campania had the largest number of civilians working for the Allied government. In Puglia the ports and docks were used by the Allies, there was a large air base at Cerignola, 40 km southeast from Foggia, and the region was designated as a base for the rest and relaxation of troops. Chianese calculates that 29,685 civilians worked for the Allies in Puglia, of which 15,952 were employed in Bari, 6,615 in Foggia, 3,676 in Brindisi and 2,311 in Taranto.¹⁰ The Allies had attempted to alleviate unemployment by inaugurating public works, but the demand was far greater than the number of places available. Industry was hindered by the lack of available raw materials and transport, which the report indicated had a negative effect on labour problems. The US announcement that it would provide a large number of motor vehicles and foodstuffs had received favourable comments by the population.¹¹ This announcement demonstrates that the Allies were aware of the economic problems and were attempting to fix them. However, it often appears that the help given was in order to prevent public demonstrations and dissuade people from turning to the Communist party for help. In June 1943 Gaetano Salvemini, whilst teaching at Harvard, prophesied that the presence of Allied troops in Italy would

⁸ CIC, Bari Office, Report for 20 August-20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁹ ‘Disoccupazione’, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 17 May 1945.

¹⁰ Chianese, “*Quando uscimmo dai rifugi*”, 175.

¹¹ CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

hinder the possibility of a communist advantage.¹² He was proved correct; the historiography of the Resistance has demonstrated that the British in particular discriminated against the political left and favoured the monarchy. Relations with the partisans were complicated by the continued support of Badoglio and the King by the British, in particular Winston Churchill, although the Americans, whilst pro-republican were certainly not active supporters of the leftist agenda. Both the UK and USA only began to take notice of the partisans in 1944 and decided that control was better than ignorance.¹³ Before the liberation of Rome, the Allies placed little faith the partisans' military capabilities. However, after the success of this episode the Allies and in particular the commanders located in southern Italy were surprised 'at the success of their military operations.'¹⁴ Consequently, Di Nolfo argues that the main aim of the Allies was to check communism rather than help the Italian people and bring about democracy.¹⁵

Unemployment remained a permanent feature of Puglian society during the war and after. In Barletta, located on the coast in the north of Puglia, on 28 August 1945 the directors of the local labour office threatened to call a general strike unless the unemployed of the Commune, totaling approximately 1000 persons were given jobs. The Prefect met with the labour office and party representatives to examine the situation and as a result a series of public works were planned to help ease the problem.¹⁶ In the city of Bari in January 1946 a protest march was organised by ex-combatants over the lack of jobs, the high cost of living and the fact that women were still keeping positions. The march consisted of about 200 men, but the numbers

¹² Ennio Di Nolfo, 'The US and the PCI: Years of Policy Formation 1942-1946' in Simon Serfaty and Lawrence Grey (eds), *The Italian Communist Party: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 39.

¹³ Julie Le Gac, 'From Suspicious Observation to Ambiguous Collaboration: The Allies and Italian Partisans, 1943-1944', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31, 5, 2008, 721 and 735.

¹⁴ Tommaso Piffer, *Gli Alleati e la Resistenza italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010), 81.

¹⁵ Di Nolfo, 'The US and the PCI: Years of Policy Formation', 48.

¹⁶ CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

were swelled to 400 with women and children who joined along the way. The men then attempted to obtain free meals from restaurants and bars, but were obstructed by the *carabinieri*. The following day the men marched to the *Questura* with a banner saying ‘We want bread and work.’ The crowd then attempted to invade the *Questura* and force their way into buildings where women worked. Both attempts were prevented by the *carabinieri*.¹⁷ This incident reveals the tense atmosphere over the issue of jobs. Italian servicemen felt aggrieved that women were allowed to keep the jobs that had been theirs before the war. They believed that they, as men and as ex-soldiers deserved to hold these jobs and not women, who should have returned to the home. The attempt to obtain free meals suggests that the servicemen believed that they deserved the food as a reward for their service in the conflict. Ex-servicemen or ‘*reduci*’ continued to be vocal in their quest for work in the region. For example, *La Tribuna del Popolo* reported that an ex-servicemen protest took place in Lecce about the slowness and the delay in the alleviation of unemployment. Their actions caused shops, offices and banks to close. The protest ended when 170 were given work.¹⁸ Figures of unemployment and the two aforementioned examples present a picture of the extent of unemployment for ex-combatants in Puglia.

Strikes proved an effective means to air grievances concerning employment. Another example of this is provided by a butchers’ strike against a new local tax in Altamura, a town located on the Murge plateau 45 km South-West of Bari, close to the border with Basilicata, on 24 August 1945. The same day all shopkeepers in support of the butchers sent a message to the Prefect petitioning for the abolishment of the new tax. Following a meeting between the Prefect and the butchers, the tax was temporarily suspended and all shops reopened.¹⁹ This example is evidence of the effectiveness of local businesses striking together to achieve

¹⁷Extract from CIC, Bari Office, 20 January 1946, WO204/12624, TNA.

¹⁸*La Tribuna del Popolo*, 10 April 1946, Busta 206, F.1, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

¹⁹CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945. WO204/12623, TNA.

a goal that would benefit the whole group. It is demonstrative of the important position that shopkeepers such as butchers had in society during the war and occupation. Butchers were the only proprietors that civilians could take their meat ration cards to obtain meat. Furthermore, butchers were also the way to get the small quantity of goods that were available outside the rationing system. They were regularly involved in the black market and habitually kept the prime cuts of meat for illegal sale, where they could charge extortionate prices. This practice of keeping the best of commodities reserved for the black market was also common to bakers and farmers. In Altamura, the authorities realised that in the interest of keeping public order it was necessary to concede to the butchers' demands. This is further evidence of the authorities' acquiescence in the face of public disorder.

Strikes were also organised by dockworkers in Puglian ports. The port of Taranto in particular assumed a significant role in the Allied occupation of Puglia, not only in military terms (it was used by the Allies to repair damaged Italian and Allied shipping), but also for the city population. Morgan has argued that the port cities of Taranto and Naples enjoyed a precarious and volatile dependency on the occupying force, which became the major, almost only source of legal and illegal employment. Spriano suggests that southern workers were weaker in terms of the leftist agenda and that the working class did not operate in one form of organisation like their northern counterparts.²⁰ However, in Puglia it appears that workers were perhaps more politically aware than they are given credit for, as workers used strike and negotiation to improve their wages and conditions. This is even true of those employed by the Allies, who enjoyed a higher salary and more privileged position than other workers.²¹ Taranto, Bari and Naples supplied and reinforced the fighting front and provided rest and

²⁰Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano. Vol. 5: La Resistenza, Togliatti e il partito nuovo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 6 and 141-142.

²¹*Ibid.*, 141-142.

relaxation for thousands of multinational troops.²² The Taranto dockworkers were able to undertake two successful strikes in 1944. Firstly, on 10 January, 3,000 people went on strike over the high cost of non-rationed goods and poor living standards. The commander of the docks acted as mediator, and at 1pm 500 workers were invited to a meeting with the Prefect to discuss the issues and the possible setting up of a co-operative. Workers resumed work at 3pm assured in the fulfillment of the measures promised.²³ Secondly, on 15 March, 150 dock workers absented from work in protest against the lack of approval of a contract for the adjustment of wages, which was already in force at the Bari docks. The dockworkers assured the Italian authorities that they merely desired the injustice to be addressed. Subsequently, the Italian authorities pressed the Allied government of Bari for a superior explanation of the controversy. The strike continued until 19 March after negotiations by representatives of the dockworkers and the Allied authorities had met and produced a new contract of work.²⁴ AMG had sought to prevent such issues by setting up a 'uniform wage scale' upon its arrival in Italy.²⁵ In October 1943 the 8th Army experienced problems with discrepancies: for example, the army was hiring common labour at 50 lire per day, whilst the civil authorities paid only 30 lire. A memo pointed out that 'it is of the first importance that a wage and labour policy be adopted that is consistent throughout Italy.'²⁶ However, the Taranto dock wages strike over wage discrepancies in March 1944 demonstrates that at this stage a uniform policy had not been implemented, resulting in tension between the Allied employers and their civilian employees. It could be suggested that problems at a local administrative level were to blame for the imbalance. The naval workers of Molfetta used their employment by the Allies to earn concessions in October 1944. Approximately 120 workers, of which half were

²² Morgan, *The Fall of Mussolini*, 137-138.

²³ Ministero della Guerra report, 14 January 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 2, F.18, ACS.

²⁴ Carabinieri Report, 15 March 1944, Prefect of Taranto reports on the strike, 16 and 19 March 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 9, F.657, ACS.

²⁵ Cipher Message to 15th Army group, 4 November 1943, WO204/7706, TNA.

²⁶ Memo on Labour Wages, CAO 15th Army group, 28 October 1943, WO204/7706, TNA.

deemed 'specialised' of the *Fratelli Tattoli* Company abandoned work on 18 October. The following day a meeting between the representative of the workers and an Allied official took place. The outcome of the meeting was that all men, but six returned to work the next day. The workers had been promised an increase in salary and new work uniforms.²⁷

The strikes carried out by the Taranto dockworkers in 1944 are evidence of the success of peaceful strikes and negotiations, with an agreeable outcome for both parties. It is also apparent that in terms of industrial disputes the Allies were more profoundly involved than with issues such as lack of food or land. It could be argued that a reason for the Allies' involvement in industrial or employment disputes stemmed from the fear of the rise of Left-wing parties, and particularly the Communists. Workers were seen as the traditional targets and supporters of Communism, so by intervening in labour disputes the Allies could prevent dissatisfaction spilling into support the Communist party, and keep a check on its activities. The Allies controlled major industry and in particular the docks, which were a vital means of getting goods and personnel in and out of Italy. It was in the Allied authorities' greatest interests to reach a settlement with the workers, as strikes caused delays in an essential industry.

It appears that the effectiveness of strikes against the Italian and Allied authorities depended greatly on local conditions. In particular, the occupation of the strikers contributed to the success of the walkout, with jobs considered more essential, more probable to be successful. The butchers of Altamura and the Taranto dockworkers held important positions in the running of the occupation. Butchers could act as peacekeepers in terms of food supply. The

²⁷Carabinieri report, 1 November 1944, Busta 231, F.231, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari. The documentation does not provide any reason why the six men did not return to work. One can speculate that they were not satisfied with the terms of the agreement.

Taranto and the Molfetta dock employees were directly connected to the Allied war effort, which was designated more important than anything else in the occupation.

Agricultural Disturbances

The 1944 UNRRA report into conditions in liberated Italy described the state of agriculture as critical. There was a complete lack of fertilizer, a loss of cultivated land through flooding, a scarcity of draft animals, destruction caused by military operations and crops devastated by the retreating Germans.²⁸ However, for Italian civilians the state of the agrarian sector had been an issue of concern and discontent even before the conflict. Guido Crainz notes how disillusionment with the agricultural system and the clamour for reform was not solely caused by the war. Peasants had urged for change since the end of the First World War. However, the Second World War brought forth new decisive elements in the shaking up of the mental horizon that had so far persisted.²⁹ The war brought about a sense that change was possible, with the entry of the Left into national politics and a desire to sweep away the hierarchies of the past.

‘Too much of the best land was in too few hands and too many had no land at all’:³⁰ this comment by Ginsborg accurately describes the agricultural system in Italy. In 1936 59% of the population of the Mezzogiorno worked the land. Employment issues of an archaic agrarian sector affected a significant proportion of the working population. The *latifondo* system, characterised by large estates and landless peasants, meant that peasants were not secured on one piece of land, but rented different strips of land, habitually on a yearly basis and frequently from more than one *latifondo*. In the Mezzogiorno the agricultural contracts

²⁸UNRRA Observer’s Report, no date but 1944, WO32/11163, TNA.

²⁹Guido Crainz, *L’ombra della Guerra: Il 1945, L’Italia* (Rome: Donzelli, 2007), 128-129.

³⁰ Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 122.

agreed between landlord and peasants were the ‘worst in all Italy.’ Contracts were practically always on an ‘individual level’, often unwritten and bitterly contested and varied greatly between regions.³¹ Despite the rural demagoguery of Fascism, agriculture was never a priority for Mussolini, who instead dedicated energy and support to industry and finance. The Italian countryside at this time was subject to increasing overpopulation, an issue since the nineteenth century, but was further exacerbated during this period by mechanization, particularly in the Po Valley.³²

The agricultural sector in Puglia was divided into two zones. The coastal areas were dominated by the cultivation of crops such as grapes and olives farmed by small peasant cultivators. The interior of Puglia and in particular the *Tavoliere* plain was the home of the *latifondia*, the great estates. Unlike other regions of the Mezzogiorno, Puglia depended massively on the employment of casual day labourers.³³ These casual labourers did not live on the estates where they worked, but in large agricultural towns, which had expanded at breakneck speed in the late nineteenth century. Consequently, nowhere else was the agricultural workforce so homogeneous. Snowden has claimed that from the turn of the nineteenth century until the advent of Fascism, Puglia was the only region to produce a powerful and organised peasant movement.³⁴ In fact, peasant consciousness and the willingness to protest was found throughout the peninsula. The large-scale organisation and wave of peasant protests that affected the Po Valley from the late nineteenth century cannot be disregarded. The weeders (*mondine*) began to demand their own terms of work and developed a social consciousness with a particular concern for health. Gentili Zappi argues

³¹ Ginsborg, ‘The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question’, 85-86.

³² Zamagni, *The Economic History of Italy*, 262-264.

³³ For a discussion of the decline of the *latifondia* system and local power structures in the Mezzogiorno during the Liberal period see Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, (eds), *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997).

³⁴ Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates*, 1-42.

that the waves of strikes, petitions and marches that pervaded the years from unification to the First World War appeared to have no apparent specific goal, political or religious, but what guided these protests was an inherent sense of right and wrong.³⁵ In the Po Valley, strikes were a continual feature of life. For example, in 1904 there were 208 strikes; this number peaked in 1907 with 377, but still in 1912 176 strikes took place.³⁶ Emilio Sereni stated that agricultural workers had fought to have a say in the progress of their own farming.³⁷ In fact, Zappi Gentili argues that a peculiarity of Italian history is that the mobilization of agricultural workers occurred before that of industrial workers. For instance, in 1906 there were 221,913 organised farm workers, but no figures for industrial workers. In 1910 the figures were 390,851 for agriculture and 426,183 for industry respectively. However, by 1914 agriculture was once again producing higher numbers of organised workers (488,756 for agriculture and 473,292 for industry).³⁸

Socialists and Revolutionary Syndicalists found overwhelming support in Puglia and were influential in leading the push for reform. Waves of strikes and protests began in 1906 and culminated in the 'Red Biennial' (Biennio Rosso) of 1919-1921.³⁹ The 'Red Biennial' swept through the country as a wave of popular protest and desire for change. In terms of agriculture, Roberto Bianchi described these two years as a massive burst of peasants and ex-combatants into the public scene, with the participation of whole villages and communities and the mobilisation for control of land and resources.⁴⁰ The phenomenon was evident in all agricultural parts of the country from the Po Valley to Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio, but it was above all most apparent in the south. Bianchi argues that in Puglia, Calabria, and the province

³⁵Elda Gentili Zappi, *If Eight Hours Seem Too Few: Mobilization of Women Workers in the Italian Rice Fields* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 69.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 187.

³⁷Emilio Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1996), 439.

³⁸Zappi Gentili, *If Eight Hours Seem Too Few*, 233.

³⁹Snowden, *Violence and the Great Estates*, chapters 1, 5 and 6.

⁴⁰Roberto Bianchi, *Pace, pane, terra. Il 1919 in Italia* (Rome: Odradek, 2007), 19.

of Cosenza in particular, the uprisings took on a more acutely impetuous nature than those in the centre-north.⁴¹

Thus, Puglia had a tradition of peasant protest that was revived during the Second World War. Land occupations and threats to the landowners were again used as a means of expressing negative opinions concerning the state of employment in the agrarian sector. Between July 1943 and October 1944 a wave of peasant agitation occurred in the whole of the south, followed by an attempt by the Communist Minister of Agriculture Fausto Gullo to reform the sector.⁴² Gullo's first legislation of 26 July 1944 divided the price of grain into two values. It consisted of a base price and a production bonus that would go directly to the peasant, meaning that peasants who rented land and paid a fixed quota (grain or cash) to the landlord would get a fairer deal. In October 1944 he issued a decree that allowed all uncultivated land to be occupied and farmed for four years initially, provided that the peasants formed themselves into co-operatives. Gullo also revised southern sharecropping contracts and forbade the use of intermediaries between landlord and peasant.

Gullo was aided by the secretary of the CGIL, Giuseppe Di Vittorio, who focused his attention on the great estates of Puglia, his native region.⁴³ Di Vittorio had been a day labourer himself and played a key role in revolutionary syndicalism both before and after the First World War. He was also responsible for the last stand against the Fascist advance in Bari in August 1922, before fleeing into exile to France. Di Vittorio and Gullo expounded respect for the initiatives of the peasant fight and, Rossi-Doria argues, did not attempt to try

⁴¹Ibid., 88. See Bianchi's book for many examples of peasant protest during 1919.

⁴²Ginsborg, 'The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question in Southern Italy', 88.

⁴³For Di Vittorio's thoughts on the CGIL and the Pact of Rome see Luciano Lama, *La CGIL di Di Vittorio, 1944-1957: scritti e interventi di Giuseppe Di Vittorio commentati da Luciano Lama; a cura di Fabrizio D'Agostini* (Bari: De Donato, 1977).

to indoctrinate the peasants.⁴⁴ Di Vittorio attempted to implement two policies, the *imponibile di manodopera* and the system of *collocamento*. Through the *imponibile*, landowners were obliged to employ a certain number of workers dependent on the size of their estate. The *collocamento* was used to regulate the way in which workers were hired.⁴⁵ The peasants, accustomed to protesting for their rights, now had legal and state backing.

During the Allied occupation of Puglia, peasant discontent was common. A singular report by a CIC special agent into Puglia's agricultural sector in July 1944 illuminated the reasons why peasants decided to take action through the period. Firstly, he stated that many peasants had no land and relied on seasonal work: moreover, Puglia had a larger proportion of landless agricultural labourers than any other Italian region. The severe drought that year had caused the masses of agricultural farmworkers to be 'without employment, without food and without money.' The cinemas had been closed for weeks as no one had any disposable cash to pay to go. This situation was not new; it was typical of what had occurred in previous years of poor harvests. Significantly, the agent argued that another factor that had 'inflamed' the peasantry was the non-application of the Gullo decrees. He pointed out that:

Given the traditional anarchist orientation of the region, the tendency is for the landless peasantry to resort to action against the local authorities rather than wait for the orderly process of law involved in making formal protests through the higher authorities.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Anna Rossi-Doria, *Il ministro e i contadini: decreti Gullo e lotte nel mezzogiorno 1944-1949* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1983), 14.

⁴⁵Ginsborg, 'The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question', 91-93.

⁴⁶CIC Report, 12 July 1945, 'Further Information on Disturbances in Puglia', WO204/12623, TNA.

The outmoded system, drought and non-application of the new legislation due to the landowners' resistance encouraged civilians to continue with tradition and undertake land occupations and public rallies. For example, in November 1944 in Casalnuovo Monterotano, a town in the Dauni Mountains of northern Puglia, 800 people including ex-servicemen, communists and the local mayor marched and occupied 780 hectares of cultivated land. Authorities were given two days to persuade the crowd to disperse before coercive measures would be used.⁴⁷ However, cultivated land was not the sole target of land invasions; old common or demesne land that had been continually removed from southern Italian peasants became a target of the peasant movement. In Casalnuovo Monterotano, the farmhands' anger centred on the old common land known as Vellevona, which was at the time owned by the Ferrucci brothers. The trouble began in November 1945 when approximately 500 men and women armed with sticks occupied the land; military intervention was needed to disperse the protesters. Subsequently, in July 1946 the local head of the Communist section Raffaele Agostinelli, the *Camera del Lavoro* and local mayor Michele Pollice organised at a meeting a future occupation of the land from 20-28 July. On 31st October 1946 at 2pm, an organised invasion of Vellevona estate took place. Although unsuccessful, the populace was not deterred. Another meeting took place on 22 November led by the ex-mayor Pollice, to organise an occupation of Vellevona for the day of the religious festival of 8 December 1946.⁴⁸ These initiatives are evidence of the commitment of Pugliese peasants to regain their rights of common land. It could be said that it was additionally crucial given the severe food shortages caused by the war.

⁴⁷Copy of a Letter from CRRR Bari, 4 November 1945, ACC MICROFILMS, AC (1000) - Civil Disturbances Bari area (109)\710, ACS.

⁴⁸See documents- Questura di Foggia, 9 November 1945, Carabinieri report, Foggia, 17 July 1946, Questura report, Casalnuovo Monterotano 5 November 1946 and Carabinieri report, Lucera, 25 November 1945, Busta 12, F.3, Prefettura di Foggia, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Foggia.

Occasionally, a particular landowner and his estate could be targeted, as in the case of the Melodia's estate in Laterza, a town located in the province of Taranto near the border with Basilicata. On 7 August 1945 almost 1,000 people went to the Municipio to ask and obtain from the Prefect a statement concerning unemployment and employment at the Melodia's estate. The crowd listened calmly to him, despite being in large numbers and then dispersed. However, the following day, 5,000 people marched to the estate and gave the farmer 10 days to leave the farm. This led to 300 people to take possession of the fields without incident. The people returned to their homes at 5pm, after they were given promises of a fair settlement from the Prefect.⁴⁹

Williams reasons that most of the land occupations were 'certainly' the work of the PCI and other left wing parties. She suggests that they saw the Allied occupation as an opportunity to complete land reform.⁵⁰ Ginsborg's description of a typical land occupation shows that it usually began with planning the event on a Sunday evening at the local PCI headquarters.⁵¹ Undoubtedly, the political left was centrally involved in the clamour for land reform. The PCI at a national level was endeavoring to redress peasant complaints through Gullo's and Di Vittorio's decrees. Their agrarian strategy was part of their wider policy to establish themselves in the south as the leading party of the peasantry.⁵² The sole attempt by Gullo to balance class relations in the south through reform did help the PCI succeed in linking the southern peasantry with the party.⁵³ At a local level communists and socialist were active in appealing to the authorities and organising protests and land occupations. It can be suggested that there was disparity between intentions of local level communists and those in the Parri government (21 June 1945-8 December 1945). The report into disturbances in Puglia

⁴⁹Public Order Note, 7 August 1945, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone, Liaison Officer (119)\217-Taranto, ACS.

⁵⁰Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 218 and 254.

⁵¹Ginsborg, 'The Communist Party and the Agrarian Question', 94.

⁵² Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party* (London: Frances Pinter, 1981), 45-59.

⁵³Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 60-62.

describes how the Parri government had sent Scoccimaro, one of the PCI leaders in the south of Italy (including Puglia), to speak to the peasants and warn them that if disorder continued the party would abandon them. He promised steps would be taken to address the economic situation.⁵⁴ However, in the opinion of the peasants of Puglia, the new measures had been ignored locally, so it was improbable that any new measures would be adhered to. For that reason, active remonstrance could prove more effective.

Occupations of landowners' estates were not the only method employed by peasants to force land reform. The local labour office held a central role in the disturbances, disputes and negotiations between the landlords and their workers. For example, a meeting took place between the landowners and farmworkers at the labour office in the village of San Michele in Bari on 10 September 1945. The purpose of the meeting was to reach an agreement on the amount of wages to be paid and the number of workers to be employed. The disgruntled landowners stated that it was impossible for them to abide by the new wages set by the labour office at 500 lire per day. The labour office acted as representative for the farmworkers and threatened a general strike if the landowners did not adhere to the new wage scale. It was necessary to inform the Prefect and provide reinforcements of the *carabinieri* to maintain public order.⁵⁵ In Gravina in Puglia, in the Alta Murgia National Park, the local labour office held a meeting on 27 August 1945 to determine the possibility of hiring some 1,400 unoccupied civilians and repatriated ex-soldiers. The landholders contended that it was impossible for them to continue employing workers assigned to them by the labour office. They argued that during June, July and August they had employed new personnel as a gesture of co-operation in an attempt to help disadvantaged families; however, the drought had brought activity to a standstill and they vehemently refused to employ people they had no use

⁵⁴CIC Report, 'Further Information on Disturbances in Puglia' WO204/12623, TNA.

⁵⁵CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

for. The labour office was insistent that landlords and shopkeepers would have to absorb the jobless, as they alone were the only group who could cope with unemployment problems. Neither that meeting, nor a following one on 2 September, could reach a solution.⁵⁶ Agricultural labourers benefitted from the use the labour office as their spokesman, as they could present a united front. Additionally, landowners had to deal with an administrative body with some authority as opposed to individual peasants.

The local labour office acted as intermediary and gave peasants an official platform to confront the landlords and the *latifondi* system. This office was not part of a political party or related to the *Federterra*, the rural trade union of the CGIL.⁵⁷ Through the office, civilians could present a united front, and as a collective force they could make the landlords concede to new and fairer procedures of work. The labour office helped negotiate wages for those in work, but they could also act as a voice for the unemployed in the commune. For example, a meeting took place in Bari attended by the Prefect, representatives of the *Camera del Lavoro* and *Associazioni provinciali degli Agricoltori* (Agricultural landowners' association) on 16 September 1945. The outcome of the aforementioned meeting was that the provincial tariff for agriculture workers would increase by 30% from 28 September, which would rise to 35% in the future, if local conditions allowed.⁵⁸ In Gravina, the office and the local community distrusted the landowners' claims that they could not employ more people, since they had employed individuals through the summer despite the drought. The public believed that it was the burden of local businesses to relieve unemployment figures, therefore improving the lives of many families in the commune. For their part, the landowners were rigid in their objection not only Gullo's decrees, but also to the labour office's endeavors to impose wage

⁵⁶CIC, Report for 20 August- 20September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁵⁷ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 108.

⁵⁸Regional labour office for Puglia report, 20 September 1946, Busta 23, F.5/4/5, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

scales and the employment of more workers. Under the pre-war system, the great estates of Puglia had more freedom to pay whatever wages they wanted and employ as many peasants they desired.

The absence of the Allies cannot be ignored. With regards to peasant activities, the labour office and the Italian authority's reform, the Allies fulfilled the role of a passive observer. The higher Allied authorities were resolute that ground level AMG and ACC should avoid every opportunity to become involved in agriculture problems, unless it had a direct impact on Allied activities.

The peasants of Puglia adopted varied methods during the Allied occupation to improve the situation surrounding employment in the agrarian sector. The Communist agriculture minister and the labour office assisted the people of the region. The opposition to the PCI, in particular the DC and Liberals later blocked a significant number of the laws introduced by Gullo and Di Vittorio.⁵⁹ At a local level measures were not implemented or encountered fierce opposition from the landowners. The Allied authorities kept their distance, but still took an interest in what occurred in the countryside of Puglia, which is evident in the detailed reports made by the CIC. The Allies and the CIC were more concerned about the role of political parties, rather than agricultural reforms and demonstrations. In particular, the Allies were concerned about the growing support for the Left in Italy.

Following the meeting of Churchill and Stalin at the Kremlin in October 1944, Italy was ascribed firmly to the western sphere of influence. Stalin had been anxious to address the balance of power of the two countries in the Balkans. Hence, a cause for concern of the

⁵⁹Ibid., 95.

Allied authorities was the growth of political parties and especially the PCI during the occupation. The remainder of this chapter will assess the local political situation in Puglia by examining the nature of political protest in Puglia during the occupation.

Political rivalry in Puglia

Prior to Fascism and the war the PCI did not have strong roots in the south or the net of organisation that was present in the north. However, upon the initiation of the PCI's programme to reach the workers and peasants of the south, Spriano argues that Puglia was the region that was most ready for the reconstitution of the PCI. During the 1920s, Puglia was made up of 'red islands': isolated groups of communists (led in one case by Di Vittorio); in particular the agricultural day labourers of the Murge region remained Left wing long into the Fascist period.⁶⁰ In fact, Tarantino argues that the maintenance of a network of clandestine contacts was crucial for the rapid redevelopment of the PCI in Puglia.⁶¹

The Allies were not against Italian participation in politics, but in the first instance, their main concern was public order. For example, a document from AFHQ to the head CAO of Regions one and two stated that anyone could participate in political activities (subject to Allied scrutiny and interference) other than the Fascists, so long as this did not lead to rioting and disorder.⁶² However, the Allies did have concerns over specific political groups. The Americans were greatly concerned with the possibility of growing support for the communists and their role in civil disturbance. The British authorities too devoted intelligence personnel to watch and report on communist activity. A letter from the Major General of the 54 area (Bari) sent out to a number of departments and to the RAF stated that:

⁶⁰ Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, 144-148.

⁶¹ Tarantino, *Dal 'regno' alle 'repubbliche' del Sud*, 62.

⁶² AFHQ to CAOs of Regions 1 and 2, 18/01/1944 in Leuzzi, Cioffi, *Alleati, monarchia, partiti nel regno del Sud*.

