# Axis Police Forces

## Collaboration and Transnational Interactions between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany (1936-1943)

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# Abstract

This research examines the relationships between the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany from the second half of the 1930s until the Italian armistice in September 1943. By investigating these police interactions, it aims to contribute to our understanding of the broader relationships and cooperation between the Axis powers. The early contacts between the two fascist regimes were not as effective and successful as their ideological and political affinity might suggest. Police interactions and mediation contributed to a general rapprochement that started in 1935 and eventually culminated in the announcement of the Berlin-Rome Axis in November 1936. The Italian interior ministry's police and the Gestapo started a collaboration in the spring of 1936. It was based on a secret protocol directed against political subversion and was reinforced in the following months through the exchange of liaison officers and of visits. Drawing on a transnational approach, this work explores the development of these bilateral partnerships and shows that their scope and targets expanded over the years, especially after the outbreak of the Second World War. During the conflict, the two police forces implemented increasingly radical policies and intensified their cooperation, which also affected the territories occupied by the Axis powers. Furthermore, their partnership assumed clear diplomatic implications and was constantly monitored by the foreign offices and by Mussolini himself. They recognised the value of police ties and of the strong bond established by the two police chiefs, Arturo Bocchini and Heinrich Himmler, to strengthen the broader connections between the regimes and to evade diplomatic impasses and tensions. This sheds light on the fact that police interactions and exchanges were not just means to counter political dissent and opposition, but they were also diplomatic tools in the hands of the two regimes and means to exert influence and authority abroad.

*In memory of Margherita, Piero, and Guido Veneziani,*
*of Clara Lesser, and of Eva, Leopold, and Fritz Rosenberg,*
*victims of fascist violence.*

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## Abbreviations

**ACS** *Archivio centrale dello stato*; Italian national archives

**AEL** *Arbeitserziehungslager*; work education camps of the Gestapo

**AS** *Archivio di stato*; provincial archive

**ASDMAE** *Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*; Italian foreign office's archives

**BArch** *Bundesarchiv*; German federal archives

**DAGR** *Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati*; General and Confidential Affairs Division

**BdO** *Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei*; Overall Commander of the Order Police

**BdS** *Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*; Overall Commander of the Security Police and of the Security Service

**CSA** *Centro di Studi Anticomunisti*; Anti-communist Study Centre

**Demorazza** *Direzione generale per la demografia e la razza*; Directorate General for Demography and Race

**DGPS** *Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza*; Directorate General of Public Security

**Gestapa** *Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt*; Gestapo Office

**Gestapo** *Geheime Staatspolizei*, Secret State Police

**HSSPF** *Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer*; Higher SS and Police Leader

**ICPC** International Criminal Police Commission

**IdS** *Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*; Inspector of the Security Police and SD

**KdS** *Kommandeur der Sipo und des SD*; Commander of the Security Police and SD

**KPD** *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; Communist Party of Germany

**Kripo** *Kriminalpolizei*; criminal police

**MI** *Ministero dell'interno*; interior ministry

**MVSN** *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale*; Voluntary Militia for National Security

**NDH** *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*; Independent State of Croatia

**NSDAP** *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*; National Socialist German Workers Party

**Office RG** Office for the Relationships with Germany

**Orpo** *Ordnungspolizei*; Order Police

**OVRA** acronym used to indicate the Fascist secret political police; its exact meaning is unclear

**PA AA** *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*; German foreign office's archives

**PAI** *Polizia dell'Africa Italiana*; Italian Africa Police

**PCdI** *Partito Comunista d'Italia*; Comunist Party of Italy

**PNF** *Partito Nazionale Fascista*; National Fascist Party

**PolPol** *Divisione Polizia Politica*; Political Police Division

**PS** *Pubblica Sicurezza*; Public Security

**PSP** *Polícia de Segurança Pública*; Public Security Police

**PVDE** *Polícia de Vigilância e de Defesa do Estado*; Surveillance and State Defence Police

**Questura** Italian provincial police headquarters

**RKFDV** *Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums*; Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom

**RSHA** *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*; Reich Security Main Office

**SA** Sturmabteilung; stormtroopers

**Schupo** *Schutzpolizei*; the municipal uniformed police

**SD** *Sicherheitsdienst*; Security Service

**SIM** *Servizio informazioni militare*; Italian military intelligence

**Sipo** *Sicherheitspolizei*; Security Police

**SPD** *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; Social Democratic Party of Germany

**SS** *Schutzstaffel*; Protection Squad

**TNA** The National Archives of the UK

# Introduction

The historiography of fascism has been revived and renewed in recent decades by the emergence of new and ground-breaking research. This has been possible thanks to new archival findings and more documentation made accessible to researchers, for example through the opening of former Soviet archives to international researchers and the removal of restrictions on key collections, like the records of the political police of Mussolini's regime.[1] More recently, the study of fascism has benefitted from the transnational turn in historiographical research which, building on the comparative approach, has introduced new practices, perspectives, and methods to analyse inter-war fascism as the dynamic and hybrid phenomenon that it actually was.[2] Transnational history, in fact, investigates connections, interactions, circulations and transfers of people, ideas, goods, and processes 'over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between polities and societies'. In doing so, it adopts a perspective that transcends the nation state paradigm, which means that the investigation is carried out not considering the limits represented by national borders.[3] Transnational perspective offers a better understanding of the object under investigation because it complements the local or national perspective.[4] In fascist studies, the transnational approach highlights the importance of fascist connections and interactions and their examination sheds a light on the fact that fascism 'was both a national and transnational phenomenon' that 'transcended national borders but was rooted in national communities'. In other words, fascism was a phenomenon with 'specific national manifestations', interests and features, that also 'spread across borders' because it was open to external connections.[5]

New studies have increasingly demonstrated that fascist experiences were not restricted by national borders but that there were points of contact, interactions, and influences between

[1] For further information about these points, see respectively George C. Browder, 'Captured German and Other Nations' Documents in the Osoby (Special) Archive, Moscow', *Central European History* 24, no. 4 (1991): 424–45, https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/S0008938900019245; and the essays in Isabella Zanni Rosiello, ed., *Intorno agli archivi e alle istituzioni: scritti di Claudio Pavone* (Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Dipartimento per i beni archivistici e librari, Direzione generale per gli archivi, 2004), http://www.archivi.beniculturali.it/dga/uploads/documents/Saggi/Saggi_84_I.pdf.
[2] On this point, see António Costa Pinto and Aristotle Kallis, eds., *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.
[3] Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), xviii.
[4] On this point, see Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Transnational History', *European History Online (EGO)* published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz (3 December 2010), http://www.ieg-ego.eu/patelk-2010-en. On transnationalism as a 'research perspective' rather than a strictly defined methodology, see also Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421–39, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777305002705.
[5] Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, eds., *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, 1st ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 2.

regimes, organisations, and individuals. Accordingly, research on fascism should not focus exclusively on, or be limited to, a single national case or context.[6] Transnational processes, transfers, and entanglements as well as international networks between fascist movements and states have thus received more attention than in the past and enhanced the point of view of the historiography of fascism and of the fascist regimes.[7] In particular, recent research has shown that 'transnational exchange was formative for fascist politics of repression' as the Axis regimes and other countries 'exchanged and cooperated on police procedures, investigations, registrations and other areas'.[8] Indeed, the transnational approach with its comparative component, which helps to identify similarities and differences while examining links and connections, can effectively contribute to the study of the fascist regimes and their repressive apparatuses.

Mussolini considered that 'the principal instrument of authority' was the interior ministry, and thus the control over the police apparatus.[9] The police forces of fascist states – especially those of their most significant expressions, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany – have been the object of comprehensive and important analysis which have greatly contributed to our understanding of how these states functioned and how life in a fascist society was. They have highlighted the internal developments and multifaceted organisation of the security apparatus of the fascist regimes as well as its structural limits, in spite of the public perception. Ground-breaking research has indeed uncovered how the pervasive and wide-ranging repression in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany benefitted from the widespread and active contribution of the populace and the emergence of self-controlling communities. In short, they have revealed the intricate mechanism of coercion and consent in fascist regimes.[10]

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[6] On this point, see the introduction and the different case studies in Sven Reichardt and Armin Nolzen, eds., *Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005).

[7] Amongst the most recent examples, see Andrea Di Michele and Filippo Focardi, eds., *Rethinking Fascism: The Italian and German Dictatorships* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022); Johannes Dafinger and Dieter Pohl, eds., *A New Nationalist Europe under Hitler: Concepts of Europe and Transnational Networks in the National Socialist Sphere of Influence, 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 2019); Fernando Clara and Cláudia Ninhos, eds., *Nazi Germany and Southern Europe, 1933-45: Science, Culture and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Giulia Albanese, "Non solo propaganda: Il modello fascista all'estero (1922-35)," chap. 13 in *Il fascismo italiano: Storia e interpretazioni*, ed. Giulia Albanese (Roma: Carocci, 2021), 309-30.

[8] In Kiran Klaus Patel and Sven Reichardt, 'The Dark Side of Transnationalism Social Engineering and Nazism, 1930s–40s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (January 2016): 18, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009415607956.

[9] See the entry dated 10 June 1939 in Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1939-1943*, 4. ed (Milano: Rizzoli, 1969), 128.

[10] About this point, see Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2003); Mimmo Franzinelli, *Delatori. Spie e confidenti anonimi: L'arma segreta del regime fascista* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2012); Philip Morgan, '"The years of consent"? Popular attitudes and resistance to Fascism in Italy, 1925-1940' in *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe*, eds. Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999),

Building on these historiographical findings, research on fascist police forces and repressive apparatuses has recently started to take into account the existence of forms of cooperation and exchanges between them. Through comparative and transnational lenses, new studies have emphasised connections, mutual influences, as much as differences and similarities.[11] These investigations have contributed to the advance of the field of study, and yet they are still scarce. Notably, albeit the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany have been extensively studied, little comparative and relational work exists.[12]

Michael Ebner's innovative book on everyday violence in Fascist Italy, for example, draws parallels with other states, especially with Nazi Germany. In so doing, as Bernhard notes, not only does he mention similarities and differences between the two regimes' police apparatuses, but he also identifies the existence of transnational cooperation.[13] The intention of the present work is exactly to explore some of the transnational practices and experiences introduced by Ebner. In fact, it aims to contribute to our understanding of the interactions between the two Axis regimes and their systems of repression focusing on the relationships and partnership between their police forces, specifically between the Italian interior ministry's police – the *Pubblica Sicurezza* (Public Security) or PS – and the German police forces unified under the direction of the leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were both police states, and the point of view of their police forces and an analysis of their transnational interactions can reveal much about the relationship between the two fascist regimes.

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163–80. Yet, whether Nazi Germany can be considered a 'self-policing society' is still debated; about this point, see Richard J. Evans, 'Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany: Raleigh Lecture on History', *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 151, 2006 Lectures (2007), 74–76, https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2036/pba151p053.pdf.

[11] See, for example, Patrick Bernhard, 'Behind the Battle Lines: Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in North Africa during World War II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (1 December 2012): 425–46, https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dcs054; Mario Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo: Collaborazione di polizia e diplomazia culturale tra Italia fascista e Portogallo di Salazar (1928-1945)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2008); Andrew Szanajda and David A. Messenger, 'The German Secret State Police in Spain: Extending the Reach of National Socialism', *The International History Review* 40, no. 2 (15 March 2018): 397–415, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1309563.

[12] On this point, see Patrick Bernhard, 'Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis. Die Polizei im Dritten Reich und im faschistischen Italien 1933 bis 1943', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59, no. 2 (15 April 2011): 229–62, https://doi.org/10.1524/vfzg.2011.0012; Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario: Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 1 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1993) and vol. 2 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1996); Jonathan Dunnage, 'Policing Right-Wing Dictatorships: Some Preliminary Comparisons of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés* 10, no. 1 (1 June 2006): 93–122, https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.200; Jonathan Dunnage and Nadine Rossol, 'Building Ideological Bridges and Inventing Institutional Traditions: Festivities and Commemorative Rituals in the Fascist and Nazi Police', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 19, no. 1 (1 June 2015): 67–88, https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.1553; Camilla Poesio, *Il confino fascista: L'arma slenziosa del Regime* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011); Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[13] Patrick Bernhard, 'Renarrating Italian Fascism: New Directions in the Historiography of a European Dictatorship', *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 01 (February 2014): 158, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777313000556.

Rather than simply offering a traditional comparative analysis of the Fascist and Nazi police apparatuses, this research explores their points of contact as well as interactions and transfers across borders. Hence, it draws on a transnational perspective to investigate the relationships and collaboration that the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany established in the second half of 1930s, precisely in 1936, and that developed and intensified until September 1943, when the proclamation of the Italian armistice on 8 September 1943 sanctioned the end of their partnership. To do so, it tries to answer two fundamental questions: how did the police partnership between the Axis regimes develop over the years? and what do these police interactions and collaboration tell us about the broader relationship between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the period under examination?

What this work presents is a more complete picture of the activities of the police apparatuses of the two fascist regimes and of their transnational interactions. It thus examines and compares their organisations and joint work, their objectives and goals, as well as their reciprocal behaviours and approaches. In so doing, it highlights the presence of mutual influences, of similar patterns and differences in policies and practices as well as the existence of dynamics of attractiveness and competition between the 'Axis police forces', as the Italian police monthly renamed them.[14] On the other hand, it illustrates the significance of police interactions and collaboration for the broader relationships between Rome and Berlin. In his book on the relationships between Mussolini and Hitler, Goeschel underlines how the communication between the two dictators often took place outside diplomatic channels.[15] Police mediation was one of the alternative ways that Hitler and Mussolini used to interact and, in some decisive situations, to ease political tensions and circumvent diplomatic impasses. This police diplomacy or mediation constituted a real 'parallel diplomacy', as Ivani defines it, a political tool in the hands of the regimes that contributed to establish and consolidate connections avoiding diplomatic red tape.[16] In particular, the close relationships that the police chiefs Arturo Bocchini and Himmler developed over the years represented a privileged channel for Rome and Berlin to communicate and address issues that their diplomatic corps were not able to solve. The main examples occurred during the general rapprochement between the two fascist regimes in 1936 and during the period of cold diplomatic relationships that followed Mussolini's declaration of non-belligerence in September 1939.

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[14] See the article entitled "Le polize dell'Asse" in *Il magistrato dell'ordine* 15, no.9 (19 December 1938): 109-110.

[15] See Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 63-68.

[16] Mario Ivani, 'I rapporti tra la polizia fascista e la PVDE (1937-1940)' (XXXII Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de História Económica e Social, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, 2012), 8, http://aphes32.cehc.iscte-iul.pt/docs/s11_3_pap.pdf.

As Fehlhaber suggests, in fact, the 'Axis' consisted not only of the relationships between Hitler and Mussolini or formal connections and diplomatic initiatives but was also shaped by the participation and experiences of broad and different networks of actors that actively contributed to its existence and development.[17] In this regard, the relationships between Himmler and Bocchini and their active contribution to the development of the Axis are significant and still requires further investigation.[18] An analysis of the interactions between the two police chiefs as well as between the two regimes' police forces, in fact, can reveal much about the internal configuration of the Axis and about how the partnership actually functioned and evolved over the years. The present work thus aims to add to the existing scholarship on the history of the Axis and of fascist networks, interactions, and influences as it shines a light on the institutional and personal relationships, cooperation, and points of contacts that had the Nazi and Forces police forces as protagonists. At the same time, it aspires to contribute to the long-overlooked discussion about how much the Italian authorities were willing to join forces and cooperate with the German authorities and therefore shared responsibilities as partners and contributors to Nazi crimes and violence, a crucial aspect of the bilateral interactions that has been neglected by the historiography until recent years.[19]

This research is inspired by, and expands on, the works of Patrick Bernhard and Klaus Voigt, who – after an initial recognition by Renzo De Felice in the 1960s and 1970s – shed light on the impact of the bilateral collaboration and of the cross-border persecution that the Axis police forces established in 1936, when Himmler and Bocchini signed a secret protocol that initiated an exchange of information and a joint work between the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, Secret State Police) and the PS.[20] This was directed against political subversion, specifically communist organisations and activists, in which the fascist political police forces had a shared interest. Anti-communism represented a common ground on which to establish connections and collaboration since governments and police forces were concerned about the worldwide menace

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[17] See the Introduction to Nils Fehlhaber, *Netzwerke der 'Achse Berlin-Rom': Die Zusammenarbeit faschistischer und nationalsozialistischer Führungseliten 1933-1943*, (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2019).
[18] See footnote no. 108 in Ibid., 39.
[19] About this point, see Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano: La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013), especially its chapters V and VI; also Christian Goeschel, 'A Parallel History? Rethinking the Relationship between Italy and Germany, ca. 1860–1945', *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 3 (September 2016): 610–32, https://doi.org/10.1086/687475.
[20] See Patrick Bernhard, 'Der Beginn einer faschistischen Interpol? Das deutsch-italienische Polizeiabkommen von 1936 und die Zusammenarbeit der faschistischen Diktaturen im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit', 2009, http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/artikel-3585; Bernhard, 'Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis'; Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*. It was De Felice who first discovered and published the text of the protocol, yet his work lacks a full acknowledgment of the importance of the police collaboration for the regimes and, more generally, for the Axis partnership; see Renzo De Felice in "Alle origini del Patto d'Acciaio: L'incontro e gli accordi fra Bocchini e Himmler del marzo-aprile 1936," *La Cultura*, September 1963, 524–38.

posed by international communism.[21] They were willing to join forces to counter the 'Bolshevik threat', especially after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil war. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany thus built on a common anti-communist sentiment to work on a general rapprochement and to set up a police cooperation.

It is true that 'the importance of the German-Italian Police Accords of March-April 1936', as Goeschel observes, 'should not be exaggerated'.[22] And yet, this work aims to illustrate the wide and varied dynamics that those accords initiated and shows how the broader partnership between the Axis police forces assumed further connotations and more relevance for the two fascist regimes than they originally envisioned in 1936. Over the years, the Axis police forces consolidated their bonds and their cooperation intensified and expanded, despite differences in mentality and aims as well as the existence of a mutual, relentless suspicion. Mirroring the broader relationships between the Axis powers, the police partnership was indeed characterised by the growing pre-eminence of German interests as well as by the presence of latent wariness, distrust, and rivalry between the fascist police forces.

This research shows how, with time, the two Axis police forces worked together on additional objectives and assignments and the presence of the cooperation became increasingly noticeable. For example, on the occasion of Hitler's visit to Italy in May 1938, groups of German policemen and SS men were assigned to various Italian cities to monitor the local communities of German expatriates. The intensification of ties and mutual exchanges became even more evident as the war approached, when the police forces tightened their control over the populace and enforced more radical domestic policies and practices. The impact of the Second World War on the police partnership and interactions is an important factor under examination since it permits to highlight a general radicalisation in police practices as much as differences and similarities between the two police forces and their regimes. In addition, this work illustrates how police interactions and forms of transnational cooperation occurred in the territories that the Axis powers progressively occupied in the course of the conflict, although these were occasionally more problematic. The police collaboration thus expanded and proved effective until the armistice of September 1943. In the course of that year, however, the relationships between the two police leaderships deteriorated, since they did not consider each other trustworthy partners any longer. In this regard, the arrest of Bocchini's successor Carmine

[21] About this point, see Mathieu Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Lorna Louise Waddington, *Hitler's Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007).
[22] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 67.

Senise at the hands of the Gestapo in September 1943 symbolised the end of the bilateral partnership between the Axis police forces.

The focus of the investigation is on the developments of the broader partnership and cross-border interactions that the Axis police forces established, consolidated, and expanded between 1936 and 1943. At the same time, it takes into account the significant role that police diplomacy played in the relationships between the two fascist regimes as well as in their connections with other countries. In the second half of the 1930s, Rome and Berlin elaborated on the shared and widespread interest in countering the Bolshevik threat to develop contacts and connections with other countries and police forces, and thus to increase their influence and authority abroad. In establishing their networks of interactions, this study illustrates, the Italian and German police forces enforced different agendas and pursued their own national interests. At times, their goals and aspirations collided, and the situation could occasionally develop into a rivalry for gaining a foothold or exerting more influence in a country.

The two parts into which this work is divided analyse in detail these two topics. The first part deals with the establishment of the secret collaboration and partnership between the Gestapo and the PS in 1936 as well as the broader networks of police interactions and connections that the two Axis powers established in the second half of the 1930s. Chapter I puts the establishment of police relationships and cooperation between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy into context and illustrates how, despite political and ideological affinities, the conclusion of the secret agreement in 1936 was not considered a predictable outcome. It highlights how police diplomacy contributed to the general rapprochement between the fascist regimes which occurred in 1935-1936 and culminated in the proclamation of the Axis Berlin-Rome in November 1936. Chapter II examines how, in the mid-1930s, Rome and Berlin made an increasing use of police diplomacy and anti-communism as means to establish international connections and exert power and influence abroad. In so doing, it compares the two regimes' agendas and exposes their different practices, interests, and approaches as well as the dynamics of attractiveness and competition that their involvement abroad generated.

The second part of the study concentrates on the development of the bilateral relationships and of the collaboration between the two Axis police forces up until its end in September 1943. It reconstructs how Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany reinforced their bonds and worked together to target their enemies and opponents across their own jurisdictions and investigates to what extend Axis police collaboration was a transnational extension of the far-reaching repression that they enforced at home. In other words, it reconstructs how the police interactions and collaboration progressed over the years and compares the PS and Gestapo's objectives and policies as well their mindsets and reciprocal behaviour. Chapter III focuses on the first two

years of collaboration and highlights how crucial events in the history of the Axis regimes that took place between 1936 and 1938 influenced and strengthened the interactions and joint work between their police forces. It shows how the German annexation of Austria impacted the cross-border interactions and exchanges between the two police forces, as Italy and the Third Reich now shared a border. The Anschluss also enabled the German police leadership to extend their influence in the field of international police cooperation as a result of the takeover of the Vienna-based International Criminal Police Commission. Moreover, the chapter highlights the forms of mutual assistance and cooperation that were put into place on the occasion of the exchanges of visits between Mussolini and Hitler in 1937 and 1938. It thus shows how, despite some divergences, the PS and the Gestapo willingly joined forces to tighten their control over their own jurisdictions and to extend their reach over their expatriates living in the partner's territory.

Chapter IV develops this point further illustrating how, in preparation for the war, the two police apparatuses of the Axis powers reinforced their reorganisations and increased their objectives and tasks. This expansion of police scope and assignments, it is demonstrated, reflected on their collaboration. The transnational persecution set up by the Gestapo and the PS increasingly targeted new categories of alleged enemies of the regimes, like social outsiders and religious minorities, which were not initially encompassed by the 1936 protocol. Most important, the last part of the chapter reveals that, in the fall of 1939, Mussolini and Hitler turned to their police chiefs to break the diplomatic dreadlock and address crucial questions that endangered the partnership between their countries, specifically the Italian declaration of non-belligerence and the South Tyrol question.

Lastly, chapter V examines the relationships and collaboration between the Axis police forces between the outbreak of the Second World War and the Italian armistice of September 1943. Its aim is to illustrate how the state of war affected the progress of police collaboration. The cross-border persecution of perceived enemies and the repression of alleged misconduct and discontent continued to expand in wartime, and the chapter highlights the increasing radicalisation of police practices and procedures, but different opinions and disagreements remained. The chapter then shows how the wartime collaboration extended to the territories that were under the joint occupation of the Axis powers. It examines the different approaches to Jewish refugees in occupied France and explores the little-known interactions between the Axis police forces in Croatia and Slovenia. Still, the chapter considers that, whereas the partnership intensified and progressed effectively during the war years, the conflict exposed the vulnerability and malfunction of the Fascist regime. The last part of the chapter illustrates how the deterioration of the situation and the collapse of the Italian home front reflected on the

general relationships between Rome and Berlin and between their police forces in particular. It thus deals with the last stages of the police partnership, until its end in September 1943.

In view of its topic, this research is widely based on police records and other sources produced by state organisations and bodies under the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy. Hundreds of files produced by police headquarters, foreign offices, and other central state and party agencies and kept in German, Italian, and British national archives have been thoroughly examined to reconstruct the institutional interactions and partnership between the two regimes' police forces. In light of their nature, these sources can help us to understand the real connotation and function of police relationships and connections for the two regimes and their security apparatuses and, possibly, their real impact on the police forces' day-to-day activity. On the other hand, the sources available and examined have, in turn, influenced the investigation. In fact, two main difficulties emerge from the use of this kind of primary sources.

First, the problem of working with institutional and official records, as Philip Morgan remarks, is that they report and interpret facts and events from the viewpoint of the institutions that produced them. In other words, the point of view they convey – in this case, that of fascist authorities and police forces – might influence how the historian examines and evaluates a situation.[23] Morgan refers explicitly to the problems of interpreting popular dissent using police sources, but that is true also in relation to the police relationships and interactions.

By looking at the primary sources examined for this study, which are predominantly official and top-level sources, this work is evidently a top-down institutional history rather than a social history of the police relationship or a history from below. The examination of how the two police forces interacted at the highest level can indeed shed light on the actual meaning of these relationships and connections for Berlin and Rome. Yet, with respect to Morgan's remark, it is necessary to analyse and evaluate police sources with care, because they often present a one-sided reality. In this regard, it has been possible to investigate some confidential reports, letters, or internal memoranda that the police forces produced. These sources permit us to know the real mindset and opinions of the actors involved in the police interactions and allow us to reconstruct decision-making processes as well as the enduring mistrust, wariness, and competition that persevered behind the official proclamations. Bocchini's secret reports to Mussolini, for example, give an insight into the German-Italian police relationships, although it is always necessary to keep in mind who the author and the recipient of these reports are and be wary of the message they convey.

[23] In Morgan, '"The years of consent"?,' 167-72.

The second problem to deal with is the presence of relevant gaps in the German and Italian documentation. Many sources have not survived the war, like the documentation of the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin concerning the relationships with the PS which are almost entirely lost. Other collections or files are not easily accessible. This is evident with some Italian files that are still not available to the public or that have not been completely catalogued yet. As a result, the organisation and availability of the sources has influenced the development of the archival research. The documentation consulted mainly belongs to the collections of the German foreign office and to the Italian police records, especially those of the 'Office for the Relationships with Germany' that the PS specifically created to supervise the communication with the German police. These files are indeed thoroughly organised and quite comprehensive, and at times it is possible to examine the original Gestapo reports and letters through the copies that are included in these collections. Unfortunately, they too present gaps and underwent loss of precious documentation, in particular with regards to the wartime period and the personal files of the police chiefs. A more positive note, on the other hand, is that the sources examined for this study unveils a few topics that are open to further investigation.

# Part I

# Chapter 1. The Beginnings of the Axis Police Partnership. Police Diplomacy and the Establishment of the Collaboration in 1936

This chapter examines how and why Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy set up a police collaboration in 1936 and illustrates how the creation and consolidation of police connections contributed to the general rapprochement between Rome and Berlin, which culminated into the announcement of the Berlin-Rome Axis in November 1936. In so doing, it highlights that police interactions and diplomacy – and, primarily, the direct connection between the police chiefs – formed an important channel of communication between Berlin and Rome that benefitted the development of solid relationships between the two fascist regimes. In addition, it emphasises how the establishment of a police cooperation between the Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was not a predictable outcome until the mid-1930s, despite the two regimes' ideological affinity and ruthless repression of any domestic political opposition. Despite these premises, the chapter shows that earlier approaches between the two police forces had indeed proved ineffective or insubstantial.

The chapter thus puts the establishment of police connections and cooperation between the two fascist regimes into context. It first examines how, from the middle of the nineteenth century, governments and police forces discussed and developed forms of international and transnational cooperation against political subversion. It illustrates how they established systems of surveillance over expatriates and their networks of contacts and assistance than spanned across borders, and shows how such cooperation was generally motivated by strategic consideration rather political or ideological affinity. Then, the investigation on the interactions between the German and Italian police forces before 1936 exposes their strategies and objectives as well as their reciprocal mindset and perspectives. Finally, the chapter focuses on the set up and reinforcement of the collaboration in 1936 that brought the political police of the two dictatorships to join forces against political subversion, predominantly represented by communism. It highlights the direct involvement of Mussolini as well as the role played by the police chiefs in the development of the bilateral police interactions.

## 1.1 Collective Responses to Common Threats: Early Attempts to Establish International Political Police Cooperation in Europe

Forms of international political police cooperation had been instituted long before Mussolini and Hitler's seizure of power. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the rise of radical movements that worked towards a change of the political and social status quo had prompted governments and police forces to offer each other assistance in dealing with what they

considered agitators and subversive activities.[1] These were primarily labour organisations, anarchist, socialist and communist parties, but in multinational empires also separatist groups and anti-imperialist activists were subjected to constant police scrutiny and repression.[2]

Numerous dissidents and revolutionaries were forced to emigrate, and even in exile they were kept under constant surveillance by undercover police officers, spies, and paid informants.[3] This surveillance across borders usually benefitted from the formal or tacit knowledge and assistance of the policemen of the host countries, who were eager to cooperate to detect and monitor any troublesome and potentially dangerous element within their jurisdictions.[4] If no official agreement had been concluded, camaraderie, exchanges of favours, and economic return could motivate and facilitate the cooperation of the host authorities in the surveillance of the expatriates.[5] Their capture and detention with no warrant or conviction and their enforced repatriation were more problematic, not least because of the potential public reaction. Furthermore, the extradition of criminals was a long and bureaucratic process that required the formal intervention of diplomacy, judiciary, and police, and extradition treaties did not generally encompass political crimes exactly because of their indistinct and controversial nature. Yet, police forces regularly sought to circumvent this red tape and simplify the extradition process.

Before the Bolshevik Revolution, anarchist terrorism was considered the main international menace to social and political order. Anarchist actions included violent acts like bombings and political assassinations, and were difficult to prevent due to the transnational mobility and networks of support of their affiliates. Secret multilateral police conferences were organised with the intention of coordinating a joint response to the threat. The first of this kind was held

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[1] On the rise of modern states' police and on international police collaboration in the 19th century, see Hsi-huey Liang, *The Rise of Modern Police and the European State System from Metternich to the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mathieu Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[2] On this point, see Ibid. On police cooperation with regard to the surveillance of anti-imperialist activists, see Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[3] Early attempts to establish broad police cooperation across borders occurred in the aftermaths of the 1848-1849 uprisings in Europe; see Mathieu Deflem, "International Policing in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Police Union of German States, 1851-1866," *International Criminal Justice Review* 6, no. 1 (May 1, 1996): 36–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/105756779600600103; Christos Aliprantis, "State Formation and Security Policies between the Habsburg Empire and the Italian States after the 1848-49 Revolutions," *Contemporanea. Rivista di storia dell'800 e del '900* 22, no. 4 (2019): 633–38; Christos Aliprantis, "Transnational Policing after the 1848–1849 Revolutions: The Habsburg Empire in the Mediterranean," *European History Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2020): 412–37, https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691420932489.

[4] The tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, established the most successful and long-lived system of surveillance over the communities of Russian expatriates. They had a special branch – the Foreign Agentura – that operated abroad from 1883 until the collapse of the tsardom with the decisive support of the police forces of the host countries. For further information, see Fredric Scott Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police Abroad: Policing Europe in a Modernising World* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[5] For an example of this broad police surveillance, see Christopher Duggan, "Malta, London, and Paris," chap.5 in *Francesco Crispi: From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 106-148.

in Rome following the assassination of the Austrian empress Elisabeth in 1898.[6] The conference was attended by delegates from twenty-one countries, whose majority agreed on establishing direct police connections and exchanges of information. It was also proposed to adopt the anthropometric description of the *portrait parlé* as unique system of police identification and to simplify the extradition procedures.[7] Other international conferences against anarchist terrorism were organised in the following years, but they were less successful in terms of participation and achievements than the first conference in Rome.[8] Its resolutions remained effective until the outbreak of the First World War, and even later police forces considered them the basis for the establishment of informal, bilateral exchanges of information on political subversives, albeit the anarchists were no more considered the most important menace.

Communism became the main international threat after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution 'which envisaged the total and violent overthrow of world order'.[9] On the one hand, it triggered a revolutionary momentum that inspired uprisings and activists worldwide.[10] On the other hand, it generated firm reactions from governments and police forces that feared the prospect of a communist seizure of power in their own countries. Some European countries also contemplated the opportunity of joining forces to counter the advancing 'red scare', as they had done before against anarchist terrorism.

In December 1920, a secret police conference on the topic 'The International Struggle Against Bolshevism: An International Trouble' was held in Munich with the participation of twenty-four police officers from Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands. The delegations agreed on working together and providing each other support against the common threat, although they had acknowledged – with the exception of the Italians and Austrians – that a communist revolution was unlikely to happen in their respective countries. Yet, the way the participants were supposed to work together remained vague. The Italian representative's idea to create a central bureau to facilitate and coordinate the exchange of information among them was rejected. The conference produced no effective outcomes, and the idea to organise a second meeting remained a dead letter.[11]

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[6] On international fight against anarchist terrorism see Richard Bach Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[7] The final acts of the conference are published as Appendix A in Ibid., 366-71.
[8] For further information, see also Deflem, *Policing World Society*; and Richard Bach Jensen, 'The International Anti-Anarchist Conference of 1898 and the Origins of Interpol', *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 323–47, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948101600205.
[9] Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.
[10] For further details, see "Time of Revolution (1917-1923)," chap. 1 in Ibid., 7-42.
[11] Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 116-18.

An international police organisation was eventually created in 1923 under the name of International Criminal Police Commission, ICPC. Its foundation was the result of an initiative of the Austrian police chief and former chancellor Johannes Schober.[12] He convened in Vienna delegates from twenty European countries to discuss the adoption of common measures for the repression of international delinquency, in particular the establishment of direct and faster communication between police forces and the simplification of the extradition process.[13] The ICPC was created to coordinate and develop this broad system of police cooperation.[14] Its members agreed to collaborate in the repression of international crimes such as counterfeiting currency, drug trafficking, and white slavery, but political policing was explicitly excluded from the ICPC scope. Any attempt to discuss measures for the repression of political crimes and international terrorism was always rejected by its members to preserve the apolitical character of the organisation. It does not mean that the ICPC was 'politically neutral'. The Soviet police were never involved in its sessions and activities. Even so, the ICPC was not an anti-communist organisation, nor did it become one when the Nazis assumed control of its direction at the end of the 1930s.[15] This takeover was a direct consequence of the Anschluss and of the incorporation of the Austrian police into the Nazi security apparatus, as discussed further in chapter 3. Following its foundation, the members of the ICPC agreed that the presidency and secretariat of the ICPC remained in the hands of the Austrian police.

The attitude of the Italian police leadership – and later of the Nazi police as well – towards the ICPC was variable and ambivalent, with no genuine interest in the work and achievements of the Commission. In their view, the real benefit of participating in the ICPC activities was the possibility of networking during its annual meetings. They reckoned that these gatherings offered suitable occasions to establish and cultivate relationships with other police forces 'which might be of use in further circumstances'.[16] Over the years, both the Fascist and Nazi police took advantage of the ICPC channels to establish and develop valuable institutional and personal connections.

Police cooperation in the field of political policing was not open like that promoted by the ICPC. It was usually based on secret, bilateral connections and exchanges, not sanctioned by

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[12] On the figure and career of Schober see Rainer Hubert, *Schober. 'Arbeitermörder' und 'Hort der Republik'. Biographie eines Gestrigen* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990).

[13] In Archivio Centrale dello Stato (henceforth, ACS), Ministero dell'Interno (MI), Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza (DGPS), Divisione Polizia Amministrativa e Sociale, Scuola Superiore di Polizia e servizio centrale di segnalamento e identificazione, 1908-1965, b.143, f. Berlino. *Congresso internazionale di polizia*.

[14] On the history of the ICPC, see Cyrille Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission and the Fight against Communism, 1923-1945," in *The Policing of Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Mark Mazower (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 107-28; and chap. 5 and 7 in Deflem, *Policing World Society*.

[15] Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 112-23.