Disturbances amongst the Italian civilian population, invariably instigated by communists, are becoming more frequent. The troublemakers are taking full advantage of the unstable political situation in Italy.⁶³

There is no evidence in the letter to substantiate the Major's claims; he surmised that the communists simply must be behind the unrest. He failed to consider the economic hardships faced by civilians. The use of the term 'troublemakers' reflects the Allied negative perception of communists, which influenced their judgment concerning matters that involved communists or civilians associated with them. However, the Major was not alone in his opinion of communists as instigators of trouble. CIC special agent Henry B. Ingargiola commented in a report on disturbances in the province of Matera in July/August 1945 that 'the local party leaders (especially communist) [...] are taking advantage of the current situation and agitating the rabble to commit violence in an attempt to gain power.'⁶⁴

Matera, a city in the region of Basilicata close to the border with Puglia, was often included in reports and letters that were investigating events in Puglia. Furthermore, the Major of the 54 Area stated that the disturbances were an entirely Italian problem and British troops were on no account to interfere. He was resolute that every effort to avoid any involvement must be made, including confining troops to barracks. Only if British interests were directly threatened, would the use of arms be permitted to protect life and property.⁶⁵ This is a clear indication that at this late stage in the occupation, the wish to be separated from Italian issues of public order was greatly sought after. From this document it appears that the Allies were

⁶³Letter from Major of 54 Area, 3 July 1945, ACC MICROFILMS, Bari Zone, Liaison Officer (119)\214-Bari, ACS.

⁶⁴CIC Report, 'Disturbances in Matera', 4 August 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁶⁵Letter from Major of 54 Area, 3 July 1945, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone, Liaison Officer (119)\214-Bari, ACS.

only interested in helping the Italian authorities and the civilians if they could gain some benefits, or in cases when there was a threat to the Allied cause.

In a sense, apprehension over political parties involved in protests was justifiable. Parties such as the PCI were repeatedly involved in organising protests, and political leaders were acting as speakers on behalf of civilians. For instance, in Santaremo in Colle, located near Altamura and Gioia del Colle, on 26 August 1945, the local communist leader Francesco Labrille led 700 people to the Municipio to demand work for the unemployed and a wage increase for those in work. They were joined by a crowd of farmers, who had gathered to demand an increase to the prices of farm products. The crowd was dispersed after local authorities made promises to discuss the issues with the prefect.⁶⁶ Another example occurred in Gravina on 17 February 1944, when at 4.30pm local communists organised a demonstration of 1,000 people to march to the local authority building to complain over the sufferings of the populace.⁶⁷ In Castellaneta, 40km from Taranto, on 12 March 1944 a communist protest took place in the piazza and attracted approximately 200 persons. The communists had achieved prior authority from the military. In Taranto on 23 April 1944 sailors led a procession through the streets waving a red flag.⁶⁸ Local authorities were warned by Rome of the possibility of a 'Red September' in 1945. Officers were told that communists might attempt to occupy all public offices on 15 September. This was given serious consideration at both national and local level, but the information was later regarded as unreliable.⁶⁹ The rumour of a 'Red September' indicates that both Allied and Italian authorities viewed the activities of some communists as a threat. ⁷⁰ In Carbonara near Bari

⁶⁶CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁶⁷Carabinieri Report, 'Ordine Pubblico in Gravina di Puglia', 18 February 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 5, F.223, ACS.

⁶⁸ Carabinieri Report, 25 April 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 9, F.650, ACS.

⁶⁹CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁷⁰Prefect's Report, 18 March 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 4, F.156, ACS.

on 11 December 1946, local PCI representatives led a protest of approximately 400 persons over the lack of pasta and general foodstuffs.⁷¹

From the perspective of an Italian civilian, appealing to the communist party to help redress civilian sufferings made sense. The communist party had the means to organise large demonstrations and its leaders were often well known to the Italian and Allied authorities. Furthermore, after the fall of the Fascist regime, civilians were now once again able to publically declare their political opinions and ideas for the future of Italy. Consequently, organised politics attracted civilians who had been long unable to make their voices heard. Demonstrations, marches and procession were common throughout Puglia during the occupation. Civilians joined parties to express their political views during protests, but parties could also use organic protests without any political motivation to expose their cause by joining in or waving a red flag.

People joined the various parties that had been banned during the Fascist regime or that had arisen during the occupation, for example *L'Uomo Qualunque* (the average man). A 'handmade' political organisation that originated in Rome, led by Guglielmo Giannini, it expounded anti-communist views and advocated respect of state laws and individual rights (particularly economic rights), and arrived in Puglia in the summer of 1945.⁷² *Qualunquismo* (Whatever-ness) reflected the disillusionment amongst some Italians over the anti-Fascist coalition government and politics in general. Giannini stated that his movement was not on behalf of any party and that he was against professional politicians.⁷³ Sarubbi has argued that Gianinni saw his party as one in which realistic people were animated to serve the country in

⁷¹ Questura di Bari, 12 December 1946, Busta 206, F.1, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

⁷² Andrea Sarubbi, *La Lega qualunque: dal populismo di Giannini a quello di Bossi* (Rome: Armando, 1995), 88.

⁷³ Sandro Setta, *L'Uomo qualunque, 1944-1948* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1995), 4-7.

everyway and in whatever means possible.⁷⁴ Sandro Setta states that the movement attracted the generally discontented, the unemployed ex-servicemen, and the desperate people of Puglia, Sicily and Campania living in extreme conditions.⁷⁵ The results for the Constituent Assembly in 1946 indicated that the *Qualunquismo* movement was mostly a southern and Sardinian phenomenon. The party obtained 9.7% of the vote in the South, 12.4% in Sardinia, 5.3% in the Centre and only 2.3% in the north.⁷⁶

In the southern half of the peninsula between June-July 1945 a series of clashes and violent incidents occurred. The epicentre of this was Puglia and in particular Andria in the north east of the region and the Minervino Murge national park. In these episodes Setta argues that many involved were not proletarian militants, but rather delinquents camouflaged in politics to exercise personal vendettas.⁷⁷ Therefore, Setta concludes that the structure of *qualunquismo* locally involved armed and organised bands or squads against leftists and that in general the structure of the party was weak.⁷⁸ During September 1945 the Bari office claimed that it had 10,000 members, composed of former members of other parties and those who had adopted a 'lingering' interest toward politics. These people had been awaiting the arrival of an independent party that could 'offer a true sense of security.' Local offices and the official newspaper of the party, habitually 'blasted' the PCI for its 'violent, aggressive and barbarous acts.'⁷⁹ The administrative elections of November 1946 reveal the popularity of *L'Uomo Qualunque* in Puglia. For example, in Bari the movement obtained 46% of the vote, whilst the Left coalition (made up of PSI and PCI) gained 41.4%. In Foggia *L'Uomo*

⁷⁴ Sarubbi, *La Lega qualunque*, 193.

⁷⁵ Setta, *L'Uomo qualunque*, 189

⁷⁶ Sarubbi, *La Lega qualunque*, 180.

⁷⁷ Setta, *L'Uomo qualunque*, 53-54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁹ CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

Qualunque achieved 34.6%, in Lecce 47.1% and in Taranto 25.2%.⁸⁰ These figures indicate the widespread popularity of the party and its significance to the region during the occupation. Moreover, they reveal the almost equal split of the population, in particular in Bari, between the *Qualunquismo* movement and the two Left-wing parties - which can help explaining the high rate of political violence in the region. The quick rise in membership of *L'Uomo Qualunque* also demonstrates the influence that a party could acquire in a short time period, and it is indicative of the aspiration of ordinary Italians to be involved in politics and have a say in the future of their country.

The first provincial conference of *L'Uomo Qualunque* was held in Bari on 3 February 1946, and caused some concern for national authorities, since they worried over how communists would behave during the meeting, and feared a second march on Rome when those attending left the province. Consequently, *L'Uomo Qualunque* supporters were not permitted to leave the region in one large group and had to take many separate trains.⁸¹ The Italian government was right to be wary of communist behaviour during the Bari conference. Indeed, three separate incidents occurred involving communist opposition to *qualunquismo*. Firstly, a group of 20-armed communists from Bitonto followed group members of *L'Uomo Qualunque*, attacking and injuring some of them. Secondly, a clash occurred between students and some communists, and thirdly, 300 communists initiated public disorder at the station, triggering the intervention of local security forces.⁸² Anti-*L'Uomo Qualunque* sentiments were displayed in the left-wing newspaper *La Voce*, with the headline: '*Il congresso dell'Uomo Qualunque provoca l'indignazione del popolo pugliese*' (The *L'Uomo Qualunque* conference provokes indignation amongst the Puglian people). The author of the

⁸⁰Setta, *L'Uomo qualunque*, 184-188. See also Sarubbi, *La Lega qualunque*.

⁸¹Ministero dell'Interno to Director General of Pubblica Sicurezza, 12 February 1946, Busta 233, F.5/4/2, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

⁸²Questura di Bari, 4 February 1946, Busta 233, F.5/4/2, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

piece went on to describe Gianinini as ‘*Il Duce del qualunquismo*.’⁸³ A significant comparison of Gianinni to Mussolini reveals how Left-wing Italians viewed the movement as neo-Fascist. At a local *L’Uomo Qualunque* meeting in Brindisi on 1 February the communist militant Cosimo Caraffa (described in *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* as not being in full control of his mental faculties) shouted ‘*Siete tutti fascisti*’ (You are all fascists).⁸⁴

Conversely, opposition to *L’Uomo Qualunque* was not always peaceful, as violent clashes often occurred. However, this trend can be applied to political parties and groups in general. Not only did political parties direct their anger and frustration at the Italian or Allied authorities, but also hostility frequently targeted other parties. Williams observes that in Sicily and other regions of the Mezzogiorno clashes between groups could turn violent.⁸⁵ Puglia was no exception to this rule. For example, during the night of 9 September several hand grenades were thrown at the door of the HQ of *L’Uomo Qualunque* in Martina Franca, a town in the province of Taranto, and the second most populated city of the province. Those responsible were not identified, but local law enforcement ‘strongly believed’ that communist elements were involved. The incident resulted in no casualties, but is expressive of the antagonistic feelings between Italians over political reasons. As seen earlier in the chapter, the PCI and *L’Uomo Qualunque* were bitter political rivals in Puglia, and clashes between the two were frequent. On 17 July 1946 an incident occurred in Foggia between members of *L’Uomo Qualunque* from San Severo and PCI supporters, which resulted in 12 people being wounded, two of whom seriously.⁸⁶ Two days previously in Andria, the *L’Uomo Qualunque* office was forced to close by 100 members of the communist party. *L’Uomo Qualunque* was

⁸³ *La Voce*, 5 February 1946, Busta 233, F.5/4/2, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

⁸⁴ *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 4 February 1946. The head of *L’Uomo Qualunque* in Corato sent a letter of complaint to the local Mayor, Prefect and Public Security. He complained that his members were often intimidated and that communist propaganda consistently repeated the idea that the party was a replication of the history of Fascism. Busta 233, F.5/4/2, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

⁸⁵ Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy’, 218.

⁸⁶ ‘Gravi incidenti tra comunisti e qualunquisti a San Severo’, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 18 July 1946.

critical of the PCI at both a national and local level; therefore, local communists in Puglia decided to attempt to prevent the new party from disseminating negative opinions.⁸⁷

These incidents are indicative of the wide range of political opinions in Puglia during the occupation and of the divided nature of local politics. Political parties were not exclusively representatives and mediators of the local population. Party/political groups often organised events with a specific intention of a desired outcome and often were not passive in achieving their aims, choosing direct action. For example, on 16 January 1944 in Mesagne, an olive and grape growing town near Brindisi, 200 people, the majority of whom were communists, protested over local living conditions and invaded the Municipio shouting against the Prefect. The communists then returned to the '*circolo di lettura*', the local reading group, but a small group successfully invaded the home of an ex-counselor, though without attacking him physically. The larger group was contained and policed by the local *carabinieri*. An unidentified person threw a hand grenade, which exploded without causing any injuries. The *carabinieri* were able to arrest those responsible.⁸⁸ The Mesagne incident shows the extreme actions that members of the local communist party were prepared to utilize in order to succeed, such as the use of hand grenades and invasion of personal property. The intrusion into government buildings served a political purpose, differently from food riots, which were in most cases provoked by desperation and anger. Not all those involved were affiliated communists, therefore demonstrations of this description attracted those who did not want to be officially engaged in politics, but identified with the motivations for protests.

On 31 March in Toritto, an agricultural town in the province of Bari, 100 citizens, the majority of whom were communists, left the local PCI headquarters to complain over the

⁸⁷CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁸⁸ Two Carabinieri reports, 17 and 18 January 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 6, F.357, ACS.

arranged price of peas at 30L per kilo. The group confronted an employee at the rationing office and attempted to make their way to the prefecture building to bring down the Prefect and replace the head of the rationing office.⁸⁹ This is a typical example of the PCI leading the people on a particular issue that was causing consternation amongst the local populace. In addition, in Gallipoli, by the Ionian Sea on the west coast of the Salentine Peninsula, a group of 500 people gathered on 11 June 1944 to mark the liberation of Rome that had occurred on 4 June. The Commissioner of Public Security reported that the event was organised by several parties, whom had obtained consent from AMG. The affair was attended by a substantial part of the population.⁹⁰ The crowd marched to the monument of the fallen soldier and to AMG headquarters. There were no incidents. Two months later, in Francavilla Fontone the communists held a rally against the King in front of the party headquarters, supported by members of the PSI, CLN and Action Party. The King was held responsible for the current situation of the nation; however, one man was opposed to the condemnation of the monarch and shouted in his favour.⁹¹ In Santaremo in Colle on 20 August 1945 two local communists, Luca Di Mita and Severio di Muro presented themselves at the headquarters of the urban police and demanded the picture frame of the portrait of the King. They were told that it had already been destroyed, and an argument ensued.⁹² ‘A wave of revulsion’ had swept Italy when Badoglio and the King had fled Rome for Brindisi and to many Italians this cemented a complete distrust of the monarchy.⁹³ The PCI adopted a negative stance on the Italian King Vittorio Emanuele III: the party blamed him for his support to Mussolini’s Fascist state, and vehemently believed that the only way to secure a new democratic start for

⁸⁹Prefect of Bari Report, 11 April 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 9, F.668, ACS.

⁹⁰Note from the Commissioner of Public Security, 6 April 1944, Busta 7, F1.14, Commissariato di Pubblica Sicurezza di Manfredonia, Archivio di Stato di Foggia.

⁹¹Carabiniere report from Gallipoli, 12 June 1944, F.265 and Carabiniere report from Francavilla Fontone, 12 March 1944, F. 257, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta.5, ACS.

⁹²CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

⁹³Joan Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 149.

Italy was to remove a monarchy tainted with Fascism. In general terms it was the northern half of the peninsula that shared this aversion to the continuation of the monarchical state and this is reflected in the referendum results on the monarchy question in 1946. The vote for a Republic won by 54%, but victory was not replicated in the South, Puglia included. 67.3% of the Pugliesi voted in favour of the monarchy, hence dissent against the King may have been at times vocal in Puglia, but it formed the opinion of a minority.⁹⁴

Violent acts did not only occur between PCI supporters and those of *L'Uomo Qualunque*; in Trani (a seaport of Puglia, on the Adriatic Sea, in the province of Barletta-Andria-Trani) a clash between PCI followers and Italian soldiers took place in May 1945. A group of people, consisting of mainly workers, communists and socialists, listened to a public speech by M. Onofrio, a communist speaker, from the balcony of the Hotel Italia. Some soldiers arrived at the scene and began to murmur the address of the speaker through the crowd. Some of the communist listeners present took umbrage at this and a brawl broke out. Later that evening during a meeting at the *Camera del Lavoro*, a hand grenade was thrown, injuring seven people.⁹⁵ This example is evidence of the undercurrent of violence that was present at this time.

The above examples are revealing of the variety of issues that political parties would campaign for or demonstrate against, and reveal the complex political situation during this period. The diverse range of political issues such as abolition of the monarchy and food prices demonstrates a politically active region involved in both local and national issues. It seems that for many citizens political parties - and the PCI in particular - acted as ideal

⁹⁴ Robert Leonardi and Douglas A. Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy: the Politics of Dominance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 49.

⁹⁵ 'Incidenti a Trani- sette feriti', *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 11 May 1945.

facilitators and negotiators in a similar way that the labour office acted for agricultural workers.

The stereotypical idea of the Italian partisans during the Second World War is of brave men and women clandestinely fighting to free the Italian nation from Fascism and German occupation, holding communist views. John Foot argues that the meaning of the Resistance in terms of public memory has changed in line with political development.⁹⁶ Despite the country moving from the Left to Right of the political sphere with the removal of the Left from government between 1944-1948, the Resistance remained the celebrated version of the war, particularly by the Left. Focardi stated that the period between 8 September 1943 and April 1945 has been considered that of the true war, in which the Italian people by their own volition fought against their hated enemies of Fascism and Germany.⁹⁷ The protagonists of the Resistance in this 'true war' were frequently depicted as communist. However, not all partisans were communist or linked to the PCI (which made some 60% of the partisan brigades at the national level). This was also the case in Puglia. For instance, in Cerignola, 30 Marines of the San Marco regiment joined by local partisans invaded the local communist section. The perpetrators caused some damage and tore down the red flag and cancelled out communist writings on the walls. They replaced them with monarchist slogans. No reaction occurred until the next day. A partisan named Pazzarella was stopped by a group of communists and taken to their headquarters. This provoked the partisans to go to the building and to threaten those inside. The intervention of the *carabinieri* avoided violence and allowed Pazzarella to be freed.⁹⁸ In this case, the local fighters were in direct opposition to the PCI and held a more traditional monarchist view. The marines' involvement shows that the Italian

⁹⁶ John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 149.

⁹⁷ Filippo Focardi, *La guerra della memoria: la Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano* (Bari-Rome: Laterza, 2005), 12-13.

⁹⁸ English Translation of Carabinieri Report Cerignola to ACC Bari, 18 September 1945, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone, Liaison Officer (119)214-Civil Disturbances, Bari, ACS.

men of the armed forces were not removed from politics, but were prepared to demonstrate their political leanings in a physical and aggressive manner.

This theory does not just apply to those who were in active service; veterans could also be involved in clashes over political affairs. On 27 August 1945 approximately 30 armed Italian veterans (some formerly of the San Marco Regiment) stormed and devastated the communist headquarters in Trani. All furniture and pictures were demolished and some records were destroyed. It was believed that the veterans had acted in retaliation against the communist bands that had entered various offices in the town and destroyed pictures of Vittorio Emanuele III. It was necessary for the *carabinieri* and the Garibaldi division to patrol the town in order to prevent further incidents. No direct action was taken by the PCI, but there was evidence that local communists had been hissing at the soldiers of the San Marco Regime, for wearing the monarchist emblem on their hats.⁹⁹ It appears that in several areas of Puglia the issue of the monarchy had become a belligerent subject between political groups. As seen earlier, the monarchy was stained with Fascism and many called for its elimination, whereas others, for example the San Marco marines still fully supported the monarchy. It should be noted that not all demonstrations by veterans were violent. For example, in Manfredonia, a coastal town in the province of Foggia, ex-combatants with prior agreement from the mayor demonstrated at the monument of the fallen soldier.¹⁰⁰ However, it can be argued that this event was an act of commemoration rather than a political demonstration.

The CIC report for the Bari area for August-September 1945 commented that some people had become fed up with the 'violence, vulgarity and stupidity' displayed by the 'communist

⁹⁹CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

¹⁰⁰Letter from the association for those wounded in war to Carabinieri and Director of Public Security, 4/11/44, Busta 7, F1.18, Commissariato di Pubblica Sicurezza di Manfredonia, Archivio di Stato di Foggia.

troublemakers.’ The report suggested that they had made people proclaim themselves to be Fascist. Togliatti had opened the door of government for the PCI with his return to Italy in the spring of 1944 and his *Svolta di Salerno* by removing more radical aims such as social take over and promoting instead reconstruction along democratic lines, forcing the other parties to co-operate.¹⁰¹ Cooke argues that in this sense ‘Togliatti very successfully established the PCI’s democratic credentials. This was not a party of barricades and Molotov cocktails, but one of the ballot box.’¹⁰² Indeed, the communist hierarchy and party leaders had endeavored to prevent violence and to re-establish law and order in the summer of 1945.¹⁰³ In line with Togliatti’s *Svolta di Salerno*, the PCI hierarchy had advocated a policy of co-operation during the war. However, this sense of co-operation was shattered by the referendum on the monarchy on 2 June 1946.¹⁰⁴ The examples given in this chapter demonstrate that if in general political parties adopted a strategy of alliances during the conflict and the immediate postwar era, this was repeatedly not the case at local level in Puglia.

Although the Allies are absent from reports of clashes between political groups, Allied intelligence personnel devoted substantial time to investigating the views and actions of parties. They required the local Italian government to keep them fully informed. Therefore, it may appear that in this sphere of civil life the Allies were not involved, but they took the role of careful watcher.

¹⁰¹ See Di Nolfo, ‘The US and the PCI’, in Serfaty and Grey (eds), *The Italian Communist Party*, 45; Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party*, 8-29.

¹⁰² Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 19.

¹⁰³ CIC, Report for 20 August- 20 September 1945, WO204/12623, TNA.

¹⁰⁴ Focardi, *La guerra della memoria*, 14.

Written Forms of Protest

Not all forms of protest need necessarily be physical. Leaflets, manifestoes, propaganda posters and even graffiti are other means to express frustration and hopes for the future. These were often used in conjunction with rumours, jokes and songs, which Passerini describes in the Fascist period as ‘another fundamental form of verbal expression that was the terrain of endless struggle.’ The habit of adapting popular songs in order to express feelings, particularly about hunger and misery, grew with the Second World War and continued as a form of protest.¹⁰⁵ In Puglia during the Allied occupation forms of written protest were widely used by civilians. In particular, there was an abundance of material and graffiti produced by local Fascists. It would have been impossible for Fascist loyalists to stage public demonstrations, which would have been repressed by both Allied and Italian authorities for two reasons. Firstly, the country had been ‘liberated’ from Fascism and the Fascist hierarchy removed. However, at a local level it is arguable that a full programme of *epurazione* or purging of personnel did not take place. Pavone has argued that it is indeed easy to see more continuity than change in the post-war state reorganisation, also due to a failure in producing legislation against Fascism. For example, in the case of Puglia only Bari, Lecce and Taranto changed Prefects during the so-called 45 days.¹⁰⁶ In the south the Allies were heavily involved in the process of purging the local administrations and adopted a policy of keeping the existing administration and tempering *epurazione*. This process involved using prominent citizens to fill roles, retaining the *carabinieri* and enlisting the church hierarchy.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, Spriano has suggested that the effect of the occupation in the south was to preserve traditional conservative forces, church hierarchy, agrarian relations and the

¹⁰⁵Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 80-83.

¹⁰⁶Claudio Pavone, *Alle origini della Repubblica: Scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello Stato* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1995), 71-72 and 123.

¹⁰⁷Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 36.

bureaucracy of the old state.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, concern over public calm was a chief cause of anxiety, as it was likely that if a Fascist rally took place violence would have broken out. Subsequently, leaflets, posters and graffiti enabled fascists to protest in a clandestine way, often putting up notices at night and anonymously.

In Gromo Apulia unsigned posters were pasted on walls on 15 November 1945 throughout the town. The poster stated:

Viva England, Viva America, the bread at 25 Lire per Kg- Viva L'Italia without the spirit of Italy, Viva Duce, bread at 2 Lire per Kg. Viva America, Viva England, Viva Italy without bread. The war of fighting has ended, now the war of famine begins.

The local *carabinieri* had removed the posters and held the opinion that the person responsible was a 'Fascist of questionable mentality.'¹⁰⁹ The phrase 'questionable mentality' could reflect either the personal opinions of the *carabinieri* or an attempt to distance themselves from the author in the eyes of the Allies. On the night of 18-19 November 1943 in Bari, the phrase '*Viva Il Duce. Viva la Repubblica Fascista*' appeared on a wall. The same slogan was rewritten the following evening, and the subsequent night a new catchphrase appeared, which read 'Viva Il Duce, down with the King, down with the traitor Badoglio, Mussolini will win, Viva Fascist Italy.'¹¹⁰ In the same month in Bari a leaflet was distributed on the anniversary of the UN sanctions of Italy, which attempted to persuade people to hate the Allies. The leaflet requested that civilians not forget the sanctions imposed on their 'just

¹⁰⁸ Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, 143.

¹⁰⁹ Extract from CIC Report Bari Zone, 27 December 1945, WO204/12624, TNA.

¹¹⁰ Prefect of Bari report to MDI, 25 November 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7-2.12, ACS.

aspirations' by England. Moreover, the leaflet praised the German allies and referred to the Anglo-Americans as 'mercenary hordes.'¹¹¹

In Peschici, a town in the national park of Gargano, during the night of 18-19 March 1944 the phrase '*Viva Hitler! Viva Il Duce! Viva La Germania. Credere-Obbedire-Combattere*' (Believe, Obey, Fight) appeared on a wall. The placement of Hitler before Mussolini and Viva Germany before the Fascist slogan suggests that the authors felt their hopes now lay with Germany. The phrase also shows how for some civilians Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were inexorably linked. This idea of loyalty to Germany was not unique to Peschici. In Goia del Colle, on 23 March 1944 40 copies of a Fascist manifesto named 'Honour and Justice' appeared in the town. The manifesto praised Mussolini's achievements and cursed the 'English' and those who associated with them. Significantly, the manifesto stated that Mussolini and Hitler would bring justice.¹¹² It is important to note that the exaltation of death, sacrifice of life for the nation, honour and loyalty to the Nazi allies was also crucial in the RSI propaganda and narrative. This adulation of their ally was not reflected by the Germans, who were never ambiguous about their belief in the incapacity of the Italians to fight and in the superiority of Nazism.¹¹³ Thus, is it interesting to find these sorts of sentiments in the south of Italy. These attitudes demonstrate that although under Allied and Italian control, far from the territory of the RSI, loyal Fascists were still influenced by RSI rhetoric.

In Gravina on 15 May 1944 a small leaflet was distributed, which discussed the honour and glory brought to Italy by Mussolini and condemned the situation in liberated Italy: 'Sacheggi,

¹¹¹Prefect of Bari report, with accompanying leaflet, 18 November 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno, 1943-1944, Busta 2.7-2.12, ACS.

¹¹²Carabinieri's note, March 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 9, F.667, ACS. Carabinieri report, 23 March 1944, Busta 231, F.231, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

¹¹³Luigi Ganapini, *La repubblica delle camicie nere. I combattenti, i politici, gli amministratori, i socializzatori* (Milan: Garzanti, 2nd edition 2010), 7-8 and 71.

incendi, stupri [...] morte ha prodotto la libertà stessa' ('Looting, fires, rapes [...] death have all been produced by freedom').¹¹⁴ The principal themes of Fascist propaganda and graffiti in Puglia were the glory of Mussolini and Fascist Italy, and the encouragement of hatred towards the Allies by referring to negative aspects of liberated Italy as persuasion. It is no surprise that Fascists used this genre in order to exalt what they believed were the achievements of the past regime. Neither is it a surprise that they chose to denounce the Allies, the King and Badoglio; those who had helped to destroy the Fascist regime and made them outcasts in Italian society in liberated areas.

The local supporters of Fascism did not limit their activities to distributing propaganda. Fascists in Bari made a statement by breaking into the 'English' propaganda office on the evening of 14-15 November 1943. They shattered some windows and took photographs that were on display in the office. In place of the photos the group wrote 'the day of justice will arrive, Viva Il Duce!' This phrase was repeatedly written on stubs of paper ripped from a photograph.¹¹⁵ The Fascists in Bari were prepared to commit crimes in order to display their sense of injustice at the course the war had taken. Similarly to other political groups, breaking into opposition buildings and causing damage seemed an effective way to express their feelings.

Although the Allied military police were not the main responsible for law enforcement for dealing with political groups, it can be argued that CMPs dealt with individual Fascists. The arrest of active local Fascists served as an effective propaganda tool. From the viewpoint of civilians, in the majority anti-Fascist, it appeared that the Allies were continuing with their task of liberation and purging the region of Fascism. For example, in Goia del Colle in May

¹¹⁴Prefect of Bari report with leaflet, 15 May 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 5, F.282, ACS.

¹¹⁵Prefect of Bari to CA section, 16 November 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7-2.12, ACS.

1944 (after the official handover to the Italian authorities) American MPs arrested two brothers aged 17 and 20. Both students in the town, they were suspected of Fascist activity, which proved to be correct. It was determined that they had produced a pamphlet entitled 'Honour and Justice'; the main themes of the pamphlet were the destruction of German and Italian cities caused by the fury of Anglo-American bombing, and the loss of Italian prestige. Anger over the destruction caused by Allied bombing was not restricted to Fascist sympathizers; many civilians were infuriated at what at times was viewed as unnecessary and wanton air raids. Through an investigation carried out by the American police it was discovered that four other students aged between 16 and 20 were part of a young Fascist group that was operating in Goia del Colle.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, in the documentation no further evidence is to be found on what happened to the two brothers or their fellow students. The young age of the group indicates that these young men had been brought up during Fascism.