[16] ACS, MI, DGPS, Divisione Polizia Politica (PolPol), Fascicoli per Materia, 1926-1944, b.172, f.3, Commissione Internazionale di Polizia Criminale, Memorandum for the Italian police chief, 6 October 1932.

any sort of agreement. Accords were tacit or, in some cases, old treaties in effect until the Great War were restored. The secret exchange of information on political subversives established by Vienna and Rome in 1927, for example, was based on the resolutions approved in Rome in 1898.[17]

Governments and police wanted to keep any form of political police collaboration and exchange secret from the public opinion, at home and abroad. When Scotland Yard approached the Italian embassy in August 1923 and proposed sharing with the Italian police confidential information on anarchist and communist agitators, the British authorities demanded a high level of secrecy in the communication and to be allowed to deny any involvement in front of the general public. In case of necessity, they might even be 'forced to present formal protests' against the behaviour of the Italian police, although the character of such remonstrations was intended to be merely conventional 'in light of the ongoing secret arrangement'.[18] From 1931, these secret interactions and exchanges between Rome and London were no longer handled by Scotland Yard. The latter continued to supervise only the official communication on police matters. The confidential information and enquiries were now managed by the British Passport Control Office in Rome, a cover for the representatives of the Secret Intelligence Service, which dealt with 'all work, classed as "Intelligence", regarding Communism or subversive movements in England'.[19]

Nor did diplomatic or ideological considerations impede the establishment and development of this secret cooperation, which is documented until 1938. The aim, on both sides, was to preserve and protect the political and social order in their respective countries against political subversives and agitators. To this end, London had no hesitation in denouncing the political conduct of Italian migrants or travellers to the Italian police, in return for the information received.[20] For the same reason, the British intelligence services initially proved eager to share information – via the Passport Control Office in Berlin – on communist and anti-colonial activists with the new Prussian secret police established after Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, as they had done before with the authorities of the Weimar Republic.[21]

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[17] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati (DAGR), Archivio Generale (AG), Categorie Permanenti (Ctg. Permanenti), B4 Personale di Pubblica Sicurezza (PS), Affari Generali e Fascicoli Personali, 1911-1944, b.9, f.529, Zecchini Emilio.

[18] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.5, f.6, Agitatori politici. Segnalazioni segretissime con la polizia estera, The Italian foreign office to the police, 21 August 1923.

[19] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, K/R – OVRA (henceforth only OVRA), 1927-1943, b.3, Claude Dansey to Guido Leto, 22 December 1931. For further information on the cooperation between the British Passport Control Office in Rome and the Italian police see, Mauro Canali, *Le spie del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 105; Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 314.

[20] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, OVRA, b.3.

[21] Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest*, 174; Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, *A Matter of Intelligence: MI5 and the Surveillance of Anti-Nazi Refugees, 1933-50* (Manchester: Manchester University

On the one hand, the police forces of democratic countries aimed to work together with police forces that had proven successful in the fight against left-wing subversives and agitators. On the other hand, democratic governments generally preferred not to openly endorse a police collaboration with these regimes, being aware that it could have been politically inappropriate and potentially dangerous in electoral terms. The Italian police also wanted to keep these connections and exchanges secret because they did not want to draw attention to – and provide international support for – the anti-fascist cause.

Diplomatic considerations could promote exchanges in the field of political policing even between countries that appeared as archenemies, for example Fascist Italy and the Soviet Union. The Italian political police – whose main targets were communist movements and activists – had no difficulties in passing on information on Russian exiles and Soviet citizens living in the peninsula to the authorities of the first communist state, when requested by the foreign office in 1931.[22] At that time, Moscow and Rome had begun to intensify their relationships and discuss the possibility of concluding financial and political accords, eventually signed in 1933.[23] Exchanges also occurred between the Soviet secret police and the Gestapo in the aftermaths of the conclusion of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939, as highlighted in chapter 4.

These collaborations had been motivated by a common interest in the surveillance of political subversives – above all communists – or by diplomatic considerations. Ideological or political affinity were not taken into account. In this regard, the Italian police could establish connections with the police forces of the Weimar Republic but then proved reluctant to interact with the police of the Third Reich. The conclusion of a police collaboration between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany was indeed not taken for granted, in particular during the first years of Nazi power.

## 1.2 German-Italian Police Interactions between the March on Rome and the Advent of Nazism (1920s-1932)

Contacts occurred between the police forces and security agencies of the Weimar Republic and Fascist Italy during the 1920s. They shared an interest in political revolutionaries, namely communists, and on their networks of interaction and support. Germany, with its radical and

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Press, 2017), 16-19, 26-27. From 1934, MI5 also started to monitor the fascist groups in Britain and kept under scrutiny the interactions between the British Union of Fascists (BUF) and the Nazi and Fascist organisations abroad, see "Nazi spies and the 'Auslandsorganisation'," chap. 5 in Ibid., 44-54; and Claudia Baldoli, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 47.

[22] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.257, f.23, Accordo italo-sovietico. Censimento profughi russi e cittadini sovietici.

[23] Enzo Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza: Politica estera, 1922-1939* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 2000), 191-92.

popular communist party, represented ‘a bridge between Moscow and the rest of Europe’.[24] The Communist International or Comintern had offices in Berlin, and communist emissaries and Soviet agents reached western Europe through Germany. Transnational solidarity organisations connected to the Comintern, like the International Workers’ Relief and the League Against Imperialism, had their headquarters in Berlin too.[25] For the Fascist authorities, another matter of interest were the Italians living in the country. The Italian colony was not as relevant and numerous as in the pre-war years. Germany did not represent a favoured destination for Italian migrants anymore.[26] They were dispersed throughout the country, and their number continued to reduce over the years. Still, some anti-fascists sought refuge there before Hitler came to power in 1933. The members of the Italian community thus needed to be kept under control and converted into Fascists.[27]

Throughout the 1920s, the Italian embassy in Berlin repeatedly requested the interior ministry’s police, the Public Security (PS), to set up a permanent service of political policing in the German capital, but with no success. The organisation of a service for the surveillance of political activists and subversives within the Italian colonies abroad was neither a new idea nor a Fascist invention.[28] With the assistance of the foreign office, the police had monitored Italian anarchists and agitators residing overseas since the end of the nineteenth century. For decades, policemen had been attached to embassies and consulates with a more or less official recognition by the local police authorities, which counted on reciprocal behaviour from the Italian authorities. The service had been suspended in 1919, as the problematic domestic situation and an internal reorganisation brought the interior ministry’s police to recall all the personnel deployed abroad. It was then restored and reinforced when Mussolini came to power after the March on Rome in October 1922.[29]

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[24] Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 70. On the German Communist Party (KPD, *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*) and its policies profoundly influenced by Moscow, and on the reaction of the Weimar authorities and police against communist unrest, see the first chapters in Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[25] On the organisation and activity of the International Workers’ Relief see Kasper Braskén, *The International Workers’ Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity: Willi Münzenberg in Weimar Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). On the LAI, see “The League Against Imperialism Years, 1926-1933,” chap. 5 in Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest*, 139-68.

[26] Cesare Bermani, *Al lavoro nella Germania di Hitler: Racconti e memorie dell’emigrazione italiana, 1937-1945* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998), 13-14.

[27] The attempts of the regime to implement the fascistisation of the Italian community in Germany were not successful; see Claudia Baldoli, “Un fallimento del fascismo all’estero: La costruzione delle piccole Italie nella Germania nazista,” *Italia Contemporanea*, no. 235 (2004): 221–38.

[28] See Piero Brunello, *Storie di anarchici e di spie: polizia e politica nell’Italia liberale* (Roma: Donzelli, 2009).

[29] See Stefania Ruggeri, “Il fondo ‘Polizia Internazionale’,” in *Il movimento socialista e popolare in Puglia dalle origini alla Costituzione, 1874-1946*, *Il movimento socialista e popolare in Puglia dalle origini alla Costituzione, 1874-1946*, eds. Fabio Grassi and Gianni C. Donno (Bari: Tip. Mare, 1985), 153-57; Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 16-32.

In April 1923, Mussolini – who was at the same time head of government, interior minister, and foreign minister – approved a request of the Italian embassy and authorised the deployment of Francesco Nudi to Berlin.[30] In Germany, Nudi, assisted by another police officer, monitored the anti-fascist expatriates, tracked the movements and connections of communist emissaries, studied the organisation and activity of the KPD and of the Comintern, and recruited informers. He intended to create a permanent political policing service in the country with four agents and adequate resources but was recalled in October 1923.[31]

The head of the police Emilio De Bono – one of the quadrumvirs that had led the March on Rome – was aware that Berlin was one of the most important observation post to monitor and gather information on communist subversives.[32] Despite this acknowledgment and the continuing pressure of the embassy, financial reasons and shortage of personnel did not allow the interior ministry police to run a large and permanent network of functionaries and agents abroad. The system of surveillance was thus carried out by the personnel of legations and consulates that counted on the collaborative approach of the local police, while police functionaries were assigned only temporary missions abroad.[33] The situation changed from the middle of the 1920s, when the dictatorship was definitively established and the ruthless repression of the anti-fascist forces was implemented, giving new birth to the PS and to its central office, the Directorate General of Public Security (DGPS).

Mussolini had not initially given much attention to this police corps inherited from the liberal state.[34] The PS was a rather small and poorly organised corps than the carabinieri, the gendarmes of the ministry of war that depended on the interior ministry for matters regarding law enforcement and the maintenance of public order. The police were not evenly distributed across the country as they were mainly present in urban areas, and Mussolini considered them politically unreliable because of their strong ties with the previous liberal governments. He preferred to entrust a personal, secret Fascist agency – known as 'the Fascist Cheka' – with

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[30] Mussolini led the interior ministry almost continuously from October 1922 to July 1943, except for the period from June 1924 to November 1926 when the ministry was led by Luigi Federzoni. He was foreign minister until September 1929, then from July 1932 to June 1936, and for the last time from February until July 1943; in Mario Missori, *Gerarchie e statuti del P.N.F.: Gran consiglio, Direttorio nazionale, Federazioni provinciali: quadri e biografie* (Roma: Bonacci, 1986), 296-97.
[31] In ACS, MI, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Annuali, 1923, b.105, f.4, Germania.
[32] Ibid., De Bono to the embassy, 18 September 1923. The title 'head of the police' was an innovation of the Fascist era that substituted 'Director General of Public Security' previously used to define the chief of the interior ministry police or Directorate General of Public Security (DGPS) during the liberal age; see Royal Decree no. 2908, 20 December 1923.
[33] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 41-49.
[34] About the impact on the police of the passage from the liberal state to the advent of the Fascist regime, see 'Cinderella status': The liberal police and the lure of fascism," chap. 1 in Jonathan Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen: Behaviour, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 8-36.

delicate political tasks and operations against the anti-fascists rather than the institutionalised police. The interior ministry police and their personnel suffered a process of dismantlement during the first years of his government in favour of the carabinieri and of the newly established Party Militia (*Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale*, MVSN), commanded by the head of the police De Bono. The situation changed after the murder of the socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti at the hands of the Fascist Cheka which brought the secret organisation to an end and prompted De Bono to resign in June 1924.[35]

Under the new police chief Francesco Crispo Moncada there started a phase of reorganisation of the departments and staff of the Public Security that interested primarily the political police offices and their networks of informants, and that was continued and implemented by his successor Arturo Bocchini. Crispo Moncada was dismissed in September 1926 after Gino Lucetti's failed attempt against Mussolini's life, a few months after another attempt had been carried out by the Irishwoman Violet Gibson. The appointment of Bocchini as police chief coincided with the expansion of the Fascist repressive apparatus that accompanied the definitive establishment of the regime. New public security laws were issued on 6 November 1926 as part of the *leggi fascistissime* (very fascist laws) that constituted the legal structure of the regime.[36]

Bocchini was an efficient career functionary with experience as director of the interior ministry's personnel administration and as prefect in Bologna and Genoa, cities with a solid left-wing tradition. The new police chief developed a direct connection with the dictator that allowed him to circumvent the supervision of his direct superior, the undersecretary Guido Buffarini Guidi, and to defend the autonomy of the police against any interference, control, and ideological imposition dictated by the Fascist organisations, and chiefly by the party (PNF).[37] Still, he 'imposed a formal but nevertheless exact alignment of the institution with the regime' and 'tolerated the presence of fascist positions, as long as they were matched by professional competence'.[38]

The loyal and experienced Bocchini, like Crispo Moncada, considered the fight against communists and political opponents the primary task of the police. Unlike his predecessor, he was able to reorganise the police and create an efficient political policing structure counting on Mussolini's support, on vast funds at his disposal, and on the special powers provided by the

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[35] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 131-32.
[36] Ibid., 59-61.
[37] Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen*, 46-53.
[38] Ibid., 49.

new repressive laws approved on 6 November 1926.[39] He created the Political Police Division or PolPol that together, and often competing, with the already existing *Divisione Affari Generali e Riservati* (DAGR, 'General and Confidential Affairs Division') conducted the fight against anti-fascism and the opponents of the regime. Within the DGPS, the go-between between the PolPol and the DAGR was Guido Leto, the head of the DAGR Section I's 'Special Office for the Subversive and Anti-fascist Movement' (*Ufficio speciale del movimento sovversivo e antifascista* or simply *Ufficio Materia*, Office Subject Matter) and its sub-office 'K/R' (*Riservata/Communismo*, Confidential/Communism). It was the section K/R, i.e. Leto, that coordinated the operations against the anti-fascists which required a joint work between the local police headquarters (the *questure*), directed by the DAGR, and the OVRA, the new secret political police and executive arm of the PolPol.[40]

The OVRA had the mandate to combat the anti-fascists and primarily the communists throughout Italian territory. It was granted enormous resources and autonomy of action and was accountable exclusively to the police chief and the PolPol. Bocchini entrusted Francesco Nudi with the initial set-up of this secret organisation, whose cryptic name 'OVRA' had been given by Mussolini himself in 1927.[41] Nudi directed the first group of functionaries and agents that monitored the industrial areas and working-class districts of northern Italy, where the presence and influence of the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI) was strong. This area constituted the first OVRA zone. The number of OVRA personnel and their vast network of informants expanded over the years, and a further five zones were established across the country by 1937.[42]

Restructured and reinforced, the PS committed itself to the protection of Mussolini and his regime. It remained a small corps about 20,000 strong (three times less than the carabinieri, the

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[39] For a detailed reconstruction of Bocchini's figure and career, together with Canali's and Dunnage's work, see Paola Carucci, "Arturo Bocchini," in *Uomini e volti del fascismo*, ed. Ferdinando Cordova (Roma: Bulzoni, 1980), 62-102; and Italo G. Savella, "Mussolini's 'Fouché': Arturo Bocchini, the Fascist OVRA, and the Italian Police Tradition" (PhD Dissertation, University of Rochester, 1996).

[40] On the organisation, functions, and personnel of the PS during the regime, see 'Il fascismo e la riorganizzazione della Pubblica Sicurezza,' chap. 2 in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 33-130; Paola Carucci, "L'organizzazione dei servizi di polizia dopo l'approvazione del T.U. delle leggi di PS nel 1926," *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato*, no. 31 (1976): 82–115; Italo G. Savella, "Arturo Bocchini and the Secret Political Police in Fascist Italy," *The Historian* 60, no. 4 (June 1998): 779–93, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6563.1998.tb01415.x. On the innovation but also on the continuity of practices and personnel between the liberal state and the regime, see Giovanna Tosatti, "La repressione del dissenso politico tra l'età liberale e il fascismo: L'organizzazione della polizia," *Studi Storici* 38, no. 1 (1997): 217–55.

[41] No official interpretation of the name was ever given. The psychological effect that this cryptic name and its association to a secret, perpetual surveillance had on the population was exactly what Mussolini wanted. According to Leto, Mussolini had based it on the Italian word for 'octopus', *piovra*, because the police had to penetrate all the sectors and aspects of the national life with the 'tentacles' of a secret police organisation; in Archivio di Stato di Roma (AS Roma), Corte d'Appello (CAP), Sezione Istrutoria, b.1618, f.143, Guido Leto, Leto's interrogation dated 7 July 1949.

[42] For further information on the establishment, organisation, and personnel of the OVRA, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 299-399; and Mimmo Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra: Agenti, collaboratori e vittime della polizia fascista*, 3rd ed. (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000).

largest police force in the country) but contributed to the Fascist repressive apparatus in a decisive way.[43] It implemented a system of pervasive surveillance and ruthless repression of the enemies of Fascism that allowed the regime to keep under control and crush any form of opposition, dissent, and deviance. Violence was a common occurrence, especially in the *questure*, but the DGPS reprimanded and occasionally punished the excesses that were considered detrimental to the image of the regime and beneficial to the anti-fascist claims.[44]

The Fascist police apparatus was widespread and did not concentrate exclusively on the anti-fascist militants and groups active in Italy. The number of expatriates had increased with the establishment of the dictatorship, and monitoring their activities and connections became a priority for the newly restructured police. Crispo Moncada had instigated a reorganisation of the system of surveillance abroad that Bocchini then reinforced and put into effect. This surveillance was continuing and penetrating. Information was obtained through the establishment of a vast network of paid informers and spies inside the anti-fascist groups and recruited by the PolPol, through accommodating foreign policemen, the military intelligence, as well as through the diplomatic corps and the personnel of the Fascist organisations abroad. More policemen were now seconded abroad for short-term missions or permanently attached to the consulates and embassies located in the main centres for Italian migration in Europe and the Americas.[45]

The PolPol formed in Berlin one of its first networks of informers abroad.[46] Bocchini had also intended to send Nudi back there in the fall of 1926, but the idea was not eventually put into effect.[47] No police functionary was permanently assigned to Berlin until 1936, despite the continuing requests of the local embassy. It was thus the latter that oversaw the surveillance of the expatriates and of their local and international connections on behalf of the PS, which then refunded the cost of the service and the payment of the informers.[48] The confidential interactions with the local police were managed by the embassy as well, but police relationships between Italy and Germany became more direct in 1927, when a ‘bourgeois-block’ government

[43] See Michael R. Ebner, “Institutions of Fascist Violence,” chap. 2 in *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 48-71.
For figures regarding the personnel of the interior ministry and of the PS in the 1920s and 1930s, see Stefano Sepe and Laura Mazzone, *Pagine di storia del Ministero dell’Interno* (Roma: SSAI, 1998), http://ssaistorico.interno.gov.it/download/allegati1/quaderni_08.pdf, 358-61.
[44] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 82-86; Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini’s Italy*, 59-60.
[45] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 49-59. For further information on the networks of spies and informers operating abroad see “I fiduciari della polizia politica,” chap. 3 in Ibid., 131-297, and “Lo spionaggio fascista all’estero,” chap. 6 in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell’Ovra*, 163-202.
[46] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 202-04.
[47] Ibid., 59.
[48] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.190, f.1, Germania. 1927.

(*Bürgerblock-Regierung*) headed by the Centrist Wilhelm Marx and expression of a centre-right coalition was formed in Berlin.[49]

At the end of 1926, Bocchini was contacted by the Prussian interior ministry which suggested the organisation of a mutual exchange of information on communist movements. The proponent was a civil official named Mühleisen, who directed an office responsible for anti-communist intelligence that operated in connection with the other German states' police agencies. After consulting the embassy and receiving Mussolini's approval, Bocchini accepted the offer.[50]

The collaboration was finally launched in April 1927, and the police chief promptly requested a list of names of Italian anarchists and communists residing in Berlin and in the rest of Germany.[51] Confidential information and reports on communist and anarchist activities were exchanged through the Italian embassy until the end of 1927, although the Prussian counterpart occasionally complained of the Italian unwillingness to provide information. Alongside the Prussian authorities, the Bavarian ones were interested in a secret cooperation with the Fascist police, and Bocchini agreed to share confidential information with the head of the Munich police Karl Mantel in June 1927.[52]

Having established institutional connections with the security apparatus of the two largest and most powerful states in Germany, Bocchini worked on the reorganisation of the group of informants and spies active in Berlin. He assigned the task to Emilio Zecchini, an experienced functionary who had served in the Habsburg police before joining the Italian police in 1918. Posted in Vienna, it was Zecchini who had established and cultivated the relationships with Schober and the Austrian police and had created in Austria an important network of informers and spies who reported on the German, Danubian, and Balkan areas.[53] Like Nudi, Zecchini recognised that a lack of resources had compromised the organisation in Germany of an efficient intelligence system that could successfully scrutinise and infiltrate the anti-fascist circles in Berlin. Zecchini worked on the recruitment of local informers, including a member of the Berlin police, and reported on the organisation, leaderships, and connections of the

[49] Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 244.
[50] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.99, f.8, Italia-Germania. Attività comunista, Bocchini to Mülheisen, 13 March 1927.
[51] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Annuali, 1927, b.115, Note from Bocchini to the embassy, 10 April 1927.
[52] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.99, f.8, Bocchini to the interior ministry, 23 June 1927.
[53] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Permanenti, B4 Personale di PS, b.9, f.529.

KPD.[54] He was facilitated in his effort by the Prussian interior ministry, which had willingly shared information with him.[55]

Despite the general collaborative mindset, the regular and direct exchange of intelligence between the Italian police and the German authorities did not last long. It was interrupted at the beginning of 1928, likely because of the collapse of Marx's coalition cabinet, and not re-established. Contacts, however, appear to have continued in the following years, although they were sporadic. They are documented at least until March 1930, when Rodolfo Modrini – who had replaced Zecchini in Vienna in 1928 – was sent to Berlin in an attempt to obtain information from the local authorities.[56]

The Italian police spy network in Germany, on the other hand, continued its activities. The focus remained on the anti-fascist organisations, but the PS and the regime monitored with increasing attention the political instability that characterised the last years of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the NSDAP, the Nazi party.[57]

The attitude of the police towards what they labelled as 'Hitler's Movement' was vigilant, and its advance was kept under constant scrutiny not only with regard to Germany. Groups of Nazi sympathisers were emerging within the German communities in Italy, and in 1931 Bocchini requested the *questure* to identify the Nazi party's representatives and affiliates in their jurisdiction and to the report on their political activities.[58] A major concern was to avoid an escalation of violence within the German colony, especially in case of a Nazi takeover of power. The Nazi breakthrough at the election of September 1930 proved that it was no longer a remote possibility, and Bocchini instructed the prefects to prevent a forcible occupation of the German consulates by Nazi party members.[59]

Hitler was eventually appointed chancellor by president Hindenburg on 30 January 1933. Rome observed his complete seizure of power and the establishment of the Third Reich with interest, caution, and with a sense of superiority.[60] The new chancellor looked for stronger relationships with Mussolini, but the early interactions between the two fascist regimes proved less straightforward and predetermined than any ideological and political affinity might have

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[54] Ibid., Zecchini's memorandum, 16 October 1927.
[55] Ibid., Zecchini to Bocchini, no date.
[56] ACS, MI, DGPS, Ufficio Centrale di Polizia Internazionale, 1930-1935, b.1, f.7, Globetrotters, Modrini to Leto, 18 March 1930.
[57] For context, see Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (London: Longman, 1981).
[58] AS Livorno, Prefettura di Livorno, Inv. 181, f. 9, Costituzione in Italia di gruppi Hitleriani, 1931-1943, Circular Letter no. 443/34492, 14 December 1931.
[59] Ibid., Circular Letter no. 443/34876, 18 December 1931.
[60] Hans Woller, "I rapporti tra Mussolini e Hitler prima del 1933," Italia contemporanea, no. 196 (1994): 507, https://www.reteparri.it/wp-content/uploads/ic/RAV0053532_1994_194-197_17.pdf; Christian Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler: The Forging of the Fascist Alliance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 34-36.

suggested. Fascist Italy's attitude towards Nazi Germany was ambivalent, and this was reflected in police relationships as well.

### 1.3 A Predictable Attraction? Early Police Contacts between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany (1933-1935)

The suspicion and vigilance of the Italian police did not dimmish after Hitler's appointment. Throughout the 1930s the PS continued monitoring the developments of the situation in Germany and the consolidation of Nazi power. It kept files on the most prominent Nazis and, at home, continued listing the Nazi sympathisers and intercepting their mail. It also reinforced an already strict control over the German-speaking minority living in South Tyrol, since the rise of the Nazis and their claims over Austria fostered irredentist and pan-German activism in this turbulent border area.[61] Any public display of support or affiliation to the Nazi party was long prohibited there, and the German authorities frequently complained about the harsh treatment to which German residents and tourists were subjected at the hands of the Italian police, which perceived them as Nazi agitators smuggling pan-Germanistic propaganda and promoting anti-Italian behaviour.[62] Official German protests neither changed the situation nor inhibited the work of the Italian policemen, who were simply invited by Bocchini to carry on with the surveillance of real and alleged Nazis in Italy in a more discreet way not to arouse suspicion or complaints.[63]

The establishment of the Third Reich, on the other hand, seemed to offer an occasion to reinstate contacts and relations between the police forces of Rome and Berlin. The common ground was represented by the shared interest in countering communism.

The appointment of Hitler as chancellor in January 1933 was not accompanied by a predominant presence of Nazi ministers in the coalition cabinet. Yet, they took control of the crucial Reich interior ministry, held by Wilhelm Frick, and of the Prussian interior ministry, led by Hermann Göring. In other words, law enforcement across the country was now administered by the Nazis, who directly controlled the police forces of the largest German state. Police raids and Nazi violence against left-wing organisations and militants intensified in the first weeks of Hitler's power, then the Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933 permitted the Nazis to introduce emergency legislation (the so-called 'Reichstag Fire Decree') that enabled the dismantling of

[61] For further information, see chap. 4 and 5 in Georg Grote, *The South Tyrol Question, 1866–2010* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2012), https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0353-0303-2.
[62] Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA AA), Deutsche Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), b.699, Deutsch-italienische politische Beziehungen: Überwachung der Deutschen in Italien durch die italienischen Behörden, 1934-1937, The German embassy to the Italian foreign ministry, 24 November 1934.
[63] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.45, f.8, Germania. Movimento nazista in Italia. Varie, Bocchini to the prefects, 30 December 1934.

the democratic system and the suspension of civil rights. A ruthless persecution of political opponents was launched across the country. Left-wing parties and labour organisations were banned and crushed, and their leaders and members persecuted, imprisoned, or forced to expatriate.[64]

To carry out this brutal and large-scale repression, the regular police forces were granted more power and autonomy of action, and the paramilitary groups affiliated to Hitler's coalition government – the Nazi SA and SS, and the nationalist *Stahlhelm* (Steel Helmet) – were incorporated into an auxiliary police corps (*Hilfspolizei*). The stormtroopers were given legal authority to carry weapons and make arrests, paving the way to indiscriminate brutality against the enemies of the new regime. This combination of regular policemen and paramilitary auxiliaries had been first introduced in Prussia by Göring and soon spread all over the country, facilitating the entrance of Nazi militants into the German states' security apparatus.[65]

During the spring of 1933, the Nazis extended their authority over the various states' police corps and promptly concentrated on the reorganisation of their political police offices.[66] The leader of the SS Heinrich Himmler took control of the Bavarian police and put Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the Nazi party's intelligence managed by the SS), in charge of the political police.[67] Bavaria was the first example of the infiltration of the SS, a party organisation, into the police, a state institution. It proved a successful model that was later imposed nationwide.[68] Furthermore, in Dachau, near Munich, Himmler opened the first SS concentration camp for political prisoners, which soon became the prototype of a broader system of institutionalised terror run by the SS.[69]

Under the now minister-president Göring, the Prussian political police were reorganised as an independent police department and renamed Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, Secret State Police).[70] It was directed by Rudolf Diels who was the head of the Gestapo Office or Gestapa

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[64] See 'The Monopoly of Political Power (1933),' chap. 3 in Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 57-95.

[65] George C. Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State: The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 54.

[66] For an overview see "Der Zugriff der Nationalsozialisten auf die Polizei," section III in Friedrich Wilhelm, *Die Polizei im NS-Staat: Die Geschichte ihrer Organisation im Überblick* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), 37-72.

[67] For a detailed reconstruction of Himmler's life and career see, Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). On Heydrich, see Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[68] On the so-called 'Bavarian model' and on the policemen that were involved in its development, see Shlomo Aronson, *Beginnings of the Gestapo System: The Bavarian Model in 1933* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1969).

[69] On the opening of Dachau, see Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Abacus, 2016), 52-60.

[70] On the transformations occurred as well as on the persistence of elements of continuity, see Christoph Graf, *Politische Polizei zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur: Die Entwicklung der Preussischen Politischen Polizei vom Staatsschutzorgan der Weimarer Republik zum Geheimen Staatspolizeiamt des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1983).

(*Geheime Staatspolizeiamt*), the Gestapo headquarters situated in Prinz-Albrecht Strasse no.8 in Berlin.[71] A loyal associate of Göring, Diels was a nationalist First World War veteran that had served in the Freikorps before joining the Prussian interior ministry.[72] Although not a convinced Nazi supporter, as head of the Prussian Gestapo, he contributed to secure the establishment of the dictatorship, drawing on his experience in the fight against communism.[73] He was also open to the establishment of international police connections.

The police authorities in Berlin proved keen to collaborate with foreign police forces after the first waves of repression of the domestic opposition. In July 1933, Rodolfo Modrini was dispatched to Berlin where he was allowed to examine material on the German communist movement and its international connections. 'Unfortunately not many' were the names of the Italian communists that emerged. Still, the Italian policeman informed Bocchini about the positive approach of the German police and stressed the opportunity for establishing further interactions and collaboration with them, for example to gain access to the KPD records seized by the Gestapo.[74] It is likely that Modrini's mission was the result of a German initiative, since the Prussian police authorities had similarly approached the British security services. At the end of March 1933, representatives of MI5 and of the SIS had travelled to Berlin at the invitation of the Prussian political police (soon to become the Gestapo) to examine documents concerning communist activities directed against the British Empire. On the occasion, they visited the former headquarters of the KPD and met Diels, who proved very collaborative.[75] Notwithstanding the Nazi inclination to work together, the positive impressions and the common interests had no effective results in either case.

Contacts between the police of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were not completely interrupted after this failed first approach. They continued, in a formal and uncommitted way, throughout 1933 and in the first half of 1934 through diplomatic channels. During the period of consolidation of power, the Reich interior ministry requested the German legations, or directly the Italian authorities, copies of the PS' and carabinieri's manuals and bulletins and sent the Italian authorities questionnaires about the uniforms and equipment used by the several Italian police forces.[76] The Reich ministry of the interior was looking at foreign models for the

[71] Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 55-62.
[72] Graf, *Politische Polizei Zwischen Demokratie Und Diktatur*, 317-29.
[73] For a deeper insight into the organisation of the Prussian Gestapo, see "Die Preußische Politische Polizei in der Anfangsphase des Dritten Reiches: Das Geheime Staatspolizeiamt unter Rudolf Diels," chap. 4 in Ibid., 108-313; and Christoph Graf, 'The Genesis of the Gestapo', *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (July 1987): 419–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948702200304.
[74] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.39, f.18, Germania. Partito comunista tedesco 1932-1934, Modrini to Bocchini, 6 luglio 1933.
[75] Brinson and Dove, *A Matter of Intelligence*, 16-19.
[76] In PA AA, Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), b.904a, Italien. Polizeitruppen (Carabinieri usw.).

reorganisation of the German security apparatus, and for the same reason a high-ranking member of the Prussian *Schutzpolizei* (the municipal uniformed police) was sent to Italy in April 1934. He was expected to study the organisation of the Italian police on the spot, but in the end organisational problems interfered with the study trip.[77]

### 1.3.1 *Diels' 'Secret' Mission in Rome*

From 1934, the Prussian Gestapo was prompted by the foreign office to start working on an expansion of its international police connections calling on the widespread interest in fighting communism and political subversion.[78] The Fascist police were considered the most suitable partner on political and ideological grounds, but the Italians remained ambivalent. In general, the position of the Italian authorities towards Berlin was cautious, if not openly hostile, because the rise of the Nazis jeopardised Italy's international influence and aspirations both as the leading fascist country as well as a key player in European diplomacy.[79] The PS in particular was reluctant to interact with the police forces of the Nazi regime and showed no interest in establishing a partnership in the field of political policing.

At the end of March 1934, Diels and three collaborators secretly travelled to Rome to propose a collaboration between the Gestapo and the political office of the Fascist Militia. The latter was a more approachable partner than the PS, and its leadership saw in a liaison with the Gestapo the possibility of extending its power and influence. As Canali emphasises, the activities and functions of the various state and party policing agencies that constituted the multifaceted security apparatus of the Fascist regime often collided and these agencies did not always communicate and cooperate enthusiastically with each other.[80] The leadership of the Militia wanted Diels' visit and its contacts with the Gestapo to remain secret, but the DGPS soon became aware of them. The PolPol had an informant within the political office of the Militia who promptly advised of the meeting. It also managed to establish a direct contact with Diels through a functionary disguised as a Militia man. This was Antonino Pizzuto, the multilingual expert of the Political Police Division and Italian vice-president of the ICPC.[81] He spoke fluent German and had a degree in philosophy, a fortunate coincidence that permitted him to break the ice and approach Diels talking about one of his uncles, the German philosopher Hermann Alexander Diels. Despite the Militia's efforts, Pizzuto managed to interact with Diels

[77] Ibid., The German embassy to the foreign office, 11 May 1934.
[78] Patrick Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis. Die Polizei im Dritten Reich und im faschistischen Italien 1933 bis 1943," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59, no. 2 (April 15, 2011): 238, https://doi.org/10.1524/vfzg.2011.0012.
[79] For further details, see 'First date, June 1934,' chap. 2 in Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 37-59.
[80] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 114-23.
[81] Pizzuto became a praised novelist after his retirement. For further details on his life and career, see Ibid., 512-15.

and came to know the specifics of his proposal, which he immediately reported to his superiors.[82]

The Italian policeman described Diels as a 'young man' who 'doesn't seem very informed about political policing' and international police practices, while one of his collaborators – a man named Behl, resident in Venice – appeared more in control of the situation.[83] In Pizzuto's view, it was Behl that had originated the proposal advanced by Diels to request the Militia the permit to establish a network of Gestapo informants and spies for the surveillance of the anti-Nazi exiles in Italy. This proposal, commented Pizzuto, was prejudicial to the authority of the Italian police forces and Diels' 'feeble' allusion to the reciprocity of the offer was not satisfactory because the number of Italian anti-fascists in Germany was scarce after Hitler's rise to power. The supplementary suggestion of a secret and extra-legal extradition of the subversives was impracticable and hazardous. First, the two countries did not share a border; second, if uncovered, such an illegal procedure risked generating diplomatic complications and support for the anti-fascist cause. The possibility of knowing (and thus monitoring) the German agents operating in Italy was a positive aspect to take into account but – Pizzuto emphasised – giving the Gestapo the permission to establish a network in the country would have exposed the regime to future perils. In a few words, there was the risk of whetting the German appetite for gathering intelligence on Italy.[84]

The talks between the Militia and the Gestapo were abandoned, although it is not known whether the PS directly intervened to stop them. The police chief Bocchini shared Pizzuto's scorn and opinion about the lack of benefit from an agreement with the Gestapo, which had nothing to offer the Italian police. The PolPol had already identified some of the Gestapo spies in Italy. One of its informants – the journalist Italo Tavolato, code name 'Tiberio' – had contacts within the Gestapo and was thus able to report on its organisation and activities, including Diels' discussions with the Militia.[85] At that time, Bocchini had no interest – or saw no equal benefit – in an interaction with the Gestapo.

The situation did not change when Diels was replaced by Himmler in April 1934. It was the final step in the SS *Reichsführer*'s ascendancy over the political police in all the German states, although in Prussia he was formally subject to Göring.[86] Then, the Nazi coup in Austria on 25

[82] Ibid., 103-04.
[83] It is likely that the actual name was 'Behr'. A note of the German embassy in Rome mentions a meeting between the ambassador and a man named 'Behr' in preparation for Diels' arrival; in PA AA, Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), b.904a, Italien. Polizeitruppen, The embassy to Diels, 17 March 1934.
[84] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7, Germania. Polizia, Pizzuto's memorandum, 25 March 1934.
[85] Ibid., Report dated 27 March 1934.
[86] Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 124-131. See also Hans Buchheim, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Munich: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 35-59.

July 1934 and the murder of the Austrian chancellor Dollfuss at the hands of the Austrian SS compromised any possibility of establishing closer connections between Rome and Berlin in the immediate future.[87]

### 1.3.2 The Advent of the Gestapo on the International Stage

By the middle of 1934, the power of Himmler and the SS and their prominence within the Nazi regime's apparatus were on the rise. Hitler acknowledged and rewarded their loyalty and contribution to the Night of the Long Knives' purge, which on 30 June 1934 eliminated the leadership of the increasingly demanding SA and the discordant or non-aligned figures within the Nazi party and amongst its conservative allies.[88] The SS – until then formally attached to the SA – became an independent organisation within the NSDAP, and the SD was recognised as the sole intelligence agency of the party.[89] Their role and presence within the German security apparatus intensified after the Night of the Long Knives' showdown and permitted Himmler to strengthen his control over the political police.[90] The SS *Reichführer*, as head of the political police in all the states and as deputy in Prussia, and Heydrich, as head of the Gestapo Office, were now able to start working on the centralisation and unification of the German political police forces, a process that could be finalised only in 1936.

Thanks to Himmler's combined role, Berlin became the centre of coordination of the German police. The Gestapo Office gradually spread its authority outside its Prussian jurisdiction, directing and supervising the activities of the other political police forces. Furthermore, Heydrich transferred to the Gestapo skilled functionaries like Heinrich Müller and Werner Best. The former came from the Bavarian political police, which he had joined in the Weimar years. His efficiency and experience in the fight against communist and left-wing movements had granted him Heydrich's appreciation and the possibility of continuing his career after the Nazi takeover.[91] The SS jurist Werner Best had formed in Hesse the first autonomous political police at the service of the Nazi regime, and Heydrich now chose him as deputy.[92] He

[87] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 55-59.
[88] On the Night of the Long Knives, see Daniel Siemens, "The 'Röhm Purge' and the Myth of the Homosexual Nazi," chap. 5 in *Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 157-79.
[89] Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 132.
[90] Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 145.
[91] Andreas Seeger, *'Gestapo-Müller': Die Karriere Eines Schreibtischtäters* (Berlin: Metropol, 1996), 42-45.
[92] Ulrich Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903-1989*, 3rd ed. (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 126.

was the legal expert of the Gestapo and as such ‘played a decisive part in the theoretical and practical shaping of the Nazi police state’.[93]

The advancement of the Gestapo Office’s authority and predominance on a national level included the supervision of international police relationships. As per Best’s instructions, it was put in charge of the direct communication and exchanges with the foreign police forces and had to approve any deployment of German policemen abroad as well as any existing international connection.[94] The international prestige of the German police increased in 1934 and 1935. They emerged as a successful model and suitable partner for many countries worried about the communist threat and contacts in the field of political police were established. Although the approach to the Italian police had failed, the Gestapo and the German foreign office started working on the conclusion of partnerships with other police forces. The idea was to prompt the creation of a ‘police defensive front’ of the ‘most civilised European states’ against political criminality, a ‘net’ – with Berlin at its centre – in which political criminality would have been caught. Yet, the scope of the Nazi police diplomacy was not limited to promoting the security of the countries involved. It would indeed show that National Socialism was committed and able to protect Europe from Bolshevism.[95] This point was central to the Nazi propaganda and foreign policy as it was instrumental in approaching and appealing other countries which worried about the communist threat and had a common interest in countering it.[96]

In 1934, the Gestapo and the Hungarian political police agreed to offer each other assistance in dealing with communism and political subversion and set up a regular and direct exchange of information. This cooperation was secret and not sanctioned by any written agreement. Talks were initiated with the conservative Spanish government, and in 1935 with the Romanian and Polish police forces as well.[97] At the same time, the Gestapo and the foreign office started to conceive the idea of an international political police conference in Berlin with delegations from Hungary, Spain, Poland, and ‘possibly Italy too’.[98]

This project was ambitious and could not be realised in a short time. The Spanish right-wing government fell in December 1935, and the ongoing negotiations were interrupted. A

[93] Carsten Dams and Michael Stolle, *The Gestapo: Power and Terror in the Third Reich*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39.
[94] Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BArch), R 58 (Reichssicherheitshauptamt)/242, Best to the states’ political police headquarters and to the Prussian Gestapo Office, 23 September 1935.
[95] PA AA, RZ 214 (Referat Deutschland/Abteilung Inland), R 100749, Polizeiabkommen mit Spanien. Entsendung deutscher Polizeifachleute nach Spanien. 1934-1944, Memorandum of the foreign office dated 14 March 1935.
[96] Lorna Louise Waddington, *Hitler’s Crusade: Bolshevism and the Myth of the International Jewish Conspiracy* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 29-30; Jens Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini: La difficile alleanza* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1975), 385-86.
[97] PA AA, R 100749, Memorandum dated 14 March 1935.
[98] Ibid., Foreign office’s note dated 18 September 1935.

partnership with the Italian police was still contemplated, but the relationships between the PS and the German police had not improved in the meantime.

The 1935 ICPC conference in Copenhagen had offered the German police the opportunity of approaching the PS after one year of cool interactions between them, but without much success. Still in February 1936, Bocchini did not consider a collaboration with the German police worth and made fun of Modrini who – after correspondence with the chief of the German uniformed police Kurt Daluege – recommended an improvement of the relationships with Berlin. These, the liaison officer in Vienna believed, could in due course lead to an exchange of information in the field of political policing. The police chief did not share his collaborator's view and disdained it sarcastically.[99] The interest in closer ties between the two police forces was not mutual at that time. In the background, however, the situation was in development. Mussolini had just opened to the possibility of a political police agreement between Rome and Berlin.

### 1.4 The Rapprochement between Rome and Berlin and the Police Meeting of March-April 1936

By the end of 1935, Mussolini's determination to invade Ethiopia had brought a redefinition of his relationship with London and Paris. Only in April 1935, the Italian dictator had organised a meeting in Stresa, in Piedmont, with the prime ministers of France and Britain to discuss the menace posed by German rearmament and foreign policy aims to the international order created at the end of the Great War. They had declared their intention to join forces to defend peace in Europe, but the 'Stresa Front' rapidly dissolved in the wake of the Abyssinian campaign. The Fascist regime had decided to invade Ethiopia, a fellow member of the League of Nations, despite the opposition of Paris and London. Mussolini was determined to challenge the international status quo to achieve his imperialistic objective. This resolution facilitated the collapse of the system of collective security and opened to a rapprochement between Rome and Berlin.[100]

Contacts between the two fascist regimes had already intensified before the launch of the attack on 3 October 1935 and the subsequent imposition of economic sanctions by the League of Nations. Anti-communism was the common ideological point that offered the possibility of

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[99] The police chief scornfully wrote on Modrini's report that 'This one [Modrini] in Naples would be called "Dr Cheated who makes love!"', in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.3, Modrini to Bocchini, 10 February 1936.

[100] For an in-depth examination of the international situation and of the role of the Abyssinian War in the convergency between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, see Manfred Funke, *Sanzioni e cannoni: 1934-1936: Hitler, Mussolini e il conflitto etiopico* (Milano: Garzanti, 1972); and chap. 11-12 in Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini*.

establishing closer ties in different fields. It had been revived by the Communist International's recognition of fascism as the proletariat's main enemy and of the need for a unity of the anti-fascist movements, which authorised the creation of the popular fronts.[101]

Cultural and propaganda exchanges between Rome and Berlin increased. At the same time, Mussolini opened to a police collaboration. The idea had been first suggested by the chief of the Italian military intelligence (SIM), Mario Roatta, in a meeting with his German counterpart, Wilhelm Canaris, in September 1935.[102] Nothing happened until the end of November, when the German foreign office prompted the ambassador in Rome von Hassell to verify with the Italian government whether there was a possibility of concluding a secret agreement that would lead to a closer political police collaboration against the common enemy of 'Bolshevism, i.e. of international political crime in general'.[103] On 12 December 1935, Berlin was informed that Mussolini himself (who still was foreign and interior minister) had accepted the proposal and the idea of a meeting in Berlin between police representatives. His sole condition was that no other countries were to be involved.[104] The German foreign office was working alongside the Prussian Gestapo towards the expansion of the network of police interactions but considered Italy a priority. For that reason, it decided to suspend the plan for an international political police conference, although talks with third countries were not interrupted.[105]

The negotiations for a bilateral police collaboration were a crucial component of the general rapprochement between Rome and Berlin that occurred at the end of 1935 and in 1936. The two regimes were both determined to revise the international status quo and were diplomatically isolated. They had an interest in a political convergence to pursue their own foreign policy' objectives and that inspired their actions.[106] The negotiations were not inspired by any ideological affinity and nor did they examine practical policing questions. They had a clear political connotation as indicated by the fact that the police forces played a secondary role in these consultations. They were not actively involved until their final stages.

The Gestapo presented in February a programme for the meeting that comprised discussions about the fight against Bolshevism and 'its international helpers' and included the possibility of a visit to Dachau. The original version of the Gestapo programme received and forwarded by the foreign office explicitly mentioned 'Freemasonry and international Jewry' alongside

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[101] Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 78-79.
[102] Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini*, 385-90.
[103] PA AA, R 99513, Deutsch-italienische Zusammenarbeit in der Frage der Bekämpfung des Bolshewismus. 1935-1937, Bd.1, The foreign office to the embassy, 27 November 1935.
[104] Ibid., The embassy to the foreign office, 12 December 1935.
[105] Ibid., The foreign office to Himmler, 11 January 1936.
[106] On this point, see Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 60-68.

Bolshevism. The embassy preferred to modify the sentence.[107] The diplomatic corps probably wanted to avoid last-minute questions or hesitations on the Italian side which might not be expecting to discuss, or willing to implement, any anti-Jewish measure. While the persecution of Jews was becoming a priority for the German police, they were not a target of the Italian police. The Fascist regime had not yet assumed an official position in relation to the 'Jewish question', albeit Mussolini and some of his close collaborators (within the interior ministry in particular, in consideration of its competence in domestic policy's affairs) were already promoting racist and anti-Semitic policies.[108]

Rome approved the programme. Despite the embassy's attempt, the Italian police chief realised that, in conjunction with Bolshevism, the Germans intended to discuss 'freemasonry and Zionism'. He had also been informed that the conversation would probably turn on the contribution of the Vatican in the anti-Bolshevik struggle, with which the German authorities had recently tried to establish contacts.[109] The only request made by the Italian authorities was to issue a press release to announce that the Italian police chief had been invited to Berlin by the German police to discuss technical police questions.[110] The subject of the meeting and any final agreement had to remain secret, but the Italian authorities wanted to signal that there were ongoing police contacts, i.e. closer relationships, between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

### 1.4.1. *The Police Conference and the Conclusion of a Secret Agreement*

The Italian delegation that arrived in Berlin on 29 March 1936 was led by Bocchini and included his personal secretary, Emilio Manganiello, Leto, Modrini, two other high-rank functionaries of the political police, Ercole Conti and Tommaso Petrillo, as well as a representative of the foreign office. Two members of the Italian embassy joined the delegation during the secret meetings that took place in the Gestapo Office from 30 March to 1 April. The German side consisted of the leadership of the Gestapo (Himmler, Heydrich, Best, Müller) and the three foreign office's functionaries who had been involved in the negotiations.[111]

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[107] See PA AA, Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), Geheimakten, 1920-1943, b.39, f.58, Zusammenarbeit der deutschen und italienischen politischen Polizei (auch 1936), The foreign office to the embassy, 14 February 1936.

[108] For further information see Giorgio Fabre, *Mussolini razzista: dal socialismo al fascismo: la formazione di un antisemita* (Milano: Garzanti, 2005); Giorgio Fabre, *Il razzismo del duce: Mussolini dal ministero dell'Interno alla Repubblica sociale italiana* (Roma: Carocci, 2021); Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista: Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, 2nd ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 2007).

[109] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16, Progetto di accordo tra la polizia Italiana-Tedesca e Ungherese per combattere il comunismo, sf. Conferenza di Berlino delle Polizie per la lotta anticomunista, Bocchini's report dated 26 March 1936. About the anti-communism of the Vatican and its points of contact with the fascist regimes see Giuliana Chamedes, 'The Vatican, Nazi-Fascism, and the Making of Transnational Anti-Communism in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 2 (April 2016): 261–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009414566291.

[110] In PA AA, R 99513.

[111] In Ibid.

The conference was a diplomatic success. The German foreign office remarked that its significance 'for the foreign-policy relationships between Germany and Italy is not to be underestimated' as confirmed by Mussolini's personal interest and involvement.[112] In practical terms, the conference sanctioned the beginning of a collaboration between the Gestapo and the PS. The delegations had discussed the adoption of common measures to counter communist and masonic activities and the approved resolutions were grouped into a final secret protocol.

The two police forces agreed on setting up a regular and mutual exchange of information and offering each other assistance to deal with communist, masonic, as well as other organisations 'whose control or suppression' was in the interest of the two parts. In other words, communism and freemasonry were the main target of the collaboration, but it could be directed against other enemies of the regimes. Point 5 of the protocol was unambiguous in this regard. They accepted to adopt police measures against 'communists, freemasons, and migrants' when 'suggested' by the partner. According to this resolution, exiles and expatriates could be persecuted by the authorities of their home country even outside their jurisdiction by means of the police of the host country. This measure referred to the broad category of 'migrants' and could be interpreted to encompass all the categories of enemies of the regimes. The following chapters show that it would soon be applied extensively. Another generic category was that of the political criminals, whom Himmler – like Diels in 1934 – proposed to be subject to a secret extradition, evading official diplomatic procedures and red tape.[113] The Italians endorsed the general protocol but preferred not to make any commitment in relation to this delicate and complicated matter which was 'of particular interest to the leadership of the German political police'.[114] The resolutions needed Mussolini's ratification, so they left the final decision to the dictator.

After three days of discussion, the Italian delegation returned to Italy. On the way back, Petrillo and two other functionaries visited the concentration camp of Dachau.[115] Bocchini immediately submitted to Mussolini a detailed report on the conversations and on his private encounters with Himmler and Göring, whom he had met in his capacity of head of the Gestapo. It is not known whether the police chief followed an explicit order of Mussolini or these

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[112] PA AA, R 100748, Deutsch-italienisches, deutsch-japanishes sowie italienisch-japanisches Polizeiabkommen, 1936-1939, Foreign office's memorandum dated 6 April 1936.

[113] The text of protocols was first published in its Italian version by Renzo De Felice in "Alle origini del Patto d'Acciaio: L'incontro e gli accordi fra Bocchini e Himmler del marzo-aprile 1936," *La Cultura*, September 1963, 524–38; and later in *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1972), 649-57. Patrick Berhnard published the German version which is available online at 'Deutsch-italienisches Polizeiabkommen vom 1. April 1936' (Themenportal Europäische Geschichte, 2010), http://www.europa.clio-online.de/quelle/id/q63-28415.

[114] Bocchini's report to Mussolini dated 4 April 1936, in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 653.

[115] Petrillo then wrote Bocchini a report about the visit which is published in Ibid., 657-59.

confidential reports (which were a routine after any trip abroad or meeting with foreign guests) were the result of his own initiative. Bocchini had a direct and privileged relationship with Mussolini, as already mentioned. They had daily meetings and he had become one of the dictator's main advisors, who was consulted not just about police matters. According to Ebner, the emphasis on Bocchini's opportunism and on his occasional contrasts with the Fascist hierarchies has contributed to underestimate his political views and abilities. He demonstrated an adaptable and capable career state official that 'zealously carried out the regime's policies', although not devoted to the Fascist cause and ideology.[116] Mussolini never called into question his role and loyalty during his long service at the head of the police.

Bocchini was overall sceptical about the organisation of the German police, which he described with the inveterate criticism and disdain of the Italian authorities. In his opinion, they focused too much on statistics and theories and lacked pragmatism. The organisation of their records in the filing cabinets, for example, was modern and detailed but not practical. In other words, it was not advantageous to a prompt police investigation. He was however confident that a joint operation against communism would prove fruitful and effective, as information gathering is the basis of police work. The questions of masonic and international Jewish conspiracies had emerged as expected but he had remained prudent and vague. It had been made clear that the 'Jewish question' in Germany was different from Italy, where the number of Jews was irrelevant and their presence within the regime and state apparatus was scarce. Any reference to it had not been included in the protocols, although the police chief recognised that it was possible to forward generic information as in the case of freemasonry. Communism was the main target of this police collaboration. In this regard – Bocchini informed Mussolini – Göring had told him that it was necessary to establish broader ties to efficiently contrast its advance. In other words, the relationships between Germany and Italy should go beyond a mere technical cooperation.[117]

The police conference and accord were part of the general rapprochement between Berlin and Rome and the Nazi leadership aspired to develop closer political ties with the fascist regime. Mussolini wanted a reconciliation too but remained wary about a proper political agreement with Nazi Germany. He thus ratified the protocols and the additional proposals and notified Göring that, for him, the police accord already had a political significance.[118]

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[116] Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 51-52.

[117] See Bocchini's report to Mussolini dated 4 April 1936, in De Felice, *Storia degli ebrei italiani sotto il fascismo*, 649-55.

[118] Mussolini to the Italian ambassador in Berlin, 9 April 1936, in Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (*DDI*), 8, vol. III (1 gennaio – 9 maggio 1936) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1992), doc. 614.

After Mussolini's approval, Himmler and Bocchini could sign the protocols. The dictator decided to make the bond even stronger and suggested the appointment of police liaison officers attached to the respective embassies. This idea had certainly been discussed with Bocchini, who had already contemplated this option before his trip to Berlin.[119] Himmler accepted the proposal, and the secret collaboration was initiated.[120]

### 1.5 Establishing the Police Collaboration

The functionary of the PS Osvaldo Chiavaccini arrived in Berlin at the beginning of July 1936. He was attached to the Italian embassy as representative of the PS and liaison with the Gestapo, although his role was not officially recognised and did not guarantee him a diplomatic status. Born in 1884 and in the police since 1907, Chiavaccini was a qualified police official with a valuable experience in the field of political policing. He had been involved in the surveillance of subversives already before the advent of the Fascist regime. In view of his language skills (he spoke French and German), he had carried out a few missions abroad to pursue anti-fascist expatriates and had also been deployed at the Austrian border.[121] Once in Berlin, Chiavaccini immediately established contacts with the leadership of the Gestapo (in particular Best and Müller) and met the German officer assigned to Rome, Theodor Helmerking.[122] The latter had no particular police experience compared to Chiavaccini. Born in 1902, Helmerking had a PhD in Law and had joined the Gestapo only in 1935, coming from a career in the judiciary. His prior assignments were limited to six months in Potsdam and another short period in Hannover, after the training at the police academy in Charlottenburg, in Berlin.[123] Helmerking arrived in Rome at the end of July. He was attached to the German embassy but, like Chiavaccini, had no official diplomatic status.

With the deployment of Chiavaccini and Helmerking started the regular and direct exchange of information between the Gestapo Office and the DGPS. Requests and pieces of information were transmitted through diplomatic couriers and eventually handed over by the two police liaison officers, who in turn redirected answers and messages received from the host police. The DGPS decided to create an office dedicated to the supervision of the communication with the Gestapo. The new 'Office for the Relationships with Germany' – simply termed 'Office

[119] See ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16, sf. Conferenza di Berlino delle Polizie per la lotta anticomunista, Bocchini's report dated 26 March 1936.
[120] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.37, Accordi fra la Polizia Italiana e Tedesca.
[121] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, Versamento 1957, b.236-ter, f. Chiavaccini Osvaldo.
[122] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con la Germania (Ufficio RG), 1936-1943, b.1, f. RG 27 Corrispondenza varia con il dottor Chiavaccini.
[123] In BArch, Berlin Document Center (BDC), R 9361-III (Personenbezogene Unterlagen der SS und SA)/71872, Helmerking Theodor.

RG' – was part of the DAGR Section I and was directed by Leto with the support of a young officer, Raffaele Alianello. Unfortunately, it is not known how the Gestapo Office had organised its side of the communication and kept its records, because its operational files have not survived the war.

The two police chiefs set up their own system of direct communication. They could reach each other by phone using agreed codenames or forwarding letters to disguised addresses.[124] Himmler and Bocchini had met for the first time at the conference in Berlin, and that had been the beginning of a strong relationship not restricted to working interactions. Their experiences, characters, and attitudes differed, nevertheless they developed a solid personal connection. Himmler genuinely admired the older, skilful, and flamboyant Bocchini and was his private guests on several occasions. In 1937, the *Reichsführer* travelled across Italy and Libya with his wife Marga and, in 1938, spent several days in Bocchini's hometown, San Giorgio del Sannio, in Campania.[125] Their good and direct rapport contributed to the progress of the police collaboration in a decisive way and was advantageous for the general relationships between Rome and Berlin. Their personal ties were a valuable diplomatic tool and reinforced the authority and prestige of the two police chiefs within their regimes.

### 1.5.1 The Second Meeting of October 1936

In the summer of 1936, Himmler consolidated his unique authority over the German police forces which were merged for the first time into a national corps. Göring withdrew from police affairs, and he gained complete control of the Prussian Gestapo. On 17 June, Hitler appointed him 'chief of the German police in the Reich ministry of the interior'. The SS *Reichsführer* had finally succeeded in placing all the German police forces in his own hands, and his subordination to the interior minister Frick indicated by the new title was a pure formality. He was accountable only to Hitler, who entrusted him with the creation and direction of a national police.[126] Himmler and Heydrich could thus bring into effect their project of centralisation and unification of the German police forces.

The Gestapo officially extended its jurisdiction nationwide and absorbed the other states' political police agencies. As the political police of the Nazi regime, it ceased to be identified as 'Prussian'. It formed in conjunction with the criminal police (Kripo) the new *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police) or Sipo, which directed the fight against the enemies of the Reich and of the

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[124] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.37 and f.38, Accordi fra la polizia italiana e tedesca. Chiamate telefoniche.
[125] Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 247–49; Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 395-97.
[126] Ibid., 199-201.

German national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).[127] For the Nazi *völkisch* interpretation of misconduct and crime, any act of ordinary delinquency as well as any social, racial, and sexual nonconformity and divergence were regarded as a sign of degeneration and a criminal offence against the German racial community and disciplined as the same as a political crime. This expansion of the categories of crime and their politicisation resulted in the criminal police acquiring extensive preventive and repressive police power, like the Gestapo.[128]

Heydrich assumed the title of 'chief of Sipo and SD' and remained at the head of the Gestapo, delegating the direction of the Kripo to Arthur Nebe. Himmler made general Daluege commander of the new *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police, Orpo), which reunited all the German uniformed police forces. With this reform, the *Reichsführer*'s 'two police lieutenants assumed the active roles of chiefs of police' and he 'removed himself from the detailed work of a police chief'.[129] Himmler was not attracted to petty police questions and activities. He was not much concerned with police diplomacy either and delegated it to his collaborators as much as possible. The relationships with Fascist Italy, however, were crucial (in 1936, in particular) and frequently saw his direct involvement.

The reconciliation between the two fascist regime in 1936 combined an intensification of their broader interactions and mutual diplomatic concessions were reinforced over the following months through an intense exchange of visits of prominent representatives of the two regimes.[130] In October 1936, Himmler returned Bocchini's visit on the occasion of the annual celebration of the Italian interior ministry police.

Established in 1928, the ceremonies for the *Festa della polizia* that took place on 18 October represented both a showcase for the Italian police's strength and a good opportunity to reinforce the bond and cooperation between the two police and their leaderships.[131] The invitation of the increasingly powerful Himmler assumed relevance not only for the progress of the bilateral police relationships but also in a wider diplomatic sense. The newly appointed foreign minister and Mussolini's son-in-law Galeazzo Ciano expressed his wish to meet the *Reichsführer* and encounters with other Italian ministers and high-rank Fascist functionaries were organised as

[127] For a detailed reconstruction of this police reorganisation, see Browder, "The Formation of Sipo and SD," chap. 19 in *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 231-49.
[128] On the contribution of the Kripo to the Nazi police system, see Patrick Wagner, *Volksgemeinschaft ohne Verbrecher: Konzeptionen und Praxis der Kriminalpolizei in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik und des Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg: Christians, 1996).
[129] Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State*, 231.
[130] For a detailed examination, see "Dall'occupazione della Renania alla guerra di Spagna: La formazione dell'Asse," chap. 13 in Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini*, 407-34.
[131] On the *Festa della polizia* and its German counterpart the *Tag der Deutschen Polizei* (The day of the German police) and on the creation of police rituals in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, see Jonathan Dunnage and Nadine Rossol, 'Building Ideological Bridges and Inventing Institutional Traditions: Festivities and Commemorative Rituals in the Fascist and Nazi Police', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 19, no. 1 (1 June 2015): 67–88, https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.1553.

well. Himmler himself took an active role in this police diplomacy requesting to meet Mussolini. Yet, a sudden illness of the *Reichsführer* forced a change of programme. The public ceremonies were attended by Heydrich and Daluege, who led the delegation that had arrived in Rome on 16 October. Himmler could join them only on 19 October 1936; therefore the visit was prolonged until 22 October.[132]

The German ambassador in Rome Ulrich von Hassell described the visit as 'a total success'. The reception and the official ceremonies organised by the Italian authorities had been solemn and grand, the same as those for visiting ministers. The visit had displayed sincere camaraderie and a cordial atmosphere between hosts and guests and had strengthened the institutional relationships. Most importantly, the ambassador reported, the Italian authorities had underlined the necessity of joining forces to fight communism, which was the objective pursued by the German foreign policy.[133]

Secret conversations took place alongside the official events, and the advance of communism in Europe was indeed the main topic.[134] A main concern was the civil war in Spain. The nationalist insurrection, started in July 1936 against the republican popular front government, had acquired an international dimension and the character of an ideological confrontation. On the one hand, there were the insurgents supported by Rome and Berlin, which also deployed troops on the ground; on the other hand, the legitimate government was aided by Moscow and by thousands of international volunteers, many of whom were Italian and German exiles, who wanted to counter the fascist advance in Spain.[135]

The discussion about Spain and the necessity to react to the perceived growing communist pressure in Europe persuaded the two police leaderships to reinforce the police agreement signed in April. After secret discussions, a new protocol was agreed on 16 October 1936. The new treaty did not suppress the previous one. On the contrary, it extended its anti-communist connotation. The two police forces agreed on an intensification of their common efforts to oppose communism. The new resolutions included sharing the details of suspicious Soviet citizens entering their own territories, reinforcing their monitoring of communist activities and

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[132] In PA AA, Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), b.696b, Deutsch-italienische politische Beziehungen: Besuch des Reichsführer SS Himmler in Rom, 1936.

[133] Ibid., Von Hassell's report dated 27 October 1927.

[134] See Bocchini's report dated 26 October 1936 that informed Mussolini about the content of his secret conversations with Himmler in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7.

[135] For further information see Miguel Alonso, "Civil War, Total War, Fascist War: Rebel Violence and Occupation Policies in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)," in *Fascist Warfare, 1922-1945: Aggression, Occupation, Annihilation*, eds. Alan Kramer, Javier Rodrigo, and Miguel Alonso (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 73-95. On the German and Italian role in the Spanish Civil War, see Stanley G. Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany, and World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Javier Rodrigo, *Fascist Italy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (London: Routledge, 2021); Robert H. Whealey, *Hitler and Spain: The Nazi Role in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, 1st ed (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

propaganda abroad, and informing each other about the latest directives concerning the international development of communism. These arrangements encompassed the cultural sphere as well, as the two parts agreed on repressing those cultural and propaganda manifestations that were directed against their regimes.[136] To comply with this stipulation, the PS, the Italian foreign office, and the ministry for press and propaganda (in 1937 renamed 'ministry of popular culture', Minculpop) decided to create and covertly fund an anti-communist association that, like the Nazi *Antikomintern* instituted in 1933, was dedicated to study and counter the communist propaganda.[137] With Mussolini's consent, this officially 'private' cultural organisation was founded in 1937 under the name of *Centro di studi anticommunisti* (CSA, Anti-communist study centre) and operated until the beginning of the Second World War.[138]

The Italian authorities remained more reticent than the Nazi leadership on the explicit identification of international communism with the USSR, with which Fascist Italy had established good diplomatic and trade relationship.[139] Notwithstanding, both Berlin and Rome recognised that a strong anti-communist commitment was a means to gain broader international consensus and to captivate larger support overseas than the promotion of open and uncompromising fascist claims.[140] Pushing forward the anti-Bolshevik banner, Fascism and Nazism could present themselves as the forces of order and find a common ground on which to develop broader connections.

For the German authorities, the visit represented 'a complete success of the joint efforts initiated by the foreign office and the Gestapo about two years before'. The two police were united in their commitment to 'defend the national socialist and fascist ideology (*Weltanschauung*) against the hostile international forces' that were 'embodied' by the Soviet Union, and the German-Italian police collaboration constituted the 'essential basis' for the implementation of the systematic anti-communist 'police alliance policy' (*polizeilichen Bündnispolitik*) planned by Berlin. The visit had consolidated the partnership and offered the Nazi authorities the opportunity to draw once more attention to the necessity of creating an anti-communist front with Berlin at its centre. The involvement of other countries had not been openly discussed – reported the representative of the foreign office that had accompanied the

[136] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7, Protocol dated 16 October 1936.
[137] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.3, f. RG 50 CSA. Affari Generali. On the Nazi Antikomintern see Lorna L. Waddington, 'The Anti-Komintern and Nazi Anti-Bolshevik Propaganda in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 4 (2007): 573–94.
[138] For more information on the CSA, see Philip V. Cannistraro and Edward D. Wynot, 'On the Dynamics of Anti-Communism as a Function of Fascist Foreign Policy, 1933-1943', *Il Politico* 38, no. 4 (1973): 645–81.
[139] On this point, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Dictatorship, 1915-1945*, 1st American ed. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 285-86.
[140] See Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, 279-86, 314-15.

German police delegation – but it was Himmler's intention to discuss in due time the matter with Bocchini and then, 'in about a year', held an international police conference in Berlin.[141] These initiatives required the Gestapo and the German foreign office to continue working together on the progression and consolidation of the relationships with the Italian police and, at the same time, on the expansion of their network of police interactions, which are reconstructed in the following chapter.[142]

There was ground for optimism in Berlin. The ties between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were becoming stronger. Right after the annual celebrations of the Italian police, Ciano travelled to Germany where he met Hitler and his counterpart Konstantin von Neurath. The result of the visit was the conclusion of the first diplomatic agreement between the two fascist regimes. On 23 October 1936, the two foreign ministers signed a secret protocol that sanctioned the convergence between Rome and Berlin with regard to some specific international questions, like Spain, Austria, and the struggle against communist propaganda.[143] This agreement did not establish a formal alliance between Berlin and Rome rather 'an axis', as Mussolini publicly introduced it during a speech in Milan on 1 November 1936.[144]

Exactly at the same time, Nazi Germany was negotiating an accord against the Communist International with the Japanese empire. The so-called Anti-Comintern Pact was eventually signed on 25 November 1936 by the German ambassador in London and plenipotentiary Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, Kintomo Mushakoji. Berlin and Tokyo agreed on joining forces to resist the disintegrating forces of international communism. The cooperation consisted in the adoption of common measures to inhibit the disruption and disorder promoted by the Comintern, in the way of an exchange of information and the implementation of actions against communist emissaries.[145] As such, the letter of the pact implied the establishment of a police anti-communist collaboration. A secret additional

[141] PA AA, R 100748, Memorandum dated 26 October 1936.
[142] For an overview, see Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik, 1933-1938* (Frankfurt and Berlin: Metzner Verlag, 1968), 461-63; also Patrick Bernhard, "Der Beginn einer faschistischen Interpol? Das deutsch-italienische Polizeiabkommen von 1936 und die Zusammenarbeit der faschistischen Diktaturen im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit," 2009, http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/artikel-3585.
[143] For the Italian version of the protocol see *DDI*, 8, vol. V (1 settembre – 31 dicembre 1936) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1994), doc. 273. For the German version, see *Akten zur deutschen Auswartigen Politik: 1918-1945* (ADAP), Serie C: 1933-1937: Das dritte Reich: Die ersten Jahre, vol. V.2 (26. Mai bis 31. Oktober 1936) (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), doc. 624.
[144] On the establishment and significance of the Axis see Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini*, 432-34; Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 68-71.
[145] For the German and Japanese texts of the agreement and of its supplementary protocol, see PA AA, R 100748. The English version is available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/tri1.asp (last accessed on 3 April 2022)

protocol, however, explicitly stated that the real common enemy of Japan and Germany was the Soviet Union, whose government and army were behind the Comintern.[146]

In the fall of 1936, Berlin succeeded in establishing strong relationships with Italy and Japan, two ambitious countries which shared with Germany an aggressive foreign policy and a strong anti-communist stance. These diplomatic achievements and shared traits had a direct effect on the progress of the police relationships amongst the countries involved. The next chapter investigates the extent of this influence and its implications.

### 1.6 Conclusions

This chapter illustrates that ideology and political affinity were not decisive factors in the establishment of police connections and collaborations. Quite the contrary, they were the result of pragmatic and strategic considerations.

The secret exchange of information between the Italian interior ministry police and the British intelligence was established in the 1920s and continued even after the announcement of the Axis. The PS had also interacted with the security apparatus of the Weimar Republic when Berlin was attracting Italian anti-fascists and was hosting several international communist organisations. Exchanges of police information might even occur between a fascist and a communist state, if considered beneficial to diplomatic purposes. Prior to 1936, on the contrary, the Italian police showed no interest in a collaboration with the police forces of Nazi Germany, despite the German efforts and regardless of any ideological affinity. The situation changed in the second half of 1935 and in 1936, when Rome and Berlin were both enduring diplomatic isolation. This state of things was a consequence of their increasingly aggressive foreign policies that were challenging the international order sanctioned in Versailles at the end of the Great World. The two regimes needed to create connections and turned to their police forces and to their strong anti-Bolshevism, which represented a solid common ground. The establishment and consolidation of police relationships and of a secret cooperation in 1936 had thus wider political implications for Rome and Berlin.

Police diplomacy was a valuable diplomatic tool. Interactions and exchanges between police forces were used to promote or reinforce broader connections and as means to exert and spread influence, all aspects that emerge in the international interactions established by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and that are better analysed in the following chapter.

The establishment of the police partnership and the interactions between the two police forces mirrored the general tenor of the early relationships between Fascist Italy and Nazi

[146] In Gerhard L. Weinberg, 'Die geheimen Abkommen zum Antikominternpakt', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2, no. 2 (1954): 193–201.

Germany. They reveal inveterate mutual suspicion, prejudices, and differences in practices and objectives that persisted even after the conclusion of the agreements, despite the official declarations.

The Italian police leadership secretly regarded its German counterpart with disdain and superiority. Himmler and Heydrich were not career policemen and Bocchini did remark it in his confidential reports to Mussolini.[147] The lack of preparation of the German police leadership was a recurring topic already displayed in Pizzuto's description of Rudolf Diels. Nevertheless, Himmler and Bocchini developed a genuine and strong personal relationship that accompanied the progress of the institutional partnership between their police forces.

The police agreements of 1936, in fact, did not simply contribute to the diplomatic rapprochement between Rome and Berlin but constituted the foundation of an institutional collaboration that was implemented through the deployment of liaison officers. Mussolini himself played a decisive role in its establishment and further development.

Several of the aspects that have just been highlighted continued to characterise the progress of the bilateral partnership after 1936, as the following chapters show.

[147] See Bocchini's report to Mussolini copied on 26 October 1936 in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7.

## Chapter 2. Police Diplomacy in Action: The Italian and German Police's Networks of Interactions (1936-1940)

The previous chapter discussed how diplomatic aims and strategic considerations rather than an assumed ideological and political affinity prompted a rapprochement between the two Axis powers. What the bilateral collaboration meant in practical terms and its developments, targets, and outcomes is better reconstructed in the second part of this work. Drawing on a comparative approach, this chapter examines the relationships between the Gestapo and the Italian police in relation to the wider connections and networks of interactions they established in the second half of the 1930s. In other words, it investigates the international police interactions and partnerships of the two Axis regimes and compares their attitudes, aims, and agendas.

Moreover, the chapter considers whether the establishment of police collaborations sought to fight political subversion or was mainly a means to extend authority and influence abroad. The secret police collaboration established by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in 1936 was grounded in a shared interest in the fight against communism and political subversion in general. Anti-communism was instrumental in the establishment of connections and partnerships in various fields – not only in policing – after years of tepid relationships. This chapter thus highlights that anti-communism and police relationships were a diplomatic tool in the hands of the two fascist regimes.

At the end of the 1930s, Rome and Berlin made increasing use of police diplomacy and interactions as a means of gaining and exerting power and influence abroad. They presented themselves as the defenders of a European order menaced by the advance of communism and political subversion. They took advantage of their domestic successes in the fight against political opponents to stress the need for police collaborations and to export their policing model. Even so, their agendas as well as their approaches towards foreign police forces differed. Their interests could occasionally collide and develop into a more or less covert competition to establish a predominant influence in a third country. Dynamics of prestige and attractiveness were at stake and inevitably reflected on police relationships. For this reason, the Italian and German foreign offices frequently reminded their police leaderships of the diplomatic relevance of police ties and partnerships and wanted to play an active role in their expansion and supervision. The two diplomacies exhibited this common attitude but, in the end, their degree of participation in these broad relationships was not alike. This difference mirrored the distinct dynamics of power and of decision-making within the two fascist regimes.

## 2.1 The German Agenda: A Multilateral Approach

The visit of the German police leadership to Rome in October 1936 was celebrated as success by the Nazi authorities, as the previous chapter pointed out. It contributed to the consolidation of the bilateral police partnership and bolstered the Nazi efforts to establish wider connections. Alongside the successful visit, the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan in November 1936 prompted an intensification of the joint efforts of the Gestapo and the foreign office to pursue their final goal: the creation of a bloc of states united around the leadership of the Third Reich in fighting Bolshevism. Decisive steps in that direction were taken by the Nazi authorities in 1937.