It was not only the Fascists that used propaganda and graffiti as a method to express their opinions. Parties of the Left produced pamphlets, leaflets and posters and wrote slogans on walls, in an attempt to persuade other people that their party was the right one to follow. For instance, in Galatina, one of the most important towns in the Salentine peninsula, during the night of 15-16 November 1943 communist slogans were written on various walls. The slogans included, 'down with the King, out with tyranny, viva Russia, out with the *squadristi* and viva the Allies.'¹¹⁷ In Bari in the same month persons unknown wrote 'what will form the new Italy?' on walls in the city. Under the question the authors asked people to consider each party and requested that they reflect on whom they trusted.¹¹⁸ This graffiti was trying to persuade the people to contemplate Italy's future and to become politically active. In a sense

¹¹⁶Prefect of Bari Report, 10 May 1944, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 5, F.271, ACS.

¹¹⁷Prefect of Lecce Report, 20 November 1943, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7-2.12, ACS.

¹¹⁸Prefect of Bari, 16 November 1943, 'What will form the new Italy?' Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.7-2.12, ACS.

the authors attempted to show that freedom of political expression was now achievable, even during the early stages of the occupation. Communists did not only use graffiti to protest; like all other parties, they also founded their own newspapers, such as *Civiltà Proletaria*, which, for example, in March 1944 ran an article on the discontented population of Mola. The argument of the article was that the severe living conditions caused by the Italian Government and by the Prefect had culminated in a malcontented population.¹¹⁹ It is interesting that the Allies were not blamed for the difficult conditions of civilians' lives even several months into the occupation.

On occasion, parties worked together to produce propaganda on shared aims. An undated poster by the PCI, Socialists and Action party is an example of Left-wing parties, which constituted the bulk of the Resistance in German-occupied Italy, working together. The poster discussed the promises of aid made by the Allies after the Armistice and Italian participation in the governing of the country, and stated that their assessment of the country was incorrect. The next section cried out in bold '*Lavoratori!*' (Workers), which is evidence of the social class targeted by these parties. The poster proclaimed '*il popolo italiano vuole*' (the Italian people want), in order to inspire a sense of collectivity and a feeling that these three parties represented the desires of the population as a whole. The list of what the people wanted is typical of what would be expected by Left-wing groups during the occupation. For example: an end to the war, the removal of the Savoy monarchy, the punishment of the accomplices of Fascism, a new truly democratic anti-Fascist government, and solutions to the food crisis. An item on the list may seem small, but to the base support of Left parties it represented an improvement to daily life: to increase lunchtime for workers by 15 minutes.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Copy of article in *Civiltà Proletaria*, 12 March 1944, Segreteria particolare del Capo del Governo, Busta 231, F.231, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

¹²⁰Undated Poster by Il Partito d'Azione, Il Partito Socialista and Il Partito Comunista, MI PS, GDS 1943-1944, Busta 5, F.223, ACS.

Printed propaganda and graffiti were used by political groups of all leanings. In particular, Left-wing groups at this stage collaborated in order to achieve a new democratic Italy. In the case of Fascist propaganda it was motivated by a sense of revenge directed at the Allies and at the Italian authorities, who were viewed as traitors involved in the downfall of Fascism. The Fascists attempted to demonstrate the achievements of Fascism in a hope that it would turn people against the Italian and Allied authorities.

Conclusion

The Allies did attempt to improve the living condition of civilians in Puglia by responding positively to requests and by employing large numbers of people to work for the occupying government. However, even with the instigation of public works, unemployment remained an issue and was exacerbated by the repatriation of Italian servicemen and the withdrawal of Allied employment in 1945. Ultimately, the occupation of Puglia was a period of civil unrest prompted by the war situation. It can be argued that this increase in protest and civil disobedience is not unusual in war, but in Puglia it was correspondingly based on longer standing issues such as agrarian reform in addition to shortages triggered by the war.

On a political level the situation was more complex. The occupation witnessed the rebirth of individual political choice and the ability of parties to endeavour to instigate change at a local level. Puglia proved an ideal location for the introduction of an organised PCI network, and consequently leaders of the local party acted as spokesmen for the masses and helped to organise protests, rallies and strikes. Likewise, the political Right also evolved from Fascism and took the form of *L'Uomo Qualunque* in the region. The emergence of these two factions

led to political division in many Puglian towns and cities. Frequently this disunion erupted into violence and acts of vandalism, partaking in the atmosphere of aggression that permeated the region. Even though the region had been liberated it can be argued that a wartime mentality persisted and that therefore people were quicker to resort to violence than they would be in times of peace.

Chapter 4

Disease

Although public health in Italy deteriorated significantly as a direct consequence of the war, the issue of abysmal public health, predominantly in the *Mezzogiorno* was not an original topic. In fact, southern Italy had consistently suffered throughout its modern history from a multiplicity of diseases, brought about by poverty, the economic and physical environment and the local bureaucracy. Snowden notes that the Italian Department of Health in 1902 described the cities of Puglia as the unhealthiest places in Italy. These cities had the correct mix of squalor and overcrowding for the spread of infection, and Barletta in particular had a reputation in the early twentieth century as being notoriously unhealthy.¹ Although attempts were made to ameliorate the problems of civilian health and sanitation before the Second World War, general levels of public health and hygiene still lagged behind those of the Allied countries. Tragically the effects of bombing and liberation by ground forces further exacerbated existing problems and introduced a host of new problems, such as how to cope with the thousands of troops flooding into the area.

The inadequate standards of public health posed a threat to the wellbeing of Allied personnel and consequently became a vital concern for the higher forces of the Allied command. How to prevent and control the spread of disease and infection was a important means of safeguarding the health and subsequently the fighting capacity of the Allied armies. Therefore, they devised varied methods to combat existing diseases in Puglia and schemes to prevent both troops and civilians from becoming infected or re-infected. The Allies understood that in order to preserve the health of their troops it was necessary to improve the

¹Frank M. Snowden, 'Cholera in Barletta 1910', *Past and Present*, 132, 1991,70-73.

health of civilians. This would entail treating current maladies amongst the population and implementing measures to eradicate diseases such as malaria and typhus to prevent infection. The Allies' attitudes towards public health can portray a picture of AMG acting as a quasi-imperialist power: they attempted to keep the contact between themselves and the unhealthy natives to a minimum, simultaneously striving to improve the health of local inhabitants for reasons of military necessity. The Allied policy towards public health in Puglia is also indicative of broader Allied policies, all characterized by a perception of Italians as friends and foes at the same time. AMG did not hesitate to use Italian hospital buildings, supplies and personnel, but principally for their own use and motivations. This is a trend that occurs in almost every aspect of the occupation. This chapter will investigate Allied attempts to treat, prevent and control diseases in Puglia during the occupation. The Allies targeted malaria, typhus, smallpox, scabies and tuberculosis amongst others in their war against disease. They embarked on a considerable public health scheme, whose priority was to ensure the health of the troops, with any health benefits gained by the Italian people as an opportune effect.

Sanitation and Hygiene

Levels of sanitation and hygiene in Puglia were notably worsened during the war and occupation. Bombing, sabotage by the retreating German troops and actions by ground forces liberating the region damaged and destroyed sewer systems and aqueducts, and led to a breakdown in public health services such as rubbish collection. These three contributing factors led to lower levels of public health amongst inhabitants and to higher levels of disease. In addition, the standard of public health in towns and cities of the area before the war was considered below the one that existed in countries such as America and Britain. The already poorer public utility systems could not cope with the damage sustained by war and with the influx of Allied troops and refugees. A study into the circumstances of Bari, Taranto

and Foggia demonstrates the scale of the sanitation problem that both residents and Allies faced during the long occupation.

The port city of Bari suffered from poor sanitation, which was made worse by the actions of both troops and citizens. For example, a letter to the prefect from a hygiene officer in January 1945 pointed out that civilian buildings were in poor hygienic conditions and, although no troops were billeted in the immediate vicinity, this posed a threat to the military. In fact, the missive declared that ‘the condition of the civilian portion of the town must affect the general hygiene of the whole town.’ With the approach of the summer months it was deemed necessary to deal with these problems to avoid consequent diseases.²

Sewage disposal became an issue for the Allies in control of Bari in January 1945. The resident liaison officer for the city received a complaint from the Italian rail authorities about a cesspool next to Allied premises. Subsequently, an investigation took place and it was determined that Signal Corps occupied two of the three floors in the building. Although the corps could not see any initial problems, parts of the sewage pipes, which were above ground, had been removed. They indicated that perhaps the civilians were using them as drains.³ It appears probable that the soldiers were also involved in using the pipes as drains, but to avoid being reprimanded they placed the blame onto the Italians who occupied one floor of the building. It is important to note that the pipes were above ground, which meant it was more feasible that damage could occur, and it is an indication of the standard of sewage facilities in the city. Furthermore, the complaint was raised in January 1945, over eighteen months since the arrival of the Allies, showing how all issues of sanitation had not been

²Unnamed Hygiene letter to the Prefect, January 1945, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone (10210) Liaison Officer (119)\ 119-21, ACS.

³Report to liaison officer on a cesspool in Bari, 9 January 1946, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone (10210) Liaison Officer (119)\ 119-21, ACS.

corrected in this time period. This is evidence that small-scale sewage problems of this nature were not a high priority for the authorities of the city.

The Taranto sewage system was damaged by Allied bombing before the occupation, and presented a momentous risk to public health. For example, by the summer of 1944 a sewer that discharged into the Mare Grande near the Italian yacht club had become a 'sanitary nuisance.' The main cause for concern was the discharging of the sewer into three feet of water at the shore's edge. The Allied authorities felt that danger from pollution was considerable, particularly to bathers. In order to remedy the situation, AMG envisaged that an engineering project of extensive size would have to be undertaken.⁴ Although the sewer was not badly damaged by bombs, the example shows how even a small amount of destruction could have a significant impact, especially when there were existing flaws in the design of the system.

Furthermore, a field hygiene section report to the Prefect of Taranto offers a disheartening image of the living conditions some civilians had to endure during the conflict. The report was concerned with a group of houses near the city stadium alongside Via Ancona:

The road running alongside Via Ancona is in a very filthy condition, being filled with excreta and general refuse. On the East side of the Stadium an area enclosed by stonewalls is littered with faeces and refuse. The various houses on the West side of Via Ancona share communal lavatories, which are built over large cesspits. The latter are full. This is a contributory factor to the filthiness of the road. Adjoining the houses is a pigstye [sic] in which 50 pigs are being kept. This is filthy and breeding many flies: the manure from the stye [sic] is dumped in the roadway. Will you please arrange for the cesspits in the houses to be emptied, to have the road cleaned regularly

⁴ Letter to the prefect from town Major of Taranto, 30 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Taranto Zone (10250) General (115)51 Hygiene and Sanitary, ACS.

and to ensure a regular removal from the pigstye [sic]. The town authorities have been informed verbally of this disgusting and filthy state of affairs and your co-operation in cleaning up this 'Danger Spot' will be appreciated.⁵

The living conditions described in the letter were an immense risk to the health of the residents. The abundance of refuse and excrement created conditions favourable for the spread of disease. This threat was exacerbated by the use of communal lavatories and lack of efficient sewage facilities. The sharing of toilet facilities by large groups of people was conducive for a whole street to become infected if a pathogen was introduced. The example also demonstrates the lack of help from both the Italian and Allied authorities for the people near the stadium. It was the duty of the Italian authorities to clean the cesspits, but this had not been undertaken. Although the territory had been handed back to the Italians in February 1944, it is clear that the Allies were still in charge. The officer was able to give orders to the Prefect and to expect them to be carried out. It appears that the Italian authorities could administer the city, but if something arose that affected the Allies their orders were superseded by AMG. The tone of the letter is one of severe displeasure and lacks sympathy for the inhabitants.

The circumstances prevailing in Foggia during the Allied occupation were even more extreme. The city had been almost flattened by bombs and this had a considerable effect on public services and hence health. AMG reports into sanitary conditions in Foggia in February and March 1944 outline the sheer scale of the public health problem in the city. Conditions were described as 'ripe for an epidemic', with bad living environments, lack of toilet facilities, running water and lowered resistance to disease. Results of a two-day survey on sanitation in the town showed that it was awful; garbage and filth were being thrown into the

⁵Letter to the prefect from Field Hygiene Section, 7 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Taranto Zone (10250) General (115)51 Hygiene and Sanitary, ACS.

thoroughfare. Excavations, which were intended for air raid shelters, were being used as human latrines. A scheme for the filling up of the excavations, bomb crater and repair to the streets was under construction and should have been implemented in the near future. An officer commented that there were 'very important military installations in and around Foggia city which makes the health problem of this town one of vital importance to military operations.' The Allies believed that Foggia in normal times, before bombing, would have been condemned as a health hazard by American standards. For example, 5,000 families were not connected to the sewer system.⁶

Repairs to the sewage system were thus of the first priority. However, Foggia presented the Allies with an unusual system of waste disposal: the 'black hole' or 'catch basin' system. The black hole system involved a hole in the ground in front of each house covered with a stone slab, with a pipe connecting it to inside the house. Frequently, bodily wastes and garbage were thrown into the street. The Allies stated in a report that no cleaning of 'black holes' had occurred for several years until AMG re-instituted it. However, the programme did not progress fast enough due to a shortage of equipment. The cleaning of the basins was responsibility of the *Acquedotto Pugliese* and of a Sergeant of the 21st engineers, who had 30 young men employed to clean them. A report noted that in normal circumstances this would have been fine, but increased vehicle traffic from bivouac areas, airfields, depots, refuse in the streets and bomb debris from buildings were adding difficulties. The Allies were critical of the design of the basins, as they believed they could become a malaria hazard if there was any heavy rain.⁷

⁶See Report from CAO Foggia on sewers, 8 February 1944; 'Public health in Foggia', from director of Public Health and Welfare, 5 March 1944, and Interim report on sanitary conditions by CAO Foggia, 8 February 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone(10230) General (115), ACS.

⁷See the above sources and Adjutant General to Captain Garrigan, report on Foggia public health, 15 May 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

Furthermore, the Allies organised a garbage collection and cleaning programme, but were not satisfied with its progress by February 1944. A campaign to stop people throwing garbage into streets was inaugurated, but AMG had serious doubts that it would be a success, despite a number of arrests and fines. The campaign was not solely directed at the populace of Foggia. The CAO of Foggia Lieutenant Colonel, Paul Shipman Andrews requested from headquarters copies of the orders which had been issued forbidding troops from throwing garbage out of windows and onto streets and bomb craters.⁸ This request demonstrates that the higher authorities were aware that not all the blame for the continuing garbage problem could be directed at the Italian people. It appears that the troops themselves were adding to the problem through lack of care. The campaign against improper disposal of waste by troops continued into March 1944. For example, an order to all units by the Allied Air Force Area Command in Foggia read:

It has come to the attention of this headquarters that unauthorized garbage dumps are still being used by units in within the area in spite of the fact that authorized dumps have been clearly located in Sanitary Bulletin No. 1, this headquarters, 15 February 1944. The use of unauthorized dumps is a menace to health, since garbage is neither burned nor buried, it becomes an ideal breeding place for flies and vermin.⁹

Areas mentioned as being used as an unauthorised dump was located near the football stadium. A letter on behalf of the 255th squadron of the RAF to the commanding officer of Foggia is evidence that civilians as well as troops were using this dump. For instance, the letter claimed that Italians were dumping large amounts of garbage and tin cans there. The area emitted highly offensive odours and dogs had been seen feeding from the refuse. The

⁸CAO Foggia request for orders, 24 February 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

⁹Adjutant general to all units in Foggia, 7 March 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

letter pointed out that a continuance of the situation would result in breeding grounds for mosquitoes and flies, and requested that this matter have immediate action as it directly concerned civilians.¹⁰ It is interesting to note the concern for civilians in the letter, although it is not known whether this concern stemmed from genuine feelings of sympathy or from the resulting threat they would pose to Allied health.

However, some Allied personnel did not just condemn the citizens of Foggia for the circumstances in which they lived, but understood the difficulties they faced. For example, The CAO of Foggia sympathised with the inhabitants of the city: 'it is unquestionably difficult for one to maintain a proper or adequate respect for sanitary practices when one is living in rubble.' Every bombed house or crater became an opportunity for a latrine or dump.¹¹ Therefore, the people of Foggia were forced to live in a less than sanitary manner due to the scale of destruction and more important daily concerns, such as finding adequate food, shelters and work. The public health problems in Foggia were believed to be severe and a significant threat to the Allies. This became additionally important, as 'Foggia was not just another Italian civilian community, but a most vital military reservation.'¹² The fact that the Allies could not leave the area explains their drive to improve public health. This argument can be applied to Puglia in general as it was home to two major Allied ports at Taranto and Bari and played host to thousands of Allied personnel. This knowledge can be applied in a wider sense to any location in Italy that the Allies felt was important to them in one way or another, whether military or in terms of the occupation government.

¹⁰Adjutant general to commander of AMG Foggia, 1 March 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

¹¹ Interim report on sanitary conditions by CAO Foggia, 8 February 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

¹² Ibid.

Malaria

The Allies undertook a war to annihilate the mosquito in Italy, in the hope that it would eradicate malaria from the peninsula.¹³ Before analysing Allied efforts it is necessary to understand the prevalence of malaria in Italy and in particular in Puglia, and Italian attempts to combat the disease before the conflict.

The first government statistics of numbers affected by malaria were collected in the 1880s and indicated that two million people a year were infected or re-infected and over 20,000 perished. Of the 69 Italian provinces, only two were free of the malady. Malaria was endemic in the whole of Italy but it was pre-eminently a problem of the south. Areas such as the rice fields of the Po Valley greatly suffered, but it was the Mezzogiorno where malaria was king. Mortality figures from 1887 clearly show the discrepancy between north and south. For example, regional deaths were as follows: northern Italy 1,507; central Italy (minus Lazio), 696; and southern Italy (plus Lazio) 18,830.¹⁴ These statistics show the disproportionate numbers of deaths in the south and identify malaria as a greater danger to the southern population. The malarial parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* (falciparum malaria) was the dominant parasite that caused malaria in the south. This form of malaria had the most frequently fatal outcome. The parasites *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium malariae* were more common in the north of the country and far less prone to induce a lethal conclusion.¹⁵

Physical environmental factors also contributed to the prevalence of malaria in the south. The Apennines did not replenish the southern rivers in the year-round manner that the Alps did for the Po Valley. Lack of snow meant rainwater was the only source of river water and since

¹³Snowden, 'Fields of Death: Malaria in Italy, 1861-1962', *Modern Italy*, 42, 1, 1999, 48.

¹⁴Ibid., 25-27.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29 and Snowden, 'Mosquitoes, Quinine and the Socialism of Italian Women 1900-1914', *Past and Present*, 178, 1, 200, 186-187.

the rain predominantly fell during winter and spring, southern rivers flooded their banks every year and then dried up in the summer. This led to stagnant pools forming throughout the region; a paradise for mosquitoes. Marshland was also a permanent feature of the southern landscape. Moreover, another contributing factor to the existence of high malaria rates in the south was that the peak season for mosquitoes coincided with high working period of the agricultural calendar. 'Mowing, harvesting and threshing in July and August coincided perfectly with the annual malaria epidemic, which began with the regularity of an astronomical event.'¹⁶

The Italian state, both Liberal and Fascist, understood the impact that malaria exhibited on the country, not solely in terms of public health, but also in economic and military terms. Therefore, both regimes embarked on campaigns to destroy the hold that malaria had on Italy. Between 1900 and 1907 the Liberal government embarked on an experiment to eradicate malaria through the use of quinine in two pilot provinces: 'Rome because of its political importance and Foggia because it was the most malarial province in the nation.'¹⁷ The government's strategy entailed making quinine universally available for fever victims and not just to those affected in the upper classes. The state, local authorities and the Red Cross mobilized doctors and nurses to run health stations to dispense quinine, which numbered 1,200 by the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁸ Importantly, the message was conveyed to the people that they had a 'right to health.' In this sense, Snowden suggests that the war on malaria developed a 'subversive political content.' Malaria changed from being an individual misfortune to an occupational disease spread through the culpable negligence of the landlords. The campaign provided lessons in mass organization and bequeathed the destitute with the vocabulary of political rights. Therefore, Snowden argues that it is no

¹⁶Snowden, 'Fields of Death', 31 and 34.

¹⁷Ibid., 40.

¹⁸Ibid., and Snowden, 'Mosquitoes, Quinine and Socialism', 199.

coincidence that both Lazio and Puglia gave rise to peasant movements.¹⁹ The Liberal scheme did not eradicate malaria; however, the mass availability of quinine considerably reduced mortality rates, from 710 deaths per million inhabitants in 1887 to 57 in 1914.²⁰

Tragically, the First World War undid the gains made under the Liberal scheme. Quinine became unavailable and medical attention was diverted to the influenza pandemic.²¹ In the 1930s, the Fascist regime embarked on its own mission to rid the Pontine Marshes of malaria. This mission had an overtly political aim: if the measures were successful it would be a good propaganda opportunity for the regime. The Fascist operation had three faces: hydrological (*bonifica idraulica*), agrarian (*bonifica agraria*) and hygienic (*bonifica igienica*). Primarily, this involved setting a network of canals (named ‘Mussolini’s canals’) draining lakes, dredging rivers filling in stagnant pools, settling peasants onto the reclaimed land, and implementing preventative education.²² The scheme was successful in the elimination of malaria from the region; however, the achievements only affected a small part of the Italian population that was touched by malaria, such as Puglia.²³

Accordingly, malaria still presented a major risk for the Allies arriving into southern Italy in 1943. However, the invasion of Italy was not the first time that malaria had been an issue for the Allied armies. For example, mosquitoes caused widespread suffering amongst unacclimatised union soldiers in the Peninsula campaign of the American Civil War and British authorities had been previously confronted with malaria in the First World War.²⁴

¹⁹Snowden, ‘Fields of Death’, 41.

²⁰Ibid., 43.

²¹Ibid.

²²Snowden, ‘From Triumph to Disaster: Fascism and Malaria in the Pontine Marshes, 1928-1946’ in John Dickie, John Foot and Frank M. Snowden (eds), *Disastro! Disasters in Italy since 1860: Culture, Politics and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 122-126.

²³Snowden, ‘Fields of Death’, 46.

²⁴Andrew M. Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 72-73.

British troops encountered malaria mainly in Macedonia, East Africa, Mesopotamia and Palestine. In the Sinai desert, pools were filled in and petroleum spraying of breeding pools were systematically carried out. Drainage works were undertaken in some areas and commanders were advised to insist troops used some form of personal protection. Nonetheless, many commanding officers were unconvinced that much could be achieved from these preventative measures, hence they refused to divert manpower. Consequently, even modest success was the exception not in the rule in the First World War battle against malaria.²⁵

Typhus was the disease that affected the American army in the First World War, killing 2 and half million people on the eastern front. Subsequently, when the United States mobilized for World War II, planners took to heart a dismal lesson: insect-borne diseases could nullify a nation's military might.²⁶ This did not just apply to measures to counteract typhus, but crucially also malaria. According to Mark Harrison, the success in the battle against malaria 'depended crucially on the emergence of a new style of command which attached greater importance to medicine as a managerial resource.' Science was now viewed as a means to maximizing potential manpower.²⁷

Sicily was the first Italian area to expose Allied troops to the threat of malaria and the figures of infection are alarming. Hall states that 21,000 were infected with malaria and 17,000 wounded in battles in Sicily. A medical report by the Assistant Director of Hygiene for the Eighth Army Lieutenant Colonel A.W.S. Thompson on malaria during the 1943-1945 Italian campaign states that during the first fortnight 200 cases resulted from infected elsewhere

²⁵Mark Harrison, 'Medicine and the Culture of Command: the Case of Malaria Control in the British Army during the two World Wars', *Medical History*, 40, 1996, 439-441.

²⁶Edmund. P. Russell III, 'The Strange Career of DDT: Experts, Federal Capacity, and Environmentalism in World War II', *Science and Technology*, 40, October 1999, 776.

²⁷Harrison, 'Medicine and the Culture of Command', 438.

before the Sicilian mosquitoes took their toll. After 23 July malaria cases ‘poured into medical units in alarming and increasing numbers.’ In the first week of August that year there were 1,302 admissions, and in the second 1,809, which was the peak. By 3 September 1943 the Sicilian campaign had produced 7,138 cases of malaria and of 3,257 fevers: ‘A possible total of 10,395 casualties due to malaria.’²⁸ Harrison states that over 20,000 acquired malaria in Sicily, and between 4 September to 27 November 1943 15,547 cases of malaria and undiagnosed fevers were admitted to hospital. It was estimated that 8,000 of the cases were attributed to Sicily.²⁹ Thus, malaria had already proved its potential for decimation of manpower before the Allies reached Puglia in September 1943. As previously stated Puglia (and Foggia in particular) was one of the most malarial regions in Italy and an impending hot zone of malaria for unacclimatized Allied servicemen. Consequently, the Allies targeted civilians, troops and the Puglian landscape in an attempt to quell the startling casualty figures from Sicily spreading to the mainland. Although Puglia was part of region 2 and subsequently under Italian jurisdiction, an administrative instruction for region 5 on how to combat malaria is indicative of how the Allies attempted to inform commanders and soldiers about the danger of malaria. The instruction stated:

It is well known that malaria will attack newcomers from non-malarial countries much more severely than the local inhabitants of malarious countries and that the very nature of military operations are more conducive to the creation of conditions favourable to the spread of the disease [...] Personal protection against mosquito bites is the most important of all methods of malaria prevention under active service conditions and it should therefore be undertaken with special zeal by all ranks from

²⁸Medical report by the Assistant Director of Hygiene for the Eighth Army Lieutenant- Colonel A.W.S. Thompson on malaria during the 1943-1945 Italian campaign, WO204/159, TNA.

²⁹Marcus Hall, ‘World War II and the Axis of Disease: Battling Malaria in Twentieth Century Italy’ in Charles E. Closmann (ed.), *War and the Environment: Military Destruction in the Modern Age* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 113. See also Harrison, ‘Medicine and the Culture of Command’, 446.

sundown to sunrise [...] During the Great war an allied force of 120,000 men suffered severely from Malaria and was so incapacitated that it was impossible to have more than 20,000 men in the line. Malaria can defeat armies. To hit Hitler - master malaria.³⁰

The information in the instruction is explicit in its belief of the threat posed by malaria and that during active service it was the responsibility of individuals, not of the authorities, to protect themselves from infection. It places the burden of staying healthy on every member of the army, regardless of rank. Furthermore, the instruction informed soldiers that they would receive atrebrine tablets, more commonly known as mepacrine, when receiving rations.³¹ This is evidence that the Allies had faith in the preventative and treatment benefits of chemical treatment versus malaria.

For more than 350 years Quinine had been the only medicine available to treat malaria.³² In 1942 the Japanese invaded Java and seized the Dutch plantations, which supplied 90% of the world's cinchona bark used to make Quinine.³³ The Allies therefore had an incentive to produce a synthetic substitute, such as atrebrine/mepacrine. German scientists had synthesized the drug in the early 1930s and sold the formula to the Americans. After the fall of Java mepacrine was mass-produced and made available to all frontline units in 1942. Initially mepacrine proved just as unpopular with the troops as had Quinine since the First World War.³⁴ Quinine could have toxic side effects and was rumoured to cause sexual impotence. Mepacrine similarly had some side effects and suffered from the same stigma as

³⁰Administrative instruction (Public Health) on how to combat malaria from Region 5 Commissioner G. Marshall, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

³¹Administrative instruction, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

³²Irwin W. Sherman, *Magic Bullets to Conquer Malaria from Quinine to Qinghaosu* (Washington: ASM Press, 2011), 52.

³³Joseph P. Byrne, *Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics, and Plagues* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 21 and 482

³⁴Mark Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World, 1500 to the Present Day* (Malden: Polity, 2004), 159.

quinine, in that it was thought to cause impotence. Side effects were indeed visible, as recorded by Norman Lewis in his *Diary Naples '44*: by taking a double dose of the drug to ward off malaria (in conjunction with using repellent and a mosquito net) his skin and eyes took on a yellow tinge. Despite Lewis' diligence he suffered from three bouts of malaria between September 1943 and October 1944, evidence that the measures put in place were not always effective.³⁵ Lewis belonged to a minority of officers who accepted taking the medicine, while in general reservations proved difficult to overcome, despite a barrage of information and popularizing of the drug by the authorities. 'Ultimately, the key factor in preventing malaria - as in the case of many other diseases was discipline.'³⁶

The American public was also made aware of the discovery of new synthetic drugs in the fight against malaria by the national and local press. For instance, the *New York Times* reported on 22 November 1943 that the eight army was 'being followed through the swamps of southern Italy by a man under Government orders to capture several hundred malarial mosquitoes of three varieties.'³⁷ When the Japanese occupied Java they obtained 93% of the world's quinine output, so British chemists had to find a way of mass production of a substitute called melacrin (mepacrine).³⁸ American newspapers provided information to the soldiers' families, in the hope that they would advise their sons, brothers and other relatives on active service to take the new drug. Discipline, education and the availability of personal protection were measures designed to prevent Allied troops from contracting malaria.

The struggle against the mosquito was primarily chemical. The importance the Allies attached to the use of insecticides cannot be down played. The Allies began by using pre-war

³⁵Norman Lewis, *Naples '44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth* (New York: Eland Publishing, 2011), 8, 91, 105 and 108.

³⁶Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*, 159-160.

³⁷'Italian Mosquitoes Hunted in War against Malaria', *New York Times*, 22 November 1943, 7.

³⁸Ibid.

chemicals such as Paris Green insecticide and oil to destroy mosquitoes and their breeding grounds. However, it is evident that these two chemicals were not the first choice. For example, a public health report dated 9 March 1944 stated that unfortunately Paris Green would not be available for the control of anopheles mosquito breeding, but that oil would be sent to three distribution places in region 2.³⁹ In fact, the Allies' first choice for the fight against malaria, dubbed 'the war's greatest contribution to the future health of world' in January 1945, was the new insecticide DDT.⁴⁰

The insecticidal properties of DDT were discovered in 1939, which led to tests on its efficiency against the mosquito by troops in India and the South West Pacific by US forces. The success of these trials led to the widespread use of DDT in the prevention of malaria and it was 'to prove especially important in Italy.' High levels of malaria and acts of sabotage in the Pontine Marshes by the German forces, deemed acts of biological warfare by posterity made the success of DDT essential.⁴¹ The faith in DDT was not confined to the higher policy makers of the AMG; grassroots personnel also commented in a public health report that DDT was useful prevention of malaria, not just typhus.⁴² Therefore, DDT became the cornerstone of the plan to exterminate mosquitoes from the Italian peninsula.

The body set up to deal with the threat was the Malaria Control Branch, which was established by Colonel Paul Russell of the US Medical Corps. The branch discovered that DDT could be sprayed onto buildings, which would remain lethal to mosquitoes for up to two

³⁹Public Health, 9 March 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health reports (163)\345, ACS.

⁴⁰Russell, 'The Strange Career of DDT', 770-771.

⁴¹Harrison, 'Medicine and the Culture of Command', 449. For the German sabotage of malaria control systems see also: Hall, 'World War II and the Axis of Disease: Battling Malaria in Twentieth Century Italy'; Snowden, 'From Triumph to Disaster: Fascism and Malaria in the Pontine Marshes, 1928-1946' and Snowden, 'Fields of Death.'

⁴²Public Health Report, May 1944, WO204/1308, TNA.

months.⁴³ The use of DDT in the winter of 1943 had ‘devastating effects’ for mosquitoes.⁴⁴ The spraying of marshland, pools, and buildings and in fact any area that could harbour mosquitoes was fundamental to the Allied programme. The local Baltimore newspaper *The Sun* reported on the activities of the Malaria Control Branch in Italy in 1944:

Allied HQ Naples, 30 May. With the malaria season coming up in Italy, the air force and the surgeon general’s office are conducting a spirited offensive against the *Anopheles* mosquito. Using equipment similar to that used for ‘crop dusting,’ Havoc and Caydet planes of the Mediterranean Air Transport Command have been strafing operations against the mosquito breeding grounds of southern Italy. The operations are directed by Lieut Robert H. Dyer of Corpus Christi, Texas, who like his assistants Lieut Norman G. Bedgood, Tyler, Texas and Arthur R. Montgomery, Fayetteville Ark, flew dusting planes in crop protection work before the war.⁴⁵

Crop dusting was not the only activity of the branch; the unit travelled around the Italian liberated mainland and islands, including Puglia, distributing medication to civilians for the treatment and prevention of malaria. A Public Health report for June 1944 noted that: ‘the malaria control branch visited regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, and distributed chocolate quinine for the treatment of children with malaria. Rates are lower than in 1943.’⁴⁶ The use of chocolate quinine for children is symbolic of the Allies’ genuine concern over the health of children. Despite the primary aim of civilian healthcare being the preservation of military health, by adding chocolate to the quinine the Allied authorities were endeavoring to not just persuade children to take the quinine, but to make it a more agreeable experience.

⁴³Harrison, ‘Medicine and the Culture of Command’, 450.

⁴⁴Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*, 150.

⁴⁵ ‘Yanks Begin Strafing of Italian Mosquitoes,’ *The Sun*, 2 June 1944, 6.

⁴⁶ ‘Malaria control branch’, 8 June 1944, WO204/1308, TNA.

By May 1944 a complex system of malaria prevention and control had been set up in the baroque Puglian city of Lecce and its surrounding areas. Captain H. Armand di Masi of the special reserves of the Australian forces received information from the new provincial health officer Dr Gennaro Lanni on malaria control in the province of Lecce. The doctor wished to advise AMG that four squads of four men were at work in the malarial areas. The squads were located at San Cataldo, Nardo, Melendugno and Ugento. The *Comitato Provinciale Anti-Malarico* (Provincial Anti-Malaria Committee) was responsible for paying the wages of the workmen and for furnishing them with supplies. However, the workers brought their own rubber boots and tools, as the Province was unable to supply them. A provincial budget of 200,000 Lire had been allocated for Lecce by the Ministry of the Interior for 1944. However, the province had just received some of the allocated funds from 1943. The men at work in the malarial areas of Lecce were not supplied with the new wonder insecticide DDT, but laboured with 50 quintals of heavy oil and three quintals of Paris Green left over from the previous year.⁴⁷ The situation in Lecce is demonstrative of the Allied role as planners and advisers. It was the Allies who gave the Italian authorities directions and instructions on how to combat malaria, but this did not always mean that the Allies themselves would do the required work. In the case of Lecce, the Italian authorities had organised teams of workers, supplies of oil and funds from the central Italian government. The official handover of the region took place in February 1944; therefore, it is possible that the Allies were trying to avoid extra expenditure and to be able to divert manpower to other areas. All the praise and faith lavished on DDT makes it surprising that the Allies did not assist the Italian authorities in the province of Lecce in securing a supply of the insecticide. Instead, the workers had to use what were now regarded as less effective and outdated methods. This disparity is even more striking when the volume of Allied activity in Puglia is considered.

⁴⁷Malaria control in Lecce Province, 20 May 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

Efforts in malaria control in Lecce were additionally directed at civilians. The province had an ambulatory physician, Dr De Masi, who operated in the San Cataldo area and was equipped with a microscope for blood analysis. Furthermore, a male ambulatory nurse operated in the Melendugno area. These two individuals were responsible for administering treatment to civilians suffering with malaria. Two medical officers was not a sufficient number to deal with the volume of patients, given that there were 1,000 recurring cases of malaria and only 100 new cases due to scarcity of rain those months.⁴⁸ The infection figures were proportionately higher than the amount of staff available to treat them.

A report of 1 June 1944 to the malaria control branch from the province paints a pointedly bleaker picture of disease control in the area. This report is more explicit in terms of the problems facing the Italian authorities: 'Anti-malaria control is proceeding slowly in Lecce Province under considerable difficulties-financial, material and personnel.' The report is critical that the allocated funds by the Italian government had not arrived and that equipment was lacking. There was practically no Paris Green to carry on the work.⁴⁹ This is evidence that in theory the plans set up by the Allies to combat malaria were impressive, but in reality without funds, equipment and access to insecticides their effectiveness was seriously compromised.

Another critical case was that of the notoriously unhealthy coastal city of Barletta, which witnessed an increase in rates of malaria in July 1944. A public health report to the director of public health specified that:

An effort is being made to have an ambulatorio established in Barletta with a doctor, nurse and laboratory technician assigned to it. Cases are being reported on physical

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹ Malaria control in Lecce Province, 1 June 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

symptoms only hence a very probable error in actual numbers of cases existing. Only primary cases are reported but [sic] stated that there are several hundred recurrent cases. This presents the carrier problem and makes additional treatment facilities imperative [...] Malaria control activities are being carried out according to well devised plans.⁵⁰

The treatment of those infected with malaria took the central stage in Barletta. It was imperative that those infected or re-infected were treated as soon as possible to protect other civilians and Allied personnel. From this report it is evident that the Allies had conviction in the devised plans to combat malaria. The Region 2 August 1944 public health report stated that:

Malaria shows some increase, there being 278 primary cases reported during the period 1-20 August as compared to 215 cases reported during the entire month of July. There was a continuation of the mosquito control programs in all Provinces. The general insanitary conditions of all communes remain unchanged.⁵¹

There is no indication in the report as to the reason for the increase, although it can be surmised that it was due to the fact that it now was the height of the malaria season and also an extremely active period (for example harvesting) for agriculture. However, it is clear that these figures were not considered satisfactory and that any increase, no matter how small, was viewed as a threat to the health of the Allies.

The effects of the malaria cycle on percentages of contagion can be demonstrated in a malaria report for the capital of Puglia, Bari, in September 1944. The city had seen a decrease in

⁵⁰Public Health report for July 1944, 1 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health reports (163)\345 ACS.

⁵¹Region 2 Public Health report for August 1944, 2 September 1944, Public Health reports (163)\345, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

malaria from the high summer months and the Allied authorities reported that the disease ‘was now only killing adults and this will soon stop.’ This was a result of the numbers of mosquitoes declining towards the end of the malaria season. The report further commented that the plan for next year had been sent to the *Medico Provinciale* (Provincial Health Officer) and forwarded to Italian Ministry of the Interior.⁵² The sending of detailed plans on malaria control for the following year to the Italian authorities is clear confirmation that although the Allies had officially ‘handed back’ control of the zone over to the Italians, the Allies were firmly in control, taking the important decisions and planning orders.

A severe epidemic of malaria among both civilians and soldiers did not occur in the occupation of Puglia or in fact in the occupation as a whole. Harrison argues that this was due both to the improvement in discipline after the Sicilian campaign and to the use of DDT, which managed to prevent an epidemic of malaria in Italy.⁵³ The Eighth Army report on malaria calculate that in the third and fourth quarters of 1943, there were 16,710 cases of primary malaria and 15,052 men wounded in battle. In all four quarters of 1944, 8,153 cases of malaria were reported and 39,996 men were wounded in action. The 1944 figures are demonstrative of the improvements in discipline, the use of insecticides and treatment for civilians on malaria rates. The significantly higher military casualty rate was a result of the Allied landing at Anzio and battles such as Monte Cassino and Rome. The first two quarters of 1945 witnessed 965 admissions for malaria and 9,889 war casualties. The first two quarters would not have taken into account the whole malaria season, so it is likely that numbers of admissions continued throughout 1945. Malaria was thus a substantial source of anxiety and admissions for the Allies during the occupation of Puglia. The Allied authorities targeted Allied servicemen, Italian civilians and the Puglian landscape in their feud against

⁵² Bari Zone Public Health Report, 20 September 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone, (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

⁵³ Harrison, ‘Medicine and the Culture of Command’, 450 and Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*, 160.

the mosquito. The Allies were able to avoid a major epidemic, but did not wipe out malaria during the conflict. Yet, malaria was not the only scourge of the Allies during the occupation of Puglia; typhus was a complementary contagion that plagued the period.

Typhus

In 1940 the Rockefeller Institute, a philanthropic body that funded medical research and public health, devised a vaccine for typhus, which was 90% effective. Most Allied soldiers received it as a matter of course from 1942. Critics of the institute question the intentions of the body, arguing that they were not entirely benevolent, but ‘regarded support for scientific medicine as an investment in the economic and moral order of Western Capitalism.’⁵⁴ However, the Institute did produce benefits to the battle against disease in the Second World War in Italy, by inoculating the troops destined for the peninsula.

Typhus is spread by lice and produces symptoms such as chills, cough, high fever, low blood pressure, severe headaches and horrendous muscle pain. The most famous incident of a typhus outbreak in the Italian campaign occurred in Naples in the winter of 1943-1944. The Allies approached the epidemic with zeal and were determined to prevent the spread of typhus amongst both Neapolitans and Allied troops. By August 1942 typhus had already felled 20,000 soldiers in Africa, so the local Allied authorities were resolute that this would not be repeated in Naples.⁵⁵

The headquarters of the epidemic was set up on 14 December 1943 and delousing with insecticidal powder began the following day. This entailed the compulsory dusting of 700

⁵⁴Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*, 141 and 156.

⁵⁵Russell, ‘The Strange Career of DDT’, 778.

passengers on a train leaving Naples. The Allied programme involved targeting seven areas for delousing and dusting: contact delousing, air raid shelters, mass delousing of the populace, flying squads of dusting planes, institutional dusting, military and refugees.⁵⁶ Through this list the Allies sought to delouse and dust any person or structure that could harbour lice, in order to halt the epidemic. The authorities began by dusting people with pyrethrum and rotenone, which ‘broke the back’ of the epidemic. However, it was the arrival of DDT that permitted wider dusting: ‘This event marked the first time that a typhus epidemic had been halted in wintertime and DDT received much of the credit.’⁵⁷ The fear of typhus by Neapolitans was so great that long queues formed at the disinfecting stations.⁵⁸ In fact, the stations became popular overnight and the sight of persons with powdered hair and clothes became too common to cause comment. From mid-December 1943 until the epidemic subsided over 3,000,000 applications of powder were carried out, halting the epidemic and its spread to troops and to other areas.⁵⁹

Although not on epidemic proportions, typhus was likewise common among the civilians of Puglia. Accordingly, the ministrations of the Allies were not on the same scale as the procedures found in Naples; nevertheless, the Allies conducted a programme of education, prevention and treatment of typhus in Puglia during the occupation. The programme began with the intended principal beneficiaries, the military forces. The administration instruction number 9 on typhus fever produced by Major Sherman in the Taranto area in November 1943 was explicit in how to prevent typhus:

⁵⁶Fred L. Soper, William A. Davis, Floyd S. Markham and Louis A. Riehl, ‘Typhus Fever in Italy 1943-1945, and its Control with Louse Powder’, *American Journal of Hygiene*, 45, 3, 1947, 316.

⁵⁷ Russell, ‘The Strange Career of DDT’, 782.

⁵⁸Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World*, 156.

⁵⁹Soper, Davis, Markham and Riehl, ‘Typhus Fever in Italy 1943-1945’, 317-319.

With the approach of winter the danger of outbreaks of typhus is again emphasized [...] As a result of the conditions under which these populations have lived recently, the danger of the spread to the troops is greatly increased. It is particularly stressed that typhus is a killing disease. During last winter over 40% of the cases of typhus occurring in the British forces in North Africa were fatal.⁶⁰

The report ordered that the following precautions would be adopted ‘to prevent loss of life and manpower from this grave disease.’ The first precaution was to:

Avoid contact with civilians, and particularly natives. Slum and native quarters will be placed out of bounds and only cinemas and cafes approved by hygiene officers will be available for the use of troops.⁶¹

The fact that avoidance of civilians was the first order of prevention is evidence that the Allies blamed civilians for typhus. Moreover, a report from the Office of the Surgeon of 3 December 1943 explained the reasons behind the prevalence of typhus in Italy. The report stated that the amount of destruction of civilian habitations and sanitary facilities, the lack of fuel and disorganization of Italian health agencies had established ripe conditions for an epidemic. These issues would lead to overcrowding with a complete lack of sanitary and health provision. The report calculated the level of lice infestation of the Italian population by using Italian POWs and the consistent stream of Italian troops returning from the Balkans where typhus was rampant, and came to the conclusion that between 60 and 90% of the

⁶⁰Administration instruction number 9 on typhus fever, by Major G.C Sherman of the Taranto area, 30 November 1943, ACC Microfilms, Taranto Zone (10250) General (115)\61 Infectious Diseases, ACS.

⁶¹ Ibid.

people were infested with lice. The account made it clear that if this were the case, protecting the troops would be arduous.⁶²

By placing civil living quarters out of bounds, the authorities hoped to reduce the risk to military personnel; however, it is unlikely that all troops adhered to this rule. Many soldiers frequented illegal prostitutes who operated out of their own homes, went to cafes unapproved by the Allies and made friendship with civilians. The Allies understood this fact and set up further instructions to complement the non-fraternization order. These directives included inoculation, health inspections on personal cleanliness, or forcing troops to have a bath or shower once a week. A bath register was kept to ensure that all men adhered to this rule. Furthermore, they had to change their underclothes weekly and all units would have the use of a steam disinfector. All of these rules had to be followed by all ranks; no exemptions were to be granted.⁶³

The fact that the Allies believed civilians to be the culprits of the dissemination of typhus in Puglia is indicative of their negative opinion of Italian public health and hygiene. The Allies did not just decide to treat typhus once it had manifested itself; they agreed to take prophylactic action in the hope to avoid the disease appearing at all. Prevention of disease was equally vital to the Allies as the treating of disease. In Puglia military and civilian education was a chief part of the plan. The AMG typhus demonstration unit travelled throughout the south and Sicily. At each selected centre, employees of the *Medico Provinciale* (Provincial Health Authority) attended two-day courses, which consisted of lectures and demonstrations on typhus prevention. Each team was supplied with DDT and a spray gun to take back to their province. In this way, should the malady appear the teams

⁶²Report from the Office of the Surgeon, 'Typhus in Italy, 3 December 1943, WO204/3008, TNA.

⁶³ Ibid.

could begin spraying the area, before the Allied typhus control unit arrived. The report concluded that this scheme had instilled confidence in the provincial Italian authorities that every precaution had been taken to avoid a typhus epidemic.⁶⁴

Similarly to the case of malaria, despite the measures put in place typhus still broke out in Puglia during the occupation. For example, there were sporadic cases of typhus in the Bari area in November 1944, but no epidemics.⁶⁵ In the area surrounding Latiano, not far from Brindisi, an outbreak of typhus first appeared on 23 December 1944. The medical officer for the region, Dr Angelo Ribezzi was called to see Eupremio Bembi, a 60-year-old man who was diagnosed with bronco-pneumonia. His 58-year-old wife Caterina Galesso had fallen sick; the verdict was myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). Subsequently, 17-year-old Armando Bembi became ill on 19 January 1945 and was judged as having septicemia, and 24-year-old Giuseppe Bembi fell ill a few days later and was identified as having typhus. Since the whole family had been indisposed, two typhus teams arrived composed of seven men and seven women. The teams immediately commenced disinfecting the population and instructed the Italian typhus teams on how to proceed. Italian typhus teams existed in Latiano and the surrounding towns of Messagne and Francavilla. One of the Allied teams left the region on 5 February 1945, but the other split in two and accompanied the Italian teams to Messagne and Francavilla. The outbreak of typhus in Latiano is evidence of the seriousness of the threat that the AMG considered typhus to be to the health of the military. The Allied typhus teams moved into the area one or two days after the diagnosis of typhus and

⁶⁴Welfare Branch report for December 1944, 7 January 1945, WO204/20601, TNA.

⁶⁵E.S. Orpwood, zone commissioner to regional director of Public Health, 'Monthly report on sanitary services in the Bari zone,' 2 November 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

proceeded not just to disinfect the immediate area surrounding the Bembi family, but also the extended areas and particularly the urban centres.⁶⁶

Smallpox

Today smallpox is considered a disease of the past and is often associated with the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs and the Incas shortly after the discovery of the Americas in the fifteenth century. However, smallpox was a real and present danger for people in Puglia during the Second World War. Naturally, the presence of smallpox among civilians in the region was regarded as a credible menace to the well being of Allied troops. Two outbreaks of smallpox in Taranto and Ceglie in April and November 1944 are illuminating examples of how the Allies reacted to civilian eruptions of the illness.

The outbreak in Taranto occurred in two periods, 16 March to 2 April 1944 and 18 April to May 1944. During the first period, all cases appeared at the 22 General Hospital and were confined to military personnel, except for one woman who worked at the hospital. It was believed that the first case had imported the disease from North Africa. This event showed that not only did the people of Puglia pose a threat to the health of the troops, but also the influx of troops posed a threat to the health of the *Pugliesi*. In the second phase all cases were instead civilian. Taranto was quarantined from the first outbreak, but this proved an impractical measure. A public health officer, who informed the regional public health office that by 9 May 1944 nine civilian cases of smallpox had been identified in the port city, provided details on the second phase. The last case to be discovered concerned an infant of six months; neither mother nor child had been vaccinated against the disease, and the child

⁶⁶Bari Zone report on Typhus outbreak in Latiano, 9 February 1945, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

died. In April the mother of the baby had been in contact with persons revealed to have smallpox and had received furniture from them. She lived in a communal farm on the outskirts of the city, which housed 37 people. For economic reasons it was not possible to move these people to the San Pietro Island, a quarantined hospital for the treatment of smallpox patients. All those who had contact with the mother and infant were however segregated and isolated. Additionally, all contacts were vaccinated along with those of neighbouring properties. Five vaccination stations were set up in the city, through the donation of vaccine by the military authorities. Unfortunately, this ran out on the third day and the stations had to wait three days for further supplies to arrive from Palermo. The British Army lent the Italian Naval Authorities vaccines to protect naval, military and dock working personnel, demonstrating once more the hierarchy of priorities for ACC.

Subsequently, stations were gradually expanded into the adjacent areas of the Taranto province. The account indicated that it was impossible to say the exact number of vaccinations given, but that 6,400 vaccinations were recorded. The Allies were critical of the lack of an isolation hospital in the city and of the use of a former leper colony run by ‘untrained religious sisters.’ They recommended that the Italian authorities reviewed the facilities in the city.⁶⁷ The Prefect notified the first case of smallpox on 12 November 1944, with the original infection thought to be in Naples. Instantaneously, the following actions were taken:

- a) Town placed ‘Out of Bounds’ to all Troops and marked as such.
- b) Vaccination ordered for all inhabitants (22,000, of whom approx. 2,000 had been vaccinated a few months previously).

⁶⁷Public health officer report, ‘Smallpox in Taranto’, 9 May 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health reports (163)345, ACS.

- c) Town was 'blocked' as far as possible by CCRR (Carabinieri).
- d) All usual decrees were issued by the Prefect.⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that the first priority and action of the AMG authorities was to declare the town out of bounds to troops, while the vaccination and therefore health of civilians was secondary. Taranto was not placed off limits, as this would not have been possible. Unlike Ceglie, Taranto already had a large number of troops in city, due to the Allied use of the docks and shipyards. It would certainly have slowed down the war effort to remove the troops from the city. In spite of the above orders, a further five cases were reported. It became apparent that not all contacts of the original patients had been identified and isolated, and that those isolation methods were ineffective. Consequently, the additional cases led to an intensification of the rules, such as extra MP patrols, no trains to stop at the local station, cancellation of the local bus service and no permission to enter or leave the town without a vaccination certificate. It was understood that the serum used by the civil authorities was substandard, with only 40% of vaccinations being successful. Therefore, an extra allotment of reliable serum was requested from the military.⁶⁹

The pattern of action regarding the outbreak of smallpox consisted in locating infected people and vaccinating and isolating them, all known acquaintances and surrounding homes. Mass vaccination programmes similar to the stations set up in Naples for typhus were implemented to prevent a spread of the disease. Moreover, whole towns and cities were quarantined, which resulted in severe limitations to civilians' daily lives. The population could not travel around or outside the city and for many, such as agricultural workers, this meant being restricted

⁶⁸E.S. Orpwood, Bari zone commissioner 'Smallpox outbreak in Ceglie', 1 December 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

from going to work, which could bring dire economic consequences. The Allies seemed to believe that those infected, or those who been in contact with them should be segregated away in institutions such as the San Pietro island to prevent any further cases. Furthermore, like in the case of protests over lack of foodstuffs, the Allies frequently stepped in to assist the Italian authorities with supplies of vaccine and other forms of chemical treatment.

Bubonic Plague attacks Taranto

Of all of the diseases found in Puglia during the Allied occupation, it was the outbreak of bubonic plague (the black death) in Taranto in October-December 1945 that was most shocking. By the twentieth century the plague was considered an archaic disease associated with wiping out half the population of Europe in the fourteenth century and during subsequent outbreaks, until the arrival of germ theory and modern medicine. An ACC Report compiled in December 1945 stated that there had been 15 deaths since the start of the outbreak. The perception of bubonic plague as an illness of the past caused the outbreak to become news in the Allied home countries. However, newspaper reports differ over the total number of people infected and deceased. For example, the *New York Times* and *The Atlanta Constitution* both featured the same article on 21 October 1945, and reported that ‘The Italian high commissioner for public health said today 11 people had died and 13 others were ill in an outbreak of bubonic plague in Taranto.’⁷⁰ Another American newspaper, the *New York Herald Tribune*, highlighted the Allied strategy for dealing with the episode of plague:

London, Oct 17, Maculey Gracie, the Pied Piper of Britain, will fly to Italy as soon as possible to deal with a serious bubonic plague in Taranto caused by rats, the Ministry

⁷⁰‘Bubonic Plague Kills 11 in Italy’, *New York Times*, 21 October 1945; ‘Plague hits Taranto- Rome Oct 20’ *The Atlanta Constitution*, 21 October 1945.

of Food disclosed tonight. Gracie is the director of infestation control at the ministry and has supervised the destruction of more than 8,000,000 rats in Britain in the last 18 months. Twenty-three cases of bubonic plague have been reported in Taranto on the Italian 'insep' in the last month. The United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Administration released three tons of DDT for dusting the entire local population, then sent an appeal to Britain for Gracie.⁷¹

The *Manchester Guardian* added:

The plane which carries Mr. Gracie will be loaded with the latest type of poison for the mass destruction of rats to which the epidemic has been traced. Last paragraph-Gracie said after Italy, would go to Germany to deal with the rat problem there.⁷²

The Allied strategy for combating the outbreak of bubonic plague was remarkably similar to their efforts to fight malaria and typhus, and focused on destroying the carriers of the disease. In the case of plague, this signified the destruction of hundreds of thousands of rats, which played host to fleas, the carriers of plague. Although those infected with plague were given medical attention, the Allied opinion was that to contain the wave of disease they had to eliminate the possibility of further contamination. However, it is possible that Allied personnel were not greatly at risk. The soldiers and sailors were housed in barracks and billets approved and maintained by the army. It was the civilians who were mostly at risk. Bombing had damaged or destroyed many homes and public utilities, which forced levels of public hygiene to decrease and overcrowding, providing an effective breeding ground for vermin.

⁷¹'British Pied Piper Going To Italian Plague Area: Rat-Control Head Flying to Taranto in Bubonic Drive', *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 October 1945, 18.

⁷²'BUBONIC PLAGUE IN ITALY: Rat-Poison by Plane', *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1945, 5.

Other Diseases: Tuberculosis, Typhoid and Scabies

Although not on the scale of malaria, typhus and smallpox, Puglia played host to a variety of diseases that posed a threat to civilians and troops alike. In November 1944 Bari witnessed sporadic cases of typhoid, typhus and smallpox and diphtheritis.⁷³ Moreover, tuberculosis (TB) was found in Bari. Patients were treated at special wards in the Cotugno hospital, but the level of security of the patients presented a problem for the Allied authorities. A liaison officer's report complained that patients were allowed in the town of Bari and went to cinemas, theatres and travelled in buses. This freedom was very dangerous to the health of others and should not have been permitted.⁷⁴ The report is evidence of the AMG's annoyance at the lax measures imposed at the hospital by Italian staff, particularly as cinemas, theatres and cafes were favourite jaunts of the Allied servicemen on leave.

The skin ailment scabies caused an issue for the Allies in Foggia. The CAO of the city made a request in February 1944 for sulphur and lime. The report indicated that scabies was 'rampant' in the city. The lime was to be used to clean the streets 'where filth had accumulated and even when cleaned was still a health hazard.' The officer was keen to point out 'that anything which causes widespread weakness among the men of Foggia definitely interferes with the military effort.'⁷⁵ This would hinder the war effort as many were employed by AMG. It is evident that no matter what disease occurred, the continual and consistent first priority was to ensure the health of the troops in Puglia. Often this was achieved by measures directed at civilians, as it was believed that this would prevent the spread of infection. Allied priority also applied to medical supplies.

⁷³E.S. Orpwood, zone commissioner to regional director of Public Health, 2 November 1944, 'Monthly report on sanitary services in the Bari zone', ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

⁷⁴Bari Chief Liaison Officer report to the Medico Provinciale, 27 March 1946, ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone (10210) Liaison Officer (119)\ 119-21, ACS.

⁷⁵Letter from CAO of Foggia to AMG Foggia Province regarding a request for sulphur and lime in February 1944, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

Medical Supplies

The prizes are different in each province. Italian drugs are sold more on the black market than in pharmacies.⁷⁶

This comment from an Allied report in the Bari zone is demonstrative of the lack of medical supplies throughout the region. Distribution of supplies was not on an equal scale across the province, with winners and losers depending on location. Furthermore, the black market was thriving, not only for the sale of household and food items, but also essential medical supplies. It can be suggested that the civilian marketeers acquired the supplies either through crime or from Allied troops themselves, hoping to make a quick profit.

The introduction of the new wonder drug penicillin in 1944 brought a public relations issue for the Allies. The Allies only had enough of penicillin to treat their own troops. However, Italians in Rome demanded that penicillin be made available for them too. This led to a public announcement, as the Allies felt that the situation had become an embarrassment. They were insistent that the drug was for the military and not for civilians. It was only to be given to civilians if 'their life is in danger and is of value to the Allies.' Indeed, the Allies foresaw:

It becoming a problem everywhere so needs to be taken up by the highest authorities and put into the lay press. Italians must be told that supply is inadequate for our armies and that civilians in UK and USA are also being denied.⁷⁷

This is indicative of the Allies presenting themselves as benevolent governors who were constrained by circumstances, such as lack of supplies. The statement that British and

⁷⁶E.S. Orpwood, zone commissioner to regional director of Public Health, 2 November 1944, 'Monthly report on sanitary services in the Bari zone,' ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

⁷⁷Four documents related to supplies of Penicillin, May 1945, WO204/3009, TNA.