At the beginning of 1937, Ribbentrop, as the architect of the Anti-Comintern Pact, promoted the creation of a 'Permanent German Commission for Countering the Communist International' (*Ständige deutsche Kommission zur Bekämpfung der Kommunistischen Internationale*). It brought together representatives the various German agencies and ministries involved in the fight against communism with the purpose of proving assistance to a future German-Japanese committee, which the letter of the Pact recommended to coordinate the execution of its resolutions. Ribbentrop himself headed this new inter-ministerial organism that comprised representatives of Göring, Himmler, the minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels, and of the foreign minister von Neurath.[1]

The conception as well as the organisation of the Commission reflected the political ambitions of the ambassador in London, in particular – the foreign office observed – his 'aspiration to lead the entire German anti-Bolshevik activity'.[2] Notwithstanding the delicate dynamics of power within the Nazi leadership that Ribbentrop's initiative implied, the foreign office recognised that the existence of an inter-ministerial organism promoting a unified anti-Bolshevik policy was beneficial to its own goals. It suggested that 'beginning with the activation of the German-Japanese collaboration' the Commission could embrace the objective to create a 'more or less homogenous' bloc of anti-communist states under German guidance.[3] In other words, the Commission was expected not only to promote closer ties with Japan – its

[1] See the act of foundation of the commission, dated 11 January 1937, in PA AA, R 100748. In the end, the institution of a joint German-Japanese committee remained a dead letter, see James William Morley, ed., *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany, and the USSR, 1935-1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 47.

[2] See the marginal note in PA AA, R 100748, The foreign office to the secretary of the Commission, 19 April 1937. For a reconstruction of Ribbentrop's political ascent and career within the Nazi regime, see Stefan Scheil, *Ribbentrop: Oder: Die Verlockung des nationalen Aufbruchs: Eine politische Biographie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2013).

[3] PA AA, R 100748, Draft of a programme for the activity of the 'Permanent German Commission for Countering the Communist International', pp.1-2.

original assignment – but also to fulfil a broader task, which the German authorities had been working on for years.

This long-term goal had to be pursued gradually and according to the circumstances: first, through the conclusion of 'loose and nonbinding contacts' abroad; then, through 'the open commencement of cultural relationships' with foreign states, 'the conclusion of propaganda or press agreements, police partnerships' and, finally, through the establishment of 'international treaties for the defence against Bolshevism'.[4] In this agenda of anti-communist policies, the 'field of activity' (*Arbeitsgebiet*) of the police constituted 'the best ground for the formation of an international front against Bolshevism'. In this regard, the German police's attempt to conclude anti-communist agreements with other countries proved successful, not least because these agreements had revealed a 'solid basis' for establishing further 'political collaboration'. The 'focus of the Commission' should therefore be 'on international policing' (*internationale Polizeiarbeit*).[5]

This general plan confirmed the Nazi authorities' intention to continue forming a broader anti-communist network and their acknowledgment of the significant contribution that police diplomacy could make to further this end. Their efforts to strengthen and expand police relationships and collaborations were improved at once. In April 1937, Himmler informed the foreign office of his intention to organise an international police conference right before the *Parteitag*, the annual rally of the Nazi party which took place every September in Nuremberg.[6] The idea was not new. It had been discussed since the establishment of the first collaborations with other police forces, because it represented an occasion to strengthen and extend the German network of police interactions and partnerships. Following the successful visit of the German police leadership in Rome in October 1936, the foreign office and the Gestapo decided to organise it 'in about a year', i.e. by the end of 1937.[7] This plan was not only consistent with the agenda that the German foreign office and police had been implementing for years but, as the following sections show, also diverged from the Italian approach, especially from Bocchini's view.

### 2.1.1 The International Police Conference in Berlin (30 August-3 September 1937)

The preparations for the event had already begun when Himmler notified the foreign office of his plan to organise a multilateral anti-communist police conference. The chief of Sipo and SD

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., pp.3-4. On this point, see also Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis", 241-42.
[6] PA AA, R 100744, Internationaler Polizei-Kongress zur Bekämpfung des Bolschewismus, 1937-1942, Memorandum of the foreign office dated 23 April 1937.
[7] See footnote no. 139 in chap. 1.

Heydrich started to contact possible participants in February, approaching them directly without the involvement of the German diplomats. This autonomous initiative exhibited his and Himmler's aspiration to influence the German foreign policy and, accordingly, that the loyal and ideologically committed SS take assume a leading position over career diplomats and bureaucrats.[8] Heydrich was the man behind the organisation of the summit, since Himmler tended to delegate everyday police affairs and international relations to his collaborators. An exception was the relationship with the Italian police chief Bocchini, which the *Reichsführer* carefully cultivated.

The Italian police chief was one of the first to receive an invitation from Heydrich. He was informed that the summit, initially scheduled for the late spring of 1937, sought to bring together delegates from 'all the countries' which had proved eager to join forces to resist communism. Participating in the event and sharing their experiences and knowledge in the repression of communist activities, they would consolidate and extend the collaborations already in place and implement a common effort to counter the Bolshevik threat.[9] Heydrich did not, however, disclose that the final aspiration of the conference was the creation of a multilateral police collaboration under German control, which would constitute a 'battle line' (*Kampflinie*) against communism.[10] Bocchini discussed the question directly with Mussolini – as customary in the case of an invitation abroad, and even more necessary when the relationships with the Third Reich were concerned – who decided to send a representative of the PS to the conference, but not the police chief himself.[11]

An anti-communist police meeting organised in Nazi Germany and not attended by the Fascist regime's chief of the police would have represented a failure for Himmler and the German police, and not only because of the *Reichsführer*'s personal affection and sincere admiration for his colleague. Bocchini was at the head of the police of the first fascist regime, which had proved remarkably successful and efficient in the long struggle against communism, and his reputation, skills, and experience were internationally recognised, even by democratic governments. His presence assumed a symbolic meaning. It would validate the international status gained by the Gestapo in the field of political policing and give the other delegations a clear signal of the unity and cohesion between the Axis police forces. Hence, Himmler personally intervened to guarantee his participation. He postponed the conference to a more

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[8] About this point, see Hans-Jürgen Döscher, *SS und Auswärtiges Amt im Dritten Reich: Diplomatie im Schatten der 'Endlösung'*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt and Berlin: Ullstein, 1991).
[9] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30 Accordo fra le polizie italiana e tedesca. Affari Generali, Heydrich to Bocchini, 28 February 1937.
[10] PA AA, R 100744, Heydrich to the foreign office, 22 July 1937.
[11] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30, Bocchini to Heydrich, 26 March 1937.

suitable period, the end of August, so that his 'dear friend' Bocchini could also be 'his personal guest' at the celebration for the *Parteitag* in Nuremberg.[12] The German determination to have the Italian police chief at the summit eventually won Mussolini's approval.

Bocchini was undoubtedly the guest of honour and the German authorities showed great consideration for him. Not only did Himmler send him in advance the list of countries that were sending representatives at the meeting, but he also clarified the invitations. The German police chief informed his colleague that he had followed two criteria to select them, and these related to their general disposition towards Bolshevism. There were countries which had already proved their anti-communist commitment and would enthusiastically join forces to fight communism; and there were other countries with which it was possible to start a police collaboration in that specific field, despite some differences and antagonism in other areas. This last consideration referred to some democratic countries and was met with doubt by Bocchini.[13] The Italian was sceptical about their involvement in this initiative because he considered them not reliable partners and their presence could be problematic. He did not approve it, and his opinion did not change after the conference. He had reservation about the participation of Finland. The Finnish political police had indeed proposed the PS an exchange of information on communists and other antifascist activists, but the consultations had been interrupted once Mussolini expressed his disapproval. The connection between the Finnish police and the Gestapo, on the other hand, was stronger, as confirmed by the fact that the Finnish authorities had indicated Berlin as a suitable location for a meeting with the PS to discuss a common anti-communist agenda.[14]

Further strategic and political considerations influenced the decision about which countries to invite. The presence of a delegation from the free city of Danzig, on the one hand, was an indication of the connection between the city (until 1919 part of the German empire) and Germany. It was merely symbolic rather than substantive in the struggle against communism. The Austrian police, on the other hand, were not invited. There were contacts and interactions between the Austrian and the German police forces, but the overall relationships between their leaderships were not cordial. Quite the contrary, they were characterised by episodes of open confrontation and mistrust, which are examined more fully in the next chapter. The decision not to invite Austrian representatives can be interpreted as a signal of the German police leadership's aspiration to take control of the police apparatus of the neighbouring state, sooner

[12] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16, Progetto di accordo fra le polizie Italiana-Tedesca e Ungherese per combattere il comunismo, Himmler to Bocchini, 5 May 1937.
[13] Bocchini marked their names with a question mark, see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30, Himmler to Bocchini, 10 August 1937.
[14] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.59, f.54, N.15 Informazioni riservate, scambio con stati esteri.

or later. It cannot be excluded that they also wanted to detach the conference from any association with the International Criminal Police Commission. The ICPC was deeply connected to the Austrian police and had always refused to intervene in the field of political policing. The political police conference in Berlin can thus be considered an attempt to circumvent this 'limit' of the Vienna-based organisation.[15]

In the end, fifteen foreign delegations, predominantly from European countries, gathered in Berlin from 30 August to 3 September 1937. Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Danzig, Finland, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Yugoslavia, Poland, Portugal, Uruguay, Switzerland were represented by thirty-one delegates who came from their local or national police forces and security agencies. Most of them were the heads of anti-communist departments and agencies.[16] The Italian delegation was the most numerous, with six members. It consisted of Bocchini, his secretary Manganiello, Leto, Vincenzo Agnesina who led the political police office in Naples, the liaison officer in Berlin Chiavaccini, and Modrini, who joined the delegation as an interpreter. The chief of the Gestapo Müller made it clear that the sessions of the conference were secret and strictly limited to the field of policing. Foreign policy considerations – and especially diplomatic disputes – risked compromising the spirit of the meeting. The presence of foreign diplomatic personnel, even as interpreters, had therefore been excluded.[17] The only diplomats that attended the event were the two German ones who joined the large German delegation, which counted more than twenty members and included the entire leadership of the German police and also the Gestapo liaison officer in Rome, Helmerking.[18]

For five days, the delegates gathered at the *Haus des Flieger* (House of the Aviator) situated right in front of the Gestapo Main Office, where they attended morning sessions that focused on theoretical or practical examinations of communist activities and of their repression. The remaining part of the day was occupied by optional recreational activities and other police-related events organised by the Gestapo for its guests, like visits to police facilities and to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Himmler was the host of the event and chaired the morning sessions, as the German foreign office had recommended, but left the honour of the inaugural speech to 'the dean of the anti-communist fight', Bocchini.[19]

The speech of the Italian police chief started with a mention of the successful collaboration between the Italian and the German police and his personal ties with Himmler, then he made

[15] On this point, see also Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 119-21.
[16] See the list of foreign participants sent by Heydrich to the foreign office on 23 August 1938 in PA AA, R 100744.
[17] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30, Chiavaccini to Leto, 26 July 1937.
[18] In PA AA, R 100744.
[19] The programme of the conference and the text of Bocchini's speech are in ACS, MI, DGPS, Segreteria del Capo della Polizia (SCP) Bocchini, 1927-1940, Ff. correnti, 1937, b.23, f. Viaggio di S.E. Bocchini a Berlino.

use of some formulaic and stereotyped expressions to describe the importance of the fight against communism. He declared with a rhetorical flourish that it was the duty of the 'policemen of the healthful states' to fight against 'the most colossal fraud', that 'virulent illness' and 'hydra with thousands of heads and millions of tentacles' that communism was. It was their responsibility to protect human civilisation, but a repressive action was not enough to eradicate that 'terrible monster' that, because of its insidious nature, was penetrating their societies. In a few words, they needed to concentrate on a preventive action and to join their efforts to win this 'holy crusade'. This last point was remarked on by Heydrich in the keynote speech he gave on the penultimate day of the conference, which focused on the 'necessity of international cooperation' in the anti-communist campaign.[20] However, their objectives and agendas did not converge.

Bocchini's confidential reports to Mussolini are again helpful in revealing what happened during the secret meetings and provide an insight into the point of view of the Italian policeman. He returned to Rome immediately after the conclusion of the conference, while Leto, Modrini, and Agnesina remained in Germany several extra days.[21] The German police had in fact organised for the foreign guests a tour of several cities whose last stop was Nuremberg for the *Parteitag*.[22] Bocchini praised the cordiality and respect displayed by the German authorities towards the Italian delegation, which was granted privileged courtesies. All the same, he was overall critical of the conference. In his opinion, its effectiveness had been compromised since the beginning. It had not been possible to keep it secret. Besides, the conference could not pass effective resolutions because some delegates had attended the conference unofficially, thus had lacked the permission and authority to take decisions. He had shared his doubts with Himmler, but the latter had not worried. On the contrary, reported Bocchini, the *Reichsführer* had confided him that 'many delegates were already working' with the German police.[23]

There were indeed secret and more or less formal interactions already in place between the Gestapo and most of the delegations, the PS included. For years, Berlin had looked for police connections and partnerships with neighbouring countries in central Europe and with those states whose involvement was ideologically or geographically crucial to a confrontation with Moscow. The German police had been exchanging information with the Hungarian police since 1934, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Formal cooperation had then been concluded with

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., Manganiello to Leto, 9 September 1937.
[22] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30, Chiavaccini to Leto, 21 August 1937.
[23] The text of the report presents the word 'for' instead of 'with', but the latter seems more appropriate and plausible; see Bocchini's report on the conference dated 8 September 1937 in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16.

Bulgaria, Finland, and Yugoslavia.[24] The chief of the *Ordnungspolizei* Daluege had contributed to establish good relationships and exchanges with the Polish police and with their chief, general Kordian Zamorsky.[25] The interactions with the Japanese police were based on the letter of the Anti-Comintern Pact, although the German authorities aspired to develop them further.[26] The event was thus an occasion to strengthen and expand the already substantial network of the Gestapo.

The real goal of the conference soon became clear. The German authorities not only invited the participants to an intertwined and multilateral collaboration but, via the delegate of Danzig, also proposed the creation of an anti-communist police centre in Berlin, i.e. under their control. That, lamented the Italian police chief, was another demonstration of the 'German exhibitionist manner and yearning for leadership and domination' in every field. Bocchini was totally against the preposition, but he could not openly disagree with the German hosts. The relationships between the two regimes were a delicate and important matter, and he could not risk compromising them right before Mussolini's official visit to Germany, which was scheduled for the end of September. With the help of the Hungarian delegates, he secretly manoeuvred against the proposal which, in the end, did not win much favour and was not even discussed.[27]

The conference was not as successful as the German authorities had expected. Their idea of forming a multilateral anti-communist collaboration in the shape of a Berlin-based international police organisation was rejected. Notwithstanding, the international gathering had effectively contributed to establish and strengthen contacts and interactions between police forces. At the end of meeting, the German authorities did thus encourage their further developments and worked towards an enlargement of their network of police interactions.[28] In other words, rather than abandoning it, they continued to pursue their project of creating – and leading – a broad anti-communist police bloc.

### 2.1.2 Extending the Anti-Communist Police Network (1937-1939)

The conference was an occasion for reinforcing both personal and institutional connections and bonds as well as for establishing new ones. Even Bocchini, who dismissed the sessions of the conference as 'without any particular interest', admitted the benefits of these connections for the Italian police.[29] These results prompted Himmler and Heydrich to expand the number of countries involved in their system of mutual assistance against the Bolshevik threat. They

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[24] Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik*, 462.
[25] See BArch, R 19 (Chef der Ordnungspolizei. Hauptamt Ordungspolizei)/429.
[26] In PA AA, R 100748.
[27] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16, Bocchini's report dated 8 September 1937.
[28] Jacobsen, *Nationalsozialistische Aussenpolitik*, 462-63.
[29] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.16, Bocchini's report dated 8 September 1937.

identified the Baltic and the Scandinavian states, Britain and possibly Ireland, Egypt, Romania, Spain, and the southern American countries (except for Mexico) as potential partners.[30] The German foreign office did not share this view. Existing political conditions and general diplomatic considerations made the conclusion of a formal anti-Bolshevik cooperation with most of the mentioned countries neither likely nor advisable, especially those led by left-wing governments or bordering the Soviet Union. It did not exclude, however, the possibility of establishing unofficial and direct contacts with local policemen.[31] In need of the consent and support of the foreign office to approach other police forces, the German police leadership limited its original proposition. It concentrated instead on those countries with clear anti-communist tendencies and possibly authoritarian or pro-fascist inclinations.

Another project that was held back was Himmler and Heydrich's idea of fostering a multilateral anti-communist collaboration between the participants of the Berlin conference. In December 1937, Heydrich wrote to Bocchini about the development of direct contacts and exchanges of information with the police forces that had attended the event.[32] The Italian police chief once again observed that the potential involvement of countries led by 'liberal-democratic' governments, if not 'markedly left-wing', risked exposing any common effort and collaboration to a failure and tried to convince Heydrich to desist from his plan.[33] The Italian position and that of the German foreign office were quite alike. The chief of Sipo and SD opted for a partial step backwards, at least for the moment. He suggested revising the scope of the multilateral cooperation from the specific field of anti-communism to a more generic fight against terrorism. In this way, Heydrich claimed, it was possible to effectively involve even the police forces of those countries that did not share the Italian and German political line.[34]

Not only had Bocchini succeeded in making Heydrich step back from his initial proposition and managed to scale back the German demands; but, rearranged in this way, the broad cooperation became pointless. The previous chapter indicated how international police cooperation against terrorist activities was already a common and consolidated practice. There was no point in formalising another system of mutual assistance of that kind and putting it under the direction of the Gestapo, not least because the League of Nations had recently promoted a treaty that sanctioned an international cooperation for the prevention and repression of acts of

[30] PA AA, R 100744, Memorandum of the foreign office dated 23 November 1937.
[31] Ibid., Foreign office's note dated 2 December 1937.
[32] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 30, Heydrich to Bocchini, 11 December 1937.
[33] Ibid., Bocchini to Heydrich, 28 February 1938.
[34] Ibid., Heydrich to Bocchini, 18 July 1938.

terrorism.[35] Furthermore, most of the delegates that had attended the conference in Berlin had already expressed their intention to share information, several were willing to do it on an informal or plainly personal basis.[36] Without the official involvement of their institutions, their cooperation, although valuable, was inevitably limited. Once again, the Nazi aim to create and lead a system of multilateral cooperation came across unforeseen obstacles and stalled.

The German police leadership continued to pursue the idea of organising another international political police conference. Fijnaut mentions that a second event took place in Hamburg and Berlin in 1938 and that was attended by most of the participants in the previous conference.[37] Unfortunately, no reference to this meeting has been found in the sources examined, but there is no doubt that the Nazi authorities had intended the 1937 conference not to be a unique episode. According to its official programme, Heydrich illustrated on the last day of the summit the results of the 'first' international anti-communist police conference.[38]

At the end of 1941, the chief of Sipo and SD informed the German foreign office about his plan to organise another international political police gathering. Planned at the time of the still victorious advance of the Axis forces in Europe and of the invasion of the Soviet Union, this event was intended to focus not exclusively on communist 'subversive activity' (*Zersetzungsarbeit*) but also on the wartime threat posed by terrorist (i.e., partisans') actions and sabotage. This conference was initially scheduled for the beginning of February 1942 and Heydrich aspired to gather together in Berlin the police forces of occupied, allied, and pro-Axis countries, of Japan and Turkey, plus neutral Switzerland (already represented at the previous conference in Berlin) and Sweden. Even this other 'anti-Bolshevik police congress' was planned '*outside* the framework of the ICPC', even though the ICPC had passed under the control of the Nazi police after the Anschluss – the German annexation of Austria in March 1938 – and was now 'completely integrated into the SS-police apparatus'.[39] In the original plan, the conference would have also been followed by a four-day tour in the eastern territories occupied by the Third Reich 'to study the consequences of communism' on the spot.[40] The foreign office, however, scaled down the ambitious project. It persuaded the Gestapo to renounce to the field trip and to reschedule the conference after May 1942.[41] In the following

[35] The treaty was approved on 16 November 1937, when Fascist Italy was still a member of the League of Nations; in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.259, f.1, Terrorismo internazionale. Mussolini announced Italy's exit from the League on 11 December 1937.
[36] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 30, Heydrich to Bocchini, 18 July 1938.
[37] Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 121.
[38] See the programme of the conference in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1937, b.23, f. Viaggio di S.E. Bocchini a Berlino.
[39] Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 121.
[40] PA AA, R 100744, Heydrich to the foreign office, 20 December 1941.
[41] Ibid., Heydrich to the foreign office, 17 February 1942.

months, the attention entirely concentrated on the war effort, and the project of another anti-communist police conference was abandoned after Heydrich's death in June 1942.

A summary of how the German police network developed before the outbreak of the Second World War is offered by Heydrich who, at the end of August 1938, informed the recently appointed foreign minister Ribbentrop on the status of the international interactions of the Gestapo. At that time, a collaboration with Argentina and Uruguay was at its early stages. Treaties had been signed with Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Portugal, and Franco's Spain; while the Gestapo was cooperating on a verbal or tacit consent with the police forces of Brazil, Greece, the Netherlands, Japan, Poland, and Hungary. A good and official system of mutual assistance was in force with the Danish and the Romanian police as well. With the latter, however, the cooperation remained occasional and had not fully developed yet.[42] These were the different bilateral police relationships that were in force and that constituted the Gestapo networks of interactions in August 1938. Unfortunately, due to the loss of documentations, it is not possible to verify whether and how these collaborations actually worked, i.e. whether regular exchanges of information between police headquarters were effectively initiated and if they developed into investigations and police operations.

A comparison between the list of countries participating in the conference in 1937 and the list that Heydrich sent to Ribbentrop in August 1938 indicates that the Gestapo network remained essentially the same, with a predominant European component. Some connections were strong and characterised by an effective reciprocal assistance. Others, like the ones with the Swiss and Belgian police forces, 'were less intimate' and merely 'official and business-like', as recalled at end of the war by Heinz Jost, former chief of the foreign intelligence of the SD.[43]

The report was likely intended to stimulate a closer and more fruitful cooperation between the SS leaderships and the new foreign minister. Himmler and Ribbentrop had a good and long-lasting rapport, with the latter also being a member of the SS since 1933. The *Reichsführer* praised the substitution of von Neurath with Ribbentrop at the beginning of February 1938, since it seemed to satisfy his ambition of influencing the foreign policy of the Third Reich. With time, however, the new foreign minister disappointed Himmler's expectations.[44]

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[42] PA AA, R 100749, Heydrich to Ribbentrop, 22 August 1938.

[43] The National Archives of the UK (TNA), KV (Record of the Security Service) 2/104, Heinz Jost. Head of Amt VI in SD, Interim Report in the case of Heinz Maria Karl Jost, p.9. For further information about Jost and the SD, see Michael Wildt, ed., *Nachrichtendienst, Politische Elite, Mordeinheit: Der Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers SS* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003).

[44] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 392-94. For further information about Ribbentrop's appointment at the head of the German foreign ministry, see also Eckart Conze et al., *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik*, 1st ed. (München: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2010), 123-32.

Heydrich's communication belonged to the more optimistic initial phase of Ribbentrop's office. It did not simply provide information on the police connections established by the Gestapo but also emphasised the successful achievements that these connections represented in diplomatic terms. In this regard, the most successful and fruitful of the police initiatives had been the organisation of the international political police conference in 1937. Additionally, representatives of all the police forces cooperating with the Gestapo had been invited to Berlin as guests of the German police, except for the Romanians; and large groups of foreign policemen had attended training courses at the police academy in Berlin-Charlottenburg. The foreign minister was also informed that liaison officers (*Verbindungsleute*) had been exchanged with the police forces of Italy and Yugoslavia and attached – with no official or diplomatic status – to the personnel of the legations in Rome and Belgrade'.[45]

Chiavaccini and Helmerking had been posted to Berlin and Rome respectively in the summer of 1936. Police officer Franc Ujcic was assigned to the Yugoslav embassy in Berlin at the end of 1937; whereas Hans Helm of the Gestapo Main Office arrived in Belgrade at the beginning of 1938.[46] His assignment included the transmission of communication between the two police headquarters, the establishment of contacts with members of the local police, and 'especially' a study on the conditions of the Yugoslav police.[47] More Gestapo liaison officers were sent overseas in 1938. Franz Huber of the Gestapo Main Office was sent to Tokyo at the end of the year, following the arrival in Berlin of a representative of the Japanese interior ministry, Dr Sigenari.[48]

Yugoslav and Japanese liaison officers were posted to Rome as well in 1937 and 1938, following the development of closer connections of the PS with the Yugoslav and the Japanese police.[49] Like the Gestapo, the Italian police developed its own network of interactions in the second half of the 1930s. Their agenda and attitude, however, differed and occasionally collided with the German one. Berlin, in fact, pursued an ambitious plan and aspired to create and direct a broader anti-communist coalition. Its plan scaled down, and yet the German police established

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[45] PA AA, R 100749, Heydrich to Ribbentrop, 22 August 1938.

[46] For further information on the deployment of German police representatives and liaison officers abroad, see Sebastian Weitkamp, "SS-Diplomaten. Die Polizei-Attachés des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes," in Wolfgang Schulte, *Die Polizei im NS-Staat. Beiträge eines internationalen Symposiums an der Deutschen Hochschule der Polizei in Münster* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2009), 339-70.

[47] PA AA, R 100745, Polizeiabkommen mit Argentinien, Estland, Jugoslawien, Österreich, und Portugal, 1936-1938, Heydrich to the foreign office, 16 December 1937.

[48] PA AA, R 99509, Bekämpfung des Bolschewismus, Bd.3, 1938, Heydrich to the foreign office, 23 September 1938.

[49] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con le polizie straniere (R/P, polacca, R/J, jugoslava; R/N, nipponica; R/S, spagnola), 1936-1943, b.1.

numerous connections. The Italian police was less proactive and favoured the establishment of bilateral collaborations.

## 2.2 The Italian Police Network

In the wake of the meetings and the conclusion of the secret protocols with the Gestapo in 1936, the Fascist authorities examined the possibility of establishing contacts and partnerships with other police forces. The new and ambitious foreign minister Ciano was a major supporter of the idea, especially in relation to those countries that were within the Italian sphere of influence or the area of projected expansion.[50]

The authority and ambition of Mussolini's son-in-law not only influenced the Italian police diplomacy but also his rapport with Bocchini. Apparently, the foreign minister meant to substitute the police chief with a functionary more devoted and inclined to satisfy his ambition, but Bocchini proved too powerful and his position untouchable.[51] They eventually joined forces instead of fighting each other. In his post-war memories, Leto condemned the fact that the police chief chose to pay tribute to the foreign minister, who was not just a minister but the main pretender to Mussolini's succession. Bocchini added to his daily meetings with the dictator a weekly appointment with the foreign minister, and his conduct – an 'act of submitting' for Leto – contributed to increase Ciano's power and influence within the regime and to consolidate Bocchini's role.[52] The two men developed a close interaction and often discussed the direction and developments of the international relationships of the PS.

Compared to the German authorities, the Italian ones – and Bocchini in particular – maintained their preference for the conclusion of secret bilateral partnerships and connections rather than a broad, multilateral cooperation. Besides, the Italian authorities appeared generally less proactive than their Axis partner. As in the German case, on the other hand, the Italian police network mirrored Rome's foreign policy. In other words, the PS cultivated some police relationships more than other, conforming to the diplomatic interest and targets of the regime.

### 2.2.1. *From Foreign Policy to Police Diplomacy: The Bilateral Relationships of the PS*

In December 1937, the PS met with the foreign office and the ministry for press and propaganda to discuss the development of the anti-communist cooperation with the Gestapo, which had been reinforced the previous October when the German police leadership had visited Rome. On

[50] For detailed information on the life and political career of Ciano, see Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Galeazzo Ciano: Una vita, 1903-1944*, 1st ed. (Milano: Bompiani, 1979); and the recent work of Tobias Hof, *Galeazzo Ciano: The Fascist Pretender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).
[51] On this point, see the entry dated 21 July 1938 in Giuseppe Bottai, *Diario: 1935-1944*, ed. Giordano Bruno Guerri, 2nd ed. BUR Storia (Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2006), 126.
[52] Guido Leto, *OVRA: fascismo, antifascismo*, 2nd ed. (Bologna: Cappelli, 1952), 177-78.

that occasion, the participants (for the police: Bocchini; the head of the PolPol, Michelangelo Di Stefano; Leto of the DAGR; and Alianello of the Office RG) agreed on the founding of an anti-communist cultural organisation, examined in chapter 1. They also discussed the possibility of establishing secret police collaborations with other countries, namely Hungary, Poland, Japan, and Yugoslavia. The conditions for concluding anti-communist agreements like the one in force with the Gestapo were carefully examined. The Italian authorities were also aware that Hungary, Poland, and Japan were already cooperating with the German police.[53] The last piece of information had been provided by military intelligence or possibly directly by Himmler, who on other occasions referred to these connections to subtly encourage Bocchini to extend the anti-communist interactions of the PS.[54]

The participants in the meeting approved the collaboration with Hungary, with which talks were already in place. Any judgment about Japan and Poland was suspended until Tokyo and Warsaw took the initiative in that sense. Belgrade had clearly expressed its interest in establishing better police relationships, but its approach was considered premature. First, a 'definitive clarification' was needed, which meant an improvement of the political relationships between Fascist Italy and Yugoslavia.[55] This last point referred to the still open questions concerning the contested border between the two countries and the Fascist regime's imperialist aspirations in the Balkans and the Adriatic.[56] Another existing element of friction between Rome and Belgrade was Mussolini's support for the ultra-nationalist and pro-fascist Croatian organisation of the Ustaša, whose leader Ante Pavelić and hundreds of his followers lived in exile in Italy, where they were granted protection and financial support by the regime.[57]

The meeting revealed the Italian authorities' discreet interest in the establishment of contacts and collaborations with other foreign police. They decided to adopt a wait-and-see approach, and the situation remained open to potential developments.

The dialogue between the PS and the Hungarian police seems not to result in an official partnership. Following an initiative of the Hungarian police, Bocchini warily opened an exchange between the two police forces and approved Ciano's idea to invite the Hungarian police leadership to Rome. The visit was deferred until October 1937, when Hungarian

[53] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.3, f. RG 50, Report on the meeting dated 7 December 1936.
[54] On the latter point, see the communication dated 13 February 1937 of the Italian ambassador in Berlin to Ciano in *DDI*, 8, vol. 6 (1 gennaio – 30 giugno 1937) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1997), doc. 163.
[55] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.3, f. RG 50, Report on the meeting dated 7 December 1936.
[56] On this point, see "Italy's Ambitions in Yugoslavia: 1918–1940," chap. 1 in H. James Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini's Conquest of Yugoslavia, 1941-1943* (New York: Enigma, 2005), 1-17.
[57] For further information about Pavelić and the Ustaša and their relationships with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, see the first chapters in Pino Adriano and Giorgio Cingolani, *Nationalism and Terror: Ante Pavelic and Ustashe Terrorism from Fascism to the Cold War* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2018).

representatives attended the annual celebration of the Italian police.[58] After that, no regular exchanges of communication between the two police are documented nor did another Hungarian delegation attend the *Festa della Polizia* ever again. Hence, it is likely that a formal collaboration or regular exchange between the PS and the Hungarian police were never initiated. In any case, the Italian police did find other partners and, for the most part, their police connections were instigated by foreign policy initiatives.

On 25 March 1937, the Yugoslav prime minister Milan Stojadinović and Ciano signed a treaty of friendship, which aimed to establish a 'good-neighbour policy' between the two countries and solve existing disputes.[59] The question of the Ustaša was one of the main sources of controversy, and the police forces of Rome and Belgrade were involved in its solution. Secret provisions estabslished a close police cooperation directed to limit the activity of the members of the Croatian subversive group residing in Italy. As requested by Belgrade, the Italian authorities accepted to intern Pavelić, the other Ustaša leader Slavko Kvaternik, and their approximately five hundred affiliates, and to restrain their activities and connections. Furthermore, it was agreed that some Ustaša could be sent to work in the Italian colonies in Africa. The Italian police were then expected to communicate the names and places of internment of the Ustaša to the Yugoslav police, which could designate a liaison office specifically to enforce these arrangements.[60]

Bocchini and the undersecretary of the interior ministry Buffarini were promptly notified by Ciano about these additional provisions. After agreeing to put them into practice, Buffarini informed the minister that the activities and movements of the Ustaša in Italy were already kept under constant police surveillance.[61] The task had been carried out for years by inspector-general Ercole Conti of the *questura* of Pisa, who had liaised with the Ustaša and their leadership since 1932.[62]

It was Conti that, along with a representative of the foreign office, interacted with the special envoy of the Yugoslav police, the deputy prefect of Belgrade Sava Ćirković, and presented him

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[58] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.59, f.54.

[59] Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), Serie Gabinetto del Ministro (GAB), 1930-1943, b.755, f. Corrispondenza relativa ai rapporti con la Jugoslavia, Ciano's press statement, 25 March 1937.

[60] For the text of the agreement and of the secret verbal notes, in their original French version, see *DDI*, 8, vol. 6, doc. 340. On this point, see also Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 39.

[61] ASDMAE, GAB, b.755, f. Corrispondenza relativa ai rapporti con la Jugoslavia, Buffarini to Ciano, 5 April 1937.

[62] See Conti's report dated 18 April 1941 in *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Series 9 (1939-1943), vol. 6 (29 ottobre 1940-23 aprile 1941) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1986), doc. 936. This report was sent to the foreign office after the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941 and offers a detailed account of the activity of Pavelić and the Ustaša in Italy during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as of the attitude of the Fascist regime towards them.

with a list of names of the Ustaša in Italy. Those amongst them that had not been directly implicated in terrorist actions were given the opportunity of returning to Yugoslavia. In the end, about two hundred Ustaša were ultimately repatriated.[63]

Despite the agreement and the proclamations, the Italian authorities did not desert the Ustaša. Quite the contrary, the Fascist regime continued to tolerate and subsidise the leaders and members of the Croatian terrorist group, as long as they maintained a low profile and did not engage in overt political activities. This occasionally led to formal complaints from the official representative of the Yugoslav police in Italy, Vladeta Milićević, who supervised the process of repatriation after the return of Ćirković to Yugoslavia.[64] Milićević, who was permanently attached to the Yugoslav embassy in Rome in the summer of 1937, was a specialist in the field of anti-communism as well as in the surveillance of the Ustaša. He was known and appreciated in Vienna by the leadership of the ICPC and in Berlin as well, since he occasionally contributed to the monthly *Contra-Komintern*, a publication of the Nazi ministry of propaganda that was connected to the *Antikomintern*. Milićević was posted to Italy to collaborate with the PS not only in the repatriation of the Croatian extremists but also in the repression of communist activities.[65]

The Italian and the Yugoslav police began to share news on communist activities, on the movements of potential communist agents, and on politically unreliable individuals, and these exchanges were facilitated by the Yugoslav liaison officer in Rome.[66] The Yugoslav police did not consider the PS just a partner in the fight against communism but also a model, and wanted to study its organisation and techniques. For that reason, another Yugoslav police officer arrived in Italy at the end of 1937 to attend a four-month course at the police academy in Rome.[67]

As usual, the ties between the Yugoslav and the Italian police forces were reinforced through exchanges of visits. The highest ranks of the Yugoslav police attended the *Festa della Polizia* in October 1938; then, in the spring of 1939, Bocchini was invited to Belgrade to return the visit.[68] With Mussolini's approval, a large Italian police delegation travelled to Yugoslavia at end of June 1939. The visit celebrated the friendly relationships and sincere camaraderie

[63] Adriano and Cingolani, *Nationalism and Terror*, 141-43. On this point, see also footnote no.147 in Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il Duce: 2/ Lo Stato totalitario, (1936-1940)*, 5th ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 403; and Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 39-40.
[64] Adriano and Cingolani, *Nationalism and Terror*, 147-55.
[65] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con le polizie straniere, b.1, f. *Rapporti con la polizia jugoslava. Anno 1937-1938-1939*, Milićević to Leto, 1 October 1937.
[66] See Ibid., f. *Rapporti con la polizia jugoslava. Anno 1939*.
[67] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, Vers. 1961, b.16, f.9054-11, Regno di Jugoslavia. Ammissione di un Funzionario di quel Governo alla frequenza del corso presso la Scuola Superiore di Polizia in Roma.
[68] Ibid., b.7, f.9065-122, Invito alla Polizia italiana da parte del Governo Jugoslavo, The Italian foreign office to the interior ministry, 3 April 1939.

between the two police forces and their collaboration, which had started with 'tacit agreements' and was now becoming an intimate connection.[69] At the same time, the event had clear diplomatic implications. It took place soon after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia (caused by the German invasion of Prague and the creation of a new Slovak state) and the Italian occupation of Albania, which put Belgrade under growing pressure from its menacing and belligerent neighbours. The recent dismissal of Stojadinović also contributed to a deterioration of the Yugoslav interactions with Rome.[70] Under these circumstances, police diplomacy was once more considered instrumental in pursuing foreign policy's objectives. Bocchini's visit was intended by the Yugoslav authorities as a showcase of accord and friendship between Yugoslavia and Fascist Italy, rather than a simple celebration of their police bond. Despite the official proclamations, however, both sides did not trust each other any longer.[71]

With time, the institutional ties between Rome and Belgrade worsened, albeit personal relationships remained solid. Over the years, Milićević had established a direct and close relationships with the leadership of the Italian police (with Bocchini and Leto in particular) that were not limited to the professional sphere. Therefore, when Yugoslavia was invaded in the spring of 1941, the Yugoslav liaison officer was allowed to leave Italy. He then sought refuge in London, where he became the interior minister of the Yugoslav government in exile. At the end of the war, he even tried to re-establish his old Italian connections.[72]

The establishment of good diplomatic relationships between Rome and Belgrade at the end of the 1930s was valuable for the long-term Italian ambitions in Albania. It gave the Fascist regime a free hand with Tirana.[73] Albania had been under growing economic and political pressure since the appointment of Ciano as foreign minister. Mussolini's ambitious son-in-law aspired to its annexation and made every effort to achieve this.[74] The Italian intentions were no mystery for the Nazi authorities. In October 1936, Himmler had even offered Bocchini his help in assassinating the Albanian king. A bit surprised by the proposition, the Italian police chief

[69] See the text of Bocchini's speech in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.24, f. Visita della Delegazione di Polizia Italiana in Jugoslavia.
[70] On this point, see Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic*, 12-13; Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 41-46.
[71] See Bocchini's report to Mussolini dated 2 July 1939 in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.24, f. Visita della Delegazione di Polizia Italiana in Jugoslavia.
[72] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Polizia Amministrativa e Sociale, Scuola Superiore di Polizia, b.171, f. 3461, Milicevic Vladeta.
[73] Burgwyn, *Empire on the Adriatic*, 12. For context and further details, see Valentina Villa, "The Conquest of Albania: The Real Beginning of World War II in Italy," chap. 6 in *A Fascist Decade of War: 1935-1945 in International Perspective*, eds. Marco Maria Aterrano and Karine Varley (London: Routledge, 2020), 85-94.
[74] In Ibid. See also "Count Ciano's Invasion of Albania," chap. 1 in Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at War, 1939-1945* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), 5-32.

had considered the proposal a ‘comic interlude’.[75] The Italian police still played their part in Ciano’s project.

Policing and professional exchanges played a secondary role in this case. The Italian authorities were interested in promoting pro-Italian sentiment and in infiltrating the Albanian police apparatus rather than in encouraging a proper police cooperation. At the end of 1938 – when the idea of a military intervention in Albania was becoming more concrete – the foreign office asked the PS to allow an increasing number of Albanian police officers to train at the police academy in Rome, at the expenses of the Italian authorities. The police complied, although a bit reluctantly due to these unexpected and unnecessary expenses.[76] Bocchini was again not particularly pleased when he was requested to send a police officer to Tirana to organise the training of the local police cadets. The police chief complied and assigned the task to a police commissioner, Daniele Bordieri, but made it clear that this deployment abroad was not ‘in the interest of the police administration’.[77] It was indeed a façade and a political operation. The mission did not last long. In April, shortly after the arrival of Borghieri, Italy annexed Albania.[78]

A diplomatic initiative stimulated the establishment of police interactions with another foreign country, in this case Japan. As well as with Yugoslavia, bilateral police connections and cooperation between the PS and the Japanese police were established after the conclusion of a political agreement, specifically after Italy had joined the Third Reich and Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact.[79] On 6 November 1937, Ciano signed the treaty and the supplementary protocol that Ribbentrop and the Japanese representative had negotiated a year before.[80] The letter of the Pact was considered the basis for a police collaboration between Tokyo and Rome, as it had occurred between the former and Berlin. Likewise, it apparently never fully developed.

[75] See Bocchini’s report to Mussolini copied on 26 October 1936 in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7.
[76] See ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, Vers. 1961, b.16, f.9054-10, sf.2, Invio a Roma di un gruppo di dieci giovani albanesi per un corso teorico-pratico di polizia scientifica.
[77] Ibid., sf.3, Tirana. Corso per allievi di polizia albanese. Missione del Commissario Bordieri Daniele, Bocchini to the foreign office, 15 January 1939.
[78] For further information on the military operations and the annexation of Albania, see Villa, “The Conquest of Albania,” and Fischer, *Albania at War*.
[79] On the interactions among the Japanese Empire, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany in the second half of the 1930s and on the Italian involvement in the Anti-Comintern Pact, see “Der Antikominternpackt und die Globalisierung der Achse. Herbst 1936,” chap. 3 in Daniel Hedinger, *Die Achse: Berlin-Rom-Tokio 1919-1946* (München: C.H. Beck, 2021), 183-222.
[80] The English-language version of the tripartite treaty is available online at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/tri3.asp (last accessed on 17 February 2022). The two other signatories did not inform Ciano that the 1936 treaty included an additional secret protocol that explicitly indicated the anti-Soviet connotation of the accord; see Mario Toscano, “L’Asse Roma-Berlino – Il Patto Anticomintern – La Guerra civile in Spagna – L’Anschluss – Monaco,” in Augusto Torre et al., *La politica estera italiana dal 1914 al 1943* (Torino: ERI, 1963), 197-99.

Special envoys of the Japanese interior ministry were sent to Rome to facilitate the interactions and the anti-communist cooperation with the Italian police. Keiziro Inomata and his collaborator Zin Igarasi arrived in Italy in the second half of 1938, at the same time that the Gestapo and the Japanese police were exchanging liaison officers as well.[81] Their presence in the peninsula is documented until Italy's entry into the war, in June 1941.[82] Unfortunately, it is neither known whether they remained in the country after that date nor the activity they had carried out during their stay. The files examined indicate that exchanges of information about communist or subversive activities between Inomata and his contacts in the DGPS never occurred. It is likely that, instead of proper policing activities, the two Japanese officers carried out intelligence or propaganda tasks.

In 1938, the Italian police also established contacts and worked together with the Polish police. This time, the idea of a cooperation did not originate from the two countries' foreign offices, but directly from their police forces. The relationships between the PS and the Polish police were cordial at the end of the decade. The international police conference in Berlin had represented an occasion to develop direct contacts between Bocchini and the chief of the Polish police, Kordian Zamorsky. Under the circumstances, the head of the anti-communist section of the Polish police, Kazimierz Janisławski, met Bocchini in March 1938, and, without diplomatic mediation, they agreed to share information on communist and subversive activities. Janisławski returned to Italy again in May 1938 to assist the PS in the surveillance of the Polish colony in the peninsula for the duration of Hitler's visit. It was only at that point that the Italian and the Polish foreign offices intervened and the collaboration assumed an official character.[83] The two police forces exchanged information on anti-fascist activists and organisations via the Italian embassy in Warsaw until the end of August 1939, right before the German invasion of Poland.[84]

The war did not disrupt the personal bond and camaraderie between policemen who suddenly found themselves on opposing fronts, as mentioned in relation to Milićević's situation. A peculiar episode of police comradeship involved the chief of the Polish police, general Zamorsky, after the German invasion of Poland. Zamorsky had developed good personal connections with the leaderships of the German police and of the PS over the years, as

[81] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con le polizie straniere, b.1, f. Rapporti confidenziali fra la polizia italiana e quella giapponese. Anno 1939.
[82] See ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, 1939-1943, b.53, f.2435, Missione di amicizia Giapponese.
[83] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con le polizie straniere, b.1, f. Relazioni confidenziali tra la polizia italiana e la polizia polacca. Anno 1938.
[84] See Ibid., f. Rapporti con la polizia polacca. Anno 1939.

confirmed by his presence at the police conference in Berlin in 1937 and at the *Festa della Polizia* in Rome in 1938.[85]

After the Polish capitulation, he sought refuge in Romania and, from a refugee camp, he contacted the deputy president of the ICPC Antonino Pizzuto. He asked for Pizzuto's and Bocchini's intercessions with Himmler to recover some personal belongings that he had left in his house in Warsaw, a request that the *Reichsführer* was eager to satisfy.[86] Furthermore, he asked Pizzuto to verify whether one of his close collaborators, one of the Polish representative in the ICPC, had managed to find refuge in Britain. This matter was more delicate to deal with because it implied an interaction with the British authorities. The Fascist regime was not yet at war against Britain, but its main ally and Axis partner was. Pizzuto could thus request the information only 'as a personal favour'. He made use of his ICPC contacts within Scotland Yard and was informed that Zamorsky's collaborator had been killed by the 'Bolsheviks', i.e. the Soviet forces that had occupied the eastern part of Poland in September 1939.[87] This episode is indicative of the strong comradeship that, based on a shared fierce anti-communism, these policemen had cultivated in years of interactions, cooperation, and international meetings. Their professional solidarity could prevail over foreign policy's considerations even in wartime.

### 2.2.2. *The Police Missions in South America*

The bilateral connections just examined reveal a decisive influence of the foreign office over the formation of the PS' international network. Another element that emerges from these interactions is that the Japanese and the Yugoslav police had their permanent representatives in Rome, whereas the PS – unlike the Gestapo – had no special envoys in Belgrade or Tokyo. The only liaison officers that the Italian police sent abroad to cooperate with the local police were Chiavaccini in Berlin and, to a certain extent, Modrini in Vienna, who acted as liaison with the Austrian police and with the ICPC.

Some other Italian police officers were deployed overseas at the end of the 1930s as members of task forces. These missions abroad were envisaged as temporary and originated from requests of assistance from foreign governments. In these cases, the mediation of the foreign office was crucial. Not only did it coordinate the task forces' activities and connections with the local authorities as well as their communications with Rome, via the Italian legations. It also balanced the more political aspect of the mission with the more technical one. Their coexistence resulted

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[85] On the last point, see ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.9, f. Festa della Polizia Italiana. 13° Annuale.
[86] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Ff. Personali, 1927-1944, b.1470, f.1, Zamorsky Kordian. Generale.
[87] See the correspondence between Pizzuto and Sir Norman Kendal of Scotland Yard in Ibid.

at times problematic not only for the progress of the missions themselves but also for their interactions with the local authorities.

In the second half of the 1930s, delegations of the interior ministry's police took part in two missions to Bolivia and Peru alongside the Fascist Militia and the Carabinieri. The first south American mission was dispatched to Bolivia at the beginning of December 1936, after a military coup had brought general David Toro into power. The new president had requested the assistance of the Italian police forces to reorganise the Bolivian security apparatus and had guaranteed to cover the cost of this foreign mission.[88] Ciano had started his diplomatic career in South America and had developed a strong interest in the area already as minister for propaganda, therefore he was eager to accept the request.[89] The operation was valuable in propaganda terms and was not kept secret. The nine members of the delegation were officially received by Ciano before embarking at Genoa and celebrated by the Italian police monthly *Il magistrato dell'ordine* (literally 'The administrator of order', i.e. the policeman).[90]

Inspector-general Epifanio Pennetta had apparently declined the leadership of the group unconvinced of the presence of militiamen, with whom he had experienced a difficult cooperation.[91] At the head of the mission was thus put the *questore* (police superintendent) Domenico Ravelli. As Pennetta had expected, the progress of the mission was affected by the composite nature of the delegation, specifically by the conduct of the members of the Militia. The carabinieri, the policemen, and the embassy in La Paz aimed to maintain the assistance on a mere technical level. The militiamen engaged in political activities and directly interfered with the life of the local government, playing an active role in the coup that overthrew Toro in July 1937. After that, their presence in the country was no longer welcome and they had to return to Italy. The rest of the mission was dismissed in 1937 as well, but two members of the delegation were invited to extend their stay for another year. One was an officer of the carabinieri, who remained in Bolivia until March 1938. The other was police commissioner Rosario Barranco of the DAGR. He was actively involved in the reorganisation of the Bolivian police, the political office included. The local authorities appreciated his work, but the political situation in the country became increasingly unstable and he was recalled at the beginning of 1939.[92] He did not remain in Italy long, as he was quickly reassigned to the consulate in Nice.

[88] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Permanenti, B4 Personale di PS, b.10, f. Barranco Rosario.

[89] On this point, see Federico Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism: Ideology, Violence, and the Sacred in Argentina and Italy, 1919-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 94-95.

[90] See "Una missione di polizia italiana in Bolivia," *Il magistrato dell'ordine* 13, no.12 (19 December 1936): 158. For further information on the police journal and for an anthology of its articles, see Nicola Labanca and Michele Di Giorgio, eds., *Una cultura professionale per la polizia dell'Italia fascista: Antologia de «Il magistrato dell'ordine» (1924-1939)* (Milano: Edizioni Unicopli, 2021).

[91] Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen*, 138.

[92] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 123-25.

The second south American task force arrived in Peru in the spring of 1937. The military government of Lima had requested the Italian assistance for two years to support the reorganisation of the local police corps, specifically of the political police. The mission consisted, again, of nine representatives of the police, the carabinieri, and the MVSN, at the command of the *questore* Ernesto Cammarota. In addition to the official training assignment, they were granted by the Peruvian government authority over the local policemen and were entrusted political policing activities. Despite the concerns expressed by the embassy, they got involved in the repression of political opponents, arresting and torturing left-wing militants. Four of its members returned to Italy at the end of the second year, but the mission was prolonged until 1940. Ciano insisted on the local government extending the mission even longer, but the situation in the country had changed and his attempts failed. Yet, Cammarota and his men could not immediately return to Italy because of the state of war in Europe. They managed to leave Peru only in March 1941. It is not known why one member of the group, police commissioner Alessandro Borgomanero of the DAGR, remained in Lima and moved back to Italy only in 1942.[93] Like Barranco, he was promptly assigned another mission abroad. Both cases are investigated further in the final chapter.

The police missions in South America had been organised following a request from the local governments. A mixed composition characterised these task forces. In Bolivia, it led to an open contrast between the Fascist Militia, on the one hand, and the police, the carabinieri, and the diplomatic personnel, on the other hand, which affected the whole operation. In Peru, the components of the mission combined more successfully and actively supported the local authorities, irrespective of the more cautious approach of the embassy. The contribution of the PS in both cases was certainly relevant. The two heads of missions came from its ranks and its representatives contributed to the reorganisation and activity of the local police forces in a noticeable manner. Unfortunately, the sources available are not many and it is not possible to reconstruct in detail the activities that these missions carried out nor their effective outcomes.

These task forces in South America were not the sole missions that the PS sent abroad at the end of the 1930s. In the summer of 1937, the Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar requested the secret assistance of the Italian police.[94] A delegation of the interior ministry's police was then sent to Portugal, this time without the participation of carabinieri and militiamen.

[93] Ibid., 125-29.

[94] On Salazar and the Portuguese dictatorship, see António Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism: Problems of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); and the first chapters in Mario Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo: Collaborazione di polizia e diplomazia culturale tra Italia fascista e Portogallo di Salazar (1928-1945)* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2008).

### 2.2.3. *The Mission in Portugal and the Competition with the Gestapo*

In July 1937, a failed attempt against Salazar' life exposed some inefficiencies and tensions within the Portuguese security apparatus, in particular between the Public Security Police (*Polícia de Segurança Pública*, PSP) and the political police created by the regime, the *Polícia de Vigilância e de Defesa do Estado* (PVDE, Surveillance and State Defence Police) led by Agostinho Lourenço. The Portuguese dictator requested the secret assistance of the Italian police in the investigations of the killing attempt and, most importantly, in the reorganisation of the Portuguese political police and the repression of political subversion. This invitation had not just implications for the police but also offered the Fascist regime an opportunity to extend its influence over the Portuguese *Estado Novo* (New State) and to further its fascistisation.[95] Yet, the Italian authorities had to deal with the hostility of the leadership of the PVDE and with the competition of the Third Reich and its police apparatus.[96]

Ivani divided the activities of the Italian police mission into two phases. During the first year, from the summer of 1937 until the summer of 1938, the delegation headed by the *questore* Leone Santoro studied the organisation of Portuguese police forces, organised training sessions on political policing, and worked on a project for the reform of the police apparatus of the *Estado Novo* based on the Italian model. Their assignment was supposed to terminate in September 1938, but Salazar's government requested to extend their stay to complete the police reform. At that point started the second phase, in which the mission assumed a more evident political and ideological connotation. Public displays of unity and solidarity between Rome and Lisbon fostered the image and prestige of the Fascist regime in Portugal.[97] Besides, 'in encouraging Salazar's regime to inject fascist ideology into the Portuguese police' Santoro was 'instrumental in spreading the fascist word' there.[98]

The mission and the interactions between the PS and the Portuguese police (the PSP in particular) encouraged the development of stronger ties between Fascist Italy and the *Estado Novo* and promoted the fascistisation of Salazar's regime. In other words, policy diplomacy was an important means for the Fascist regime to gain a foothold in Portugal, which was crucial also in the context of the Spanish Civil War. The impact of the mission was more limited on a technical level. A reform of the Portuguese police was never fully realised, and the Italian

[95] Ibid., 101-55.
[96] For an overview of the relationships between Nazi Germany and the *Estado Novo* see Cláudia Ninhos, "The Estado Novo and Portuguese-German Relations in the Age of Fascism," in *Fascism without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, eds. Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 143-67.
[97] See Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo*, 139-49.
[98] Dunnage, *Mussolini's Policemen*, 145.

expectations were not satisfied. Exchanges of information and know-how took place, but the Italian intention to conclude a written anti-communist agreement to formalise the bilateral cooperation was frustrated until the very end. After long negotiations, a treaty, modelled on the Italian-German protocol of April 1936, was eventually signed by Santoro and Lourenço at the conclusion of the mission, on 20 April 1940.[99] The police delegation left Portugal shortly afterwards and the agreement probably never came into force.[100]

The PVDE and the PS did not establish a strong and sincere relationship. The attitude of the Portuguese political police and their chief Lourenço towards the Italian mission was a matter of constant complaints from Santoro, even though it improved during the last phase of the mission. For Bocchini's part, the PVDE was not a suitable partner. In general, he emerged wary and distrustful of the Portuguese political police. When, in April 1939, the Portuguese political police arbitrarily arrested and expelled an Italian citizen, the Italian police chief wanted to interrupt the ongoing negotiations for the treaty and recall Santoro's mission. He showed no particular interest in a collaboration with the PVDE, but the foreign office intervened to keep the situation under control and emphasised the necessity of concluding the agreement.[101] In so doing, it made it clear that these police relationships were more relevant in political terms than for the police forces involved.

The fact that Salazar had requested the assistance of the Italian police without previously informing the PVDE had certainly not favoured their interactions. Overall, the Portuguese political police had better relationships with the Gestapo and, traditionally, with the British intelligence.[102] The PVDE and the Gestapo had been in contact since October 1936, when the former had expressed its intention to initiate a cooperation with the German political police. A treaty, based on the usual draft, was promptly signed at the beginning of 1937, bypassing any diplomatic mediation. Not only did the negotiations go more rapidly than with the Italian police, but they also indicate the Gestapo's growing autonomy in the management of its international relationships. Indeed, the German foreign office was informed about the conclusion of the agreement approximately a month later, and it often complained that the Gestapo tried to circumvent its supervision over the correspondence with the PVDE and with other foreign police forces.[103]

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[99] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.48, Accordo tecnico tra la polizia italiana e quella portoghese.
[100] Ivani, *Esportare il fascismo*, 153.
[101] See the correspondence concerning Aristide G.M. in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.48.
[102] For further information, see Douglas L. Wheeler, 'In the Service of Order: The Portuguese Political Police and the British, German and Spanish Intelligence, 1932-1945', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 1 (1 January 1983): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/002200948301800101.
[103] In PA AA, R 100745. On the latter point, see the correspondence between the German embassy in Lisbon and the foreign office in PA AA, R 99508, Bekämpfung des Bolschewismus, Bd.2, 1937.

The cooperation between the Gestapo and the PVDE consisted of the usual exchanges of information and lists of names of subversives and dissidents, and of visits of Portuguese policemen to Germany, which likely included some training from the Gestapo.[104] The PVDE were also among the foreign delegation that attended the international conference in Berlin, where it was represented by captain Paulo Cumano, the same officer who had signed the accord with the German police the same year. The Gestapo was more successful than the Italian police in collaborating with the PVDE and in penetrating it. It indeed developed a network of contacts, paid informers, and spies within the PVDE and had agents in the field who cooperated and exchanged information with the local police. Their liaison was Eric Emil Schroeder, who acted as the Gestapo official representative in Lisbon from 1941 until the end of the Second World War.[105]

The Gestapo's bond and cooperation with the Portuguese political police remained solid until it became clear that Nazi Germany could not win the war. They were evidently stronger and more effective than the PDVE's interactions with the PS. Between the two Axis police forces, the German police proved more successful than the PS in extending their influence and in establishing stronger police connections in the Iberian peninsula. The former was indeed more resolute and proactive in pursuing its objectives not only in Portugal but also in Spain.

### 2.3 The Axis Police's Rivalry for Spain

The previous chapter demonstrated that contacts and attempts to formalise an anti-communist cooperation between Madrid and Berlin had taken place in 1934 and 1935. The project was then abandoned due to the growing political instability in the Iberian peninsula and the dissolution of the right-wing government in December 1935.[106] The victory of the Popular Front in the elections of February 1936 made it no longer possible for the Nazi authorities to begin a secret police cooperation with the Spanish police. Nevertheless, the Gestapo continued to monitor with attention the growth of domestic tensions and political violence in Spain, not least because the success of the Popular Front had attracted numerous German expatriates.[107]

[104] In PA AA, R 100745.

[105] See Wheeler, 'In the Service of Order', 9-15.

[106] For context, see George Richard Esenwein and Adrian Shubert, *Spain at War: The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931-1939* (London: Longman, 1995), on this point in particular, pp. 18-22; and Matthew Kerry, *Unite, Proletarian Brothers! Radicalism and Revolution in the Spanish Second Republic* (London: University of London Press, 2020), https://humanities-digital-library.org/index.php/hdl/catalog/book/unite-proletarian-brothers.

[107] For a detailed reconstruction of the interests and activities of the Gestapo in Spain see Andrew Szanajda and David A. Messenger, "The German Secret State Police in Spain: Extending the Reach of National Socialism," *The International History Review* 40, no. 2 (March 15, 2018): 397–415, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1309563.

In the spring of 1936, the Gestapo determined the 'urgent' dispatch of a special agent to Spain to observe and report on the Spanish situation, specifically on communist activities.[108] The task was assigned to Paul Winzer, a young officer who had entered the police in 1934 and who was attached to the staff of the embassy in Madrid to cover his real work. His mission in Spain was expected to be prolonged until the end of the year, but then the army and the nationalist forces started their insurrection in July 1936. The coup caught him stranded in Barcelona, but he managed to flee with the help of the Italian fleet that was dispatched to rescue the Italian citizens in the area and that took on board German citizens as well.[109]

The Spanish Civil War soon assumed an international dimension and the aspect of an ideological confrontation between fascism and communism, with rising numbers of anti-fascist volunteers coming to Spain to join the republican forces.[110] For the Gestapo leadership, the presence of agents in the field became even more crucial than before. They therefore wanted to send Winzer back to Spain as soon as possible. In November 1936, he was appointed Gestapo liaison officer with the political police of the new government led by general Francisco Franco. His role consisted of assisting the insurgents in their actions against communist and anarchist force, in particular in relation to German expatriates.[111] Winzer and his collaborators did not simply support and cooperate with the nationalist forces, they 'took an active part' in the conflict and contributed to extend the influence of the Third Reich in Spain.[112] They were directly involved in policing activities and participated in the persecution of anti-fascists and dissidents with a significant degree of autonomy. They were able to target the enemies of the Reich in the territories under the control of the insurgents and, progressively, across the whole country. The Gestapo was subsequently able to extend its reach outside its jurisdiction. Moreover, it 'acted in an extraterritorial capacity without being subjected to Spanish authority'.[113]

In November 1937, the chief of the nationalist police force, the Germanophile Severiano Martínez Anido, requested the assistance of a short-term German police mission to reorganise and train the local police service, in particular the political police.[114] Berlin sent a delegation

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[108] PA AA, R 100781, Tätigkeit des SD, der Abwehr, der Agenten und der Polizeiattachés. Spain, 1936-1944, Heydrich to the foreign office, 4 May 1936.
[109] Whealey, *Hitler and Spain*, 33.
[110] On this point, see "The Ideology of Anticommunism: July 1936–March 1939," chap. 2 in Ibid., 26-43; and also footnote no.130 in chapter 1. For further information on the progress of the Spanish Civil War, see Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Paul Preston and Ann L. Mackenzie, eds., *The Republic Besieged: Civil War in Spain 1936-1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996).
[111] PA AA, R 100781, Müller to the foreign office, 24 November 1936. For a detailed reconstruction of Winzer's activity in Spain, see Szanajda and Messenger, 'The German Secret State Police in Spain'.
[112] Ibid., 6.
[113] Ibid., 4.
[114] PA AA, R 100749, The Spanish nationalist foreign office to the German foreign office, 25 November 1937.

that included representatives of the two branches of the Security Police (Kripo and Gestapo) under the command of Heinz Jost of the SD. The mission arrived in Spain at the beginning of 1938, after a stop in Portugal where the German police officers were received by Cumano of the PVDE.[115] In conjunction with training activities, their assignments included the intensification of the relationships and collaboration with the nationalist police and their leadership. This included the conclusion of a formal agreement to sanction a mutual assistance in the fight against communism and political subversion. Jost – who had returned to Germany in February to prepare the SD services for the imminent annexation of Austria – returned to Spain in May to lead the negotiations. The standard bilateral accord was eventually signed by Martínez Anido, now minister of public order, at the end of July 1938. Once more, the German foreign office was notified of the existence of the agreement only at a later date.[116]

The cooperation remained in force after the collapse of the republic and the end of the civil war in the spring of 1939. Personal connections and institutional ties even strengthened at that point. The two police leaderships officially visited each other, and a special representative of the Spanish police was attached to embassy in Berlin in 1939.[117] Winzer was now the German police attaché in Madrid and remained at the head of the Gestapo network in Spain during the Second World War.[118]

The presence and influence of the Gestapo in Spain were strong and evident. Apart from Madrid, there were detached Gestapo offices in other Spanish cities and the German police extended its reach over the community of German expatriates, monitoring and enforcing the repatriation of anti-fascists, former supporters of the Republic, and alleged suspicious or hostile elements.[119] Yet, the entanglements between the Nazi and the Francoist police forces were not restricted to the political police. A new municipal uniformed police corps, the *Policía Armada* (Armed Police), was instituted in Spain at end of the conflict. Its commander, general Antonio Sagardía Ramos, wanted it to be modelled on the German uniformed police. Hence, a representative of the *Orpo*, major Hartmann of the Hamburg *Schutzpolizei*, was temporarily assigned to Madrid in April 1940 to assist with the organisation of the *Policía Armada*.[120]

The Italian police were not as active in Spain as the German police. During the Spanish Civil War, the PS monitored the situation and gathered information, sharing with the Gestapo some

[115] See TNA, KV 2/104, Heinz Jost, Interim Report, p.9.
[116] In PA AA, R 100749.
[117] Payne, *Franco and Hitler*, 119.
[118] For further information on Winzer's and the Gestapo's activities in Spain during the war, see Szanajda and Messenger, 'The German Secret State Police in Spain'.
[119] Ibid., 6; Weitkamp, "SS-Diplomaten," 342.
[120] PA AA, R 100741, Polizei. Allgemeines, The Reich interior ministry to the foreign office, 27 March 1940.

news on anti-fascist initiatives and militants that were of common interest.[121] Above all, the Italian political police were interested in the thousands of Italian volunteers that had joined the republican forces (included the leaders of the main anti-fascist parties and organisations in exile), whose activities and movements were reported by paid informers and spies.[122] Intelligence gathering and policing in the field were delegated to the military intelligence, which was particularly active in Spain and cooperated not only with the Francoist forces but also with the German military intelligence (the *Abwehr*).[123] The man who directed the police activity for the SIM was colonel Giuseppe Pièche of the carabinieri, who was also in charge of the identification and interrogation of captured Italian anti-fascists.[124]

It was Pièche that, in October 1937, suggested to the commander-general of the carabinieri, Riccardo Moizo, the possibility of extending the Italian influence over the Francoist police forces. He had visited their headquarters in Valladolid and had observed some structural problems and difficulties, in detail the shortage of personnel and impossibility of accessing to the central police records in Madrid. Pièche thus proposed to invite Spanish delegations to Italy and possibly send advisors and instructors to Spain to improve the ties between the police forces and possibly 'penetrate' the Spanish organisation.[125] Moizo informed Bocchini about this idea and his intention to discuss it with Mussolini, but the police chief notified him that he had to first discuss it with the foreign minister.[126] Ciano in fact supervised the activity of the Italian expedition in Spain, which was under the command of general Roatta, the very head of SIM.[127] The foreign minister approved the plan, but it is not known whether it was put into effect. Unfortunately, the operational files of carabinieri as well as of the SIM have been mainly lost or destroyed in the course of the Second War World. In any case, as examined, it was the German police and their organisation that prevailed in Spain.

The connections between the Francoist police and the PS became stronger right at the end of the civil war. In March 1939, Franco's brother-in-law and interior minister Ramón Serrano Suñer sent his secretary José Finat y Escrivá de Romaní, count of Mayalde, at the head of a

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[121] See the files classified RG 12 Comunismo in Spagna in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.1-2.
[122] On this point, see Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 260-76.
[123] For further information on the organisation and activities of the SIM in Spain, see Maria Gabriella Pasqualini, *Carte segrete dell'Intelligence italiana. Il S.I.M. in archivi stranieri* (Roma: Ministero della Difesa, 2014), 245-68, https://www.difesa.it/Area_Storica_HTML/editoria/2014/Carte_Segrete/Pagine/index.aspx; and Javier Rodrigo, *Fascist Italy in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (London: Routledge, 2021), in particular its chap. 1 "Fascist intervention in coup d'état of 1936," 15-58. On the relationship between SIM and PS, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 117-22.
[124] Ibid., 118.
[125] See Pièche's memorandum dated 12 October 1937 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Annuali, 1937, b.1/G, f.13, Spagna. Riorganizzazione della Polizia.
[126] In Ibid.
[127] Pasqualini, *Carte segrete dell'Intelligence italiana. Il S.I.M. in archivi stranieri*, 249-50.

‘special delegation’ to Rome to discuss some technical questions with Bocchini.[128] He was interested in the organisation of the Italian political police service and, at the same time, the two parts discussed the establishment of closer connections. They negotiated the conclusion of a treaty, although it is not certain whether it was eventually signed.[129] At any rate, the count of Mayalde started some correspondence with Alianello of the Office RG. They exchanged a few pieces of information on the activities of a group of former supporters of the republic, which Alianello classified as ‘Office RS’, a new category that designated the relationships with the Spanish police. This correspondence apparently stopped in September 1939.[130] At that time, conversely, the connections between the Francoist police and the German ones were becoming even stronger.

### 2.4 Conclusions

In the second half of the 1930s, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany developed wide networks of police relationships and collaborations. Anti-communism, or more broadly the fight against dissidents and political opponents, was the key component of these international interactions and exchanges between police forces. Yet, they were not just means to counter political dissent and opposition. They were predominantly means to exert influence and authority abroad. As the German authorities made it clear, police diplomacy was beneficial to evade diplomatic impasses and tensions. The establishment of police connections and collaborations was possible even with those countries with which the conclusion of diplomatic agreements or other forms of cooperation were otherwise more complicated. This ‘parallel diplomacy’ – as Ivani defines it – therefore assumed a clear diplomatic and propaganda value.[131]

The variety of countries engaged in the two Axis police networks (predominantly in Europe, a few in South America and in Asia) reflects the areas of interest and influence of the two regimes’ foreign policies and propaganda (especially, central Europe for Nazi Germany; the Adriatic area and South America for Fascist Italy). Moreover, it indicates a common strategy. Berlin and Rome generally networked with the same partners, i.e. countries that shared an interest in joining forces with them to oppose the advance of communism or that wanted to suppress political dissent and reorganise their security apparatus in accordance with their

[128] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.20, f.1241, Rappresentanza del Ministero dell’Interno Spagnolo.
[129] A draft based on the text of the Italian-German agreement of April 1936 is in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.8, f. RG 30.
[130] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio rapporti con le polizie straniere, b.1, f. Rapporti con la polizia spagnola. Anno 1939.
[131] Mario Ivani, “I rapporti tra la polizia fascista e la PVDE (1937-1940)” (XXXII Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de História Económica e Social, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, 2012), 8, http://aphes32.cehc.iscte-iul.pt/docs/s11_3_pap.pdf.

successful models. Since dynamics of attractiveness and prestige were at stake, rivalries could emerge at times, like in Spain and Portugal. The two Axis powers wanted to exert influence over the local police forces, but the German police demonstrated more determined and pragmatic than the Italian ones.

The way Berlin and Rome established international connections as well as their aims differed. The Italian authorities preferred the establishment of secret bilateral collaborations and adopted a wait-and-see approach. Overall, the PS proved cautious and not particularly fascinated by the establishment of international partnerships, which generally originated from initiatives of the foreign office. The Nazi authorities, on the other hand, joined forces (or attempted to do so) to pursue an ambitious plan: they aspired to create and lead a broad anti-communist front. Berlin accordingly expanded its international police network and stimulated the creation of a multilateral collaboration under its supervision. Counting on numerous partnerships and interactions that were already in force, the Gestapo organised a secret political police conference in 1937. Thirty-one delegates from fifteen countries (democratic states included) gathered in Berlin and shared their experiences in the common fight against communism. The conference represented 'the culmination of the international police work of Germany', in light of its political value and the potential diplomatic and propaganda implications for the Third Reich.[132] Its intended purpose was the establishment of a system of mutual assistance in the shape of an international political police organisation, with Berlin at its centre. The German project was eventually rejected, not least due to the opposition of the Italian police chief. Still the German police did not abandon their ambitious plan. On the contrary, they repeatedly tried to realise it, but with no success.

All the same, the Gestapo managed to establish a wide network of bilateral partnerships and connections, which proved crucial in pursuing German interests and in exerting influence abroad. In this regard, the Gestapo was more determined and proactive than the Italian police and acted more and more independently of the guidance of the foreign office, which was a result of the growing power and autonomy of Himmler and the SS within the Nazi apparatus.[133]

The German and the Italian foreign offices were determined to maintain their supervision of police relationships and collaborations, in view of their broader diplomatic implications. The German foreign office increasingly complained that the Gestapo evaded its supervision and interacted with foreign police forces without its mediation. The Italian police, on the other hand, tended to comply with the authority and instructions of the foreign office. This attitude mirrored the distinct dynamics of power within the two regimes and exposed the role played by the

[132] PA AA, R 100744, The foreign office to Himmler, 24 August 1937.
[133] For further information on this point, see Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*.

different actors involved. Ciano and Bocchini were actively involved in the establishment and consolidation of police relationships, and Mussolini was concerned about police diplomacy as well. Himmler and the German foreign ministers (von Neurath and Ribbentrop), on the contrary, delegated as much as possible to their collaborators.

The police collaborations and relationships created by the two Axis police and reconstructed in this chapter were implemented through the deployment of policemen and liaison officers abroad, meetings and exchanges of visits, the training of foreign police forces, and the transfer and circulation of police know-how and techniques. These elements combined to shape a sense of camaraderie between the policemen involved, which continued after the outbreak of the Second World War, as the cases of Milićević and Zamorsky demonstrate. At the same time, they were instrumental in the process of radicalisation and fascistisation that interested some of the police forces involved in such exchanges and partnerships. In Franco's Spain, for example, 'at the height of the regime's collaboration with the Third Reich' in 1941, the *Dirección General de Seguridad* (General Directorate of Security) created the *Archivos Judaicos* (Jewish Archives), a collection of files on Spanish and foreign Jews residing in the country.[134] In a few words, police cooperation was a transnational phenomenon characterised by exchanges and interactions across borders.[135]

[134] Payne, *Franco and Hitler*, 215.
[135] On this point, see the Introduction to Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, *Fascism without Borders*, in particular pp.1-5.

# Part II

## Chapter 3. The Police Collaboration in Action: Cementing the Bonds (1936-1938)

The first part of this work examined the setting up of the secret collaboration and partnership between the Gestapo and the Italian interior ministry's police in 1936, as well as the broader networks of police interactions and connections that the two Axis powers established before the outbreak of the Second World War. This second part concentrates on the development of the relationships between the two Axis police forces and of their bilateral cooperation up until its end, in September 1943. It aims to reconstruct in detail how Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany worked together to target their enemies and opponents across borders and to what extent their police collaboration was an extension across borders of the far-reaching repression already taking place at home. In other words, drawing on a transnational approach, it reconstructs how their police forces interacted and collaborated over the years and compares their policies and targets as well their mindsets and reciprocal behaviour.