American civilians were also denied penicillin was an attempt to demonstrate that the Italians were not treated any differently from the people of Allied home countries. The supply of medical provisions, the prevention and treatment of disease composed a significant part of the Allies' activities towards the population of Puglia. The large number of Allied servicemen in Puglia exposed them to a cornucopia of diseases present in the region. However, a group of diseases came from close physical contact between troops and Italian women, venereal disease. As the next chapter will show, the Allies devoted substantial efforts to combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Conclusion

The prevention and control of disease formed a fundamental part of the Allied occupation of Puglia. Upper Allied commanders were terrified of large groups of armed servicemen being felled by disease and consequently a programme of public health was instituted. The task presented to Allied public health, hygiene and medical personnel was a bleak one: Puglian cities suffered from a host of public health issues such as the breakdown of sewage facilities. These problems were tackled with vigour, but never quite completed, as both Italian civilians and troops continued to add to the problems by, for example, not disposing of rubbish effectively. The counterpart to improving public health was the control of infectious disease. A severe epidemic of malaria or any other infectious disease among both civilians and soldiers did not occur in the occupation of Puglia, or in fact in the occupation of Italy as a whole. The authorities were able to prevent a serious outbreak of malaria amongst Allied troops in arguably one of the most malarial areas of the peninsula. This was achieved through pro-active education and vehement continuous warnings about the disease, the introduction of more efficacious chemicals and fast and efficient plans in conjunction with Italian authorities to destroy the sources of mosquitoes. This framework was adapted and

implemented effectively to every disease present in the region. Comparably to other public health policies initiated during the occupation by the Allies, the core aim was to ensure the health of the troops, while Italians were a secondary concern. However, this did not mean that the Allied command ignored sickness amongst the local population. In fact, Italians were the complimentary targets of prevention measures to a lesser extent. For the troops to remain healthy it was paramount that they passed through or lived in a region with a healthy populace. This would ensure that malaria and other diseases such as typhus were not passed on to the armed forces. The Allied policy towards the control of disease in Puglia is indicative of how the Allies perceived their relationship with Italian civilians. The priority of the Allies was consistently and unequivocally the health of the troops, which in turn had an impact on the Allied war effort.

Chapter 5

Prostitution and Venereal Disease

War and prostitution have co-existed for centuries and the Italian campaign in the Second World War showed no exemption. In many ways, vice has consistently been viewed as the inevitable concomitant of soldiery and in fact ‘war always brings it on.’ In relation to the military, prostitution has been considered a necessary evil and a vital auxiliary service for the troops.¹ A health pamphlet for soldiers in 1944 detailed the rise in venereal disease (VD) rates. For example, the booklet claimed that, since the occupation of Sicily and southern Italy, the rate had ‘rocketed more than 20 times the rate in the UK. In December 1943 nearly 4,000 cases were admitted to hospital with VD. Italian women are causing as much damage to the Army as German men.’² Prostitution and control of venereal disease represented a significant aspect of the occupation of Puglia. The arrival of thousands of Allied troops into Puglia from September 1943 led to levels of prostitution and rates of venereal infection increasing exponentially. The extreme conditions caused by the conflict, such as real hunger, drove ‘respectable’ women to resort to prostitution as a means of survival.

The close associations of VD and prostitution with the military have led governments to seek to address the problem of prostitution as early as the eighteenth century. Parascandola argues that European governments that regulating prostitution was a better policy than trying to eliminate it. Concerns over the health of military personnel played a considerable role in this development. Consequently, ‘licensed’ houses of prostitution were established, with regular

¹Allan, M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 52. Lesley A. Hall, ‘War Always Brings it On: War STDs, the Military and the Civilian Population in Britain, 1850-1950’ in Roger Cooter, ‘Medicine and the Management of Modern Warfare’ in Cooter, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (eds), *Medicine and Modern Warfare* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 205-233. Edward H. Beardsley, ‘Allied Against Sin: American and British responses to Venereal Disease in World War I’, *Medical History*, 20, 1976, 190.

²Pamphlet ‘Armies exist to go to war- not to hospital’, GC/200/B.7/1, Wellcome Library.

medical examination of prostitutes. Berlin set up this system of regulation in the 1790s and Paris did the same at the turn of the nineteenth century.³ In nineteenth-century Britain the army was seen as a 'realm of its own', with its own concerns over VD. The Contagious Disease Acts of the 1860s were passed in the aftermath of the Crimean war and the revelations of the poor state of health and hygiene of the troops. Hall has shown that the figure for those admitted for VD stood at 394 per thousand, a figure equal to those admitted for tuberculosis, respiratory infection and fevers. Those Acts set up licensed brothels around port and garrison towns, operating in the same manner as those already established on the continent.⁴

The First World War presented the first major test for authorities in attempting to control VD. During the conflict, British, Dominion and American military leaders were confronted with the problem of troops frequenting prostitutes in France. Before the war, VD was considered a moral issue, subject to strict 'moral policing' by European society. However, Quétel argues that the First World War introduced the concept of specifically protecting health, ultimately meaning the 'fighting potential of the armed forces.' In terms of military medicine, there was a significant shift from an emphasis on surgery to 'sanitary science', denoting the responsibility of keeping the men fit and healthy. However, the moral edge to opposition did not cease to exist. In fact, Brandt demonstrates that in the charged atmosphere of war, the threat of VD to military efficiency was an equally important symbol of moral failure and social decay. In the US, the conscription draft at the beginning of the Second World War revealed the 'massive endemic nature' of the VD problem in the country.⁵

³John Parascandola, *Sex, Sin and Science: A History of Syphilis in America* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 9.

⁴Hall, 'War always brings it on,' 206-207.

⁵Mark Harrison, 'The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France and Egypt during the First World War', *Medical History*, 39, 1995, 135; Claude Quétel, *A History of Syphilis* (London: Polity Press, 1990), 188; Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 97, 52 and 77.

In France the system put in place for the control of prostitution at the turn of the nineteenth century was still in operation by the time of the Second World War. The *maisons de tolerance* by French law were open to all men, including foreign troops. However, the other *entente* powers had reservations about the effectiveness of the system in France. Both British and American authorities imposed sanctions on soldiers found with VD. For example, in the British army soldiers faced a stoppage of pay and cancelling of leave, the humiliating random inspections or so called ‘dangled parades’ and the threat of their next of kin being notified. This last practice was abandoned after 1916, when it led a soldier to commit suicide.⁶ Authorities also used propaganda directed at the moral consequences of relations with prostitutes, such as social stigma and the corruption of the soul, and they sought to provide soldiers with a range of other entertainments. Organised sport and alternative forms of recreation were instituted in order to promote ‘good clean fun.’⁷

Avoiding temptation and making use of the provided recreational activities became the cornerstone of the armed forces’ programme of lectures and series of booklets aimed at the troops both in the UK and France. For example, at the headquarters of Western Command in Chester in February 1915, twelve lectures took place to 8,766 troops. By March 1916 more than 750 lectures had taken place, reaching 500,000 soldiers.⁸ The topic headings of a sample talk given to lecturers offer an insight into the stance the army took on issues of venereal disease. The topics were as follows: self-restraint, evils of promiscuity, chastity, definitions of VD, prevention, cure, safeguards and temptations.⁹ These themes were consistently reproduced in the paraphernalia of booklets given to the troops. For instance, a booklet titled

⁶Harrison, ‘The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France’, 139.

⁷Ibid., and Beardsley, ‘Allied Against Sin’, 194.

⁸Minutes of military committee for combatting VD, 6 April 1915, SA/MWF/B.1/1 and booklet, ‘A cause of military inefficiency,’ SA/BSH/L.1, Number 6, Wellcome Library.

⁹Syllabus of Lecture, SA/BSH/L.1, Number 15, Wellcome Library.

‘A cause of military inefficiency’ suggested that the three best ways to stay healthy were to avoid alcohol, to go in for games and exercise, and to avoid filthy books or talk about filthy subjects.¹⁰ This also reveals the moral stigma behind sexuality in general.

With regards to the licensed houses themselves, the British and American authorities had contrasting ideas on how to react to legal prostitution in France during the First World War. Beardsley has suggested that the British had the habit of following the local customs of the country they were in, and thus they did not ban soldiers outright from using the ‘houses of tolerance.’ For example, Harrison shows how French cities came to offer two forms of brothels to cater for the requirements of the military. A blue light signified the ‘deluxe’ establishment for officers and the tawdrier establishment for the troops was indicated by a red light. He comments that these businesses were checked twice weekly, but that this was often spurious at best.¹¹ However, controlled prostitution was still not favoured on British soil after the war, and the authorities had little faith in regulation. For example, the Medical Women’s Federation published a report of their conference held in December 1919 on the role of the state and VD. The group was determined in their conviction that:

All systems of regulation that have been tried have proved failures and the method is hardly likely to be revived. The Prostitutes examined are never more than a small fraction of those carrying on the trade of illicit intercourse.¹²

An interwar pamphlet by *The Shield* (a magazine produced by the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene) concurred with the early beliefs of the Women’s Federation. The author

¹⁰ ‘A cause of military inefficiency’, SA/BSH/L.1, Wellcome Library.

¹¹Beardsley, ‘Allied Against Sin’, 195; Harrison, ‘The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France’, 142-143.

¹²‘Some Suggestions as to the Duty of the State in the Control of Venereal Disease’, Medical Women’s Federation, December 1919, SA/MWF/B/4/7, Wellcome Library.

Douglas White, believed medical examination of regulated prostitutes was ‘short, hurried and medically useless,’ deeming that ‘sex with a loose woman was damaging to the character of both’ and that ‘every prostitute after a while becomes infected.’¹³ This is evidence that in the 1920s moral issues were still in the foreground of opposition to prostitution and VD.

Conversely, in the First World War the Americans declared all establishments ‘off limits’, and soldiers found frequenting brothels could be subject to court martial.¹⁴ This outright ban caused friction with the French authorities, as it was considered an insult to the French people. The French tried to persuade the US to remove the ban by suggesting that all houses be equipped with prophylactics, but the Americans objected from a moral point of view.¹⁵ This argument reflects the difference in sexual mores at the time. However, in the latter years of the First World War, the Americans and the New Zealand command became committed to supplying men with prophylactic kits, in order to prevent disease. British and French efforts were not as organised or effective, and it was argued at the time that they seemed resigned to the problem.¹⁶ However, by the outbreak of the Second World War, the British were committed to the use of prophylactics to prevent VD and they formed a cornerstone of their efforts against it. In Italy, the Allies were faced with a similar situation to the one they had encountered in France between 1914 and 1918.

In Italy, by the time of the Second World War, a system of legal prostitution was in place (brothels were legalised by the Cavour regulation in 1860). The Italian law recognised three types of prostitute: those living in licensed houses or brothels, those living outside licensed houses on a ‘ticket’ scheme, and clandestine/illegal prostitutes. The women in brothels were

¹³Douglas White, MD, ‘The Potency of Sex for Good or Evil’, *The Shield*, GC/25/A.6, Wellcome Library.

¹⁴Harrison, ‘The British Army and the Problem of Venereal Disease in France’, 143.

¹⁵Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 106.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 97.

subject to regular medical examination and testing. In the second group, the 'ticket' holders were also subject to police supervision and routine investigation every two days. If a soliciting woman was stopped by the authorities and could not produce a ticket, she could be prosecuted. All infected went to the '*sala clinica*,' the specialist treatment ward for prostitutes with VD.¹⁷ This system of regulation and medical testing was comparable to the system operating in France in the First World War. In both cases, it was assumed that by thorough and frequent medical testing, VD would not be passed on to patrons. However, this system was often inefficient and did not stop diseases from being spread. Illegal prostitutes constituted the major anxiety for the Allies, as it was appreciably more difficult to know whether they carried a disease or infection. During the Allied occupation, numerous women who would have never considered prostitution as a career were driven to it by unremitting circumstances. Repeatedly these women operated either on the streets or from their own home, if it was still habitable. AMG was aware of this phenomenon. Extracts from a report dated 8 January 1944 on an investigation into the prevalence of VD amongst troops in Italy, conducted by Consultant Venereologist Brigadier R. Lees, revealed that the Allies understood the impact of social and economic conditions in forcing women to resort to prostitution:

The rapid amelioration of social and economic conditions with relief to starvation and hardships in occupied countries is important, for, at present, many women in ITALY are driven to prostitution to support themselves and their families. This problem is not peculiar to present areas but will be met in every occupied country with resultant increase in VD, and adequate preparation must be made in advance.¹⁸

¹⁷Public Health sub-commission report on VD control, 9 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

¹⁸Venereal Disease report by Brigadier V. J. E. Westropp, 8 January 1944, WO204/3009, TNA. Capital letters in the original.

At this stage the Allies appeared to believe that the appeal of servicemen to prostitutes was not as influential. That is not to say that Italian women and prostitutes were not affected by what has been called 'khaki fever' or the peculiar charm and glamour that surround men in uniform.¹⁹ American soldiers in particular fit this mold, due to their higher wages and levels of rations. The reason why the Allies were concerned about the severe situation faced by Italian civilians was the impact and implications it could have on their personnel, and consequently on the military campaign. This view is consistent with the ways in which the Allied Command perceived measures to counteract Italian social, economic and medical issues.

Upon arrival in Puglia the AMG authorities were frustrated with the system in operation for the medical inspection and treatment of prostitutes. An AMG monthly report for January 1944 on VD stated that:

Treatment clinics are located in all the important communes of region 2 but the system of treatment used by Italian physicians is considered below what prevails in other countries. Also, the treatment schedules for both gonorrhoea and syphilis are quite inadequate as measured by American standards.²⁰

Little improvement had occurred in Lecce by November 1944, when the physician in charge of treating prostitutes dismissed them after two days of observation, without 'having taken blood for test or a vaginal smear.'²¹ Throughout the Allied occupation it appears that Allied public health officers found the VD control activities of the Italian authorities far from

¹⁹Hall, 'War Always Brings it On', 213; Quétel, *A History of Syphilis*, 232.

²⁰AMG Monthly report, January 1944, WO204/2599, TNA; Public Health report for February 1944, 9 March 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health (163)\345, ACS.

²¹ Zone Commissioner monthly report on sanitary services in the Bari zone to Regional Director of public health, 2 November 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-167, ACS.

acceptable. This view persisted even when it may have been considered that there was some improvement.²² In the summer of 1944, one officer lamented that:

As long as the people of Italy consider venereal disease with the present attitude, little will be done towards control. The hospital programs started though the influence of ACC has been carried out with constant hammering by Allied officers but it felt that it will be discontinued as soon as that incentive is removed.²³

Another officer vehemently concluded: 'it seems that we fuss and cuss but the Italian does not seem to care how much venereal disease he has and how much it is spread around.'²⁴ This comment was conceivably borne out either of frustration at the lack of effort from the Italian authorities or of a negative personal view of Italian society more generally.

The Allies formed a whole host of measures and regulations designed to prevent and control the spread of VD among both Italian prostitutes and Allied servicemen during the occupation of Puglia. Numerous efforts were taken by the Allied authorities to dissuade troops from frequenting prostitutes. Furthermore, many of the Allies' preventative measures were targeted at prostitutes themselves, which caused momentous consequences for their lives.

²² Headquarters of Region 2 report on VD control to director of Public Health Sub-Commission, 15 July 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

²³ ACC HQ Region 2 PH report for August 1944, 2 September 1944, VD Control, ACC Microfilms, PH reports (163)\345, ACS.

²⁴ HQ Region 2- VD control to director of PH SUB-COM, 15 July 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

Prevention

‘The entry of the United States into the Second World War gave the anti-venereal campaign its second wind.’²⁵ This second wind was reflected in the array of measures put in place by the American and British authorities. Although prostitution was legal in Italy, the Allies immediately closed down the legal brothels operating in Puglia upon their arrival into the region. All brothels, legal or illegal were placed ‘out of bounds’ or ‘off limits’ to the troops. However, in the port city of Bari in July 1944, the ‘ticket’ scheme was still in operation and had not been successfully closed down.²⁶ This was because local Allied officers were sometimes less inclined to repress prostitution, as the higher command would have wished. For instance, an American CAO’s report on VD in Foggia dated 12 December 1943 stated that all brothels had been closed down and women found soliciting soldiers would be arrested and taken to a military doctor for examination. However, the report asked for a clearer stance on whether or not to allow brothels to function. He suggested:

We can do something reasonable to control the situation if we have a licensed house, by setting a prophylactic station adjacent to the brothel and posting police to see that users of the brothels automatically become users of the prophylactic station. This course would put the ‘pimp’ out of business in a town like Foggia.²⁷

The author of the report preferred the Italian system of regulation and control of licensed premises and believed that it would be more effective than a repressive crack down on all forms of soliciting. This is evidence that grassroots personnel did not always agree with the

²⁵Quetel, *A History of Syphilis*, 192.

²⁶HQ Region 2 VD Control Report to PH sub-commission, 15 July 1944, ACC MICROFILMS, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

²⁷CA Report, VD and the sale of wine, 12 December 1943, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACS.

policies of AMG and sought to alter them if possible. It is perhaps also indicative of the older belief that prostitution performs a necessary service for the army.

Only in May 1945 did legal brothels in Foggia reopen for the use of Italian men, following an appeal by the Italian medical officer for Foggia. The officer stated that there had been an increase in VD amongst the civilian population since the closure of the brothels. He suggested that troops could use them at certain appointed hours, but similarly to the request from December 1943, this received a negative response. The Allied documentation shows that AMG believed that Italian men had a right, under Italian law, to have brothels at their disposal and to resort freely to them. The Lieutenant Colonel of the area reopened the five state run brothels in a letter dated 1 May 1945, but was adamant that the brothels would be places out of bounds to troops, and requested a list of the names and addresses of the legal brothels. To begin with, 56 prostitutes were employed by the brothels and were medically checked daily at the hospital.²⁸

The higher echelons of the Allied command realised prior the invasion that placing brothels off limits would not deter all servicemen. A memorandum to Acting joint staff planners on 24 August 1943, entitled 'Notes on venereal disease control programs in occupied areas' shows the ideas and measures that were to be put in place:

The army is committed to the policy of repressing prostitution [...] it is very doubtful that a program of repression will succeed in those countries [where prostitution is legal]. Activities designed for the protection of troops should be limited to the troops themselves. First, putting all segregated prostitutes districts out of bounds to military

²⁸See Liaison officer in Bari to 54 Area Commander, 30 April 1945, and Lt Col of 54 Area to Liaison officer in Bari, 1 May 1945, ACC Microfilms, Liaison Officer (119)\72,73 and 86, ACS.

personnel; second adequate military policing of streets to reduce clandestine prostitution [...] third, the establishment of prophylactic stations as conveniently as possible [...] fourth the issuing of individual prophylactic packets free of charge to all personnel upon request.²⁹

This planning directive emphasises that before their arrival in Italy, the Allies were dedicated to protecting the health of troops. The prime reason for this concern was to protect their fighting capacity. It also displays that they had minor confidence in the medical inspection of prostitutes and thought that troops should be the sole targets of prevention. This was to be achieved through the four measures outlined in the memo. However, it was not considered that the men might fail to use the prophylactic station or request prophylactics before or after their encounter with a prostitute. Risks of human error did not deter the higher command from their steadfast belief in the effectiveness of prophylactics. This was supported by medical professionals such as S. A. Mackeith, consultant psychiatrist for the Allied forces, who stated in propaganda material on prophylactics that soldiers were unlikely to increase promiscuity as some believed.³⁰ For example, the British Medical Women's Federation was resolute in their faith that the publicising of prophylactics was 'an official sanction of illicit intercourse.'³¹ Further evidence of this commitment can be found thanks to figures provided by Toshiyuki Tanaka: on 29 September 1942 100,000 packets of condoms and 150,000 chemical units were sent out from New York to unspecified destinations; this was followed on 2 October 1942 by another shipment of 55,000 packets of condoms and 165,000 chemical

²⁹Memorandum to Acting joint staff planners received from CA division Washington DC, 24 August 1943, ACC Microfilms, AMG (100)\408-409, ACS.

³⁰S. A. Mackeith, 'Some comments on the VD problem in an expeditionary force', GC/135/B1/3, Wellcome Library.

³¹Statement by Medical Women's Federation, Sub-commission on VD book, SA/MWF/A.4/10, Wellcome Library.

units.³² In the US army, free preventatives were used in conjunction with regulations that required all personnel to undergo monthly physical examination, including for signs of VD. However, what checks were carried out was left to surgeons to decide at their posts, meaning that not all areas had thorough and effective inspection techniques.³³

The Allied military government similarly equated the over indulgence of wine and other alcoholic beverages with an increased probability of troops deciding to visit a prostitute. Indeed, drunkenness was considered a major contributing factor.³⁴ Moreover, a hygiene and public health report dated 27 February 1944 stated that ‘the drunken soldier does not bother about precautions’ and that ‘in too many Italian towns the brothel and the vino shop are the cheeriest places a soldier can go!’³⁵ Therefore, the authorities took steps to limit the availability of wine for troops. In fact, as early as December 1943, wine shops in Foggia were placed under the control of the local garrison command and were obligated to close at 19:00 hours.³⁶ A letter to the *Questura*, concerning the sale of wine is evidence of the measures instituted by the military:

The British Military Commander has expressed grave concern that various businesses that do not normally stock wines for sale are now being permitted to sell wine, and instructs that this practice shall cease forthwith. An order is being published prohibiting members of the Allied Forces purchasing wine in bottles or larger quantities. Members of the Allied forces in possession of wine in bottles will be

³²Toshiyuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2001), 90.

³³Parascandola, *Sex, Sin and Science*, 102.

³⁴ Mackeith, ‘Some comments on the VD problem.’

³⁵Hygiene and public health report, 27 February 1944, WO204/6629, TNA; and, again, Mackeith, ‘Some comments on the VD problem.’

³⁶CA Report, VD and the sale of wine, 12 December 1943, ACC Microfilms, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115) ACS.

apprehended by the CMP and the wine confiscated and destroyed [...] only wine merchants and dry grocery stores are permitted to sell wine. That cafes and restaurants which are in bounds' to Allied troops sell wine for consumption [...] on the premises only. That firm punishment will be inflicted on civilians, who sell wine to Allied troops in their houses, or in the neighbourhood of camps.

Correspondingly in Taranto, the manufacture of ice cream and orange and lemon squash was prepared in the canteens, throughout the warmer months. This formed an attempt to persuade troops to avoid wine and choose healthier beverages.³⁷

In the case of any public health problem, non-medical factors such as organised education and methods of enforcement also assumed vital roles. The Allied methodical education programme was measured equally essential in the fight against VD. The main aim of the programme was to persuade troops to avoid sexual activity, but also to provide servicemen with information on sexual health and hygiene, and on preventatives.³⁸ Less pronounced than during the First World War was the assertion in propaganda of the morality of sex. For example, a pamphlet for soldiers in the tropics stated that: 'a clean mind and clean thoughts are essential if you really wish to keep fit. Fellows who are governed by unclean sexual desire, are soon led to the risk of infection.'³⁹ Condoms were issued, films shown, lectures given and postcards distributed. Moreover, the Allied military government sought to set up adequate provision for recreation on military reservations to lessen the need to visit civilian

³⁷Letter to Questura on the sale of wine, 29 April 1944 and copy of a letter Lt Col of 54 area to 46 and 59 town mayors on the sale of wine to Allied forces, 28 April 1944. ACC Microfilms, Bari Zone General (115)28 Relations with Italians, ACS. One report also suggested the availability of diluted beer would be beneficial in military canteens as it would remind troops of home and therefore make it less likely that they would visit a brothel. See Mackeith, 'Some comments on the VD problem.'

³⁸See posters by Stacey Hopper, closed stores numbers 584231i, 584232i, 585150i and 584288i, Wellcome Library.

³⁹Health memoranda for British soldiers in the tropics, RAMC762/8(1), Wellcome Library.

communities. The US army employed factors of intelligence, pride, patriotism and above all fear to motivate men to use the knowledge given. Parascandola states that ‘the army education program was viewed as a continuing effort from when the soldier was inducted until he was discharged.’⁴⁰ The documentary evidence supports this view, as an abundance of material exists to demonstrate the continuous Allied effort to educate their personnel. For example, in the case of the invasion of the Italian mainland, education began before the offensive.

‘A Soldiers’ Guide to Italy’ was distributed to both American and British troops before the assault of the Italian mainland on 9 September 1943. The pamphlet was divided into two parts; part one was intended to outline the essential facts and information that soldiers were supposed to need, and part two was devised to provide less important day-to-day knowledge about the country and only ‘for those who are interested.’ This section included history, Mussolini and the Fascists, and the Catholic Church. The section on contacts with women (in section two) is indicative of the Allied education programme:

Ever since entering military your service have been warned about the dangers of venereal disease. This warning has sometimes taken the form of telling you to stay away from women; at other times, you have been cautioned frankly that if you do cohabit with strange women, you should do the necessary thing as soon as possible-report at the BLUE LIGHT and get a prophylactic treatment. Once stepped over the line, there is no way to safeguard your health, your future and the reputation of your organisation. There are many warm looking attractive women in Italy. Prostitution was common in peacetime. The conditions of the war are certain to have increased the

⁴⁰Hall, ‘War always brings it on’, 214; Parascandola, *Sex, Sin and Science*, 103.

number of easy women on the street. But all that has been said about the dangers of fraternization applies with special emphasis to consorting with a ‘pick up’ in Italy.

The section further warned that the type of woman ‘who approaches you on the street in Italy’ and says:

‘Please give me a cigarette!’ isn’t looking for a smoke. Yet that first touch may lead to major indiscretions that will endanger many of your comrades and bring a final disgrace upon your own head. Venereal disease is not the only danger arising from such associations in enemy country. Relaxed morals breed loose talk.⁴¹

This pamphlet was produced shortly before the Armistice of 8 September 1943, when the soldiers were about to enter enemy territory: this is the principal reason why the pamphlet was so firm in its denunciation of loose talk. The information presented served as a reminder to troops not to forget the education and warnings that they had been given. Fear was used to influence soldiers’ decisions and was considered most effectual.

Education continued throughout the occupation. For example, the week beginning on 9 April 1944 was named ‘Health Week’; articles on health matters appeared in the British *Union Jack* magazine, and officers and instructors talked to troops about the prevention of disease, particularly malaria, dysentery and VD. The latter was decreasing at this time, but still presented a threat to the health of servicemen.⁴² However, the effectiveness of this ‘health week’ must not be overestimated. Mackeith specified that a scientific study by the number one Biological Research Section revealed that the increase in knowledge was ‘perceptible not

⁴¹‘A Soldier’s Guide to Italy’, FO898/479, TNA.

⁴²For documents about the magazine and the organization of ‘Health Week’ see ‘Medical Policy’, April 1944, WO204/6629, TNA.

remarkable.⁴³ Films were likewise shown regularly to instruct the soldiers. For instance, the US Public Health Service Film *Sex Hygiene*, the most famous and most widely used, was shown on a parade basis. Directed by John Ford and produced by Darryl F. Zanuck in 1941, the film tells the story of Pete, a soldier who has sex with a prostitute and contracts a venereal disease. The film shows graphic images of the effects of secondary and tertiary syphilis in order to encourage the men to make a different choice from Pete. Although a film used by the US Navy, *The Story of D.E733* (1945) carried the same message, focusing on a group of sailors who failed to use the condoms that had been issued when visiting a prostitute and thus developed VD. Parascandola has shown how 'racist attitudes were reflected in venereal disease policies in the (US) military.' Black troops were given limited recreational facilities near civilian bases, the education programme was inadequate to meet their needs and a strong defeatist attitude persisted amongst commanding officers regarding VD and black servicemen. Furthermore, films such as *Easy to Get* featured an authoritarian white male voice over and depicted scenes of 'black sexual excess.'⁴⁴ Racial stereotypes endured at occupation ground level in Puglia. A VD report to the Public Health sub-commission of Allied Control Commission (ACC) for Bari in July 1944 complained that an examining room for inspecting suspected infected prostitutes was located in a building used by a company of 'colored American soldiers.'⁴⁵

Despite attempts at control, venereal disease remained an issue. The annual health statistics for the Allied armies in 1943 concerning VD was as follows: gonorrhoea 4750, syphilis, 765, chancroid, 1366, lymphogranuloma 8 and other forms of disease 5379. These figures

⁴³Mackeith, 'Some comments on the VD problem.' See also 'Health Week', *Union Jack* magazine, 5 April 1944, RAMC651/3, Wellcome Library.

⁴⁴Parascandola, *Sex, Sin and Science*, 103-107.

⁴⁵HQ Region 2 VD Control Report to Director of Public Health Sub-Commission, 15 July 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

combined came to a total of 12,268.⁴⁶ It could then be suggested that the figure could have been much higher, as it is possible that some men did not realize that they were infected, or chose to seek medical help from outside the armed forces, or military doctors may have not been able to record all of the cases seen. In Puglia numbers of infected servicemen persisted as a problem. Figures of infection in September 1944 stood in Bari at 105, in Brindisi at 29, in Foggia at 11 and in Taranto at 51.⁴⁷ Prior to their arrival in Puglia, the Allied authorities sought to concentrate their preventative procedures on men. However, it was soon apparent that in reality this would not be enough to stem the rising VD rates.

The Treatment of Women

The role played by prostitutes in the transmission of syphilis was emphasized from the moment the disease appeared in Europe in 1495.⁴⁸ This close connection between prostitutes and VD was as strong as ever in the occupation of Puglia centuries later. Notwithstanding initial plans to concentrate preventative efforts on men from contracting a venereal disease, Italian prostitutes in Puglia became the counterpart targets of the Allied command's desire to eradicate the threat of VD from the armed forces. It was understood that no amount of education and free preventatives would discourage all servicemen from frequenting prostitutes. Therefore, if they could ensure that the women were free of disease, this would minimise the risk for soldiers. The policy adopted by the Allied military government was one of compulsory medical examination and hospitalization. The Public Health section of the occupation government met frequently to discuss the progress and success of these policies. For example:

⁴⁶Annual Health Statistics, 29 February 1944, WO204/6629, TNA.

⁴⁷Appendix 'Diseases', Public Health Sub-Commission area 56, 2 November 1944, WO204/2600, TNA.

⁴⁸Quetel, *A History of Syphilis*, 211.

A meeting was held in Bari for a discussion of the VD problem in areas where allied troops are stationed. It was decided to request Italian authorities to provide hospital beds for the segregation, examination and treatment of all women suspected of having a venereal disease. The Military Police [...] are to cooperate in locating and picking up all women who loiter around camps or streets suspected of prostitution. An interpretation of Italian law is being forwarded from ACC HQ to cover the legal side of the problem.⁴⁹

The meeting in Bari in effect reinstated the supervisory system that had operated before the occupation. The setting up of VD hospitals was a central task for officers assigned to the Public Health division. At the beginning of 1944, the facilities already in place for VD control by the Italian authorities were deemed inadequate and insufficient.⁵⁰ Subsequently, the Allied government and the Italian authorities embarked on a mission to set up and supply as many VD hospitals for women as possible in the region. A public health report dated 6 April 1944 on a public health committee meeting on the issue stated that:

In co-operation with the Allied armies stationed in this region, a program of hospitalization of prostitutes has been adopted. Hospital beds have been provided in most of the large centres where the problem is most acute. To date the number of beds available is inadequate.⁵¹

⁴⁹Public Health report for February 1944, 9 March 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health (163)\345, ACS.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Public health report, 6 April 1944, ACC Microfilms, Public Health (163)\345, ACS.

By June of that year VD hospitals, run in the majority by Italian staff, had been set up in Bari, Lecce, Molfetta, Barletta and Taranto. A report dated 15 June 1944 stated that Bari had 160 beds, but in order to carry out the proper 'instructions' on how to manage a VD hospital, the number should have been 500. A complaint was heard that out of 712 unregistered prostitutes who had been apprehended by law forces in district 2 during June only 273 were infected. This was a rate of 38%, which was considered low in the report. The report specified that some women who were named as infected by Allied soldiers were found free of infection. The hospital in Taranto 'had enlarged their department to 90 beds by moving the maternity cases to another institution.' Regardless of its limited space, the VD ward in Taranto still had 36 new cases of infection in July, while six women were tested and found free of infection. On average, each woman spent 15 days in hospital and 50 patients were admitted on the last day of that month. The situation at Lecce was considered more favourable than other VD wards, as the ward had 100 beds available and all of them were occupied at all times. The hospital at Molfetta had only VD patients in June; however, the physical condition of the hospital was not considered suitable for confinement, although the report stated that the physician in charge of treatment was efficient. In June, at the Barletta hospital 10 patients were examined, and only one had syphilis. It was suggested the Italian government VD officer made more frequent visits to these treatment centres.⁵²

However, none of these figures were deemed sufficient; in particular, concern was expressed about the situation in Brindisi, where after six months of attempting to set up a hospital, no suitable space had been found:

⁵²See HQ Region 2 to director of Public Health sub-commission, 15 July 1944, and SS. Annunziata Civil Hospital, Taranto hospital monthly figures for VD ward for July 1944, from 1 August 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

The problem of hospitalization of prostitutes in Brindisi Province has not been solved to the satisfaction of the Allied Military forces in this area. In the past hospitalization has been furnished by the provinces of Lecce and Bari but at present there are no further accommodations available in these locations.⁵³

In September 1944 the situation had not improved:

It is regretted that the control of prostitutes in Brindisi is so bad. All effort has been made the past six months, to provide hospitalization [...] but space was not available. *Medico Provinciale* assured office that all infected women would be sent to Lecce for hospitalization. *Questura* is responsible for disposition of all cases of infected prostitutes.⁵⁴

Consequently, women in need of treatment were sent to either Taranto or Lecce for care. There was no thought or concern about sending these women far from their homes and families. For example, in June 1944 prostitutes from surrounding areas were being taken to Taranto for treatment, although the number of beds available in Taranto was strictly limited. An approach to the Provincial Commissioner of Brindisi was made by public health officials to ask him to make available a 50-bedded hospital that was currently staffed but kept empty and available for the reception of air raid casualties. Interestingly, in the appeal to release the hospital it was argued that in the event of an air raid, the prostitutes would have been immediately evacuated.⁵⁵ A similar attitude was shown in the case of the *Sala Clinica* of Bari VD hospital: when it was damaged in the explosion of April 1945, no consideration to the

⁵³ Region II Provincial Commissioner's report on hospitals in Brindisi for prostitutes 22 June 1944, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

⁵⁴ ACC Bari Zone Public Health report on the control of prostitution, 8 September 1944, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

⁵⁵ Taranto Hospital report, 17 June 1944, ACC Microfilms, Taranto Zone (10250) General (115)\65 VD, ACS.

welfare of the patients was contemplated. They were simply to be moved throughout the whole region:

[VD hospital] was half destroyed for the explosion in the port. Many efforts have been made but the sanitary authorities could not find any arrangements for the 150 women who were in the hospital [...] In the meantime some of the women have been sent to Barletta and Molfetta, some have remained in Bari. Another sala clinica (40-50 beds) will be arranged in the hospital of Modugno. *Questura* has asked the authorities of Brindisi, Foggia, Lecce and Taranto if any arrangement is possible.⁵⁶

A letter from public health officer for the Bari Zone Captain Jones to the Regional Public health officer of the Southern Region provides insights into the conditions for women in the VD hospitals and wards. With reference to the hospital in Bari he specified:

Some wards have only one blanket per bed other wards none at all. Neither the Land Forces sub-com no AC authorities can supply the hospital. One alternative that may clarify the situation is [to provide] fuel to for central heating of this hospital. There is only one floor to be heated to effect 130 patients. One reason for trying to effect some sort of warmth into this place is to make these patients at least comfortable and try to end the series of escapes, which when they do occur they are sabotaging the war effort by going back on the streets and preying on the troops. The amount of fuel which would be needed will not be very large.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Medico Provinciale to CAO Bari, 6 May 1945, ACC Microfilms, Liaison Officer (119)\72,73 and 86, ACS.

⁵⁷Bari Zone, Captain Jones to Regional Public health officer Southern Region Naples, 27 December 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

This was not the first appeal to the authorities for more blankets for the hospital. In fact, reports by Captain Jones from both October and November 1944 asked for more blankets and a general increase in supplies: 'The quantity of medical supplies sent by the Allies is too small for hospitals.' Moreover, problems with a lack of drugs had occurred in the region from the early phases of the occupation. Treatment in the Taranto hospital was stopped in January 1944 due to a lack of sulphur drugs.⁵⁸ The more direct appeal from Captain Jones is perhaps reflective of the desperation he felt after he received no positive response, and it was now well into the winter season. His concern for the women appeared genuine. It can be argued that he used the argument that the escapees mentioned in the quote were potential saboteurs of the war effort as a tactic to persuade the authorities to provide the extra blankets.

Bari was not the only VD ward from which women escaped. In the Molfetta hospital, eleven prostitutes escaped in October 1944, and a further eight in November. Captain Jones stated in a report that this issue had been occurring since September 1944, and whilst both the Allied and Italian authorities had been informed no arrangement had been made to watch the prostitutes in the hospitals.⁵⁹ With reference to the treatment of prostitutes under the Contagious Disease Acts of the nineteenth century, Lesley Hall argued that women were treated with a severity more appropriate to martial law than civil legislation, being subjected to compulsory medical examination and incarcerated in 'Lock hospitals.'⁶⁰ There is space to suggest that the experience of Italian prostitutes during the occupation of Puglia did not differ from that of British prostitutes almost one hundred years earlier. The living and hygiene conditions had improved, but the women were not there of their own volition and were not permitted to leave.

⁵⁸ See above and Report 'Civilians and VD in Taranto', 12 January 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

⁵⁹ Monthly report on sanitary services in the Bari zone-26 October 1944, Captain Jones letter on VD hospital in Molfetta, 3 November 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\17-18, ACS.

⁶⁰ Hall, 'War always brings it on', 207.

Reports of shortages of medical and essential supplies, as well as both attempted and successful escapes, suggest that the VD hospital was not a comforting place for the women. It was not the case that all women, both prostitutes and non-prostitutes admitted to the hospitals during the occupation were miserable; nevertheless, it appears that many were not happy with their internment. Some patients felt their treatment so severe that they appealed to the Allies for help. For example, an appeal for improved treatment by the women at the Bari hospital was addressed on 31 August 1944 to the command of the American Police. Extracts of the letter include:

We are treated like slaves by our doctors, who behave like dogs. We can't speak a word, at once we are slapped and get foot kicks and they put us into the well. They put 3 or 4 girls together in one bed, so that if one has a disease the others must get it. They keep us in for two or three months without curing us. As to food some days they don't even give us soup. Unfortunate girls have to starve. As to hygiene we better not talk of that, because there is no cleanness at all. Now we beg you as you are gentle and good.

This appeal from the patients is extreme in terms of the nature of their treatment and distress in the ward under Italian personnel. This letter prompted an investigation by Captain Jones and an Italian doctor, who concluded that: 'the women have reasonable food consisting of bread and milk in the morning, soup with pasta, vegetables and bread for lunch and soup with bread for supper. Meat is also provided sometimes.' The pair concluded that although not up to the highest standards, the levels of hygiene, food and treatment were not as alleged in the

letter.⁶¹ The appeal from the women cannot be taken at face value, as it seems that there was an underlying purpose to their appeal. Perhaps the women thought it necessary to exaggerate the situation in order to bring about an inquiry at all. Moreover, it can be suggested that the women felt aggrieved at their compulsory internment and labeling as social degenerates.

The enforced confinement of women did not distress only the women themselves; their children were also affected. The Italian *Ministero dell'Interno* sent out instructions in June 1944 on how to deal with the children of prostitutes:

The ministry has been notified that frequently prostitutes cared for in VD wards are obliged to keep their children with them during their stay, for lack of anyone to care for the children.

This was believed to be harmful to the children themselves because of 'the serious moral effect which they may have on the minds of children often in an impressionable stage of development.' Therefore, care had to be arranged for the children in question in the most suitable institution available. The ministry was firm in their position that the children must be returned to the mothers when the latter were released from hospital.⁶² The moral effects of staying in a VD hospital were considered greater than separation from the mother to the immediate comfort of the child. The authorities were anxious about the long-term moral effects of such an environment. However, the consequences of being separated from their mothers and siblings and moved to an unfamiliar new setting would have been traumatic too. There was also no consideration as to the effect on mothers when forcibly separated from

⁶¹A copy of an appeal from the girls at the Bari hospital for better treatment, 31 August 1944, Zone commissioner Bari, 8 October 1944, ACC Microfilms, Naples Zone (10260) Public Health (163)\165-67, ACS.

⁶²Appendix- MDI- Assistance to children of Prostitutes in VD hospitals, Salerno, 17 June 1944, ACC Microfilms, Publications (134)\147, ACS.

their children. Conceivably, this was a contributing factor to why women attempted to escape from the hospitals.

Conclusion

Measures akin to what a repressive regime would implement were used to defeat maladies, specifically in the case of VD. Forced hospitalisation of prostitutes and separation from their children demonstrated that the women's health and emotional distress was secondary to the needs of the armed forces. Harrison has argued that associations with vice and intemperance blackened the reputation of Allied forces. Such considerations were acknowledged as important as they could make relations between Allied forces and civilian administrations awkward.⁶³ However, this was not the key reason behind Allied efforts. The Allied military government considered the threat of venereal disease to the troops as sufficiently serious to implement a variety of programs targeted at both servicemen and women in Puglia. For men, this consisted of continuous education, the setting up of prophylactic stations and the handing out of kits, placing all places of prostitution out of bounds. However, this was not enough to prevent venereal disease from becoming an issue. Hence, women became the complementary targets of Allied efforts. Medical inspection and hospitalization were not new to established legal prostitutes, but illegal prostitutes, who showed an exponential increase brought about by the war, perceived these measures as heavy handed.

⁶³ Harrison, 'Sex and the Citizen Soldier, Health, Morals and Discipline in the British Army during the Second World War', in Cooter, Harrison and Sturdy, *Medicine and Modern Warfare*, 243.

Chapter 6

Crime

During the Second World War the Allies fought to end the dominance of Fascism and totalitarianism in Europe. However, this does not mean that all Allied soldiers were virtuous and all Axis troops immoral. Both sides were responsible for criminal acts against civilians. The brutality of the Wehrmacht during the German occupation of Italy is well known.¹ Although Allied personnel did not commit atrocities on the same scale as the Germans, they did partake in a variety of criminal acts against the Italian population during the occupation.² Lilly has described this phenomenon as the ‘dark underbelly’ of US military participation in the conflict, but it can also be applied to British and colonial forces.³ The image of the Allied soldier as a criminal has not yet entered public imagination. Lilly explains that in the US: ‘While the public imagines the US soldier in Vietnam engaging in a broad range of criminal activities, it does not usually think of the World War II GIs as looters, robbers, murderers, or rapists.’⁴ Chianese establishes how civilians were subjected to intimidation, theft, robbery, sexual violence and (more rarely) homicide. The behavior of the perpetrators was characterized by the arrogance of victory, over the submission of the defeated enemy.⁵ The study of crime in Allied-occupied areas complicates the picture of the Allies as benevolent

¹See for example Klinkhammer, *L’occupazione tedesca in Italia. 1943-1945*; Paolo Pezzino, *Anatomia di un massacro. Controversia sopra una strage tedesca* (Bologna : Il Mulino, 2007) and *Memory and Massacre: Revisiting Sant’Anna di Stazzema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012); Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

² With the exception of the mass rapes committed by French Free Forces, which occurred outside of Puglia. See Gribaudo *Guerra Totale* and Baris *Tra Due Fuochi*.

³Robert. J. Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 13.

⁴*Ibid.*, 75. From the 1990s in particular, debates have surrounded the role of the Allied strategic bombing campaign and whether it can be considered as a war crime. See for example Eric Markusen and David Kopf, *The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing: Genocide and Total War in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

⁵*Ibid.*, 120-121.

liberators and shows the tensions that existed in a protracted period of time of an occupied society. Allied crime is a little explored issue that demands further investigation.

Isobel Williams surveyed the Allied occupation from the point of view of the maintenance of law and order in Sicily and Southern Italy. She investigates murder, theft, the black market and public order and the steps taken to control them.⁶ In particular Chapter 2 of her thesis concentrates on the structures and training of the Allied police. Chapter 3 focuses on crime committed by the Allied troops and the judicial consequences. Williams argues that crimes committed by servicemen came to be known as ‘soldier trouble’ and that they fell into five categories: general misdemeanors, rape and murder, multiple episodes of rape, pillage and absenteeism.⁷ Williams reminds us that alcohol played a role in the motivations for Allied crime; hence the military authorities took steps to try and limit the consumption of large amounts of strong alcohol by the troops.⁸ Looting was also widespread and the authorities often turned a blind eye to anything not too blatant.⁹ Williams has widened the field of enquiry in terms of the Allied occupation by exploring issues frequently ignored. She has examined the widespread Allied and Italian crime in Sicily and the South of Italy and the steps taken by both the Allied and Italian authorities to police the problem. However, her work concentrates on Sicily and Campania, and rarely mentions Puglia. In addition, Williams does not use any local archives in her research, but focuses on evidence from the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* only. Baris and Felice have also explored the negative aspects of the liberators’ occupation of Southern Italy, in particular the episodes of mass rape around the

⁶ Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily’, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

Gustav Line. One of Baris' testimonies recorded the shame and hostility felt for the conduct of the conquerors.¹⁰

Allied criminal activity pervaded many aspects of the troops' endeavours, and the occupation of Puglia is no exception. Henry Elkin has argued as early as 1946 that off duty soldiers felt free to release their impulses.¹¹ This frequently included excessive drinking, which regularly resulted in felonious activity. Tensions could occur between troops and the local male populace over competition for local women.¹² Numerous crimes were committed out of a feeling of superiority over Italians. Each soldier held a view of what justice meant and carried it out accordingly. Moreover, the recorded crimes are 'a mere fraction' of the total of crimes committed.¹³

If both Allied and Italian archival material provides evidence of Allied crime, it is important not to forget that Italian civilians were as equally active in pursuing illegal deeds. This chapter will seek to examine both Allied and Italian crime in the context of the occupation of Puglia. It will demonstrate how both groups were involved in varieties of theft, and that violence was a daily possibility. Intensely violent crime and the existence of traffic accidents will be both assessed. The purpose of this chapter is to understand what actually happened, to look at trends in crime and at how this affected the civilian and military experience of the occupation. For instance, a report for the province of Bari on crime figures for January 1945 informs that there were 143 cases of people found illegally in possession of Allied goods, four murders, 135 cases of wounding, 32 instances of falsification of identity and 820 cases

¹⁰ See Baris *Tra due fuochi*, and Felice, *Guerra resistenza dopoguerra in Abruzzo*.

¹¹ Henry Elkin, 'Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life', *American Journal of Sociology*, 51, 5, Special issue on 'Human Behavior in a Military Setting', 1946, 409.

¹² Daniel Glaser, 'The Sentiments of American Soldiers Abroad towards Europeans', *American Journal of Sociology*, 51, 5, 1946, 435. See also, George Boas, 'Human Relations in a Military Government', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 7, 4, Special issue on 'Occupation of Enemy Territory', 1943, 542-554.

¹³ Lilly, *Taken by Force*, 11.

of illegal prostitution. Added together with other crimes this totaled 1,185 recorded crimes in one month only.¹⁴

Curfew, Weapons and Inconsiderate Allies

The Allied forces stationed in Puglia during the occupation encountered a populace newly liberated from Fascism. Consequently, it proved difficult for the troops to maintain law and order, as people did not desire to return to tight policing of their lives or the institution of martial law. Therefore, the Allied authorities decided that the implementation of a public curfew and a weapons amnesty were the most effective means of controlling crime and violence. These regulations are typical of how an occupying force would administer an enemy territory. For example, during the American-occupied zone of Germany, the US imposed a curfew and ordered that all weapons be handed in to the Allied authorities. In Gladback on 31 March 1945 the Americans imposed movement restrictions, meaning that civilians were only allowed to leave their home for four hours a day. This was relaxed to 7pm to 6am from 2 April. This relaxation of curfew in Germany is similar to the one imposed by the Allies in Italy. In Germany, the first US harsher curfew was a result of the occupier's belief that the Germans were morally guilty of war crimes, such as complicity in the Holocaust.¹⁵ During the liberation of France in 1944, the Americans continued to use strict measures to control the population.¹⁶ Before examining specific crimes and acts of violence in Puglia it is thus necessary to observe the occupation in terms of how the basic rules established by the Allies affected the *Pugliesi* and how this disturbed their relationship with the *alleati*.

¹⁴Province of Bari statistical crime report for January 1945, Busta 91, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

¹⁵Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (London: Pocket Books, 2010), 171-172 and 184.

¹⁶Hilary Footitt, "Meeting Private Ryan": A Franco-American Liberation Community', in Simon Kitson and Hannah Diamond (eds), *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation: New Perspectives on Wartime France* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 118.

The use of curfew is a long established practice throughout history, but especially during wartime. It allows authorities better control of the streets, it improves the knowledge of the location of the majority of the local population, and during the Second World War it also helped prevent fatalities from bombing. Hence, it was not hesitantly that AMG imposed various curfews through Allied-occupied territory. The AMG Proclamation Number 2 (Article II, paragraph 24) regarding liberated Italian territories stated that it was an offence for anyone to circulate ‘in the streets or outside of his own house without a permit after curfew, which until further notice, shall be from sunset to sunrise.’¹⁷ Often curfews were relaxed if the threat of bombing subsided and general lawlessness and crime figures declined. However, the Allies could quickly institute a more restrictive curfew if local conditions necessitated it. For example, in Bari in January 1946 a letter by the local Liaison Officer re-enforced the implementation of adult and juvenile curfew. This restriction was only applied to the city of Bari, confining adults from midnight to 6am and the under 16s from 19.30 to 6am in order to ‘stop a wave of larceny from Allied billets and depots.’¹⁸ Simultaneously, officers in Lecce wrote to the Allied commander of the area and asked if their curfew could be removed.¹⁹ The variation of curfew orders could cause problems for civilians, as Williams has demonstrated in the case of Sicily. She points out that:

Part of the problem was that the hours of curfew varied, each CAO having made his own interpretation of sunset and sunrise. Given that many inhabitants did not have watches and no means of telling the exact time, and that no curfew signal such as a siren or church bell was given, large numbers of people were being arrested

¹⁷Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily’, 162.

¹⁸Liaison Office letter regarding the enforcement of an adult and juvenile curfew in Bari, 7 January 1946, Liaison Officer (119) Security, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

¹⁹Note about the abolition of the curfew in Lecce, Copy sent to Prefect of Bari, Liaison Officer (119) Security, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

unnecessarily, giving rise to up to 80 cases a day in Palermo alone.²⁰

The imposition of a curfew over one's movements was a direct inconvenience imposed on civilians by the Allies. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why many people chose to ignore the regulation.²¹ However, this was a pattern that had preceded Allied occupation. Compared to other belligerent countries such as the UK and Germany, for example, widespread non-compliance with blackout regulations in Italy continued throughout the war. Baldoli and Fincardi have shown how this was a result of a complex system of blackout regulations and of poor detection of enemy aircraft. In Italy the Fascist state did not implement one unified system, but rather ascribed cities and areas one of three threat levels depending on the perceived threat. Additionally, the blackout hours were changed monthly leading to much confusion as to when the blackout started and finished. Baldoli and Fincardi point out that civilians' lack of compliance with the rules was not a conscious act of resistance to the regime, but an example of the difficulties of a society trying to adapt to the dynamics of war: 'Complicated rules suddenly had to be observed by a population not used to them.'²² This idea can be applied to cases of resistance to certain aspects of the Allied occupation, but unlike the early years of the blackout, non-compliance with curfew regulations was now an act of defiance to the Allies, a refusal to be controlled and contained by another set of authorities.

The disregard of curfew regulations could be interpreted as a minor issue, if compared to the level of arms possession in Puglia during the occupation. Proclamation number two of AMG in Foggia stated that anyone found in possession of firearms or explosives, except those permitted by AMG, could find themselves in front of the military courts with the possibility

²⁰Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 163.

²¹For crime figures relating to curfew offences in Sicily and Campania see *Ibid.*, 163-164.

²²Baldoli and Fincardi, 'Italian Society under Anglo-American Bombs', 1027.

of the death sentence.²³ The possibility of the death penalty is suggestive of the severity of the threat of an armed population. Williams suggested that the arrival of the Allies in Sicily and the attempted removal of weapons was a result of the fact that Italy at the time was an enemy country, but ‘even after the signing of the Armistice, the provision held in newly liberated territory, which was ipso facto previously enemy territory.’²⁴

The possession of arms arose not only from the distrust of a former enemy, but also from the potential difficulties it could cause to the occupiers. The use of weapons was a persistent feature in criminal acts during the occupation, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The widespread ownership of arms could similarly lead to negative words being exchanged. For example, a Counter Intelligence report from June 1945 related that an engineer battalion had been shot at when passing through an unnamed town under the control of communists.²⁵ This instance is correspondingly an expression of political feeling, in the sense that the local communists in this case perceived the Allies as opposed to their agenda. Furthermore, it is a manifestation of hostility to the enforced disbandment of partisans (particularly in the north) after the end of the war. Massimo Storchi has pointed out that ‘this hurried disbandment’ was ‘provoked by the fear of having armed military formations under the control of the Communist Party’; only a few weapons were surrendered.²⁶ The same report explains an incident in Andria:

Another officer when travelling in Andria reported seeing many people with guns. This indicates that although there has not been a general change in attitudes towards the allies, those who were always hostile seem now unafraid to show it, considering that the number

²³AMG Proclamation No 2 in Foggia, by Col Clive Temperley the Provincial commissioner, MDI, Pubblica Sicurezza, Governo del Sud, Busta 4, ACS.

²⁴Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy’, 164.

²⁵Extract from Air Forces, Counter Intelligence report 1-30 June 1945, WO208/3344, TNA.

²⁶Massimo Storchi, ‘Post-war Violence in Italy: A Struggle for Memory’, *Modern Italy*, 12, 2, 2007, 239.

of troops in the area has considerably diminished.²⁷

The blatant exhibition of weapons by those hostile to the Allies displays how weapons were not just used in crime, but additionally as a means of expressing disaffection with the occupation. Therefore, it is understandable why AMG would fear unfriendly civilians with a liberal supply of firearms. At the end of the occupation the disarmament of the population was not complete or in fact a success. A letter from the of Foggia in November 1946 to all the heads of public security in the surrounding areas well defines that although attempts had been made to disarm the population, none of these actions had been successful. The letter asked officials to follow the situation very closely and intervene to seize illicit weapons and munitions.²⁸ This letter is a strong indication that the policy of disarming the people of Puglia was a failure. Firearms appear to have been commonplace even at the end of the occupation, showing a purposeful disregard of the order to hand in weapons. The widespread refusal of *Pugliesi* to hand in their weapons is demonstrative that it was not just northern partisans that were armed, but also ordinary Italians who felt a need to protect themselves.

The Allied landings in Italy in the Second World War have been consistently linked to the resurgence of the Mafia in Sicily. However, scholars such as Salvatore Lupo argue that there is actually diminutive evidence to support this claim.²⁹ In fact, signs of mafia resurgence were already visible in the 1930s, despite the regime's attempt to curb the Mafia in the 1920s. Lupo argues that the shock of war conditions was enough to get things going again, without

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Letter from the Questura of Foggia about the disarmament of the population, 3 November 1946, F1.17, Busta 10, Commissariato di Pubblica Sicurezza di Manfredonia, Archivio di Stato di Foggia.

²⁹For a discussion of the evidence to support this claim see the following: Salvatore Lupo, 'The Allies and the Mafia', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2, 1, 1997, 21-33; Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy'; John Dickie, *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2004); Christopher Duggan, *Fascism and the Mafia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); and Monte S. Finkelstein, *Separatism, the Allies and the Mafia: the Struggle for Sicilian Independence 1943-1948* (Cranbury: Lehigh University Press, 1998).

any need for a conspiracy with the Allies.³⁰ He has demonstrated that AMGOT looked to anyone without any kind of informal power, and ‘in doing so they had in mind the model of the Italian-American boss.’ Importantly, both Dickie and Lupo show that the municipal role of mayor was entrusted to pre-Fascist notables; among these were a fair number of ‘men of respect’, gangsters or front men.³¹ With regards to Puglia little is known about organised criminal elements similar to the Sicilian mafia during the war. However, an intelligence report from January 1945 suggests that a culture of crime along mafia lines did exist in Puglia. The report narrated the experience of lieutenant travelling in the Foggia area:

He stopped at a detachment and was assisted by a British soldier. When asking for oil and petrol he was told that permission would have to be obtained ‘from the Italian who lives at the top of the hill.’ After astonished protestations the soldier finally agreed, but it was evident that he was reluctant to do so without the consent of the Italian ‘boss’ in the village.³²

The experience of this soldier is not only suggestive of an organised criminal element in the Foggia area, but moreover of collusion with some Allied personnel. The soldier on duty was more deferential to the ‘boss’ in the village than to his commanding officer. This is an area of the occupation in Puglia that demands more scholarship and research. If the Italians in Puglia could cause problems by disobeying curfew and disarmament orders, the Allied troops could also make things difficult for civilians.

It appears that the Allied troops did not always follow regulations themselves and therefore

³⁰Salvatore Lupo, *History of the Mafia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 187.

³¹John Dickie, *Mafia Republic: Italy's Criminal Curse: Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta and Camorra from 1946 to the Present* (London: Sceptre, 2013), 14-15; Lupo, *History of the Mafia*, 188.