The present chapter, in particular, analyses the first years of the partnership, when the ties between the regimes and their police forces became increasingly stronger. Crucial events in the history of the two regimes and of the Axis alliance occurred between 1936 and 1938, namely the Anschluss (the German annexation of Austria, in 1938) and the exchange of state visits between Hitler and Mussolini. These events not only had decisive political implications for the two regimes. They also affected the interactions and partnership between the Gestapo and the PS and contributed to strengthening their bonds. Their cooperation intensified and allowed the two police forces to progressively extend their reach outside their own jurisdiction to target the regimes' enemies and opponents. Historiography has recently shed a light on the fact that anti-fascism, especially after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, was a transnational phenomenon.[1] So was its repression. The present chapter thus starts with an early episode of cross-border cooperation and mutual assistance between police forces (in this case, not only the Gestapo and the PS) that took place in the spring of 1936, immediately after the conclusion of the first agreement between Bocchini and Himmler. This episode is a useful demonstration of how transnational police repression worked, and it is helpful to comprehend how it developed over the years, not least due to changing procedures and conditions.

[1] For further information on the transnational turn in the historiography of anti-fascism, see Bauerkämper and Rossoliński-Liebe, eds., *Fascism without Borders*; Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey, and David J. Featherstone, eds., *Anti-Fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism* (London: Routledge, 2021); Hugo García, "Transnational History: A New Paradigm for Anti-Fascist Studies?," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 4 (November 2016): 563–72, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777316000382.

### 3.1 An Example of Transnational Police Collaboration: The case of Agostino P.

One of the most significant features shared by the two fascist regimes, which also characterised their police collaboration, was the rejection and circumvention of those traditional political forms, practices, and customs that were considered obsolete and an impediment to the rule and objectives pursued by the two fascist revolutions.[2] Specifically, the protection of the dictatorships and of the national communities could not be hindered by formal regulations or red tape but was a priority that required decisive actions. Drawing on emergency legislation, structures of legal terror were developed in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany according to the necessities of the regimes.[3] The police forces expanded their repressive power and operated independently of the judiciary.[4] Outside judicial control were the police measures of *confino* (confinement or internal exile) in Italy and *Schutzhaft* (protective custody) in Germany, which had been introduced long before the establishment of the dictatorships.[5] These were preventive sanctions that were administered directly by the police forces, without previous declaration of guilt by a court or any form of judicial guarantee for the convicts.[6] In other words, they allowed the PS and the Gestapo to take into custody – arbitrarily and indeterminately – anyone regarded a menace to the security of the state and of the national community, a wide-ranging classification that expanded over the years.

The inclusion of an extradition clause in the text of the secret police protocols was in line with this mentality. Prompted by the German police leadership, it stipulated that the two police forces could carry out extraditions avoiding the official procedure and any bureaucratic red tape. The formal extradition process was a measure in international law sanctioned by bilateral

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[2] On this point, see also MacGregor Knox, *Common Destiny: Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[3] For further information, see Luigi Lacchè, ed., *Il diritto del Duce: Giustizia e repressione nell'Italia fascista* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2015); Nikolaus Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). For a comparison, see also Lutz Klinkhammer, "Was There a Fascist Revolution? The Function of Penal Law in Fascist Italy and in Nazi Germany," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 3 (2010): 390–409, https://doi.org/10.1080/13545711003768592; Camilla Poesio, "«Per la protezione del popolo e dello stato». La collaborazione tra polizia e giudici nell'Italia fascista e nella Germania nazionalsocialista," *Fascismi Periferici. Nuove Ricerche,* L'Annale Irsifar 2009 (2010): 89–100.

[4] See "Institutions of Fascist Violence," chap. 2 in Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 48-71; and "Police Justice," chap. 2 in Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34-50.

[5] On the origins and early development of protective custody and internal exile respectively, see André Keil and Matthew Stibbe, "Ein Laboratorium des Ausnahmezustands: Schutzhaft während des Ersten Weltkriegs und in den Anfangsjahren der Weimarer Republik – Preußen und Bayern 1914 bis 1923," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 68, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 535–73, https://doi.org/10.1515/vfzg-2020-0035; Giovanna Tosatti, "La repressione del dissenso politico tra l'età liberale e il fascismo: L'organizzazione della polizia," *Studi Storici* 38, no. 1 (1997): 217–55.

[6] On the procedure for the assignment to the *Schutzhaft* and to *confino*, see Martin Broszat, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick, *Anatomie Des SS-Staates*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Munich: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982); Camilla Poesio, *Il confino fascista: L'arma silenziosa del regime* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011), 26-29, and 102-07.

treaties and its execution involved the foreign offices, the ministries of justice, and the police forces. It was a long bureaucratic process and, besides, did not ordinarily encompass political crimes. Therefore, as mentioned in the first chapter, governments and polices forces regularly sought ways to circumvent or simplify it, generally counting on a shared concern about political dissent and subversion. The case of the Italian anti-fascist migrant Agostino P. exemplifies how the police forces of democratic, authoritarian, and fascist states were eager to cooperate and elude the international law to remove a real or perceived external source of disturbance and political dissent, regardless of the legitimacy of the action and of the consequences for the individual on target.

Agostino P. was the younger brother of Antonio, a republican who had first migrated to France and then moved to different European countries in the following years. For the PS, Antonio was a 'dangerous subversive' able to commit 'any kind of criminal actions, to take part in plots and to perpetrate terrorist attacks' and was considered implicated in the organisation of a series of bombings in France and Italy.[7] Anarchists, republicans, and the members of the anti-fascist movement *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty) were put under strict surveillance because of their firm and active opposition to the regime, especially because the police considered them able to carry out attempts against the life of Mussolini and of the members of the Italian royal family.[8] Antonio's movements and contacts were thus monitored by the network of spies and informers of the political police. In 1932, Rome was informed that Antonio had been joined in France by one of his brothers and that this brother apparently intended to secretly return to Italy 'for not well-defined reasons'.[9] The PS began to investigate. The brother was identified as Agostino, who had decided to emigrate after having lost his job for an international train company. From that moment onwards, Agostino's activities and movements were monitored as well.

In the police records, Agostino P. was generically labelled as 'anti-fascist', sometimes as 'anarchist' because of his acquaintance with anarchist expatriates. Out of Italy, he faced the difficulties of a life in exile and on the run. Under police surveillance, without a permanent occupation and residence, he was constantly forced to move. Over the years, he relocated to France, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Spain, Gibraltar, and French Morocco. In several countries, he was subjected to evictions and arrests for illegal immigration,

[7] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Casellario Politico Centrale (CPC), 1894-1945, b.3699, f. P. Antonio.
[8] On this point and on the necessity of adopting a critical approach when dealing with political police sources, see Mimmo Franzinelli, "Sull'uso (critico) delle fonti di polizia," in *Voci di compagni, schede di questura: Considerazioni sull'uso delle fonti orali e delle fonti di polizia per la storia dell'anarchismo*, Cesare Bermani et al. (Milano: Centro Studi Libertari, 2002), 19-30.
[9] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, CPC, b.3699, f. P. Agostino, The PolPol to the DAGR, 6 September 1932. For further information on the surveillance of the Italian anti-fascists abroad, see footnote no.43 in chap. 1.

counterfeiting documents, and vagrancy. Under those circumstances, his anti-fascist commitment apparently vacillated, which was what the Italian authorities were expecting. On a few occasions, he succeeded in persuading the personnel of the Italian consulates of his political repentance and intention to return to Italy. He received financial assistance and provisional documents to travel. His intentions eventually proved false, and he took advantage of the funds and travel permits to continue his wanderings. This strategy functioned until the end of 1935. At that time, Agostino was in Denmark and contacted the legation in Copenhagen. He received a travel permit, a train ticket, and a daily allowance for five days to return to the peninsula. The Italian border authorities and the local police in his family's province of residence were informed about his arrival. Nevertheless, Agostino left the train before reaching the German border and remained in Denmark. Using a false name, he managed to receive a reimbursement for the train ticket and requested further assistance from the bishop of Copenhagen. At the beginning of 1936, however, the Danish police arrested him, probably after an accusation presented by the Italian consulate.

Agostino P. was prosecuted and sentenced to four months imprisonment for fraud and false statements. In addition, the public prosecutor requested his expulsion from the country at the end of the prison term. The defendant declared himself a victim of the Fascist regime and demanded to be given the possibility of reaching the Soviet Union. It is very likely that the Italian legation intervened in the question and influenced the decisions of the Danish authorities. The fear that, once expelled, P. could continue to travel around Europe was certainly a decisive factor used to convince the local authorities about his repatriation, without regards for the consequences of his return to Italy. In the end, the Danish authorities not only decided to deport him, but he was assigned a police escort to the German border.[10] Again, it is likely that this decision was inspired by the Italian legation, worried that P. 'would find a way to disappear during the trip, before reaching the Italian border'. In fact, it also requested the Italian embassy in Berlin to notify the German police about his arrival and the necessity of escorting him to the Austrian or Swiss border, where P. was to be handed over to the local police forces for the last part of the journey.[11]

At the end of May 1936, P. was escorted by a Danish policeman to Lübeck and handed over the local Gestapo office. Two agents of the German political police accompanied him to the Austrian town of Kufstein, where he was placed in the custody of the local gendarmerie and escorted to the Austrian-Italian border. On 25 May 1936, Agostino P. was 'stopped' by the

[10] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, CPC, b.3699, f. P. Agostino, The embassy in Copenhagen to the interior ministry, 23 May 1936.
[11] Ibid., The embassy in Copenhagen to the embassy in Berlin, 19 May 1936.

Italian police at the Brenner Pass 'while entering into Italy'.[12] By direct orders of Bocchini, he was transferred to Rome for an 'accurate and thorough interrogation about his conduct abroad, particularly about his political line of conduct'.[13] He was characterised as a 'tenacious and very dangerous anti-fascist', not least because at the moment of his arrest the police had found a handwritten note that stated: 'Had Italy had 40.000.001 inhabitants, 40.000.000 would have been fascists and that only one would have been me. I hate them'. Following the standard procedure, the *questura* of Rome proposed P. be sent to *confino* and received the approval of Bocchini and Mussolini, who personally evaluated and validated every request.[14]

Agostino P.'s fate had been already decided when he was formally denounced to the provincial commission for the assignment of *confino*. He was sentenced to serve the maximum duration of this police measure, i.e. five years, and confined to the Tremiti Islands.[15] In the course of the years, he was transferred to other *confino* colonies and to a penitentiary, for disciplinary reasons.[16] The *confino* was not renewed at the end of his five-year sentence, in May 1941. And yet, P. was not discharged. He was interned in a concentration camp, from where he was released due to a severe illness in September 1941. Still, he remained subjected to police surveillance and restrictions. He was transferred to the place of residence of his family, which he was not allowed to leave.[17] In the meantime, his brother Antonio fought with the International Brigades in Spain and then returned to France, where he was interned in a camp for Spanish refugees. He managed to escape and eventually moved to Belgium.[18]

The case of Agostino P. illustrates how the repressive apparatus of the Fascist regime worked with regard to the expatriates. Furthermore, it shows that police forces were eager to cooperate and did not care about either the respect of any official procedure or the fate of the captive once back in his native country. What makes this episode exceptional is, in fact, the involvement of the police forces of another three countries in this course of action, in which they had no direct interest and that was not sanctioned by any official agreement. After a simple request of the Italian authorities, democratic Denmark, Nazi Germany, and authoritarian Austria showed no reservations in handing Agostino P. over the Italian police, even though he was not accused of

[12] Ibid., The interior ministry to the foreign office, 1 June 1936.
[13] Ibid., Bocchini to the *questura* of Rome, 27 May 1936.
[14] See the report from the *questura* of Rome with Bocchini's handwritten notes dated 8 June 1936, in Ibid. For further details on the procedure, see Poesio, *Il confino fascista*.
[15] See the sentence dated 22 June 1936 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio Confino di Polizia (Confino), Fascicoli personali, 1926-1943, b.745, f. P. Agostino.
[16] About the confinement sites and the harsh living conditions of the inmates, see Ebner, "The Archipelago," chap. 4 in *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 103-38; Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *I campi del duce: L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)* (Torino: Einaudi, 2019); and Celso Ghini and Adriano Dal Pont, *Gli antifascisti al confino: Storie di uomini contro la dittatura 1926-1943* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1971).
[17] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Confino, f. P. Agostino.
[18] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, CPC, b.3699, f. P. Antonio.

any crime and there was no pending verdict delivered by an Italian court that justified the measure.

Exchanges of favours, police camaraderie, a common mindset and a mutual interest in the fight against political crime and dissent certainly played a role in this action. The Danish authorities wanted Agostino P. out of their country and, to do so, seconded the requests of the Italian embassy. Less than two months before, Himmler and Bocchini had signed the treaty of collaboration, which included an extradition clause. This case was not related to the secret protocol, but the Gestapo probably expected the Italian police to reciprocate the favour whenever requested and simply claimed the reimbursement of the expenses incurred.[19] The Austrian police too were eager to support the Italian request. In brief, police forces were keen to offer each other support and to circumvent any legal or formal barrier, whenever convenient.

Further investigation might reveal whether the case of Agostino P. was a quite unique episode or other anti-fascist refugees were subjected to a similar combined effort of various police forces. At the beginning of 1937, an Italian communist living in Germany was expelled from the country and deported to Austria. Like P., he was then arrested by the Italian police at the Brenner Pass and sentenced to five years of *confino*.[20] In this case, however, it is not known whether the repatriation originated from an Italian request nor the specific motive for that. Furthermore, this unofficial repatriation was decided by the Gestapo and the PS in agreement with the letter of the secret protocol, but its execution required a transfer of the prisoner through a third country, Austria. The prisoner was eventually taken into custody by the PS, but the exact role played by the Austrian police authorities is not clear. The deportations from Germany to Italy, and vice versa, remained limited until the two regimes shared a border, i.e until the German annexation of Austria in March 1938.

### 3.2 The Austrian Police's Interactions with the PS and the German Police, and the Anschluss

The clandestine transfer of Agostino P. from Denmark to Italy through the German and Austrian territory represented the best route in view of diplomatic and pragmatic considerations. Especially the final passage through Austria had fewer diplomatic implications than through Switzerland, the alternative option. The Austrian police were certainly more indulgent towards the Italian requests. At that time, the connections between the Fascist regime and the authoritarian government led by Kurt von Schuschnigg were still tight. Their police leaderships

[19] See ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.42, f.7, Germania. Consolati Italiani. Spese per servizi di PS.
[20] See the case of Federico Mario R. in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 28 Richieste d'informazioni dalla Gestapo.

too had developed solid and enduring connections, favoured by the presence of former Habsburg policemen in the cadre of the DGPS, like Zecchini and Modrini (whose original family name was Modrich). Their close relationship was reinforced through exchange of visits. An Austrian police delegation led by Michael Skubl, president of the Viennese police and of the ICPC, was the first foreign corps to attend the ceremonies for the *Festa della Polizia*, in October 1934.[21] In June 1935, Bocchini returned the visit.[22] In the mid-1930s, their ties and partnership were solid, as confirmed by the Austrian decision to sell weapons to the PS despite the commercial sanctions to which the Fascist regime was subjected after the aggression against Ethiopia.[23]

The interactions between the leaderships of the Austrian and the Nazi police, on the contrary, were more problematic, because of the political tensions and disputes between Berlin and Vienna. As mentioned, the Austrian police were not invited to the international political police conference held in Berlin in 1937. The decision was likely due to the connection between the ICPC and the Austrian police as much as to the fact that, in Berlin, the Austrian police were not considered as a separate entity or an external partner. They were expected to align and merge with the German police apparatus sooner or later. For the Nazi authorities, the 'Austrian question' was indeed a domestic affair. As such, it was dealt with by the Nazi party and not by the foreign office, and the only acceptable outcome was the unification between the two German countries. The only uncertainty was about the timing.[24]

The coup carried out by the Nazis to seize power in Austria, in July 1934 not only failed but seriously compromised the relationships between the Third Reich and Fascist Italy.[25] Mussolini sent troops to the Austrian border to prevent any German intervention in Austria. He presented himself as the guarantor of Austrian independence against German expansionism and the political ties between Vienna and Rome became even stronger.[26] Any rapprochement between Rome and Berlin thus required to address the Austrian question.

The Abyssinian War and the subsequent diplomatic isolation faced by the Fascist regime weakened the Italian position as protector of Austria. Furthermore, Mussolini was aware that the Austrian population preferred closer ties with Germany than with Italy. He had been deeply impressed by the declaration made by Bocchini after his trip to Vienna in 1935 that 'four fifths'

[21] See "La Festa della Polizia," *Il magistrato dell'ordine* 11, no. 11 (1 November 1934): 169-70.
[22] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.166, f.1, Organizzazione della polizia italiana.
[23] Ibid., The Austrian interior ministry to Bocchini, 3 February 1936.
[24] Petersen, *Hitler e Mussolini*, 124-31.
[25] See footnote no.82 in chap. 1.
[26] For further information, see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy 1933-1939: The Road to World War II*, 2nd ed. (New York: Enigma, 2010), 71-86.

of the Austrians were pro-Nazis.[27] Regardless of the hyperbole, the police chief had reported a true fact: the support of the local population for the Nazi party, and accordingly for the unification of Austria and Germany, was widespread and on the rise. Mussolini realised that it was preferable to find a solution of the Austrian question '*with*, rather than *against*, Hitler'.[28]

The rapprochement between the two fascist regimes in the course of 1936 was accompanied by an Italian disengagement from Austria. The financial assistance and political support previously guaranteed to Schuschnigg's government were reduced and the Austrian chancellor was persuaded to negotiate with Berlin.[29] The negotiations resulted in the conclusion of the Austro-German Agreement of 11 July 1936. According to this pact, Berlin recognised the sovereignty of Vienna, whereas Austria – as a 'German state' – accepted to align its foreign policy with that of the Third Reich.[30] With this agreement, Vienna officially maintained its independence, with Italy as guarantor, and 'Schuschnigg tried to buy time'.[31] Yet, the agreement did not exclude the possibility of the Anschluss. On the contrary, the Third Reich secretly continued to intrude into Austrian internal affairs and to manoeuvre the local Nazis against Schuschnigg's government.[32]

This new line of conduct had implications for the relationships between the three countries' police forces, specifically between the Gestapo and the Austrian police. On 12 October 1936, just before Himmler's trip to Rome to consolidate the partnership with the PS, the former German chancellor Franz von Papen – recently appointed ambassador in Vienna – proposed to the Austrian foreign ministry the conclusion of a police collaboration. This initiative seemed to be inspired by Himmler himself, who mentioned 'the necessity' of 'establishing contacts with the Austrian police' also during his private conversations with Bocchini, while in Rome.[33] The proposal effectively aroused interest in Vienna, not least because von Papen purposely underlined that similar accords were already in force with the Austrian neighbours and partners, Italy and Hungary.[34]

Despite initially showing interest, the Austrians proved wary during the following negotiations. They appeared unwilling to reach an agreement, but they did not say so explicitly,

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[27] Funke, *Sanzioni e cannoni*, 178.
[28] Ibid., 179.
[29] See Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 206-12.
[30] The English version of the agreement is available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/ylbk001.asp (last accessed on 20 February 2022).
[31] Alexander Lassner, "The Foreign Policy of the Schuschnigg Government 1934-1938. The Quest for Security," in *The Dollfuss/Schuschnigg Era in Austria: A Reassessment*, eds. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Alexander Lassner (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 178.
[32] In Ibid.
[33] See Bocchini's report to Mussolini copied on 26 October 1936 in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7.
[34] PA AA, R 100745, The Austrian embassy to the German foreign office, 30 October 1936.

which irritated their German counterparts. Himmler and Heydrich intended to invite a delegation of the Austrian police to Berlin at the end of January 1937 to set up an anti-communist cooperation.[35] The Austrian authorities first delayed a reply, and the meeting was postponed. Then, they informed Berlin that informal collaborations with the Germans, as with other police forces, had proved effective enough until that moment – as in the case of Agostino P. – and they were satisfied by the status quo. They remained open to further discussions on technical questions that could improve operations against 'Bolshevik agitation', but the conclusion of a formal accord was not considered necessary.[36] Heydrich interpreted their response as a 'flat refusal' of the German offer and a 'bait' to discover the German intentions. It demonstrated the 'still strong underestimation of the communist danger' in Austria, the 'still existing fearful mistrust' of Nazi Germany and, as a consequence, the impossibility of working together. Under the circumstances, any negotiation with the Austrian authorities was unlikely to bring effective results and the German foreign office was invited to refrain from any further step in that direction.[37]

The relationships between the Gestapo and the Austrian police remained tense and hostile. Aware of the situation, the PS occasionally mediated between them. It forwarded to the Gestapo news and reports received from the Austrian police.[38] Furthermore, it tried to placate their antagonism when the situation led to public confrontation and intimidation, for example during the celebration for the *Festa della Polizia* in 1937.

After the establishment of the police collaboration in 1936, the German police leadership was invited to Rome every year for the annual *Festa della Polizia*. The event was a showcase of unity and comradeship between the two Axis powers and their police forces, as well as an occasion to strengthen their bonds. In light of its broader implications, Hitler himself commanded Himmler to return to Rome in October 1937.[39] The German delegation led by the *Reichsführer* included the whole leadership of the German police (Himmler's deputy Karl Wolff, Heydrich, Daluege), but they were not the only foreign guests at the event. The Italian police's network of interactions and connections was expanding and representatives of five other police forces (from Albania, Austria, Hungary, Portugal, and Yugoslavia) attended the *Festa della Polizia* in 1937. The Austrian police, in particular, sent four representatives, including the inspector general of the Vienna uniformed police Rudolf Manda and the chief of

[35] Ibid., The foreign office to embassy in Vienna, 18 December 1936.
[36] Ibid., The Austrian government to the German embassy, 21 January 1937.
[37] Ibid., Heydrich to the foreign office, 6 March 1937.
[38] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.1-2, f. RG 4 Comunismo in Austria.
[39] See the memorandum of the German foreign office dated 9 October 1937 in PA AA, R 99513, Deutsch-italienische Zusammenarbeit in der Frage der Bekämpfung des Bolshewismus. 1937-1938, Bd.2.

the state police Ludwig Weiser. Their interactions with the German police leadership were tense but Bocchini kept the situation under control.[40]

In his customary report to Mussolini, the Italian police chief celebrated the success of the event, which was highly praised by the foreign guests. The Germans, especially Himmler, had been enthusiastic and had demonstrated their 'fraternal comradeship' towards the hosts. Yet, incited by the *Reichsführer*, their behaviour towards the 'intelligent, qualified, and very well mannered' Austrian delegates had been aggressive 'in the most brutal way' and had resulted in agitated and harsh discussions. They had threatened to hang Weiser 'in due time', as Manda had reported to Bocchini. The Italian police chief had asked the Austrians to remain patient and cautious, and the situation had decisively improved after Himmler's departure. At that point, the two delegations interacted without further complications. The Germans had even invited Manda to Berlin and proposed a visit of Daluege to Vienna. That episode and the Germans' conduct – commented Bocchini – made it clear that the Austrian question was not solved and was still of the greatest importance to the Germans.[41]

The Fascist regime acknowledged the inevitability of the Anschluss already at the end of 1937.[42] The German attitude towards Austria was changing and 'there were numerous indications' that 'actions would be taken early in the next year'.[43] In January 1938, the Austrian police raided the local headquarters of the Nazi party in Vienna and confiscated documents that revealed arrangements for an escalation of violence and unrest directed at a destabilisation of Schuschnigg's government. That domestic pressure in combination with incessant intrusions from Berlin was intended to pave the way for the German intervention. With a reorganisation of the diplomatic corps, Berlin put Vienna under even more diplomatic pressure. On 4 February 1938, Ribbentrop replaced von Neurath as foreign minister, the ambassador in Vienna von Papen was dismissed and Wilhelm Keppler – the party's advisor on Austrian affairs – was appointed secretary of the German embassy and Hitler's special envoy in Vienna. Despite his removal from office, von Papen was entrusted with a final and decisive mission. Hitler asked him to invite Schuschnigg to Germany for a meeting.[44]

The meeting took place in Berchtesgaden on 12 February 1938. Instead of a discussion, the conversation was an ultimatum. Hitler presented a series of demands and made it clear that he was ready to order the invasion of Austria in case of refusal. Schuschnigg had to accept the

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[40] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.166, f.1.
[41] See Bocchini's report dated 25 October 1937 in Ibid.
[42] On this point, see Collotti, Labanca, and Sala, *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, 343-46.
[43] Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 504.
[44] Ibid., 504-07. The ambassador in Rome von Hassell was replaced as well. He did not align with the new course of the Italian-German relationships and Ciano was not enthusiastic of him. His substitute was von Neurath's son-in-law, Hans Georg von Mackensen; in Ibid., 502-03.

requests. One of the impositions was the appointment of the Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart as interior minister. That was a key position that allowed the Nazis to control law enforcement and public order in the country. The Austrian police forces were now under the political authority of a member of the Nazi party, although the chief of the Viennese police and president of the ICPC Skubl was confirmed state secretary of public security and maintained an executive power over them. The appointment of Seyss-Inquart removed all the restraints that had previously inhibited ordinary policemen from publicly showing their support for the Nazis and the Anschluss, and the army manifested the same tendency. As a result, the Nazis took control of the security apparatus and of the streets. It inevitably undermined Schuschnigg's authority and facilitated the Nazi seizure of power in Austria.

On 9 March 1938, Schuschnigg made a desperate attempt to resist the escalating domestic and German pressure and called a referendum on Austrian independence. Hitler mobilised the army and demanded the postponement of the referendum and Schuschnigg's resignation in favour of Seyss-Inquart. The Austrian government had neither international nor domestic support and was forced to accept the German conditions. The president of the republic, Wilhelm Miklas, at first tried to resist to the imposition of Seyss-Inquart and offered the chancellery to Skubl, who refused it. A Nazi was thus appointed chancellor. Keppler, instructed by Göring, had already sent to Berlin a request for assistance on his behalf. In the early morning of 12 March 1938, German troops crossed the Austrian border.[45] The incorporation of Austria in the Third Reich was definitively sanctioned by a plebiscite on 10 April. Mussolini – the former guardian of Austrian independence – had been informed the day before the invasion and had accepted the fait accompli, an act that Hitler greatly appreciated. The relationship between the two regimes was solid and had not been affected by the dissolution of Austria. The two fascist countries now shared a border.[46]

### 3.2.1. *The Consequences of the Anschluss for the Austrian Police*

The impact of the Anschluss on Austrian police affairs was immediate, with decisive consequences both on the domestic and on the international level. The German police began the takeover of the Austrian security apparatus even before the first German units marched into their 'brother country'. In the early hours of 12 March 1938, Himmler and Heydrich flew to Vienna. They were accompanied by the Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller and Walter Schellenberg

[45] Ibid., 651-55.
[46] Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 513-17.

of the SD, respectively in charge of the integration of the Austrian police system into the Reich's apparatus and of the requisition of Austrian intelligence files.[47]

First and foremost, the assimilation of the Austrian police consisted in the Nazis taking control of the interior ministry and the police headquarters and of their records. These actions were facilitated by the assistance of Nazi sympathisers and activists within the police ranks.[48] The Austrian police files and lists compiled under Dollfuss and Schuschnigg were useful to identify names and addresses of political opponents and anti-Nazis. The new rulers could thus immediately launch a large-scale and systematic persecution of real or potential enemies. On the first day of the Anschluss alone, police and SD – together with the local SS and SA as auxiliary police – arrested approximately 21,000 people, including numerous members and leaders of the Austrian Jewish community.[49] Representatives and supporters of the former regime were a primary target, and they included the old leadership of the Austrian police, as the German delegation had warned at the *Festa della Polizia*. Rudolf Manda was imprisoned in Dachau until the end of 1938; the chief of the state police Weiser – whom the Nazis had threatened to hang – was detained until October 1939 and then confined in Germany, where he died in 1944.[50] Skubl was initially confirmed by Seyss-Inquart as state secretary for public security, but Himmler demanded his resignation. He was first placed under house arrest and then confined in Germany until the end of the war.[51]

The dismissal of the old leadership was followed by the reorganisation of the Austrian police according to the German model, as Himmler and his closest collaborators (Heydrich, Daluege, and Müller) discussed on the first days of the Anschluss.[52] Two special offices of Sipo and Orpo

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[47] TNA, KV 2/99, Walter Friedrich Schellenberg, Report on the case of Walter Friedrich Schellenberg, p.3. For further information on the life and career of Schellenberg, see Katrin Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services: The Career of Walter Schellenberg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[48] On this point, see Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Thomas Franz Mang, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *The Vienna Gestapo, 1938-1945: Crimes, Perpetrators, Victims* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 24-32.

[49] Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 656. The oppression and violence against the Austrian Jews saw the decisive contribution of Adolf Eichmann. Raised in Austria, he was one of the SD main specialists on Jewish affairs who Heydrich sent to Vienna to deal with the racial enemies of the Reich. He developed a system of forced mass emigration that was managed by the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna. For further information, see David Cesarani, "The Expert on Emigration, 1938-41," chap. 3 in *Eichmann: His Life, Crimes and Legacy* (London: Heinemann, 2004), 61-90.

[50] For further details about the removal and arrest of former members of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg's regimes, see Dieter Wagner and Gerhard Tomkowitz, *Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer: The Nazi Annexation of Austria 1938* (London: Longman, 1971), 173-209.

[51] See Skubl's testimony on 13 June 1946 in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 16, Proceedings, 11 June 1946 - 24 June 1946 (Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1948), 181-82. Available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/06-13-46.asp (last consulted on 20 February 2022).

[52] For a detailed analysis of the restructuring of the Austrian police and, in particular, of the organisation and activity of the Gestapo in Austria, see Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, *The Vienna Gestapo*; and Franz Weisz, "Personell vor allem ein 'ständestaatlicher' Polizeikörper. Die Gestapo in Österreich," in *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität*, eds. Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2003), 439-62.

were created to supervise the establishment of the two German police branches in the annexed country, to coordinate the activity of the provincial offices, and to interact with the main headquarters in Berlin. The first one was provisionally directed by Gestapo chief Müller, who assumed the role of acting inspector of Sipo and SD (*Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*, IdS), a position created in 1936 to coordinate the activity of Sipo with other state, local, and party's institutions.[53] The Orpo equivalent of the IdS was August Meyszner, a former Austrian police officer and long-lasting Nazi activist who had just returned from exile in Germany.[54] Franz Josef Huber was transferred from the Gestapo Main Office to lead the Gestapo in Vienna. Like Müller, he had served in the Bavarian political police before the Nazi seizure of power and Heydrich had then wanted him in Berlin, where he had directed the Austrian desk at the Gestapo Main Office.[55]

The Gestapo headquarters in Vienna, located at the Hotel Metropole, was the regional head office of the political police and oversaw the activity of the local Gestapo posts in the Austrian provinces.[56] As head of the Viennese Gestapo, Huber worked in collaboration with the Sipo inspector and with the new state secretary for security Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who was the leader of the Austrian SS. According to Peter Black, Heydrich had temporarily assigned Müller and Schellenberg to Austria exactly to limit Kaltenbrunner's power at the moment of the Anschluss.[57] Yet, the chief of the Gestapo was frequently absent, busy with the security arrangements for Hitler's trip to Italy that was programmed for May 1938. Schellenberg substituted him, until he was recalled to Berlin in April 1938.[58] Kaltenbrunner was finally able to extend his influence over the Austrian police forces when Müller definitively returned to Berlin and Walter Stahlecker took the post of Sipo inspector. At the end of summer of 1938, he became the supreme SS and police authority and Himmler's personal representative in Austria. He was appointed 'Higher SS and Police Leader' (*Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*, HSSPF), a title created at the end of 1937 to coordinate the activity of Orpo, Sipo, SD, and SS in a military district and which made him responsible only to the *Reichsführer* of the SS.[59] Over the years,

[53] On the role and tasks of IdS, see Jens Banach, *Heydrichs Elite: Das Führerkorps der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1936-1945*, 3rd ed. (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2002).
[54] Weisz, "Personell vor allem ein 'ständestaatlicher' Polizeikörper," 439-49.
[55] Boeckl-Klamper, Mang, and Neugebauer, *The Vienna Gestapo*, 24-25.
[56] In Ibid.
[57] Peter R. Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner: Ideological Soldier of the Third Reich* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 104-10.
[58] TNA, KV 2/99, Walter Friedrich Schellenberg, Report, p.3. Details about Schellenberg's precise activities in Austria are unknown; see Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*.
[59] Weisz, "Personell vor allem ein 'ständestaatlicher' Polizeikörper," 445. For further details on the HSSPF, see Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Höheren SS- Und Polizeiführer: Himmlers Vertreter Im Reich Und in Den Besetzten Gebieten* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1986); Hans Buchheim, 'Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 11, no. 4 (1963): 562–91, https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/heftarchiv/1963_4_2_buchheim.pdf.

Kaltenbrunner proved reliable and loyal, and Himmler chose him as the new head of the Nazi security apparatus after the death of Heydrich in June 1942.[60]

Kaltenbrunner succeeded Heydrich not only as chief of the German police and the SD but also as president of the International Criminal Police Commission. Since its founding, the leadership of the Vienna police had controlled the presidency and the secretariat of the ICPC, whose headquarters were in Vienna. At the moment of the Anschluss, the chief of the Viennese police Michael Skubl was president of the ICPC too. His arrest and the incorporation of the Austrian police into the German police apparatus brought the configuration of the ICPC into question.

### 3.2.2. *The ICPC after the Anschluss: The Nazi Takeover*

At the end of the 1930s, Himmler and Heydrich's ambitions and efforts were directed towards the formation of an international political police organisation. The attempt to establish one in 1937 failed, and their initial strategy was revised. In 1938, the Anschluss allowed them to extend their influence on international policing. The German police leadership took advantage of the imminent annexation of Austria to bring the main existing international police body, the ICPC, under their authority. They recognised that gaining control of the ICPC – although its scope did not encompass political crimes – was beneficial in terms of international prestige and influence. And yet, taking control of the ICPC and changing its organisation were not as straightforward as they had initially expected.

The attitude of the Nazi police leadership towards the ICPC had changed over the years. In the first period after the establishment of the dictatorship, no German representatives attended the annual meetings of the Commission. The German involvement in the Commission intensified briefly in the second half of the 1930s, and Daluege was elected vice-president as a reward.[61] This new approach reflected the growing effort put by Berlin into police diplomacy, which was important to avoid international isolation and extend German influence abroad. Large delegations attended the 1935 conference in Copenhagen and the one in Belgrade, a year later, implementing a policy of increasing and exerting 'influence through participation'.[62]

The new commitment of the German police to the ICPC did not last long. They boycotted the 1937 conference in London. Their absence was presented as a retaliation against a quarrel with the British convenors, but it was certainly related to the broader disagreements between the Berlin and London. The ICPC was not politically neutral, as mentioned in the first chapter.

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[60] See Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner*, 127-33.
[61] Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 182-83.
[62] In Ibid., 182.

Quite the contrary, ongoing diplomatic disputes and tensions could affect the participation in, and the progress of, its sessions and activities. With no German representative attending the conference, the other delegates discussed and passed a resolution that sanctioned that the presidency of the Commission was in the hands of the president of the Viennese police until 1942.[63] The proposal had been advanced by the Italian delegate, Pizzuto, to prevent a transfer of the ICPC headquarters from Vienna (possibly to a neutral country, as the Western democracies aspired) and to preserve the predominance of the Austrian partner.[64] This resolution allowed the Nazis to take control of the Commission after the Anschluss.

Italian sources reveal that the German police leadership intended to leave the ICPC in 1937, a clear signal that they rejected its mandate. It was probably a consequence of the growing tension between Berlin and Vienna, but it also reflected Himmler and Heydrich's interest in the creation of an international political police organisation, based in Berlin. They sought the support of Bocchini and the PS in their campaign against the ICPC, but the Italian police chief was wary and evasive as usual. With the annexation of Austria at hand, Heydrich decided to postpone the withdrawal from the Commission.[65] The prospect of the Anschluss triggered the German interest in assuming control of the international criminal police body.