³²Report from Intelligence corps, 17 January 1945- ‘Strong arm law in Southern Italy’, WO208/3344, TNA.

made the occupation more problematic for Italian officials and civilians in Puglia. An incident between the Allied military police and the *carabinieri* in Foggia is illuminating. An Italian roadblock was stationed on the Foggia-Lucera road with the object of catching bandits. At 2am the *carabinieri* signaled to an oncoming car to stop by flashing a torch. The vehicle proceeded to accelerate and drove by at speed, at which time the *carabinieri* fired a shot into the air. The vehicle contained American military police; thinking the *carabinieri* bandits, the Americans removed them from the roadblock some time later and took them to the Allied detention centre. The Bari liaison officer testified that the *carabinieri* felt humiliated, and, more importantly that the people of Foggia were angry over their treatment, particularly as the CCRR were attempting to catch bandits, who had been a menace in the area.³³

The Allied authorities condemned the actions of the American MPs and stated that they could have easily ‘verified their suspicions as to whether the CCRR were bona fide or otherwise.’³⁴ Indeed, in a letter to the *carabinieri* of Foggia the Allied Provost Marshal apologised for the incident. He said that ‘the fault is entirely of the American police and this office accepts full blame.’ He praised the manner in which the men of the CCRR acted, saying that ‘it was a great insult to them, but they met the situation with the greatest delicacy.’³⁵ The fact that the MPs chose not to follow the rules and simply enter the *carabinieri* is symbolic of the distrust some Allied personnel had for Italians. They automatically assumed them to be criminals and made no effort to find out their identities. The apology of the Provost Marshal was an attempt to placate not only the CCRR, but also the populace of Foggia. In effect, this incident was a

³³9th British Liaison Unit, 27 June 1946, Incident between Carabinieri and American MP, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACC Microfilms, ACS.

³⁴ Letter from Bari liaison group to HQ ACC, 27 June 1946, same incident as above, Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACC Microfilms, ACS.

³⁵Letter from the office of the Pro Vost Marshall to Carabinieri HQ in Foggia 27 June 1946, same incident as above. Foggia Zone (10230) General (115), ACC Microfilms, ACS.

public relations disaster for the Allies and it was essential that the Allies were seen to be apologising. Although not a criminal act, the infractions by the American military police augmented tensions that existed within the occupation.

The Allied troops consistently committed acts that were not considered criminal, but at least illegal and inconsiderate throughout the occupation of Puglia. For example, in May 1944 the people of Castellana complained about the behaviour of Indian soldiers, who had damaged the school building they inhabited.³⁶ Moreover, Italian prefectural documents show that the main reason for incidents between the two groups was drunkenness on the part of the Allies. It is possible to suggest that incidents of this nature did not aid in the formation of congenial relations between occupiers and occupied. The flouting of rules and regulations on a very basic level promoted the widespread lawlessness that pervaded throughout the region. For example, it can be argued that from the start of the occupation, thievery was endemic.

Petty Theft, Mugging and the Black Market

One shared aspect of lawlessness committed by both Allied troops and Italian civilians was theft.³⁷ Thievery and larceny were consistent and unrelenting aspects of the occupation of Puglia. It appears that this type of crime can be categorized into three kinds: petty theft, mugging with the use of violence, and organised pilfering of Allied stores for the black market. From the theories of Cesare Lombroso to the notoriety of the Mafia, Italians had long been associated with crime.³⁸ However, the image of the Allied soldier stands in contrast to

³⁶ Complaint about the behaviour of Indian Troops in Castellana, 10 May 1944, Prefettura di Bari, Gabinetto, Busta 83, Archivio di Stato di Bari.

³⁷ Widespread looting and theft was also carried out by German civilians and Allied troops in Germany in 1945. Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 312.

³⁸ See Cesare Lombroso, *La donna delinquente: la prostituta e la donna normale: con 8 tavole e 18 figure nel testo* (Turin: L. Roux, 1894); Paul Knepper and Per Ystehede, *The Cesare Lombroso Handbook* (London:

this image. The fact that the Allies initiated their own crime wave during the occupation is frequently forgotten in memories of the conflict. Both groups repeatedly committed larceny, but for exceedingly different reasons. For Italian civilians, petty theft and abuse of the black market were a means of survival. As stated in chapter one, food was extremely scarce and consequently Italians stole in order to feed their families. The organised and professional black marketeers used the pilfering of Allied stores as an opportunity to make quick cash; an activity in which many Allied personnel collaborated for the same motivations.

It is perhaps more challenging to comprehend why Allied servicemen chose to steal. Unlike in cases of theft committed by Italians, theft by Allies was not driven by hunger, but economic gain. An exception to this rule was the case of Allied deserters, who stole food and clothing to hide from AMG and blend into Italian society.³⁹ Various personnel were career criminals from before the war, so they were continuing in their normal pattern of behaviour, while others had been law-abiding citizens who had chosen crime only in the context of war. It is impossible to say with any certainty why the Allies carried out theft, as the reasons for this choice were complex. It is possible to suggest that many soldiers still viewed the Italians as enemies or at least belonging to a nation defeated, therefore this entitled them to the spoils of war and assuaged any guilt that they might have felt. Furthermore, soldiers were caught up in the mentality of war; a masculine world where imposing one's authority over another was a characteristic of male virility. Moreover, the consequences and chances of being caught were less than in peacetime society, perhaps persuading some troops to take greater risks. In considering acts of larceny undertaken by both Italians and Allies, this chapter will analyse different types of theft, rather than classifying these crimes as either Allied or Italian. Both groups participated in the three forms of theft above mentioned, albeit for differing motives;

Routledge, 2013); Lumley and Morris (eds), *The New History of the Italian South*; Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Westport: Praeger, 2002).

³⁹Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 114-118.

but by assessing them together it is possible to gain a more accurate image of the occupation. The idea of the invader, liberator or conqueror has throughout history carried connotations that he is likewise a looter. The right to take whatever appeals upon entering a town or village was not a modern belief, but it became an active pastime by soldiers throughout Europe during the conflict. An article from 1946 on delinquency in the army is enlightening. The author, McCallum, a soldier in the Third Army active in Germany and France during the Second World War, stated:

‘How was the looting?’ was the first question by a newcomer to a town that our troops had just occupied. Although looting was officially frowned upon, it had powerful group sanction, and approximately 80 percent of my company engaged in it in one form or another. To be an expertlooter was a term of social approbation.⁴⁰

This statement suggests that looting was ingrained into military culture and that, as McCallum and Ellis have revealed with regards to Allied authorities, ‘a blind eye was turned to anything not too blatant.’⁴¹ This notion was used during the occupation of Puglia. For example, a report by the civil affairs officer for Termoli (just outside Puglia but included in Region 2 during the war) of 19 October 1943 is evidence of this mode of behaviour:

It is appreciated that the troops are naturally embittered against the Italians in general, and that a certain amount of looting of trinkets and jewellery, binoculars, revolvers, etc, if not condoned can be understood: however, there has been wanton, deliberate, uncalled destruction of personal property which in many cases has no value at all to the looter.⁴²

⁴⁰Malcom R. McCallum, ‘The Study of Delinquency in the Army,’ *American Journal of Sociology*, 51, 5, 1946, 481.

⁴¹See McCallum and John Ellis, *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II* (London: Corgi, 1982), 233; see also Williams, ‘Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy’, 56.

⁴²CAO report, 19 October 1943, WO204/10002, TNA.

The expression 'naturally embittered' implies understanding on behalf of the troops and resignation that looting would occur; especially as at this juncture Italians were still viewed as a recently defeated enemy. However, the concern over the deliberate destruction of property was twofold: firstly, there was genuine anxiety for the victims, but secondly, the higher authorities were concerned about how this would affect their image as an occupying force. In this instance the actions of the perpetrators were sanctioned by the Allied local command, signifying that any form of retribution would not be assumed.

The attraction of stealing jewelry was not restricted merely to the practice of looting. Soldiers correspondingly took to accosting civilians in the streets or entering their homes and demanding that they hand over their jewelry. For example, in Piazza Garibaldi in Bari on 12 November 1943, two drunken English sailors stole a gold watch from a civilian worth 6,000 Lire. Once more in Bari, on 21 November 1943 six Canadian soldiers entered a civilian home and stole a watch, the value of which was 2,000 Lire. In Terlizzi, British soldiers stopped their victim, a carpenter, in the street and stole his watch and his bracelet worth 400 Lire. The author of the report, the Prefect, described the culprits as 'generally ignorant.' Additionally, a different Prefect's report dated 4 November 1943 narrated the theft of 2,000 Lire in bank notes by four British soldiers. Subsequently, whilst attempting another theft the offenders were arrested. Furthermore, on 21 October 1943 in Putignano two unidentified English soldiers stole 80 Lire in cash, a gold chain and a silver watch, for a total value of 2,000 Lire. Jewels and other obviously valuable items were not exclusively stolen. Thieves correspondingly took everyday objects of little worth. For instance, a month later in Molfetta three British soldiers stole a watch, a bracelet, a lighter, a penknife and a comb, worth a total

value of 1,000 Lire. The victim reported seeing the thief get a lift from the scene of the crime by the 'English' Police.⁴³

The motivation for thefts could involve a wide range of items. For example, the Prefect of Bari reported in December 1943 that two 'English' soldiers had entered a tailor's shop and taken women's jackets worth 500 Lire. Moreover, in Taranto on 30 September 1943 in a hotel occupied by the Allies, some soldiers stole linen and sheets. Finally, British sailors stationed in Bari on 7 January 1944 stole crockery and kitchen equipment worth 2,000 Lire.⁴⁴ In these instances it is possible that the offenders hoped to sell the items on the black market, or perhaps when they did not find anything of particular value, decided to take what they could use or sell. The same principle can be applied to the theft of watches and jewelry; the possibility of reselling existed; moreover, it is likely that many troops wanted a watch or necklace as a souvenir, either to keep for themselves or to pass onto a loved one. It is easy to think of the victims of these crimes as passive, but Williams has argued that 'there was a certain element of fear in the relationship between soldier and civilian. This made an armed soldier in uniform a person of authority.'⁴⁵ Consequently, Italians would comply with orders to stop by Allied personnel, and we must not disregard that many civilians would have been keen initially to talk to their 'liberators', particularly at the beginning of the occupation. It is credible that this duping of civilians would have caused anger and resentment amongst the population.

⁴³Prefect of Bari reports, 12 and 21 November 1943; Theft in Terlizzi, 2 November 1943. Prefect report, 4 November 1943; Prefect report on theft in Putignano, 21 October 1943; Bari Prefect report on theft in Molfetta, 24 November 1943. Additional thefts occurred in Bari, on 28 September 1943, when six Australians broke into the home of two women and stole various items. On 13 September 1943, a separate group of six Australians found the door of an apartment half open and took a suitcase and money, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁴⁴Prefect of Bari report, 1 December 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, Prefect of Taranto report, 8 October 1943, and Prefect of Bari report 7 January 1944, MDI, Pubblica Sicurezza, Governo del Sud, Busta 2, ACS.

⁴⁵Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 53.

Not all incidents of mugging and robbery were nonviolent. Frequently, violence was deployed to ensure that the victims parted with their belongings and this habitually took the form of beatings, being held up at gunpoint or being shot. Both Italians and Allied service personnel employed these methods during the occupation. As previously stated both Allies and Italians had easy access to weapons, which augmented the number of crimes involving violence. An Allied report from January 1946, condemning the situation of lawlessness in the Bari area, lamented that instance of ‘robbery with violence, raids by armed gangs and thieving was increasing.’ He stated that two months previously he had warned the Prefect to take action against armed gangs and the ‘roving gangs of youths’ who assaulted soldiers upon leaving military canteens.⁴⁶ The author was critical of the actions of local Italian law enforcement, as he insisted that: ‘It appears the Carabinieri and Municipal police can not or will not take any effective action to control the population.’⁴⁷ This report is indicative of the Allied belief in the inefficiency of Italian local government, and it could suggest the existence of collusion between some of the local criminals and the police forces. The creator of the memo was clear that if the situation continued, he would be forced to get the Italian *Ministero dell’Interno* to intervene. January 1946 represented the very end of the occupation of Puglia, thus the Allied officer was insistent that the Italian authorities dealt with the issue. At this stage the Allies were acting as an advisory body and were preparing to leave the region, therefore it was not considered their job to intervene with local law enforcement concerns.

In order to reiterate the seriousness of the local situation, the writer of the report relayed an example of a recent crime against an Allied officer. During a burglary, two thieves shot Lt Knight in the stomach and liver; the said lieutenant was seriously ill and taken to hospital.⁴⁸ A follow up report from 12 January 1946 detailed that the bullet had been successfully

⁴⁶ Brigadier of 54th area memo, 10 January 1946, WO204/1623, TNA.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

removed and although the lieutenant hovered between life and death ‘there was now a chance of survival.’ The author proceeded to explain a further incident where a gang of Italians had mugged two soldiers of the 5 Port Operating Group for cigarettes. After the refusal of the soldiers to hand over the items, ‘One of the soldiers was deliberately, and in cold blood, shot and wounded by one of the gang. He was wounded in the side of the hand.’⁴⁹

According to the writer these incidents and his subsequent appeals for change to the local Italian authorities had provoked a turnaround in the attitudes of the Bari authorities. He specified that the CCRR and *Questura* had shown ‘commendable and unwanted energy’ in their attempts to meliorate the situation, had made arrests and ‘pulled in’ known criminals for questioning.⁵⁰ This report is full of praise for the civil authorities; for example, it was noted that every effort had been made to enforce the curfew (which had never been lifted in Bari). It is interesting to note the complete change of opinion about the Italian local authorities. It is evident that the author felt relief at being able to persuade the local authorities to take up a more active role, which was achieved by the issuing of threats to involve the higher authorities in Rome. This example is evidence of the fluctuating nature of the relationship between the two authorities during the occupation. It appears that ACC were quick to judge and condemn the Italians, but similarly swift in forgiving them. It is important to understand that although the Allies were an advisory body they did not hesitate to become involved and intervene when the circumstances necessitated. Their interference was not subject to the will of the Italian authorities. The situation of lawlessness in Bari is good evidence of this Allied role. For instance, the brigadier now deemed it necessary to put British patrols on the streets during curfew hours, ‘with the sole object of protection for BRITISH Life and property.’⁵¹ The safeguarding of Italian life and property was of no concern. These patrols were to be

⁴⁹Brigadier of 54th area memo, 12 January 1946, WO204/1623, TNA.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid. Capital letters in the original.

accompanied by CMP and carabinieri; the Italians would deal with any civilians infringing the curfew or committing an offence unrelated to British interests:

If, however, the carabinieri find themselves in extreme difficulties and call upon the BRITISH personnel for assistance, then and then only, will BRITISH personnel render assistance, using the minimum force necessary to restore the situation for the carabinieri. Any arrest of an ITALIAN civilian, other than for offences against BRITISH life and/or property, will be made by the carabinieri.⁵²

It is clear that the British in this case were only troubled with British interest and safety. Perhaps it was only because the current crime wave had affected Allied affairs that they took an interest in it at all. It is conceivable that if these circumstances had only concerned Italians, the Allies would not have intervened. The order to only assist the CCRR in extreme circumstances is evidence of the Allied desire to keep their distance and retain an advisory role whenever possible. It was a means to avoid upsetting the local government by not infringing on their authority in Italian matters.

From the documentary evidence it is feasible to interpret some Italian criminals in the occupation as violent and unrelenting. However, archival evidence correspondingly suggests that the Allies were proportionately violent. For instance, Italian prefectural material is full of complaints by *Pugliesi* about the aggressive criminal conduct of Allied personnel. For example, to hold up the victim/s at gunpoint seemed to be the method of choice for Allied soldiers. In November 1943, three of them held up an Italian at gunpoint from a British military vehicle and stole 850 Lire. In Molfetta, two British soldiers stopped two Italians and mugged them at gunpoint. They stole a watch and a bracelet worth approximately 400 Lire. A similar incident occurred again in Molfetta in November 1943, on which occasion the

⁵²Ibid. Capital letters in the original.

perpetrators stole the victim's wallet. Guns were not the sole choice of weapon for intimidation: knives were also used. For example, in a report from 28 September 1943 in Taranto, 18 members of the British military personnel stole a bottle alcohol of from the hands of a 15 year old and threatened him with a knife.⁵³ Easy access to both guns and knives made it simpler for Allied soldiers to commit crimes of this nature. It can be argued that the use of weapons increased their chances of success and that in the context of war these acts did not seem as abhorrent as they would in peacetime.

The search for liquor and tobacco served as a prompt for soldiers to resort to using violence while attempting robberies. For example, in September 1943 a group of Australians demanded liquor from a *gelateria* and, when refused, threatened the cashier with death. Additionally, on 8 October 1943 in Bari a group of Anglo-American soldiers violently knocked on the door of a shop asking for cigarettes, but the owner said he could not sell to them, as the shop was not open. The soldiers began to make a racket, kicking the door and firing shots, one of which perforated the door and went into the internal wall. Later that same evening shots were heard in the area occupied by Allied troops.⁵⁴ On 22 November 1943, three separate incidents occurred in taverns in Molfetta. The first involved British soldiers, who entered the establishment of Francesco Onofrio and stole 1,200 Lire, kicked and hit Mr. Onofrio in the jaw with a pistol. The second incident occurred when the soldiers entered the bar of Nicola Magarelli and robbed him of 5,500 Lire, and proceeded to flee. Lastly, three drunken English soldiers travelled to a bar and inquired about some wine, but they were told that the place was closed as it was after hours. One soldier, who spoke Italian, 'demonstrated no respect for Italian law' and took a bottle of vermouth. This was followed by an attack on

⁵³Bari Prefect reports of 16, 31, and 29 November 1943; Prefect of Taranto report, 8 October 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁵⁴Bari Prefect report, 28 October 1943; Bari Prefect's note 29 November 1943- Incidents in Molfetta; Bari Prefect report, 13 October 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

the Italian, who was subjected to kicks and punches and was consequently seriously injured. The evidence of violent robberies of this type does not correspond to the image of the Allies as benevolent liberators, but rather to that of conquering invaders. These acts occurred during the early stages of the occupation, demonstrating how troops treated Puglia as an occupied enemy territory. Moreover, soldiers may have felt entitled to the goods that they stole as a prize for having liberated the region from Fascist and Nazi tyranny; Italians should consequently be grateful and part with their wares. The level of violence in the above examples is evidence that although many Allies felt real sympathy for Italians, this was not universal. Many treated civilians to levels of aggression that normally were reserved for the enemy. There is no comparison between the levels of atrocity committed by the Germans in Eastern Europe and the Allies in Italy, but Omer Bartov suggests that in the case of the Wehrmacht atrocities against civilians could often have a unifying effect.⁵⁵ Burleigh states that only 2% of soldiers positively reveled in violence and in fact proposes that acts of aggression were a means to form comradeship.⁵⁶ Therefore, the committing of crimes against Italian civilians was a means to solidify new and existing relationships among troops and a reflection of the brutalizing nature of warfare on ordinarily nonviolent men.

Petty theft and violent mugging can be categorized as spontaneous crimes, which did not feature any long-term plan or organization by a criminal group. In Puglia during the occupation, as in the rest of southern Italy, organised crime involving the black market and the pilfering of Allied stores was rampant. Burin argues that any occupying force will always discover a number of fault lines that can be exploited; for Allied soldiers participation in the black market was widespread, 'although confined in general to the selling of articles which actually belonged to the soldier rather than to the actual misappropriation of government

⁵⁵ Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 71.

⁵⁶ Michael Burleigh, *Moral Combat: A History of World War II* (London: Harper Press, 2010), 366.

property.⁵⁷ Williams has demonstrated how:

Any personal memoir of military action in Italy shows that soldiers used all these items almost as currency, and soldiers often exchanged rations for fresh food, liquor or services such as laundry.⁵⁸

The willingness of civilians to engage with Allied troops in this manner stands in stark contrast to the behavior of civilians in German-occupied France or northern Italy. Under the Nazi occupation, the population not involved in collaboration made a point of not seeking any contact at all with their occupiers.⁵⁹ The difference is a result of the perception of the German role as enemy/occupier and of the Allied role as liberator/occupier. Germans represented a direct threat to the French way of life, sapping the country of supplies and workers, whilst the Allies were allegedly in Italy to lift the country from the yoke of Fascism and to supply civilians with food. Therefore, Italians and Allied service personnel were able to develop trusting relationships, frequently of a criminal nature. Although many servicemen did not engage actively in the organised stealing and selling of Allied supplies, sometimes they overlooked the crime. The pilfering of Allied stores was virtually a foregone conclusion given the dire economic circumstances and the opportunity to make a quick profit. In Bari in 1946, a special watch was instigated to avoid thieving of Allied foodstuffs destined for civilian consumption from Allied warehouses by armed gangs. These men, recruited from ex-soldiers and CCRR were to be carefully screened by the *Questura*. Allied authorities decided that 200 men were needed and that they should be armed with rifles. To this end, the Prefect wrote to the *Ministero dell'Interno* requesting 100 muskets.⁶⁰ The need to set up a special

⁵⁷ Philippe Burrin, *Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (London: Arnold, 1996), 361; McCallum, 'The Study of Delinquency in the Army', 482.

⁵⁸ Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 168. For crime figures related to Sicily between September 1943 and January 1944, see page 175.

⁵⁹ Burrin, *Living with Defeat*, 192-197.

⁶⁰ Public Safety sub-com report, 9 January 1946, Liaison Officer (119) Security, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

body to guard the warehouse is symptomatic of the frequency with which Allied stores were raided. Moreover, another Allied report from January 1946 complained that ‘black market and thieving continued unabated.’⁶¹ In this case the stores were for public consumption, but this did not deter the thieves. The opportunity to make a profit was a superior incentive. The theft of supplies from the Allies was reported in the local section of the southern Italian newspaper *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*. For instance, some of the headlines included: ‘Taranto Tribunale- 380 mila sigarette rubate agli Alleati’ (380 thousand cigarettes stolen from the Allies); ‘Taranto- Arrestati per sottrazione di merci al consumo’ (Arrested for stealing goods for consumption); and ‘I ladri staccano tre carri da un merci a Bisceglie’ (Thieves detach three wagons from a goods train to Bisceglie).⁶² The consistent reportage of thefts of Allied goods reveals that it was a continuous theme of the Allied occupation, and similarly implies that a year after the end of the conflict the food situation remained arduous and black market crime extensive. Ordinary civilians may have resented some of the thieving of stores as it forced them to pay higher prices for the same goods.

For the lawless elements involved in this type of crime, trains represented an unspoiled opportunity. Trains transported a large amount of supplies throughout Italy after they had arrived by ship; therefore thieves targeted them in addition to warehouses. Goods were unloaded at ports in Taranto and Bari, meaning that Allied supplies were constantly on the move in Puglia. *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* reported in the Puglia section of the newspaper that in the Taranto area a ‘banda di ladri’, a gang of thieves, operated on the rail lines removing considerable quantities of Allied merchandise, including flour and vegetables.⁶³ In addition, in June 1944 the ACC Legal Sub-commission reported on train robberies on the

⁶¹Allied report on crime in Puglia, 14 January 1946, WO204/1623, TNA.

⁶²*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 12 July 1946; 24 May 1945; 26 May 1945; 27 September 1945; 28 September 1944.

⁶³*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 4 May 1944.

Taranto line. The deputy chief legal officer Colonel R. Willer narrated that these crimes had been dubbed the ‘Taranto Train Robbery Case’ and that this case involved ‘a series of approximately 23 separate offences by different and various persons at different and various times and places.’ Many people were arrested at Corovigno, not far from Brindisi; however, it was not expected that they would be tried by AMG; after further investigation, the regional legal officer advised that there were additional circumstances that warranted a trial.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the documentation does not provide information on whether the culprits were tried by the Italian courts or received any form of retribution. The theft of stores from trains in transit required precise planning and timing, and was not the work of the petty criminals who stole food out of hunger and desperation, but the calculated action of professional criminals. Thefts of all varieties were a continual feature of the occupation, but frequently violent crime transpired that had objectives and motives unrelated to larceny.

Violent Crime

According to Smithies, professional criminals prefer to avoid using violence whenever possible, therefore much of the wartime violence was not the work of professionals but ‘grew out of the social conflict of the period.’⁶⁵ This statement was made with reference to the UK; nonetheless it is applicable to the occupation of Puglia. Tensions between Italians and Allied troops transpired into an aura of violence that consistently pervaded the occupation. Violent attacks, apparently without motive frequently occurred. Beatings, shootings, fights and conflicts over Italian women were a regular issue. Williams has revealed that Italian records for the whole of the southern half of the peninsula testify the occurrence of 524 violent deaths

⁶⁴ Legal sub-commission, 28 June 1944- Taranto train robbery case and Discipline letter, 18 June 1944, about the arrest of those involved in train robbery, Legal142/844, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

⁶⁵Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War Two* (Portsmouth: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 153.

provoked by the Allies, 'categorised solely as homicide and with no apparent distinction made between murder and manslaughter.' She argues that these statistics are 'representative rather than completely comprehensive.'⁶⁶ This suggests that the wartime environment blurred the distinction between combatant and civilian, which allowed soldiers to commit murders and violent beatings. The Wehrmacht, particularly those fighting in Russia, were subject to draconian punishments and harsh combat discipline. The purpose of the German army regime was to instill fear, but also brutalise the men. Wehrmacht commanders, who viewed it as a convenient safety valve for the troop's anger and frustration, sanctioned the violence committed against Russian civilians.⁶⁷ This was not the case with Allied soldiers during the Italian campaign. Violence against civilians was not condoned by the Allied high command and the Military courts dealt with aggressive crimes by troops. Moreover, the violence was not one-sided. Although frequently forced to resort to violence as a form of self-defence, Italians also attacked, beat and shot Allied personnel without any obvious reason.⁶⁸ For example, in December 1943 Lord Middleton (stationed in Bari) was brutally assaulted by a cab driver and 'painfully injured.' Two inter-office reports from October 1944 between the local chief of staff and CA officer provide details as to what happened after the attack. The reports show that although the culprits had been incarcerated for eleven months no trial had taken place. The Chief of Staff made abundantly clear to the CA section how the higher authorities viewed the delay: 'I consider this delay in trying this case is quite scandalous. A British officer was brutally assaulted by an Italian. The Prefect was warned by myself that immediate action must be taken.'⁶⁹ The investigation into the delay of legal proceedings was prompted by an appeal by Lord Middleton (via Colonel Wilmer), who had now left the

⁶⁶Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 58-59.

⁶⁷Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 60-61.

⁶⁸An incident in Taranto on 3 November 1943 is evidence of Italian self-defence resulting in an Allied fatality: a New-Zealand soldier was shot and killed by an Italian after a group of 'Englishmen' (The victim may have been amongst this group) tried to enter the home of the shooter, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁶⁹Inter-office memo from the Chief of Staff to the CA section, 14 October 1944, Legal/142/653, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

peninsula and was unaware of what had happened to his attacker. It is unknown how he came across this false information, but the victim believed that the perpetrator had already been sentenced to five years in prison. He felt that this verdict was excessively harsh and appealed that if the defendant had a previous good record, then the term be suspended. However, the author of the appeal, Colonel Wilmer of the legal sub-commission, believed that this was ‘a pleasant gesture, but I am not at all sure that it will be appreciated by the Italians.’ The colonel added on an amendment two months later that the defendants had not been tried at all and had previous criminal records.⁷⁰ The involvement of the Chief of Staff in this case is evidence of the seriousness in which this matter was considered. Furthermore, it can be inferred that if Lord Middleton had not appealed for leniency the Italians would have languished in jail without a trial for some time. Subsequently, an ACC legal report from 23 October detailed why the case was delayed: a lack of medical certificates confirming the injuries sustained by Lord Middleton was to blame.⁷¹ The Bari tribunal court settled the case in November. The assailant was sentenced to four months and fifteen days in prison and his accomplice was acquitted.⁷² This is a substantially more lenient sentence than the initially proposed five years. The more lenient sentence resulted from the Italian authorities heeding Lord Middleton’s plea and from their impatience to have the matter settled. This example is evidence that the position and military station of an Allied victim was important in terms of how serious the crime was considered by AMG. It is unlikely that the amount of effort put into this case would have been the same if the victim were an ordinary soldier or an Italian civilian.

Violent attacks on British officers continued. Assaults were not limited to the officer ranks;

⁷⁰ Letter by Col R. Wilmer, Legal sub-commission, ACC about Lord Middleton, 29 August 1944, amended on 3 October 1944, Legal/142/653, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

⁷¹ ACC, Legal Sub-commission, 23 October 1944, Legal/142/653, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

⁷² ACC, Legal office report, 24 November 1944, Legal/142/653, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

the rank and file of the army were likewise targets. For instance, in the same month violent attacks on Allied servicemen were increasing in the Brindisi area. A British soldier was attacked on 10 January by two Italians, and the 38 Field Security Section reported that ‘recently there has been an increase in minor incidents. Normally when Italians have numerical majority or service personnel are under the influence.’⁷³ At this late stage of the occupation Italians were annoyed that the Allies had yet to leave and thus demonstrated their frustrations in this manner.

The Allies committed their equal share of aggressive assaults against Italian civilians. In Mola di Bari on 7 October 1943, an ‘Englishman’ attacked an Italian for no apparent reason and inflicted a 6 cm cut on his left arm.⁷⁴ In Andria on 27 November 1943, a soldier attacked an Italian civilian. The victim was severely wounded and later died in hospital; the Italian authorities attempted to find the cause of the assault and informed the ‘English authorities.’⁷⁵ Moreover, in November 1943 in Modugno three inebriated English soldiers grabbed a passerby by the throat and punched him in the face. Later that evening, shots were fired in the street and another person was wounded in the shoulder.⁷⁶ These unprovoked attacks were perhaps a response to intoxication, the lessening of morals in the wartime situation, genuine malevolence towards Italians or an act of bravado driven by mob mentality. It is impossible to know the individual motivations of each attacker, but it is feasible to state that tensions between occupier and occupied were recurrently violent.

Clashes did not only occur on an individual basis. Incidents habitually broke out between groups of Allied soldiers and Italian men. For example, at Bari train station on 14 January 1944 a group of Allied soldiers fired shots at two Italian noncombatants. One man was

⁷³38 Field Security Section, 28 January 1946, WO204/1623, TNA.

⁷⁴Prefect report, 7 October 1943, in Mola di Bari, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁷⁵Bari incident- soldier in Andria, 27 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁷⁶Bari Prefect report, 29 November 1943- Modugno, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

wounded in the shoulder.⁷⁷ Many incidences of violence or aggressiveness can be explained by the presence of Italian women. Allied soldiers attempting to find ‘easy women’, disturbances in brothels and altercations with Italian men were a constant theme. On the evening of 13 October 1943, in Casamassima, an agricultural town near Bari, some Allied military climbed the drainpipe of the home of two young orphaned women in order to obtain their favours. After the women made a significant amount of noise, the military escaped and remained unknown. That same night in another civilian home an old woman reported a wound to her left eye, caused by an ‘English soldier’ who had been denied entry into her home. That night Allied troops fired shots into the air, according to the Italian authorities in order to instill fear and alarm in the population.⁷⁸ Moreover, on 13 December 1943 an English sailor entered a house and threatened violence against a 20-year-old woman. Her father then proceeded to punch the sailor and was joined by neighbours who entered into the fracas.⁷⁹ On the evening of 20 November 1943 in Bari three English soldiers approached a landlord in Via Sonnino seeking hospitality. Upon receiving a negative answer, the soldiers quickly revealed their illicit intentions by looking at the resident girls, and started to smile and make noise. An Italian soldier staying at the abode intervened and with the other help of tenants threw the soldiers out of the house. A few hours later a shot was fired at the door of the apartment; it was assumed to be the same English soldiers, as the bullet was from an English standard issue pistol.⁸⁰

These examples show that Allied troops did not differentiate between prostitutes and other Italian women. The forced entry into homes is symptomatic of the Allied belief that Italian women were ‘easy’ and thus they would automatically sleep with them. The attempts to

⁷⁷Prefect of Bari, 14 January 1944, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁷⁸ Prefect report, 13 October 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁷⁹Prefect of Taranto, 8 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁸⁰Prefect report, 24 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

insinuate non-prostitutes into promiscuous behaviour were a slight against Italian society, and this explains not only the actions of the women's relatives, but similarly of the neighbours and those unknown to the women. To suggest that soldiers could just force themselves into the homes of women and think them easy was insult to Italian men. It demonstrated a lack of respect for Italians and was intensified by the fact that Italian men could not compete with the Allies in terms of money or prestige. However, sexual relationships with the enemy never provoked the same anger as they did in Nazi-occupied countries, where women were accused of collaborationism and punished harshly after the war.⁸¹ This was also the case in the German-occupied north of Italy, while the Allied-occupied Mezzogiorno witnessed many sanctioned relationships that resulted in marriage.⁸²

Allied soldiers who found themselves professional prostitutes sometimes ended their evening with unprovoked belligerent behaviour. On 27 November 1943 six 'English' soldiers, four of whom were dressed in civilian clothes, entered a brothel, despite being prohibited by the military authorities. A brawl ensued and an unnamed person was hurt and taken for treatment. The British Military arrested the soldiers.⁸³ In addition, in Mola di Bari a prostitute known as Lucrezia Testone appealed to the *carabinieri* to remove 'English' soldiers from her dwelling. Subsequently, the CCRR were assaulted and one *carabiniere* was stabbed with a knife and another was shot at. The Italian authorities reported that the culprits also stole from the prostitute and that local inhabitants co-operated with the British military police in order to solve the crime.⁸⁴ It can be argued that the soldiers who committed crimes against prostitutes and those inside brothels felt less guilty than they would have done in peacetime. These

⁸¹Burrin, *Living with Defeat*, 205; Fabrice Vigili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 26; Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka and Anette Warring, *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2006).

⁸² See Porzio, *Arrivano gli alleati!*

⁸³ Bari Prefect report, 27 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2.

⁸⁴ CCRR, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

women and their patrons were perceived as criminals and therefore less deserving of sympathy. In the case of Ms. Testone, she may have appeared an easy target for theft, as she had no one to protect her at home and may have chosen prostitution to survive.

During the Allied occupation of Puglia issues of race had the potential to cause outbursts of anger. In September 1945 in Piazza Vittoria in Brindisi civilians attacked the Indian battalion. The RAF police fired shots in the air and shepherded the Indians into the police station. An Allied report suggested that the reason for this outburst might be due to the Indian battalion taking over control of the military building from the Italians, therefore reducing the opportunity for pilfering.⁸⁵ However, it is also possible that there was an underlying racial component. Crimes committed by the French *Goumiers* in other parts of Italy were well known, and it is possible that this type of behaviour became associated with skin colour. Baris has demonstrated that the Moroccan troops along the Gustav line were seen as uncivilised people in the local imagination and frequently viewed as animals, which was believed a suitable image for their behaviour. Women remembered this period with shame and hostility, especially as the mass rapes had been preceded by civilians' hopes and dreams of being liberated by the Americans.⁸⁶ In the collective memory, the French colonial troops are not portrayed as liberators but as conquerors ready to profane the bodies of Italian women; a way to demonstrate their virile potency.⁸⁷ Violent acts committed by non-white soldiers were often specified as separate from white Allied crime. Porzio suggests that in the Naples area rapes committed away from the front were more contained and less merciless than those carried out at the front lines.⁸⁸ Both Allied and Italian reports made sure to specify whether the offender was African-American. For instance, in Bari in October 1943 an Italian

⁸⁵ Extract from field security section report for September 1945, WO204/1623, TNA.

⁸⁶ Baris, *Tra due fuochi*, 101 and 86-87. See also Gribaudo, *Guerra Totale*.

⁸⁷ Porzio, *Arrivano gli alleati!*, 89.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

man was wounded by an American soldier and was taken to the local British military hospital.⁸⁹ The follow up report mentioned that the culprit was African-American. Similarly, in November 1943 an Italian man, a woman and a 'negro' soldier went into a tavern and asked for drinks. The landlord told them that they were too drunk to be served. Consequently, the 'negro' soldier delivered a slap to the landlord, to which the landlord reciprocated. The Italian man then attacked the landlord with a little axe, inflicting two wounds to his left arm. He was arrested, and, although the soldier was not identified, the report repeatedly specified that he was a 'negro.'⁹⁰ This attitude towards race was not limited to the Italian authorities. In US reports of rapes committed by Americans in Britain, France and Germany the descriptions of the attackers habitually had racial overtones. Lilly argues that white soldiers who raped were rarely described as 'bestial', which was instead the case in reports of rapes committed by African-Americans.⁹¹ Mary Roberts has demonstrated that medical officers often regarded white men as 'innocent quarry of Italian women', but assumed African-Americans to be 'sexual aggressors.'⁹²

Dangerous Crossings-Traffic Accidents

Not only did the Allies bring people and supplies with them to Puglia in the autumn of 1943, but they also brought thousands of cars, trucks and motorcycles, creating a perilous situation for *Pugliesi*. In German-occupied France, a report found that traffic accidents were the leading cause of death amongst German soldiers.⁹³ Conversely, in Puglia crossing the road or even walking along side it became a dangerous undertaking. Allied soldiers unused to the

⁸⁹Bari Prefect report, 20 October 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁹⁰ Prefect of Bari, 02 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

⁹¹Lilly, *Taken by Force*, 88.

⁹²Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 164-165.

⁹³Thomas Johnston Laub, *After the Fall: German Policy in Occupied France, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 106.

roads habitually travelled at high speed and were frequently intoxicated. This resulted in a continued high number of traffic accidents and fatalities. This is an area that has been overlooked in the historiography of the impact of the Allies on southern Italy, and only Williams and Porzio have given some consideration to the issue. Williams states that it is impossible to have an exact figure of the number of Italians injured and killed by Allied vehicles, but that one Italian report put the figure at 3,584. In most cases the drivers remained unidentified, but when they were identified they tended to be American or British. She further points out that frequently Italians were employed by the Allies to drive their vehicles; therefore in some instances drivers could be mistaken for Allied soldiers, but were in fact Italian.⁹⁴ Porzio states that in October 1946 the Socialist newspaper *Avanti!* ran an article entitled 'La Jeep della morte' (The Jeep of death), which focused on the high number of Italians injured and killed by Allied vehicles. She argues that parents and relatives of victims in the Naples area frequently complained about the leniency of the Italian authorities in these matters and the absence of pity in confronting those responsible.⁹⁵

Traffic accidents presented a significant enough issue to warrant the Allies setting up a body to deal with the aftermath. In Puglia, the local military authorities drafted a report to the local claims commission, which was subsequently investigated by the Allied claims officers in Bari and Taranto. In a report that set out the nature of the group it was clear that 'although no payments are generally made at present, if definite hardship has been caused small payments could be made.'⁹⁶ Giuseppe di Paolo made an appeal to AMG on 28 October 1943. He stated that he had been walking when he was hit by a British military motorcar and was seriously wounded in the right leg. Consequently, Mr. Di Paolo was unable to work and the Italian

⁹⁴Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 90-95.

⁹⁵ Porzio, *Arrivano gli alleati!*, 73-75.

⁹⁶Report to the PCM from Chief LO of ACC, 18 December 1943 about procedure for reporting traffic accidents in Puglia, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS. See also Williams, 'Crime, Law and Order in Sicily and Southern Italy', 156.

official who submitted the report on his behalf specified that: ‘As he is very poor and as no fault for the accident can be laid on him, he applies to your command trusting to have some assistance.’⁹⁷ Although it is not known if the victim’s claim was successful, this example demonstrates that Italians could and did appeal to AMG after being injured by Allied automobiles. This stands in contrast to Allied-occupied Germany, where crimes perpetrated by soldiers of the Allied armies were irreproachable as the German police were powerless to intervene.⁹⁸

It is now important to examine the nature of crashes and accidents involving civilians and Allies, in order to understand how this had an impact on civil life. For instance, on 18 November 1943 an Italian, who worked as an English interpreter from Gioia del Colle, was fixing his car whilst on an official trip, when a vehicle that belonged to the ‘English’ air force knocked him down. The vehicle did not stop. The follow up memo by the local Italian authorities was pointedly clear that the car knocked him down without cause. Additionally, in the same month in Bari an Italian civilian was mowed down and killed by an Allied vehicle. On 31 October 1943 in Gromo Apulia an Allied military car driven by a ‘negro’ travelling too fast collided with a group of Italians and their horse. The result was one fatality, two seriously wounded victims and the death of the horse.⁹⁹ The presence of the horse on the road would not have been uncommon in Puglia. As discussed in chapter two, a large part of the region was agricultural and animals were still widely used in farming, as the agrarian industry was not mechanised. Therefore, it is no surprise that accidents often occurred to Italian agricultural vehicles, whether motorized or horse drawn. For example, a traffic accident on 27 October 1943 witnessed a collision between an ‘English’ military vehicle and an Italian

⁹⁷Appeal by an Italian who was involved in a traffic accident for assistance from the Allies, 28 October 1943, Taranto Zone, General (115)/17 Accidents, ACC Microfilms, ACS. Capital letters in the original.

⁹⁸Bessel, *Germany 1945*, 329.

⁹⁹Prefect report, 18 November 1943- traffic accident, Bari Prefect report and Prefect report, Gromo Apulia 31 October 1943, PCM Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS.

agricultural vehicle. Both parties suffered various lesions and contusions. Moreover, on the same day an American travelling at high speed hit an agricultural wagon and killed two people.¹⁰⁰ The risk of serious injury and death constituted an ever-present threat for the populace of Puglia. Hit and runs were common, with Allied drivers fleeing the scene in order to avoid any military or civil retribution. The danger was not solely directed at Italians themselves, but also at their livelihood. If injured, many could not work and the loss of a horse or wagon could make circumstances drastically problematic for agricultural workers.

The risks were not contained to adults; children were frequent casualties of motor collisions. Children are victims in all wars, but it was the unprecedented scale of suffering that the Second World War inflicted that is astonishing.¹⁰¹ In Italy, children were killed and hurt, both emotionally and physically, by bombing, actions by ground forces and extreme living conditions. The experiences of Italian children make it apparent that the liberation did not mean an end to potential dangers; the incidences of traffic collisions are evidence of this. For example, on 3 November 1943 an eight-year-old boy, Michele di Pasquale, was knocked down and suffered head injuries and a fractured right femur. Similarly, the following day the Allies knocked down a nine-year-old child. He suffered various damage and contusions; he was taken to hospital to recover.¹⁰² It could be suggested that children were the victims of traffic accidents as they had poorer road sense, but they were not always alone. For instance, a few days into the liberation an accident occurred on the Gioia-Taranto road at 11.30am. A mortar carrier knocked down two civilians, killing one woman and injuring her 12-year-old son. The victims had been walking as a family, but the father was uninjured and the other son

¹⁰⁰ Prefect report, 4 November 1943, on 27 October 1943 traffic accident, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2; Prefect of Bari, 30 December 1943, F. 15, MDI. Pubblica Sicurezza, Governo del Sud Busta 2, ACS.

¹⁰¹ Nicholas Stargardt, *Witnesses Of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Pimlico, 2006), 7.

¹⁰² Bari Prefect reports, 3 and 4 November 1943, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2 ACS.

suffered from shock.¹⁰³ These examples demonstrate the devastating effect that crimes of this nature could have on Italian families.

It is apparent from both Allied and Italian reports that the commonest affliction sustained in the case of traffic accidents was head injury. In November 1943 on the Bari-Gioia del Colle road, an Italian man was traveling on his bicycle when an 'English' military vehicle struck him down. He was knocked unconscious and sustained a fracture to the base of the skull. The victim was declared brain dead. The identity of the driver was sought and the British police were informed. Moreover, on another occasion an Italian suffered a brain hemorrhage after being run over by an Allied driver. In December in Bari 1943 a civilian sustained a fracture to the base of his skull. Later that month a twenty-year-old woman was hit by an Allied military motor vehicle and suffered a cerebral contusion and remained in hospital for twenty days. In January 1944 in Lecce a woman was hit when crossing the street. A Prefect's report narrated that she remained unconscious and had a fracture to her skull and a serious wound to her left leg.¹⁰⁴ Traffic accidents were not constricted to the start of the occupation when large numbers of vehicles arrived into the area and Italians were unused to heavy traffic. *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* reported as late as July 1946 that an Italian had been hit and killed as a result of head injuries by an American vehicle.¹⁰⁵

Traffic accidents did not always include both Italians and Allied soldiers. Occasionally, an incident would transpire that involved only Italians or Allies. For example, the supply liaison officer for the 15th army group had an accident on the Bari road to Taranto. The driver of the

¹⁰³ Report CMP to CO 105 Provost company, 28 September 1943, Accident on the Goia-Taranto road, Taranto Zone, General (115)/17 Accidents, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

¹⁰⁴ Prefect report, 4 November 1943, traffic Accident on the Bari-Goia Del Colle road, Hit and run, PCM, Brindisi-Salerno 1943-1944, Busta 2, ACS; Prefect of Bari, 30 December 1943, traffic incident; Prefect of Bari, 10 January 1944, Lecce Traffic accident, MDI. Pubblica Sicurezza. Governo Del Sud Busta 2, ACS.

¹⁰⁵ *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 11 July 1946.

other vehicle hurriedly left the scene. A member of the 704 engineers stooped to give his assistance. This prompted the victim to write to his commanding officer. He relayed that: ‘Without his aid I’m sure I would have been badly off indeed. His splendid spirit of co-operation and helpfulness reflects great credit to you and your command.’¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, in July 1946 the *Gazzetta* reported that an American automobile carrying five Americans and one *carabiniere*, for unknown reasons (the newspaper suggests that they were drunk) overturned, seriously wounding one American soldier. In the same article the newspaper described that 2 km from Cerignola an Italian man was hit and killed by an Italian driving a truck.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

Aspects that are considered exceptional in a time of peace, such as transgressions of normal behaviour, become frequent and even commonplace in wartime.¹⁰⁸ In terms of criminal behaviour this was the case in Allied-occupied Puglia. The widespread and consistent use of violence and the committing of criminal actions by both Allies and Italians present an opposite image to the one that has dominated the public memory of the occupation in the post-war decades. The view of the Allies as benign liberators stands in stark opposition to the image of the Allied soldier as a thief, mugger, murderer or rapist. Nevertheless, this negative portrayal of the Allies is correspondingly important. It is demonstrative of wider Allied behaviour during the war and symptomatic of how ground level personnel viewed those they ‘liberated.’ Looting became an ingrained action that would be undertaken upon entering villages and towns, followed by lively discussions of who got the best spoils. Wanton looting

¹⁰⁶Letter from supply liaison officer of 15 Army groups to CO of 704 engineers, 9 February 1944, Taranto Zone, General (115)/17 Accidents, ACC Microfilms, ACS.

¹⁰⁷*La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 11 July 1946.

¹⁰⁸Kitson and Diamond (eds), *Vichy, Resistance, Liberation*, 55.

was different from the wave of larceny and violent mugging that persisted in Puglia throughout the occupation. Wanton looting occurred at a time of liberation and exultation for the troops and was a crime of the heightened atmosphere of victory. The escalation of some thefts into violence can be viewed as a reflection of individual temperament, the lessening of moral consequences during wartime, genuine contempt for Italians as former enemies or a feeling of superiority and dominance.

Citizens of Puglia too were capable of violence, including murder. Italians targeted the abundance of supplies stored in Puglia for both Allied and Italian consumption and resorted to ad hoc pilfering and the organization large-scale theft of supplies. Italian motives could be driven by necessity; by the opportunity for a quick profit on the black market; by conflicts over local women; by previous dispensations to aggressive behavior; or, in cases of unprovoked attacks of wanton violence, by resentment of the presence of the Allies (and a desire to be able to administer and control their own territory). Frequently, Italian men targeted lone soldiers to vent their frustration at their situation, feeling dispossessed and emasculated by the presence of the Allies. From this perspective, Italians were committing violence against the uniform as a symbol of the Allies, rather than the individual who wore it. Furthermore, not all crime had a specific motive; traffic accidents were widespread. The large volume of Allied traffic and a high number of drivers travelling at high speed, coupled with a poor Italian road sense culminated in roads becoming dangerous places. No matter the reason, crime or accident, violence and lawlessness were ever-present in a region that had supposedly left the violence of war behind.

Conclusion

In the light of the recent revival of the interest in the civilian involvement in war, Puglia is an invaluable source. *Pugliesi* experienced bombing by both Allied and Axis sides followed by an occupation by their liberators, and it is these circumstances that make the Puglian case so noteworthy. Puglia witnessed exceptional events such as the Bari disaster, which when examined can be taken as a microcosm of Allied-Italian relations and Allied occupation directives. This study has established the abundance of knowledge that can be drawn from the Puglian experience of the war from 1943 to 1946, not exclusively in terms of contributing to the understanding of Italian history and society, but also crucially to the wider studies of the civilian in war.

The study of the occupation of Puglia is indicative of the difference between forward planning and reality. The Allies planned in minute detail the type of administrative body that they wanted to be, but this ideal was neglected once they were confronted with the actuality of the Italian situation. The idea of indirect rule in the King's Italy with a purely liaison and advisory role was swiftly forgotten once confronted with the lack of food, materials, resources and housing, and with poor public health. For reasons of expediency and the advancement of the war effort, AMG/ACC devoted extensive time and personnel to the running of the provinces. In some sense the idea of the Italian civilian became abstract; a category of individuals considered only in terms of how they could help or hinder the war effort. This abstraction is acutely evident in the fervent desire for public order and the endeavours to ameliorate public health.

This construct of Italians was instigated at the top echelons of the administration and did not necessarily reflect the ideas and opinions of average soldiers, who engaged with civilians on

a daily basis. Indeed, this analysis has shown a multifarious set of affable relationships manifested during the occupation. When G. C. Tylee went to the rest base at Santa Maria, some 50 miles south west of Taranto, during a period of rest and relaxation, he danced on a dirty floor outside a bar with local girls, whilst an Italian man played the violin. He also noticed a female partisan wearing a grenade.¹ This example was all too common, and shows the easy way in which the two groups, occupier and occupied could socialise, while the presence of the partisan and her grenade reminded them that the war was never far away. Moreover, the Allied plans for protection of the art and architecture of Puglia establishes their dissimilar attitudes towards Italians as opposed to the Germans. Italy was perceived as once a great civilization and therefore capable of redemption, whereas the Germans were often deemed as die-hard fanatics.

However, there was also animosity to Italians as former enemies, and the freedom from normal societal rules allowed soldiers to take liberties in their behaviour. The most noticeable example of this is provided by the widespread acts of Allied crime, but it is also apparent in the treatment of Italian women. For instance, when Tylee decided to visit an Italian barbershop in Foggia, whilst having his hair shampooed by the daughter of the establishment, he decided to run his hand up her calf. She proceeded to fling some lather from his hair into his eyes and said something in Italian that made the other Italian patrons laugh.² It is arguable that he would not have attempted this behaviour back home in Britain, but as an Allied soldier he felt he had greater authority and license to act this way. Unlike in peacetime, consequences were less probable and would not ruin his reputation. This reveals the complex nature of mentalities and how it is impossible to draw a universal conclusion for all Allied personnel or *Pugliesi*; it is not conceivable to speculate on an every individual basis.

¹G. C. Tylee, 89/12/1, IWM, 156.

²Ibid.

The Second World War and Allied occupation had an unequivocal impact on Puglia. In cities such as Foggia, the level of destruction caused irreparable damage and suffering; however, civilians welcomed the occupiers/liberators without hesitation, as the arrival of the Allies represented an end to war and hardship. The bombing of Puglia enables the historian to further understand the motives for strategic bombing in the Second World War. The Allies' willingness to treat southern Italian civilians as 'collateral damage' is evidence of Allied priorities – the advancement of the Allied push for Europe over the need to protect civilians. In the case of Puglia, the strategic and military importance of a location was paramount in deciding how much it would suffer under the bombs. However, once the initial jubilation of liberation was over, the Allies' role became mostly one of occupiers. Allied occasional incompetence with blackout regulations and the hasty and extensive policy of requisitioning soured relations between the two groups; Italians perceived the Allies as overusing their power to requisition, with little regard for how it would affect citizens. The widespread requisitioning of public buildings, deemed necessary for the war effort, demonstrated disregard for the rehabilitation of the basic functioning of Italian society, such as healthcare and schooling.

The priority of the war effort was moreover reflected in Allied motivations towards reconstruction. The roads and railway networks were the primary objective of the wartime reconstruction, as they were vital for the movement of troops, logistics and communications to the battle zones in the centre-north of the peninsula, while reconstruction of civilian homes and services was left behind. However, opposite to this was the restoration of monuments and historic buildings. Italian opinion on this was divided; for some it showed that the Allies sought to preserve Italian culture, but for others it represented an illogical aim when civilians

were in need of supplies and homes. The treatment of *Pugliesi* during the Allied occupation is additional confirmation of the Allied ability to consider the Italians as foes and friends at the same time. This skill permitted the Allies to exploit southern Italy's physical resources whilst seeing Italy as an occupied, rather than a liberated territory. The setting up of bombing ranges is evidence of this mentality.

Attitudes towards each other were also often prompted by economic conditions. Severe food shortages and an inefficient rationing system precipitated widespread hunger and a scarcity of daily commodities in the region. Subsequently, protests concerning the lack of food and supplies became commonplace. Frequently, women were the principal protagonists of these protests and they consistently appealed to both the Allied and Italian authorities for aid. Food shortages were not the only causes of civil discontent. High unemployment and political tensions among political groups provoked waves of protest for more job opportunities, improved wages and working conditions and in the case of political protest to voice new ideas. Frequently, groups of soldiers/veterans and members of *L'Uomo Qualunque* would instigate violent clashes with communists over issues such as the removal of the monarchy and the future direction of the Italian government. In effect differing political opinions provoked a sense of civil war during these years. Groups were intensely opposed to each other and were prepared to express this distaste in violent ways. From the documentary evidence it appears that civilians appealed to the Italian authorities more often than to the Allies. This was a product of the Allied administration withdrawing into the background after the handover of the liberated Italian territory in February 1944. However, this did not mean that the Allies did not hear or address the problems raised by the people. This is clear in the protests over emergency rations, when the Italian authorities appealed to the Allies for aid. The Allies attempted to help by responding positively to such requests and by employing

large numbers of people to work for the occupying government. However, even with the instigation of public works, unemployment remained an issue and was exacerbated by the repatriation of Italian servicemen and the withdrawal of Allied employment in 1945.

The Allies correspondingly had to deal with complications relating to public health and therefore decided to target malaria, typhus, smallpox, scabies and tuberculosis amongst other diseases. They embarked on a considerable public health scheme, whose primary aim was to ensure the health of the troops, with any health benefits gained by the Italian people as an opportune effect. The inadequate standards of public health posed a threat to the wellbeing of Allied personnel and consequently became a vital concern for the Allied command. To prevent and control the spread of disease and infection was a significant means of safeguarding the health and subsequently the fighting capacity of the Allied armies. Therefore, the Allies devised varied methods to combat existing diseases in Puglia and schemes to prevent both troops and civilians from becoming infected or re-infected.

The Allied military government considered the threat of venereal disease to the troops as sufficiently serious to implement a variety of programmes targeted at servicemen and the women of Puglia. For men, this consisted of continuous education, the setting up of prophylactic stations and the handing out of kits, putting all places of prostitution out of bounds and forbidding any contacts with prostitutes. However, this was not enough to prevent venereal disease from becoming an issue. Hence, women became the complementary targets of Allied efforts, and were subject to medical inspection and hospitalization. Ultimately, the emotional distress these measures caused to the women was a secondary issue; the purpose of any health directives carried out by the Allies for civilians was to ensure the fighting capacity of the troops.

Other aspects of the complex and shifting relationship between the Allies and civilians were violence, crime, and the existence of traffic accidents. Aspects that are considered exceptional in a time of peace, such as transgressions of normal behaviour, become frequent and even commonplace in wartime. The widespread and consistent use of violence and the committing of criminal acts by both Allies and Italians present an opposite image to the one that has dominated the public memory of the occupation in the post-war decades. The view of the Allies as benign liberators stands in stark opposition to the image of the Allied soldier as a thief, mugger, murderer or rapist. Nevertheless, this negative portrayal of the Allies is correspondingly important. It is demonstrative of wider Allied behaviour during the war and symptomatic of how ground level personnel viewed those they 'liberated.' The common instances of looting, in effect a sanctioned pastime, are evidence of this. Contrastingly, Italians frequently chose crime as a means to survive, although this was not the case for all civilians, as is demonstrated by the roving gangs of youths in Bari during the occupation.

It is tempting to think of Allied soldiers and Italian civilians as passive bystanders of an occupation regime, however, this was not the case. In fact, the two groups were active participants of the occupation and had an agency of their own. This influence is manifest in the prevalent protests and demonstrations that endured throughout the occupation, the revival of civilian political life and acts of crime committed. Soldiers and civilians lived out their daily existence on a micro level, although this is no indication that they did not have a sense of what was occurring at a macro level. Allied personnel were acutely aware of what was transpiring in Italy, Europe and the Pacific theatres, however, it is unlikely that the average *Pugliese* would be well informed; many could not read, or were too poor to worry about wider issues. This is reflected in the local press and the literature produced by political

groups in the region. Consequently, this social reading of the occupation of Puglia has demonstrated that micro studies can influence how we think about civilians in war, the nature of occupation governments and how dissimilar cultures interact with each other. In spite of the vast array of proclamations, rules, regulations and advice metered out by AMG/ACC, it is the local context that creates meaning. How those rules were put into practice, engaged with or rebelled against, carried more significance than the original intentions and aims of the highest echelons of authority, both Allied and Italian.

In spite of the Allied temptation of consistently perceiving Italians as former enemies and not co-belligerents, *Pugliesi* still formed a variety of often complex relationships with the Allies. The higher ranks of the Allied forces fervently discouraged the consorting of troops with Italians, but this thesis has exposed how this meant little to the average soldier. As a result, not only did the occupation reflect the Allied desire to control relations, but also the need for examples of normality in a war environment. By participating in the same social environment, troops and civilians could seek to escape the realities of war. This examination has further demonstrated how the perception of the occupier and the occupied can be constantly in flux, changing and adapting itself to different situations. The perception of the 'other' in the region was likewise highly localised, as some people developed a far more affable existence with the Allies than others. This examination of the occupation of Puglia provides a micro-history of an important aspect of the Second World War: the direct impact of war on a civilian population. It postulates that the relationship between occupier and occupied is never simple or arbitrary; instead, it is based on a multifarious understanding of each other and on complex reactions to an ever-changing military environment. Hence, this thesis aims also to contribute to the understanding of other occupations during the conflict, for example in Germany and France. In summary, the study of Puglia is beneficial in

determining how different areas and peoples react to wartime situations and how this affects how they distinguish and interact with their liberators. Ultimately, both civilians and Allies developed their own way of *modus vivendi* that allowed them to co-exist at a time of extreme upheaval and change.

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