The day before the Anschluss, Heydrich took over from Daluege as German representative to the ICPC, a clear signal that he intended to assume the leadership of the organisation after the assimilation of the Austrian police.[66] Yet, he soon realised that he could neither be in charge of the Commission nor move its headquarters to Berlin at once, without further repercussions. The German assimilation of the Austrian police and the dismissal of Skubl had alarmed the other members of the ICPC, who were concerned about the future of the organisation and of its original cooperative character. Heydrich decided to postpone his plan, which risked determining the immediate dissolution of the Commission.[67] He stepped down from his position within the ICPC and limited the changes in its leadership to reassure the other participants. The secretary general, Oskar Dressler, was confirmed in the role he had held since 1923, while Skubl's successor at the head of the ICPC was the new head of the Viennese police, the Austrian policeman and SS officers Otto Steinhäusl. In other words, the headquarters of the Commission remained in Vienna in conformity with the resolution passed in 1937. Despite appearances, the

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[63] Ibid., 177-78; Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 116.
[64] See Pizzuto's memorandum to Bocchini, dated 15 June 1937, in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.3.
[65] Ibid., Heydrich to Bocchini, 30 January 1938.
[66] See the communication of the ICPC secretary general to all the members dated 11 March 1938 in TNA, MEPO (Records of the Metropolitan Police Office) 3/2078, Appointment of S.S. Group-Leader Heydrich as President of Commission.
[67] Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 116-17.

direction of the ICPC was now under the influence of Berlin, namely of Heydrich and the Kripo chief Arthur Nebe. Even the appointment of Steinhäusl was intended to be provisional, due to his known bad health conditions.[68]

The last conference of the ICPC took place in Bucharest in 1938 and was used by the Nazi police to approve the new course and their predominant position within the ICPC. The meeting was tense, especially because various delegations demanded the transfer of the Commission's seat from Vienna. The German delegation not only managed to stop such proposals but also secured the successive conference to be held in Berlin.[69] The summit was initially programmed from 30 August to 7 September 1939 but was postponed at the very last minute.[70] The growing international tensions and the spectre of the war had induced many delegations to renounce to the trip or to boycott the event.[71]

On paper, the Commission continued to exist and operate after the outbreak of the Second World War, although its annual conference was no longer organised. During the war years, the German hegemony was openly manifested, and Heydrich succeeded in his original plan to become president of the ICPC and to move its seat to Berlin. Steinhäusl died in June 1940 and a swift and questionable election gave Heydrich the presidency. The Commission definitively lost its international and cooperative character. It was incorporated into the German police system and its international mandate was restricted to the occupied territories and to the allies of the Third Reich. Its headquarters were officially moved to Berlin-Wannsee in 1941 and ceased its activities in February 1945, with Kaltenbrunner as its president.[72]

In 1938, Vienna lost its status of capital city, as Austria was annexed by the Third Reich. From 1941, it was no longer the base of the International Criminal Police Commission. Despite this loss of international status, Vienna remained a privileged observation point for the Italian police on the German, Balkan, and Danuban areas. For this reason, Rodolfo Modrini continued to be stationed at the Italian legation in Vienna (a general consulate, after the Anschluss) and remained there even during the war. He was occasionally detached from Austria to conduct temporary missions out of the country, as already discussed in the previous chapters. In particular, his connections and language skills were valuable on the occasion of state visits or when his superiors travelled abroad. He accompanied Mussolini to Berlin, in 1937, and was in

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[68] Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 178.

[69] See the report on the ICPC conference in Bucharest dated 24 June 1938 in BArch, R 19/429.

[70] A copy of its provisional programme is available in Ibid.

[71] See TNA, MEPO 3/2078.

[72] Deflem, *Policing World Society*, 178-79, 184-85; Fijnaut, "The International Criminal Police Commission," 117-18. The ICPC was re-established after the war and renamed International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), with a new headquarters in Paris.

Italy at the time of Hitler's visit in 1938.[73] This exchange of visits represents another significant chapter in the history of the relationships between the Italian and German police forces, since they worked closely together to guarantee the two dictators a safe journey. In other words, they contributed to cement their bonds.

## 3.3 Concern, Cooperation, Competition: Securing Mussolini's and Hitler's Visits

Mussolini's and Hitler's state visits in 1937 and in 1938 were crucial events in the history of the Axis partnership. They were demonstrations of unity and solidarity between the two dictators and their regimes, with wider political and ideological implications. They were also showcases of strength and power intended to impress the partner as much as the international public. At the same time, they indicated the persistence of divergences and diffidence between Rome and Berlin. The interactions between the two regimes' police forces reflected these dynamics. On the one hand, the exchange of visits determined an intensification and expansion of the cross-border police cooperation, which increasingly affected the life of Italian and German expatriates and refugees (and Austrian exiles too). On the other hand, it revealed different approaches towards the security arrangements for travel, which indicated a clear shift in the balance of power between the two regimes and, accordingly, between their police forces.

### 3.3.1. *September 1937: Mussolini in Germany*

Mussolini – accompanied by Ciano, the minister of popular culture Dino Alfieri, and the secretary of the Fascist party Achille Starace – was in Germany from 25 to 29 September 1937.[74] This was not an ordinary state visit, but a spectacular event that aimed to show the strength of the Third Reich and celebrate the unity between the two fascist regimes, their leaders, and their peoples.[75] In light of its great political and symbolic value, the German authorities concentrated all their efforts on the meticulous organisation of Mussolini's stay in Germany. Security measures were one of their major concerns. They put into place massive and tight arrangements to guarantee the protection of Hitler and of his guest Mussolini and to prevent any danger that could disturb the orderly progression of the visit.[76] In particular, the German authorities feared that Italian anti-fascists in exile and emigrants could take advantage

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[73] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, Vers. 1957, b.191-bis, f. Modrini Rodolfo.

[74] Bocchini was not part of the delegation. He had just returned from the political police conference organised by Heydrich and Himmler in Berlin and remained in Rome. Still, he sent Mussolini daily reports that confirm the dictator's attention towards political police affairs and his resolution to be constantly informed about the situation in Italy; see the reports in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1937, b.23, f. Viaggio del Duce a Berlino.

[75] For further details about the visit and its political significance, see Christian Goeschel, "Staging Friendship: Mussolini and Hitler in Germany in 1937," *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (March 2017): 149–72, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X15000540; and Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 77-92.

[76] See Ibid.

of the public events to carry out actions and attempts against the lives of the dictators. The Gestapo thus requested the cooperation of the Italian police.

First, the German police tightened controls at the border to identify suspects and potentially dangerous foreigners entering the Reich. In this regard, the Gestapo had started to collect information on Italian anti-fascist expatriates long before the visit.[77] In accordance with the secret protocol, it requested from the PS names, photos, and personal details of some anti-fascists, for example of the former member of parliament Emilio Lussu, leader of *Giustizia e Libertà* after the murder of Carlo Rosselli.[78] The PS provided the information requested but occasionally remained wary and vague. On the one hand, the political police services of the two regimes did not want to disclose all the information at their disposal and limited the information shared to the essential, despite the official proclamations. On the other hand, they wanted to preserve and conceal their own networks of informers and spies abroad. This was evident in the case of Ernesto Tamburini, an anarchist trade unionist who had emigrated to Austria after the March on Rome. His name was included in a list of Italian anti-fascists that the Gestapo sent to the PS to receive further details. The PolPol authorised the other political police department of the PS, the DAGR, to provide the information requested but instructed it to omit, 'for obvious reasons', any details about Tamburini.[79] The latter, now a leading member of the Social Democratic Party in Innsbruck, was secretly working for the PolPol since 1934.[80] The Italian police did not want to compromise its informer and ignored the German request. Such conduct reciprocated by the Gestapo, as this section shows.

Second, the Gestapo strengthened its surveillance over the Italian community in Germany. The security arrangements in preparation of the visit were not limited to signalling well-known and suspect anti-fascist militants, so that they could be intercepted before entering the Reich.[81] The German police implemented strict preventive measures to constrain domestic dissent and remove potential threats and, accordingly, enforced protective custody in great measure. This police sanction was inflicted not only on German dissents and enemies of the Nazi regime but also on Italian migrants. The Gestapo indeed asked the PS for the names of the Italians residing in Germany who were known or suspect of having anti-fascist sentiments and who were to be

[77] See Poesio, *Il confino fascista*, 140, and note no.186 on pag.183.
[78] For further information on Lussu and GL, see Manlio Brigaglia, *Emilio Lussu e Giustizia e Libertà: Dall'evasione di Lipari al ritorno in Italia, 1929-1943*, 2nd ed. (Cagliari: Edizioni della Torre, 2008); and Marco Bresciani, *Quale antifascismo?: Storia di Giustizia e Libertà* (Roma: Carocci, 2017).
[79] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.44, f.7, The PolPol to the DAGR, 2 August 1937.
[80] On the informer no.641 Tamburini, codename *Marte* (Mars), see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 275-76; Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 200.
[81] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 30, Chiavaccini to Leto, 21 August 1937.

preventively arrested. As a result, numerous Italians living and working in the Reich as well as suspicious travellers were placed under arrest and detained for the period of Mussolini's visit.[82]

The security measures in place were meticulous and conspicuous. In addition to the wave of preventive arrests, thousands of uniformed and plain-clothes policemen and SS men were deployed on the streets of Munich and Berlin. On the day of Mussolini's arrival in Munich, Hitler even complained that the SS cordon around the dictators' car had been so tight that the crowd had been left too distant, spoiling the choreography of the reception staged for Mussolini.[83] The precautions taken to protect the two fascist dictators during the impressive ceremonies in Berlin were not less strict.[84] Yet, no incidents or disturbances occurred during the visit, which culminated on 28 September 1937 in a speech given by Mussolini at the Maifeld in Berlin. The dictator left Germany profoundly satisfied and impressed by the German organisation and the warm reception. He invited Hitler to Italy to return the official visit at once. The event was scheduled for May 1938.

For a few Italian immigrants, protective custody was prolonged long after Mussolini's stay in Germany, up to December 1937. The Gestapo wanted to discuss their fate with the Italian police before releasing them. Some detainees were set free, but others were expelled from the country, as agreed with the PS.[85] In other words, migrants and exiles were now increasingly exposed to persecution and expulsion as a result of the cross-border cooperation between the two police forces. This trend intensified over the years and became more evident on the occasion of Hitler's trip to Italy.

Notwithstanding the success of the visit, the partnership and cooperation between the two police forces was neither clearly flawless nor unreserved. In this regard, the episode that concerned the journalist Dalmo Carnevali resembled, to a certain extent, that of Tamburini. It uncovered a latent suspicion and duplicity still existing between the two police forces, as well as the reluctance to expose their own network of informers and spies. Carnevali – who had been a double agent already during the Great War, working for both the Italian and the German intelligence – was a former collaborator of the PolPol in Berlin. He had provided information on the Italian colony as well as on the activity of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) but his collaboration had developed superfluous after the Nazi takeover of power.[86] He was amongst the Italians arrested on the occasion of Mussolini's visit and, at the moment of his release, the Italian police demanded the Gestapo to hand him over. Surprisingly, the Gestapo

[82] Poesio, *Il confino fascista*, 140-42.
[83] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 80.
[84] Ibid., 85.
[85] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 35 Sovversivi Italiani nel Reich.
[86] For further information on his activity as informer of the PolPol, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 203-04.

rejected the request, officially for health and family reasons. This was an unusual act of mercy of the German authorities towards a foreign citizen with a questionable past and a pending request of expulsion, and it aroused Italian suspicions.[87] Carnevali was released in November 1937 and the Gestapo notified the PS that he was put under strict police surveillance.[88] The suspicions were confirmed a year later, when the Italian journalist tried to establish contacts with some fellow citizens. The sources available are not complete, but it is possible that he acted as an agent provocateur approaching other expatriates. At any rate, his activity attracted the attention of the Italian consul in Berlin, and the PS urged the German police authorities to clarify the situation.[89] An irritated Müller eventually admitted that Carnevali was a collaborator of the Gestapo, but further details about this incident and its consequences are not known.[90]

This episode – as well as that of Tamburini – reveals that, despite the official statements and the collaboration in place, the two police forces continued to interact and work together with some reserve. They even secretly manoeuvred behind each other's back, whenever possible. Such attitude and behaviours were persistent and occasionally caused incidents and tensions. Hitler's trip to Italy in the spring of 1938 exhibited these traits even more clearly, in combination with an extension of the cross-border persecution of expatriates and migrants.

### 3.3.2. *'Absolutely nothing is omitted': Extraordinary Security Measures for Hitler's Visit*

The Italian authorities initiated the preparations for Hitler's state visit soon after the return of Mussolini from Germany. In November, the Italian dictator put Ciano in charge of an inter-ministerial committee that supervised all the arrangements for the event and which included minister Alfieri, the party secretary Starace, the undersecretary Buffarini, and the chief of the police Bocchini.[91] The Italian intention was to exhibit and celebrate the unity between the regimes and the glories of the Fascist empire and of its Roman past. The Fascist regime thus prepared a magnificent and impressive spectacle for the German guests.[92]

The Italian authorities meticulously planned the security arrangements, as confirmed by the presence of Bocchini in the organising committee. The measures enforced to guarantee the success of the event resulted even tighter and more pervasive than the ones implemented by the

[87] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.2, f. RG 35, Chiavaccini to Leto, 4 November 1937.
[88] Ibid., The Gestapo to the Italian police, 27 November 1937.
[89] See the note sent by the consul in Berlin on 17 May 1938, in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.5, f. RG 35.
[90] ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.166, f.1, Chiavaccini to Leto, 26 November 1938.
[91] See ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.23, f.1620, Visita del Führer in Italia. Commissione, sf.1, Commissione per preparare la visita del Führer.
[92] For a detailed reconstruction of Hitler's travel to Italy and its significance for the two Axis powers, see Paul Baxa, "Capturing the Fascist Moment: Hitler's Visit to Italy in 1938 and the Radicalization of Fascist Italy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 227–42; Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 105-27.

German authorities in September 1937. At the same time, they were put into practice with the direct involvement and influence of the German police. Since the beginning, the two police forces discussed the security measures to introduce in preparation for the event and worked together to 'avoid surprises by foreigner elements', specifically German expatriates.[93]

Already at the beginning of October 1937, Bocchini instructed the Italian prefects about the arrangements to start to be put into place, which included stricter controls over foreigners entering the country (especially Germans, Soviets, and stateless people) and over the German colony. The local police headquarters and the carabinieri were requested to examine 'with discretion' and report on the political and moral reliability of the Germans living in Italy. They could count on the assistance of the German consulates and of the local branches of the NSDAP to identify the supporters of the Nazi regime and its opponents, and the Jews amongst them. They were then signalled to the DGPS, and the suspects placed under police surveillance.[94]

Until that point, the Italian security forces had not directly or systematically targeted the Jews living in Italy for their origins or faith. Neither the members of the Italian Jewish community nor foreign Jews, the majority of whom had emigrated from the German territories. Quite the contrary, refugees from the Third Reich – Jews included – had been allowed to enter and reside in Italy without any particular restriction, providing that they abstained from any active anti-Nazi activity.[95] In 1936, Bocchini had even persuaded the German police leadership that there was no need to explicitly mention the Jews in the text of the secret protocol. About a year later, antisemitism was already sufficiently widespread in Italy and within the apparatus of the interior ministry.[96] For the Gestapo, anyone who had left the Reich for racial motives was a political emigrant. Without any direct pressure from Germany, the Italian police started to openly regard the Jewish refugees as politically suspect or unreliable.[97] They were considered suspects that 'might abuse of the hospitality accorded to them' in light of their 'known sympathy towards Bolshevism'.[98] Hence, the classification *ebreo* (Jew) was systematically included in the lists of names of German immigrants that the Italian police compiled in preparation for Hitler's visit.[99]

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[93] See the communication to the prefects dated 24 January 1938 in AS Livorno, Questura di Livorno, Inv. 42, Ctg. A4 Vigilanza, b.556, f. UCC-HIT (Visita Hitler), 1938.
[94] See the circular letter no. 443/34492 dated 4 October 1937 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.193, f.48, Visita in Italia di S.E. Hitler, sf.2-C, Circolari.
[95] For further information, see Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario: Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, vol. 1 (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1993), 11-54.
[96] On this point, see Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 150; and also footnote no.103 in chapter 1.
[97] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol.1, 126.
[98] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Ctg. Annuali, 1937, b.2, f. Ebrei tedeschi immigrati. Attività sovversiva, The prefect of Bolzano to the DGPS, 21 February 1937.
[99] Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 251. The lists are in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.3, f. RG 55 Viaggio di S.E. Hitler in Italia.

By the end of November 1937, the PS had completed a first assessment of the political reliability of the Germans living in Italy. The DGPS compiled preliminary lists of names of politically suspect Germans that were promptly handed over to the Gestapo chief Müller for an evaluation and further information.[100] In the meantime, the local police headquarters were instructed to constantly review and update the information about the German colonies, to detect any member whose political conduct was questionable or unknown.[101]

The German embassy in Rome mobilised the consulates in the country to gather information on the local German colonies and assist the *questure*. At Heydrich's request, Mussolini permitted even the Nazi party's representatives in Italy to monitor the German communities and both consular personnel and Nazi representatives were accredited to the local police headquarters. They actively collaborated with the local police forces in identifying German expatriates and reporting on those who were politically suspect or not aligned with the Nazi regime.[102] This cooperation allowed the Nazi authorities to expand their authority and control over the community of German migrants in the peninsula.

Local sources show how Italian and German authorities worked together on a local level, specifically in Livorno, on the occasion of Hitler's visit. The local Nazi representative, Karl Ebner, with the assistance of an employee of the Telefunken company, Bertrand Biersack, was responsible for the provinces of Livorno, Grosseto, Pisa, Lucca, Massa Carrara, Spezia, and Elba, in Tuscany. In October 1938, the Germans residing in the area were asked to complete a form with their personal data, which was then examined by the local police authorities alongside their passports. After this first survey, the DGPS received a list with the names of 49 German citizens, of whom 33 were verified Nazi supporters. The political allegiance of the remaining 16 was 'dubious' and 5 were identified as Jews. This group, and 'especially the Jews', were immediately put under police surveillance, which meant that their mail was scrutinised and their movements monitored and communicated to the DGPS.[103] Over the months, the Italian police scrutinised an ever-increasing number of people, and the lists of names were constantly reviewed and updated. By the end of April 1938, the names included in the lists compiled by the *questura* of Livorno almost doubled, as a result of the information provided by Ebner and his collaborator as well as the constant tightening of the security provisions communicated by Rome.[104]

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[100] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.3, f. RG 55.
[101] See the circular letter no. 443/78697 dated 10 December 1937 in AS Livorno, Questura, b.556, f. UCC-HIT.
[102] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 112-13.
[103] AS Livorno, Questura, b.556, f. UCC-HIT, The prefect of Livorno to the DAGR Section III, 19 October 1937.
[104] The latest update was registered on 26 April 1938, in Ibid.

The German annexation of Austria in March 1938 determined an expansion of the number of potentially suspicious and dangerous foreigners to identify and keep under surveillance. On 20 March 1938, Heydrich informed Bocchini that many Austrian 'communist and terrorist elements' had fled the country and sought refuge abroad, some probably in Italy.[105] For obvious reasons, most of the incoming Austrian refugees were former supporters of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg and anti-Nazi conservatives. There were also Jews, whom Heydrich did not explicitly mention since they were considered political emigrants. The Italian police did adjust the security arrangements after the Anschluss. Already on 17 March 1938, Bocchini had asked the prefects to prepare new lists of names comprising 'former Austrians' residing in Italy.[106] Like the German communities, the members of the Austrian colony in Italy were placed under police scrutiny. The border authorities were also instructed to prevent a massive Jewish immigration from Austria. This instruction proved ineffective because it was not yet possible for the border authorities to distinguish the Jews from the other immigrants. It did not bring the expected results but confirmed a new approach of the Italian authorities towards foreign Jews, who were now explicitly targeted.[107]

In April, the Vienna Gestapo communicated to the Italian police the names and photos of the dangerous Austrian 'radical-socialists' and communists that had sought refuge abroad, and the *questure* and the carabinieri were asked to verify the 'political position' of all the Germans, Austrians, and Poles who had entered the country after the Anschluss.[108] The Polish colony in Italy, whose approximately 5000 members included numerous 'Israelites strongly suspected of anti-Nazism', were indeed placed under police scrutiny like the German and Austrian communities.[109] The Polish police actively assisted the PS in dealing with Polish immigrants and dispatched to Italy the chief of the anti-communist department Kazimierz Janisławski, as mentioned in the previous chapter.[110]

According to Voigt, the Italian police eventually communicated to the Gestapo about 15,000 names of Germans and Austrians resident in Italy (Nazi supporters included) for an evaluation and a comparison with its own records.[111] They received from Berlin further details about 'suspect' and 'dangerous' elements and indications about the preferred police measure to adopt against them. The DGPS consequently prepared two new lists that were sent to the *questure*: a

[105] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55, Heydrich to Bocchini, 20 March 1938.
[106] See the communication to the prefects dated 17 March 1938 in AS Livorno, Questura, b.556, f. UCC-HIT.
[107] See Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 281-90.
[108] See the communication to the prefects dated 3 April 1938 in AS Livorno, Questura, b.556, f. UCC-HIT.
[109] See the communication to the prefects dated 24 January 1938 in Ibid.
[110] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 32 Onorificienze. On this point, see also Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 125-26.
[111] Ibid., 124.

list A, with the names of the foreigners that had to be preventively arrested; and a list B, which included the suspects that had to be kept under surveillance.[112] Yet, Rome decided to go further than the Gestapo requested, arresting even the suspects included in list B living in the provinces of Rome, Florence, and Naples, the cities that Hitler was to visit.[113]

The security arrangements in place for Hitler's trip to Italy greatly differed from those prepared by the German police for Mussolini's visit in 1937. They were not simply motivated by security concerns. The Italian authorities undoubtedly wanted to impress their German guests with an efficient and meticulous organisation. Moreover, their conduct revealed an interest in detecting and collecting information about all the foreign elements in country, especially those whose presence was potentially dangerous or undesirable. The information gathered on this occasion proved indeed useful when the Fascist regime later introduced its new racial legislation, and then again when it started to prepare for the war and needed to identify and locate the foreign citizens in the country. They were means to gain effective control over any perceived hostile and divergent element. At any rate, compared to the visit of Mussolini, this time the collaboration between the Italian police and the Gestapo was not limited to an exchange of information and a discussion about the preventive measures to be introduced. The Gestapo did in fact directly operate and intervene in Italy.

Heydrich offered to assign German police officers to the main Italian cities and border posts to assist the Italian authorities in their interactions with German migrants and travellers, who could not always speak Italian.[114] His proposal was not necessarily an act of mistrust. It was in line with the progress of the collaboration on the ground between the two police forces. In Germany, Chiavaccini was indeed permitted to take part in the interrogation of Italian citizens arrested by the Gestapo, whenever deemed convenient.[115] The only condition – imposed by Bocchini – was that he had to conceal his role of Italian police officer not to compromise the secrecy of the police cooperation.[116] Heydrich's proposal could thus appear a simple gesture of cooperation, and the Italian police chief had no difficulties in accepting his offer.[117] The German police eventually took advantage of the situation. Their activity in Italy did exceed the original plan and, in a few circumstances, they acted behind the back of the Italian authorities.

[112] For the lists and drafts prepared by the *questura* of Livorno, see AS Livorno, Questura, b.556, f. UCC-HIT.
[113] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 125.
[114] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55, Heydrich to Bocchini, 9 February 1938.
[115] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.1, f. RG 35, Chiavaccini to Bocchini, 31 October 1936.
[116] Ibid., f. RG 27 Corrispondenza varia con il dottor Chiavaccini, Bocchini to Chiavaccini, 21 November 1936.
[117] Ibid., f. RG 35, Bocchini to Heydrich, 14 February 1938.

On 10 April 1938, the first twenty German policemen crossed the new common border and spread all over the country.[118] Before their departure, Gestapo chief Müller had reassured the Italian police leadership that their mission consisted in assisting the PS, to which they were subjected, and that were not allowed to act or take decisions autonomously.[119] Bocchini proved wary and distrustful as usual, and instructed the local police headquarters to prevent any excessive interference from German officials.[120] They gave actual support to the local police authorities with interrogations, home searches, and checking documents of German citizens.[121] Yet, the German police took advantage of this window of opportunity and of the cooperativeness of their Italian partners.

Over the weeks, the number of German policemen in Italy sharply increased. Not only were more functionaries assigned to the *questure*, but the Gestapo also organised three temporary offices in the cities that Hitler was going to visit. A central office was set up in a hotel in Rome, with a personnel of thirty-seven among functionaries, agents, and typists; a staff of seventeen stationed in a hotel in Florence; and seven were in Naples. These were proper Gestapo detachments connected to Berlin via radio and phone, and with cars, motorbikes, and planes at their disposal.[122] Gestapo chief Müller arrived directly from Vienna to direct the Gestapo office in Rome, assisted by the liaison officer in Spain Winzer and Schellenberg.[123] The SD officer later recalled that his mission in Rome consisted in interviewing and briefing 60-70 SD agents secretly deployed across the country.[124] These spies and agents certainly kept under scrutiny the German colonies and other foreign travellers, whose suspicious conduct and activities were promptly transmitted by Müller to the Italian police.[125]

At the end of April, Himmler, Heydrich, and Sepp Dietrich – the chief of the SS *Leibstandarte* 'Adolf Hitler', the dictator's personal guard – arrived in Italy for a final briefing with the Italian authorities. Heydrich had already received from Bocchini maps and photos of the three cities that Hitler was to visit as well as the planned travel itineraries. As an extra-

[118] For their names and destinations, see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55, Bocchini to the police station at the Brenner Pass, 10 April 1938. A Gestapo officer named Herbert Kappler was assigned to Palermo, in Sicily. A year later he substituted Herlmerking as police liaison officer in Rome. For further information, see BArch, BDC, R 9361-III/534460, Kappler Herbert.
[119] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55, Chiavaccini to Leto, 14 April 1938.
[120] See Bocchini's communication dated 15 April 1938 to the chiefs of the police headquarters in the fifteen provinces where these policemen were assigned (Imperia, Novara, Como, Varese, Fiume, Trieste, Genoa, Naples, Bari, Venice, Palermo, Brindisi, Milan, Rome, Turin), in Ibid.
[121] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 129.
[122] Ibid., 130.
[123] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55.
[124] TNA, KV 2/99, Walter Friedrich Schellenberg, Report, p.3.
[125] On this point, see the report that Müller transmitted to Leto on 26 April 1938 about a suspicious traveller, a lady probably of Russian or Latvian origins that from in Sicily intended to reach Rome, in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 49 Informazioni varie dalla Gestapo.

precaution, the dictator's bodyguard was permitted to inspect in advance the venues of the events and ceremonies.[126] Himmler then proceeded to Florence and Heydrich to Naples to examine the situation there.

The chief of Sipo was accompanied to Naples by Eugen Dollmann, a German historian and interpreter who had lived in Italy since 1927. In light of his language skills and well-educated manners, Dollmann regularly accompanied leading figures of the two regimes on the occasion of meetings and exchange of visits. Over the years, he had established good connections with members of the Fascist regime and especially with Bocchini. For this reason, he was enlisted in the SS and acted as Himmler's personal envoy in Italy, an intermediary with Bocchini and the other Italian authorities. In his colourful and self-absolutory post-war memories, Dollmann constantly remarked on his close connections and affinity with 'don Arturo' Bocchini in an attempt to distance himself from the Nazi leadership. From Heydrich in particular, the only one that he 'instinctively feared'.[127] Apparently, the liaison officer Helmerking did not speak Italian satisfactorily and it was Dollmann that escorted the chief of Sipo to Naples.[128]

The behaviour of the German police leadership was certainly unusual and represented a clear interference with the authority and competence of the PS. Bocchini had assured his 'dear friend Himmler' that the Italian organisation was scrupulous and that 'absolutely nothing is omitted' to guarantee a successful and safe progress of the scheduled events.[129] Most likely, he did not appreciate the intrusion and the evident lack of trust from the German side. After the war, Schellenberg declared that the German authorities had not been satisfied by the security arrangements set up by the Italians and that they, in turn, had been against a large presence of German policemen in the peninsula.[130] Unfortunately, the sources consulted do not provide more information about Bocchini's or Mussolini's reactions. It is not possible to know whether they resisted the German interference or could do nothing but accept the situation. Either way, it is clear that the German police leadership had no confidence in the Italian partner and that the balance of power between the two fascist regimes was now in favour of Berlin, which was assuming a leading position within the partnership.

### 3.3.3. *The 'Historic Days' of May 1938 and Their Aftermath*

The planned preventive measures against dangerous foreign elements were put into effect from the second half of April. The exact number of migrants and refugees that were taken into police

[126] In Ibid., f. RG 55.
[127] Eugen Dollmann, *With Hitler and Mussolini: Memoirs of a Nazi Interpreter* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2017), 96.
[128] Ibid., 92.
[129] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.23, f.1620, sf.1, Bocchini to Himmler, 14 April 1938.
[130] TNA, KV 2/99, Walter Friedrich Schellenberg, Report, p.3.

custody is unknown. According to Voigt, no less than 500 Germans and Austrians, and a few Poles, were arrested.[131] Goeschel estimates that the Jews alone were 500, plus an unknown number of non-Jewish foreigners.[132] Yet, it must be considered that the local police authorities did not always obey to the instructions received from the interior ministry. They occasionally refused to arrest foreigners who were too old or vulnerable, or they suggested they avoid detention by temporarily relocating to another province. The police measures against the less dangerous migrants were applied at the beginning of May 1938.[133]

The security arrangements that had been meticulously prepared did meet expectations. From 3 to 9 May 1938, Hitler and his entourage (which included Himmler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels, and their wives) travelled across Italy and visited Rome, Florence, and Naples in complete safety and no incidents or disruptions occurred. Thousands of agents and functionaries of the police and military corps and militiamen guaranteed order and safety. Mussolini was profoundly pleased with the work done by the Italian security apparatus and officially expressed his satisfaction.[134] The Nazi leadership too. Several functionaries of the DGPS, of the local police headquarters, and of the Militia were proposed for German decorations.[135]

The exchange of decorations was a ritual and customary practice between the two fascist regimes. It contributed to reinforce the camaraderie and bond between the Italian and the German police as much as other moments of conviviality that characterised their interactions. During the visit, for instance, Bocchini organised a lunch for his German colleagues. The event – attended by the two police leaderships, Dollmann, and the liaison officers Helmerking and Chiavaccini – was intended to celebrate the friendship and partnership between the Axis regimes and their police forces.[136] The 'historic days' of May 1938 cemented the institutional and personal bonds between the two police forces.[137]

The personal connection between Himmler and Bocchini intensified. A few months later, the *Reichsführer* returned to Italy for the *Festa della Polizia* and then spent a few days in Bocchini's hometown, San Giorgio del Sannio, as private guest of the Italian police chief.[138] In terms of institutional ties and cooperation, Hitler's visit determined a transfer of know-how and practices between the PS and the German police. On a more technical level, Himmler admired

[131] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 130-31.
[132] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 107.
[133] For a detailed reconstructions of police measures in place, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 122-37.
[134] See the note that Mussolini sent to the undersecretary Buffarini on 11 May 1938 in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.23, f.1620.
[135] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 32.
[136] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.23, f.1620, sf.7, Pranzi in onore della Delegazione di Polizia Tedesca in occasione della visita del Führer.
[137] In Ibid., sf.1, Bocchini to Himmler, 14 April 1938.
[138] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.9, f. Festa della Polizia Italiana. 13° Annuale, and f. Gita nel Sannio di S.E. Himmler. On this point, see also footnote no. 120 in chap. 1.

the system of removable wooden barriers that the Italian police used to secure and cordon off a perimeter during a parade or a public event. He decided to introduce the same system in Germany, to the satisfaction of the Italian authorities.[139] Most important, the Gestapo succeeded in inducing the Italian police to be more suspicious and less tolerant towards foreign expatriates and refugees, in particular Jews.[140]

In general, the information provided by the Gestapo and used by the Italian police to classify a foreign element as 'dangerous' or 'suspect' (i.e., to decide whether they should be preventively detained or not) was not particularly clear and consistent. Quite the contrary, they were often generic, unsubstantiated, and even self-contradictory. In many cases, the emigration per se or Jewish origins were as much as was necessary to indicate someone as a suspicious or unreliable element. Not surprisingly, most of the names included in the lists compiled by the Italian police were of Jewish emigrants. The Gestapo did deliberately stigmatise the refugees and encouraged Rome to adopt more severe measures against them.[141]

The Gestapo's plan worked. When the preventive custody and surveillance stopped after Hitler's departure, some of the foreigners included in the police lists were invited to leave the country, and a few were probably expelled by force.[142] The DGPS did not systematically discuss with Berlin which measures they wanted to adopt against them, as the German police had done after Mussolini's trip to Germany. Yet, German migrants and refugees found themselves under growing pressure. Jewish refugees in particular quickly realised that Italy had become a less hospitable country. They were the first target of the new Italian racial legislation (alongside the Jewish students banned from public schools) with the issue of an expulsion decree on 7 September 1938.[143] Any foreign Jews who had arrived in Italy after January 1919 was deprived of Italian citizenship and ordered to leave the country within six months, since foreign Jews were now prohibited from taking up residence in the Italian mainland and colonies.[144]

Without doubt, Hitler's visit offered the Italian police the possibility of gathering very detailed information on the foreign colonies in Italy. They were able to identify and trace the members of the German and former Austrian colonies. These were significantly smaller than the Italian community in the Reich, but they included many political exiles and refugees, who were considered unreliable and potentially dangerous. As Müller proclaimed, the broader and detailed exchange of information and reports between the Gestapo and the PS was 'valuable

[139] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 27, Chiavaccini to Leto, 6 August 1938.
[140] On this point, see also Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 249-51.
[141] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 106-07; Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 126-28.
[142] See Ibid., 137-38.
[143] For further details about the issue of the racial laws in Italy and their immediate impact on the lives of the foreign Jews, see Ibid., 142-44, 291-310; and Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 150-68, 186-91.
[144] The text of the expulsion decree is in Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 517.

and instructive for both sides'.[145] In this regard, each used collaboration for their own benefit and acted without scruples to pursue their own interests. Rome now knew who the refugees – alongside the Nazi affiliates – were, where they lived, and whether and possibly why they were considered unreliable and dangerous by the German authorities; and likewise with the Polish community, thanks to the collaboration with the Polish police.[146] The information gathered consolidated the control and grasp of the PS over the country. For example, they were used by the interior ministry to complete a census of foreign Jews in Italy prior to the expulsion decree in September 1938.[147]

The partnership between the Axis police forces did work effectively on the occasion of Hitler's visit to Italy. Behind the scenes, however, the cooperation remained characterised by mutual distrust and deceit as well as by a latent rivalry. As on the occasion of Mussolini's stay in Germany, the 'historic days' of May 1938 offered the opportunity of expressing unity between the Axis powers as well as of showing national strength and prestige to the partner. Such competition for superiority inevitably affected the organisation of the security arrangements. The Italian police – as Franzinelli reveals – intended to use agent provocateurs to instigate a plot against Hitler, which would have been promptly intercepted and exposed to exhibit their efficiency and ability in fighting subversion and to blame the anti-fascist movement.[148] It was not an unusual strategy for the Fascist political police. They deliberately prompted anti-fascists in exile to organise actions against the regime, so the expatriates could be arrested as soon as they returned to Italy to execute their plans. One informer, Vito Lattarulo, tried to encourage Alberto Cianca – a leading figure in the anti-fascist diaspora – to organise an attempt against Hitler, but the plan was not eventually carried out. In the end, security concerns prevailed over competition, and the PS decided not to risk compromising the visit just for a chance to bolster its prestige.[149]

The two fascist police forces took advantage of the circumstances and acted behind each other's back, whenever convenient. The German police deliberately acted in Italy with more autonomy than officially approved. This did not invalidate the joint work, but it occasionally caused incidents that embarrassed Berlin and likely irritated Rome. This was the case of the episode that concerned one of the functionaries assigned to Rome, the SS officer Georg Ritter. On his way back to Germany at the end of the visit, Richter briefly stopped in South Tyrol.

[145] In Ibid., 128.
[146] Ibid., 125-26.
[147] See Ibid., 143; Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 35-36.
[148] Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 154-55.
[149] See "Memoriale del capo della Divisione Polizia Politica Di Stefano sulla visita di Hitler in Italia (5 Aprile 1938)," document no.49 in Ibid., 593-96.

There, he gained the confidence of some members of the local German-speaking minority and discussed with them the situation in the area. Specifically, they talked about Italian domination and the possibility of an insurrection supported by the Third Reich. Richter, who was probably a member of the SD, wrote a report for his superiors about the content of these conversations before continuing the trip. Once in Germany, he realised that he had lost his personal documents and the report, and it was not clear whether it had happened in Italy or in Germany. All the same, these were returned directly to the Gestapo headquarters a few days afterwards. Richter's superiors discovered what had occurred and feared that the Italian police had found and examined the report. With great embarrassment, Müller summoned Chiavaccini and informed him that Richter was placed under arrest and his fate now depended on the decision of the Italian authorities. Hitler had just publicly renounced any claim to South Tyrol on the occasion of his stay in Italy, the SS officer had thus contravened his directive. He was to be punished as an enemy of the Reich and probably sent to a concentration camp. Richter was the scapegoat to blame for the incident, since the Gestapo wanted to limit the damage caused by his lack of caution and to prevent broader repercussions. The matter was indeed delicate and Bocchini discussed it directly with Mussolini. Following the dictator's instruction, the PS replied that what had occurred was inconsequential and there was no interest in a punishment for Richter.[150]

At the same time, rumours started to circulate amongst the anti-fascist groups in exile that Himmler had compiled a negative report on the domestic situation in Italy, using the information provided by the German spies and agents in Italy at the time of Hitler's visit. It is not known whether these were just rumours, but it cannot be excluded that the dozens of SD agents in mission in Italy carried out intelligence tasks and informed on the Italian situation. According to the anti-fascist newspaper *La voce degli italiani*, the report analysed the political fragility of a regime and the general Italian opposition to the alliance with Nazi Germany.[151] As soon as the news spread, Himmler sought to reassure Bocchini about the falsity of these allegations. Once again, the Italian police chief discussed the matter with Mussolini. Another potential quarrel was dismissed as a new failing attempt to break the 'strong bonds' between the two regimes and their police forces by means of 'ignoble and dubious manoeuvres'. Rather, such lies and attacks did nothing but strengthen 'the friendship between them' and between the two police chiefs, 'which is actually fraternal'.[152]

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[150] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 30. In his report, Chiavaccini misspelled 'Richter' as 'Ritter'.

[151] See "Un rapporto della Gestapo sulla situazione in Italia," *La voce degli italiani*, no.143 (18 June 1938), in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Ff. Personali, b.49/A, f.1, Himmler Heinrich.

[152] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.4, f. RG 30, Bocchini to Himmler, 27 June 1938.

It is not known whether the Italian authorities really believed in the official German versions. In any case, the association and interdependence between Rome and Berlin were becoming ever stronger at that time, such that potentially detrimental episodes were set aside for the highest good, i.e. to safeguard the increasingly active partnership between the two Axis powers and their police forces. Incidents, divergences, and distrust persisted, as the following chapters indicate, especially since the German police took advantage of their dominant position within the partnership to stretch the limits of collaboration as much as possible to their maximum benefit, expanding the scope of the cooperation and further extending their reach over the German expatriates and refugees in Italy.

### 3.4 Conclusions

This chapter has reconstructed how the partnership between the Axis police forces that was established in 1936 expanded during the first years of collaboration up until 1938, focusing in particular on its impact on the life of migrants and refugees. The episode that concerned Agostino P. exemplifies how the fascist persecution of political enemies and opponents was pervasive and could assume a transnational dimension, with the police forces of Denmark, Germany, and Austria assisting the Italian police. On a bilateral level, the cross-border cooperation between the Italian and German police forces sanctioned by the secret protocol expanded and intensified in the course of 1937 and 1938. This development was directly connected to some crucial events in the history of the Axis partnerships that took place in those years, specifically Mussolini's visit to Germany in September 1937, the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, and Hitler's trip to Italy in May 1938. These events reinforced the ties between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and had decisive implications for the interactions between their police forces and their joint work.

As a result of the Anschluss, the Austrian police apparatus – a long-standing partner of the PS – was incorporated into the German one, and the German police leadership was able to take control of the main international criminal police organisation, the ICPC, although the takeover was more problematic than Berlin had initially expected. Furthermore, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany now shared a border. This facilitated exchanges and communications as well as extraditions and deportations, whose number rapidly increased, as it is further discussed in the next chapter. It also determined an increase in the number of Germans and former Austrians seeking refuge in Italy, especially Jews.

Migrants and refuges were directly targeted during the two dictators' official visits, when the two police forces put into place tight and pervasive security measures. These included preventive actions against politically suspicious and unreliable foreign immigrants. The two

police forces assisted each other sharing information and discussing the measures to enforce, but the Gestapo was allowed to directly intervene in Italy. It took advantage of the situation and were able to extend its reach and control over the German colony in the peninsula. At the same time, the Italian authorities benefitted from the information gathered and grasped their control over the foreign elements in country. The sources reveal that they started to explicitly target and classify foreign Jews even before the issue of the racial legislation in September 1938.

The ties and collaboration between the two fascist police forces emerged stronger and more effective from these events, as much as the broader Axis partnership. For example, a cultural agreement was concluded in November 1938.[153] The two regimes also agreed to trade Italian manpower for German goods, and that determined an ever-increasing numbers of Italian workers that was seasonally or permanently employed in the Third Reich to support the war economy and to replace the German workers conscripted into the army.[154] Still, their interactions continued to be characterised by a latent rivalry and persistent distrust and duplicity, as just observed.[155] The partnership between the Axis police forces that was established in 1936 continued to be consolidated and strengthened over the years. In the end, as Bernhard notes, it became much more than a typical bilateral cooperation, as the following chapter shows.[156]

[153] For further details see Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture*, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2016), especially its chap.4, "A Radicalised, 'Pure' Inter-Nationalism", 109-47.

[154] For further details see Brunello Mantelli, *Camerati del lavoro: I lavoratori italiani emigrati nel Terzo Reich nel periodo dell'Asse, 1938-1943* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1992); Bermani, *Al lavoro nella Germania di Hitler*.

[155] On this point, see also Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*.

[156] Patrick Bernhard, "Blueprints of Totalitarianism: How Racist Policies in Fascist Italy Inspired and Informed Nazi Germany," *Fascism* 6, no. 2 (December 8, 2017): 150, https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00602001.

# Chapter 4. Police Developments and Collaboration at the Outbreak of the War (1939-1940)

This chapter examines how the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany prepared at the end of the 1930s for the impending war and, in so doing, it shows how these preparations – especially a change of attitude and functions – impinged on their joint work. Building on the previous chapter, it analyses how the Axis police forces tightened their power and control at home, showing an increasing radicalisation of methods and policies as well as a progressive criminalisation of nonconforming social, moral, and sexual behaviours and activities that were perceived and punished as threats to the regimes' security and their national communities. As Ebner points out, 'political and social repression was never constant or evenly distributed' but 'it also evolved over time'.[1] Over the years, the police apparatuses of the two Axis powers extended the range of their repressive activities and tasks, and therefore their targets. The totalitarian claims of the regimes became even more evident in preparation for war. Fascist warfare called for a cohesive, homogenous, and reliable domestic front. Hence, the police had to promptly detect and remove any alleged alien and potentially detrimental element from the national community.[2] Police structures and functions were reorganised and became more and more pervasive and wide-ranging to comply with the new assignments and objectives. This process determined an escalation of domestic repression and violence, which definitively erupted during the war years.

The new policies and attitudes influenced the progress of bilateral police cooperation. Migrants and exiles were increasingly under threat and exposed to cross-border persecution, in particular after the arrival of a new German liaison officer in Rome. At the same time, ties and cooperation between the two police forces and their leaderships continued to grow stronger. In light of this, police diplomacy proved once more a decisive tool in the hands of the regimes when they intervened to ease the diplomatic tensions that arose between the two Axis partners in the second part of 1939, namely the Italian decision not to join Germany in the war and the pending South Tyrol question.

### 4.1 Political Policing and Repression at the Outbreak of the War

At the end of the 1930s, the domestic situation in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy appeared fully regulated by their security apparatuses. Any organised form of internal dissent or political

[1] Michael R. Ebner, "Coercion," chap. 4 in *The Politics of Everyday Life in Fascist Italy: Outside the State?*, eds. Kate Ferris, Michael Ebner, and Joshua Arthurs (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79.
[2] See Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 70.

opposition at home had been curbed or neutralised by strict police scrutiny and repression.[3] The other major security concern, i.e. the external threat represented by groups and individuals based out of the country or arriving from abroad, was also under control. Expatriates and foreigners were increasingly perceived as generally unreliable, suspicious, or dangerous elements and were increasingly targeted by the police. Their activities and movements were constantly monitored by networks of informers and spies as well as through the cross-border police collaboration and exchange of information. A trend that this chapter shows continued to develop.

Police surveillance and repression were also effective against the organised anti-fascist groups and parties in exile, as much as they were against their underground networks at home. The external menace they posed appeared weak and perfectly manageable at the end of the 1930s, in particular after the victory of the fascist forces in Spain. Alongside police infiltration and repression, the anti-fascist front suffered from a lack of cohesion and a common strategy, which the continuing distrust and contrasts between communist and socialist parties underlined. At the end of the decade, communist parties and associations, which represented the most relentless and structured anti-fascist political organisations, were dealing with the internal instability and international adjustments that followed Stalin's show trials and purges and additional disagreements with the Comintern policies. In the summer of 1939, the rapprochement between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union in August 1939 generated another significant blow that shook communist organisations and anti-fascist activists.[4] In other words, organised political opposition did not pose a substantial threat to fascist regimes at the end of the 1930s. Their security apparatuses continued to engage with political dissent vigorously and ruthlessly but, with war imminent, their attention was on other targets, unconnected to political parties and organisations.

#### 4.1.1. *Broader Persecution and the Reorganisation of the Political Police Services in Italy*

The Italian communist party and the other anti-fascist organisations had lost ground in Italy in the second half of the 1930s. *Giustizia e Libertà* had been destabilised after the murder of its leader Carlo Rosselli in June 1937.[5] The communist party had not succeeded in establishing an operational centre in the peninsula and directed its propaganda and actions from abroad. In the months preceding the outbreak of the war, it did no longer represent a major threat to the Fascist

[3] For a comprehensive analysis, see Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*; and Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1993).
[4] See Pons, *The Global Revolution*; and Serge Wolikow, *L'Internazionale comunista: Il sogno infranto del partito mondiale della rivoluzione* (Roma: Carocci, 2016).
[5] For further information, see Bresciani, *Quale antifascismo?*.

regime and was no longer the main concern of the Italian political police. The close police surveillance and ability to infiltrate the communist organisation was so successful that the police possessed very precise and comprehensive knowledge of the party's most secret structure and activities abroad.[6] At the end of the decade, Rome knew that the communist centre in Paris was suffering a political and financial crisis. Moscow was highly critical about its work and, through the Comintern, had imposed a reorganisation, including a change of leadership and strategies.[7] In the spring of 1939, the PolPol produced a 26-page 'very confidential' and detailed report about the Italian communist party that contained updated and detailed information about the structure, tactics, and latest internal developments of the Italian communist party. It also included names, pseudonyms, addresses, and photos of its leading members out of the country.[8] The information proved so recent (up to March 1939) and accurate that they could have only been provided by someone who was a member of the central committee of the PCI.[9] This report was the result of an efficient, pervasive, and experienced police apparatus that was dedicated to the fight against anti-fascism and communism in particular, which Bocchini defined the 'most resolute enemy of the Fascist regime' in the report.[10]

Over the 1930s, the attention of the political police gradually shifted from militant anti-fascist organisations to any form of real or supposed nonconformity and dissent. This extension of police surveillance to different sectors of the national community reflected the totalitarian ambitions of the regime, which aimed to achieve the complete fascistisation of the country.[11] In fact the police, and the political police in particular, were a valuable tool in the hands of the regime to permeate and control Italian society and institutions and to enforce ideological conformity.[12] The Political Police Division enlarged its network of informers in order to infiltrate and scrutinise all the sectors of society, of the state, and even of the Fascist organisations. In so doing, it could monitor public opinion and detect any form of dissent and

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[6] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 311.

[7] On this point, see Sergio Bertelli, *Il gruppo: La formazione del gruppo dirigente del PCI 1936-1948* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1980), 29-58.

[8] See the report dated 2 May 1939 and entitled *Brevi cenni informativi sull'attuale (Marzo 1939) organizazzione e sul funzionamento del Partito Comunista Italiano* in Ibid., 93-115.

[9] Ibid., 87.

[10] See Bocchini's accompanying letter to the report in Ibid.

[11] On this point, see also Jonathan Dunnage, "Social Control in Fascist Italy: The Role of the Police," chap. 12 in *Social Control in Europe: Volume 2, 1800-2000*, Clive Emsley, Eric Johnson, and Pieter Spierenburg, eds. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), 261-80, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/28322; Philip Morgan '"The years of consent"? Popular attitudes and resistance to Fascism in Italy, 1925-1940', in *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe*, eds. Tim Kirk and Anthony McElligott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 163-80.

[12] At the same time, it is still problematic to define how much the interior ministry's police themselves were subjected to this process of fascistisation; see Jonathan Dunnage, 'Italian Policemen and Fascist Ideology', *The Italianist* 31, no. 1 (1 February 2011): 99–111, https://doi.org/10.1179/026143411X12966456896826.

criticism, even within the regime apparatus.[13] The late 1930s indeed saw mounting disaffection with the regime and discontent towards its financial and foreign policies, notably the alliance with Nazi Germany, which intensified as the spectre of war appeared on the horizon.[14]

To better perform the task, the new head of the Division Guido Leto engaged in a reorganisation of the network of informants of the PolPol. In October 1938, Bocchini had moved him from the DAGR to the PolPol to replace Michelangelo Di Stefano, who had suddenly died. As soon as he was put in charge of the PolPol, Leto refined the activity and files of the informers. On the one hand, he provided them with a set of guidelines to better perform their assignments and to improve the quality of the information provided. On the other hand, numerous informers that he did not consider valuable or trustworthy were dismissed. This reorganisation caused a loss of precious documentation, because those dossiers and records that were no longer considered useful for the service were destroyed.[15]

The OVRA too was no longer solely engaged in the repression of anti-fascist parties at the end of the 1930s and was subjected to a progressive reorganization. The secret political police had been created as the operational arm of the Political Police Division to implement and conduct the anti-communist repression within the country. Like the PolPol, the OVRA expanded its tasks and activities during the 1930s. It converted from 'an organisation specialised in the fight against communism into a totalitarian instrument of control' and repression of all the forms of domestic dissent and opposition.[16] In light of this, its membership rose and new OVRA offices were established in territories where the presence and activity of underground communist or anti-fascist groups was usually scarce and irrelevant.[17] The number of its informants increased as well. They had originally belonged to the social groups more sympathetic to communist penetration but now they represented, and informed on, the whole society.[18]

At the same time, the police intensified its persecution of non-conforming behaviours and perceived social deviances like homosexuality, prostitution, and abortion. They had been always persecuted by the Fascist regime and, in some respects, that repressive attitude was in

[13] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 182-201; Jonathan Dunnage, "Oppression and consensus-building: policing communities in fascist Italy," chap. 3 in *Mussolini's Policemen*, 78-103.
[14] For further information, see Simona Colarizi, *L'opinione degli italiani sotto il regime: 1929-1943*, 1st ed. (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1991), especially its chapters 5 and 6; and Paul Corner, "The Crisis of the late 1930s and the 'Totalitarian Phase' of Fascism," chap. 9 in *The Fascist Party and Popular Opinion in Mussolini's Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227-44.
[15] See Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 64, and 141-42; Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 363.
[16] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 312.
[17] When Italy entered the war in 1940, the OVRA personnel amounted to 56 functionaries and 319 agents; in Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 388.
[18] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 311-13.

continuity with the liberal past.[19] Yet, in the course of the 1930s, the regime increasingly regarded them as political, subversive acts, and repressed them accordingly, even when they were not explicitly prohibited by the law. That was the case of homosexuality that, unlike in the Third Reich, was persecuted by the Fascist regime although there was no specific legislation against it. Despite an internal debate, the Fascist authorities continued with the liberal tradition that did not consider homosexuality per se a crime. No law prohibited it, but homosexuals – both in liberal and in Fascist Italy – were persecuted and subjected to police measures at the discretion of the police, which intervened to suppress what was perceived as an immoral conduct and a source of public scandal. Police repression intensified with the establishment of the regime but, in the second half of the 1930s, homosexuality started to be considered as a crime against the state, therefore a political crime. As a result, more and more homosexuals were sent to the *confino* like political detainees.[20]

In the second half of the 1930s, the political police were more involved with monitoring the members of religious minorities too. In a predominantly Catholic country and with a strong presence and influence of the Church, the Fascist authorities began to officially regard members of religious minorities as deviant and dissident elements, enemies of the nation and the regime, and therefore explicitly compared them to anti-fascist militants.[21] The Italian police had started to classify Jews living in Italy as intrinsically suspect and politically unreliable even before the issue of racial legislation in September 1938. Even the suspension of the expulsion decree against foreign Jews in March 1939 did not mean an end to their racial and religious discrimination.[22] Although no further measures were put into practice until Italy's entry into the war in June 1940, the situation of the Jews – especially foreign Jews – remained uncertain, and they continued to be the monitored by the police and by the interior ministry's Directorate General for Demography and Race (*Direzione generale per la demografia e la razza*, or simply *Demorazza*). This office had been created in 1938 under the supervision of undersecretary Buffarini specifically to enforce the anti-Jewish and racial policies of the regime.[23]

[19] For a comprehensive examination see Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*; Ferris, Ebner, and Arthurs, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Fascist Italy*; Jonathan Dunnage, "Policemen and 'Women of Ill Repute': A Study of Male Sexual Attitudes and Behaviour in Fascist Italy," *European History Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 72–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691415618606.
[20] Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, 193-97; Gabriella Romano, *The Pathologisation of Homosexuality in Fascist Italy: The Case of "G"* (Palgrave Pivot, 2019), 49-65.
[21] For a comprehensive analysis of the interactions between Catholic Church, Fascist government, and evangelical minorities in Italy as well as a comparison with the liberal past, see Paolo Zanini, *Il 'pericolo protestante': Chiesa e cattolici italiani di fronte alla questione della libertà religiosa (1922-1955)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2019).
[22] On this point, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 306-10.
[23] For further information on the activity of the *Demorazza* and the role played by Buffarini in the racial persecution, see Fabre, *Il razzismo del duce*.

At the end of the decade, the Italian police launched persecutory campaigns against non-Catholic minorities and religious groups that were considered alien to the national community and not aligned to the regime. As with the Jews, the regime had generally tolerated Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other evangelical groups, but now their members were judged politically unreliable and subjected to police persecution as dissidents.[24] Their cults were not banned but these religious groups were forced to meet clandestinely. The repression became more systematic and widespread after a directive issued by Bocchini to the local police headquarters in August 1939.[25] It made clear that any religious divergence was now understood by the Fascist regime as a refusal to adhere to common national values and institutions, like the Catholic faith. They indicated a not-alignment with the nation and, thus with the regime, and had to be treated accordingly.[26] Non-Catholic Christian minorities were now openly targeted by the police, which classified them under the category 'Subversive Associations'.[27] The OVRA in particular assumed a leading role in their persecution.[28] As the war approached, the Fascist secret political police were no longer just an instrument of police repression but one of general deterrence and widespread control across the country. The fight against the communist party and the other anti-fascist organisations remained the priority, but OVRA functionaries were no longer just 'communist hunters'.[29] This expansion of scope and targets was officially sanctioned by Bocchini right before Italy's entry into the Second World War.

In preparation for war, the police chief demanded a 'reinforcement of the OVRA's organisms' and services, directed towards 'a more comprehensive and broader action of surveillance' for the defence of the state in wartime. Bocchini observed that organised anti-fascism was in retreat and the activity of its centres abroad was restrained and under control. Yet, strict police surveillance and intelligence gathering had to continue. On the contrary, he encouraged the OVRA functionaries to be 'generous' in the application of preventive police measures against those individuals that had already been identified as dangerous elements in the event of war. Since prevention was essential, he requested that OVRA functionaries infiltrate every social group and sphere, included the Catholic one. Like soldiers, they were 'mobilised' to 'constantly, and by whatever means, scrutinise the public opinion' and gather information on 'anti-fascists without a specific political connotation, complainers, and super-

[24] For a detailed analysis, see Giorgio Rochat, *Regime fascista e chiese evangeliche: Direttive e articolazioni del controllo e della repressione* (Torino: Claudiana, 1990).
[25] In Ibid., 257-59.
[26] See also Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 364-71.
[27] Rochat, *Regime fascista e chiese evangeliche*, 260-68.
[28] The secret political police had occasionally conducted actions against religious groups before, but only in connections to operations against anti-fascist organisations and never in a systematic way. On this point, see Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 366.
[29] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 311.

criticisers'. The OVRA in wartime was expected to be 'an agile and adaptable organism that works with the maximum rapidity and precision, which strikes with promptness and energy, which prevents offences and perils, which anticipates the opponent in every single ground'.[30] In other words, the secret political police were instructed to prepared for the new situation and widen its range of action and tasks as well as its targets, which were generically labelled as anti-fascists, to protect the Fascist state from any domestic menace and disturbance.

When Italy intervened in the war in 1940, the political police were fully in control of the domestic situation and eager to serve the Fascist regime in the persecution of its enemies. Any organised political opposition or threat had been neutralised or profoundly undermined, both at home and out of the country. At the same time, the number of crimes regarded as political, and thus repressed as such, increased during the 1930s, especially in the later part of the decade. Social groups and religious minorities that had never been particularly discriminated before were now openly and systematically targeted by the regime and its security apparatus. The police increasingly and arbitrarily intervened in the life of the citizens even though their actions had nothing to do with organised political opposition and dissent. As a result, the political police and the OVRA expanded their functions, organisation, and scope to comply with their new tasks: the protection of the regime and the nation from any form of non-aligned and nonconforming conduct. In short, the Fascist repressive apparatus extended its grasp over the country throughout the 1930s, a trend that continued and increased in wartime.

### 4.1.2. *The Nazi Police State at the Outbreak of the War*

In Germany, as in Italy, communist and socialist parties as well as other left-wing movements had not survived the severe repression that accompanied the Nazi consolidation of power and the establishment of the dictatorship. Underground groups continued to exist and operate clandestinely in major urban and industrial areas, but any organised form of domestic political opposition had been fundamentally liquidated by the mid-1930s.[31] At that point, the Nazi security apparatus tightened its control over the German population and implemented a system of wide-ranging police repression. The solutions adopted by Nazi regime to deal with this perceived social and racial enemies became increasingly oppressive and more radical at the end of the decade, paving the way to the explosion of extreme violence of the war years.

Together with political opposition and the alleged 'racial enemies' of the German national community that the Nazis identified primarily with the Jews, Nazi propaganda and ideology

[30] See Bocchini's communication to the OVRA inspector-generals dated 4 June 1940, in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, K/R-OVRA, 1927-1943, b.6.

[31] For further information, see Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, especially its chap. 7 "The Working Class: Everyday Life and Opposition," 101-44.

had always and openly declared any perceived nonconforming social, moral, and religious behaviour as divergent from and antagonistic to true national German values. The Nazi regime had labelled these alleged deviances as crimes against the German national community and repressed them along with open resistance and opposition to Nazi rule. Non-conformist behaviour was increasingly targeted by the regime in the second half of the decade, once the regime had fully consolidated its authority at home and the security apparatus had been concentrated in the hands of Himmler and the SS.[32]

German Jews had been ruthlessly mistreated and targeted by the regime since its early stages, yet they had not been the primary target until the end of the 1930s. On 9-10 November 1938, the Nazi authorities promoted nation-wide anti-Jewish pogroms, known as *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass).[33] From that moment, segregation and systematic violence intensified. The intention of the Nazi authorities was to induce the remaining Jews to definitively leave the Reich. In this regard, it was decided to extend to the whole country the system of mass emigration that Adolf Eichmann and the Central Office of Jewish Emigration had developed and implemented in Austria.[34] The Nazi authorities continued to contemplate migration as the most favourable solutions to the 'Jewish problem' until the second half of 1941.

Other religious minorities were openly targeted by the Nazi authorities. Against Jehovah's Witnesses and other evangelical sects Berlin implemented more radical measures than Rome.[35] The cult of the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, was officially banned in 1935, and they were subjected to brutal police repression because of their declared disapproval of and tenacious resistance to the Nazi regime.[36] The Nazi authorities assumed an increasingly confrontational attitude even towards the main Christian churches, despite initial accommodation and selective approval for some Nazi polices. Their relationships with the Catholic and the Protestant churches deteriorated in the second part of 1930s. They did not launch an open and large-scale

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[32] See Gellately, *Backing Hitler*; Lisa Pine, *Hitler's 'National Community': Society and Culture in Nazi Germany* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2007). See also Eric A. Johnson, "Some Thoughts on Social Control in 'Totalitarian' Society: The Case of Nazi Germany," chap. 11 in *Social Control in Europe*, eds. Emsley, Johnson, and Spierenburg.

[33] For a detailed reconstruction, see Alan E. Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 116-127.

[34] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 126-32. On Eichmann and the Central Office for Jewish Emigration see footnote no.50 in chap.3.

[35] For further information, see Christine Elizabeth King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1982).

[36] About the persecution of Jehovah Witnesses in Nazi Germany, see Ibid.; James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), which included an appendix with several documents (in German and English) related to the persecution; also Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

attack against them, but religious institutions and clergymen were more frequently targeted by the Nazi security apparatus.[37]

At the end of the decade, the regime promoted a mounting criminalisation of alleged divergent and non-conforming behaviours that was accompanied by large-scale campaigns against the enemies of the national community, like the anti-Jewish pogroms in 1938. The Nazi authorities did not generally conceal these actions nor their objectives. Quite the contrary, the campaigns against 'criminals' and 'parasites' were usually reported in the newspapers and thus were in the public domain. The regime encouraged a vast participation of the population and an active contribution of party and state institutions in the identification and preventive removal from the national community of whoever was considered an alien and disturbing element. In preparations for the war, Himmler even requested local authorities to carry out a certain number of preventive arrests, since these raids provided additional free workforce for the war economy. As a result, thousands of people were arrested without having committed an offence and were interned in concentration camps for an indefinite period, in most cases until their death. Common criminals, social and racial offenders progressively outnumbered political criminals in concentration camps.[38]

The whole German police apparatus engaged in the persecution of social and racial outcasts, not just the Gestapo. The criminal police, for example, took the lead in the repression of the 'asocial elements', whom Himmler vaguely indicated as those subjects whose behaviour, though not necessarily criminal, indicated 'that they will not adapt themselves to the community'.[39] This generic label was attributed to different categories of social outsiders, like work-shy, drunkards, vagrants, prostitutes, and women accused of having a dubious moral or sexual conduct, and who were thus subjected to police repression.[40] The vast asocial category also included Roma and Sinti who were characterised as racially inferior and thus as social outsiders. They fell within the scope of Kripo and its Reich Central Office to Combat the Gypsy Menace.[41] This differed from Italy, where the Fascist authorities increasingly targeted Roma and Sinti but they were not systematically persecuted until the outbreak of the war.[42] Another difference with the Italian police was that German criminal police had a department with female

[37] The Nazi authorities intended to solve 'the church questions' once and for all at the end of the war; see Pine, *Hitler's 'National Community'*, 84-90.
[38] Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 99. See also Pine, *Hitler's 'National Community'*, 99-165.
[39] Ibid., 97.
[40] For further information, see Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[41] For an overview of the persecution of Roma and Sinti in Nazi Germany, see Sybil H. Milton, "'Gyspsies' as Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany," chap. 10 in Ibid., 212-32.
[42] For a reconstruction of the persecution of Roma and Sinti in Fascist Italy, see Luca Bravi and Matteo Bassoli, *Il Porrajmos in Italia: La persecuzione di Rom e Sinti durante il fascismo* (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2013), https://www.ilibridiemil.it/images/Image/Copertine_Emil/2013/2013_26_8Porrajmos.pdf.

personnel and with a woman at its head. In 1939, the Female Criminal Police were attached to the newly established Kripo's Reich Headquarters for Combating Juvenile Delinquency. Young Germans were indeed subjected to an increasingly number of restrictions and regulations in the Third Reich, especially in wartime. The police were thus given extensive preventive and repressive powers to punish any breach of the law or juvenile transgression, including the internment in special camps created exclusively for adolescents.[43]

The German police not only expanded their power and competences but acted with growing autonomy, detached from any judicial supervision or legal restrictions. And yet, ordinary courts too complied with the Nazi vision of preventive and indefinite punishments of crime and transgressions. Judges not only severely punished any violation of the law, but they could send recurrent offenders – who were considered as having a natural inclination to crime – to preventive and indefinite 'security confinement' (*Sicherungsverwahrung*) in institutions that were run by the legal system.[44] Besides, German courts were involved in the persecution of homosexuals. Unlike the Italian case, the German law considered homosexuality a crime since the Wilhelmine criminal code. The Nazi regime had then reinforced the existing law to punish not just the act but also the intention. Homosexuals were subjected to police measures but, as Wachsmann points out, in most cases they were handed over to ordinary courts for sentencing.[45]

The wide-raging repression that was in place in Germany soon extended out of the country, into the annexed territories. Moreover, even the German social outsiders who had fled to avoid persecution at home were not always out of the reach of the German police, thanks to the bilateral police cooperation.

### 4.1.3. *The Growing Deployment Abroad of the German Police and the Establishment of the Reich Security Main Office*

Further adjustments to the organisation and activity of the German police were determined by the territorial expansion of the Third Reich at the end of the 1930s. The previous chapter examined how the German police apparatus incorporated its Austrian counterpart after the Anschluss and how it reorganised the political police services in the annexed territories. This was followed by expansion of German police activity into the annexed Sudetenland territories

[43] Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 177-78. On the repression of youth crime and transgression, see also Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 262-83; and Alfons Kenkmann, "Störfaktor an der 'Heimatfront': Jugendliche Nonkonformität und die Gestapo," in *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg: "Heimatfront" und besetztes Europa*, eds. Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 179-200. On the repression of juvenile crime in Austria see Evan Burr Bukey, *Juvenile Crime and Dissent in Nazi Vienna, 1938-1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), especially its chapter 4 "Juvenile Political Crimes, 1940–1944," 97-118.

[44] Wachsmann, *Hitler's Prisons*, 130.

[45] Ibid., 144-49.

in the autumn of 1938, and into Bohemia and Moravia after the establishment of the Protectorate the following spring.[46]

First, the expansion of the Reich determined an increasing 'foreign deployment' (*Auswärtiger Einsatz*) of Sipo and SD units, whose members generally formed the leadership of the German security apparatus in the annexed territory.[47] These Sipo and SD mobile task forces, the *Einsatzgruppen*, were promptly deployed to secure the German takeover and to eliminate any opposition and resistance to the Nazi rule as soon as a new territory had fallen under the control of German troops. They were deployed outside Germany for the first time in Austria, in March 1938. Building on that experience, this 'new instrument of state police action' was improved and implemented in the Sudetenland in September 1938.[48] The special units, or *Einsatzkommandos*, that formed the two *Einsatzgruppen* active in the Sudetenland proved methodical and ruthless in securing the German occupation, conducting more than 10,000 arrests of real or potential opponents. As usual, these units could count on the collaboration of local forces to carry out their tasks, which now also included the forceful germanisation of the non-German population in the annexed area by enforcing assimilation or removal.[49]

The majority of the population in the Sudetenland was German, so the incorporation of the territory into the Reich proceeded rapidly, without complications. The annexation of the Czech territory in 1939 was much more problematic.[50] Unlike Austria and the Sudetenland, the Protectorate was indeed principally inhabited by Czechs, so the Nazis regarded it 'as a conquered foreign land'.[51] Yet, it was incorporated into the Reich, although it was granted some degree of administrative autonomy.[52] The police forces in the Protectorate were subordinated to the local Higher SS and Police Leader, Karl Hermann Frank, who was also the deputy of the Reich Protector von Neurath. The HSSPF played a decisive role in the implementation of the Nazi occupation and racial policies in the occupied territories.[53] They were recognised increasing power and autonomy within their jurisdiction, where they commanded all the police forces and SS units.[54]

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[46] See "Undoing Munich: October 1938-March 1939," chap. 26 in Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 639-93.
[47] Dams and Stolle, *The Gestapo*, 119.
[48] Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Menschenjagd und Massenmord: Das neue Instrument der Einsatzgruppen und -kommandos 1938-1945," in *Die Gestapo: Mythos und Realität*, eds. Paul and Mallmann, 291.
[49] Ibid., 293-94; Dams and Stolle, *The Gestapo*, 120-24.
[50] For further details on the occupation and organisation of the Sudetenland and Protectorate, see Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Research Institute for Military History), ed., *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. V/1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24-41.
[51] Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 686.
[52] Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. V/1, 35.
[53] Ibid., 38-39.
[54] Dams and Stolle, *The Gestapo*, 25.

Second, the dismantling of Czechoslovakia allowed the Gestapo not only to incorporate the Protectorate into its jurisdiction as an occupying force but also to extend its power and influence over the new-found Slovak state. Like their administration in the Protectorate, the approach of the Third Reich to Slovakia modelled and inspired the German attitude towards its client states later on. Independent by name, Slovakia was indeed a satellite of the Third Reich, the first country in the Nazi orbit. Berlin not only dictated its foreign policy but also intervened in its domestic policies. To do so, many German advisors were posted in Slovakia.[55] These included policemen who were sent there to support the organisation of the newly established Slovakian police force and to influence its security policies, against political subversives and Jews in the first place. From 1940, the interactions and cooperation between the German and Slovak police forces were supervised by Franz Goltz, who was appointed German police representative in Bratislava.[56]

Third, the growing deployment abroad of German policemen and, in particular, the formation of *Einsatzgruppen* was part of a process of increasing complementarity and combination of functions and staff between Gestapo and SD that accelerated at the end of the 1930s and ultimately prompted an administrative reorganisation of the Nazi security apparatus. Himmler and Heydrich had worked towards an amalgamation between the police, a state institution, and the Nazi party's security organisations (the SS and their security service, the SD) since their takeover and unification of all the German police forces in 1936. Their aspiration was a police apparatus in the hands of the SS, which would be ideologically committed to protect the national community and whose mandate depended exclusively on Hitler.[57] The prospect of an imminent war in 1939 speeded up their plan, which resulted in the creation of a new Nazi central security agency. Heydrich decided to pursue the definitive unification of police and SD into 'a new type of specifically National Socialist institution', which was neither simply a party nor a state organisation.[58] Conceptualised by Schellenberg, Heydrich and Himmler's vision of a security organisation run by 'political fighters', devoted to the Nazi cause and the protection of the national community and subjected to no other authority other than Hitler's will, came into effect a few weeks after the outbreak of the war.[59]

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[55] See Ivan Kamenec, "The Slovak state, 1939-1945," in *Slovakia in History*, eds. Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin D. Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175-92; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 61-62.

[56] For a detailed examination of the police interactions between Nazi Germany and of the work of Goltz, see Tatjana Tönsmeyer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945: Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003); in particular pp. 118-36.

[57] On this point, see Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*; Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*.

[58] Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 9.

[59] About the role played by Schellenberg in the establishment of the new Reich security organisation, see Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*, 49-75.

On 27 September 1939, Himmler merged the main offices of Sipo and SD to form the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA, Reich Security Main Office). In its definitive form, it was organised in seven offices, whose most important was the IV, the Gestapo. It was indeed in charge of the surveillance and repression of opposition and enemies at home and in the occupied territories. The Criminal Police was the new Office V, whereas the SD was partitioned in Office III (SD-Domestic), and in Office VI (SD-Foreign).[60] The new security organisation was headed by Heydrich, who from September 1941 was also acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, until his assassination in Prague on 4 June 1942.[61] After his death and a brief interim in which the *Reichsführer* took over directly, Himmler chose Ernst Kaltenbrunner as head of the RSHA.[62]

The Reich Security Main Office was thus the result of a growing combination and complementarity between the police and the SS/SD personnel, tasks, and functions. Since it was established right after the beginning of the Second World War, its history is extremely connected to the course of the conflict.[63] In wartime, its offices and personnel actively and decisively contributed to the implementation of the Nazi rule and racial policies.

## 4.2 Developments in the Italian-German Police Partnership Before the Outbreak of the War

The previous sections highlighted the development and renovation of police services that occurred in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy before the outbreak of the war. The radicalisation and expansion of the scope and targets of the police was reflected on their bilateral cooperation and determined an intensification of cross-border police pressure on migrants and expatriates. This was particularly evident in the German community in Italy, because it mirrored the far-reaching repression that was in place in the Reich, especially after the arrival of the new German police liaison officer Kappler in Rome, in the spring of 1939. At the same time, the partnership and bonds between the two Axis police forces continued to strengthen, notwithstanding relentless wariness and differences.

The year 1939 opened with the annual celebration of the *Tag der Deutschen Polizei* in January 1939 and Himmler's tenth anniversary at the head of the SS. For the *Reichsführer*, this represented a suitable occasion to consolidate the ties between the Axis police forces and to return Bocchini's hospitality, since he had then spent a few days in the Italian police chief's

[60] Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 150-64.
[61] About Heydrich's death, see Gerwarth, "Death in Prague," chap. 1 in *Hitler's Hangman*, 1-13. About his activity as acting Reich Protector, see "Reich Protector," chap. 8 in Ibid., 218-77; also Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 319-22.
[62] On Kaltenbrunner's appointment at the head of the RSHA, see footnote no. 61 in chap. 3.
[63] On this point, see Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 165.

hometown, in October 1938. Himmler thus invited Bocchini and his collaborators to Germany at the beginning of 1939.[64]

The Italian embassy received with apprehension the news that neither Bocchini nor his closest collaborators intended to travel to Berlin, in light of the relevance that the police connection had for the broader Axis relationship. Embassy counsellor Massimo Magistrati, who was Ciano's brother-in-law, commented that, since the establishment of police collaboration in 1936, the German police had always honoured the Italian police and the Fascist regime with the presence of Himmler and his collaborators at the *Festa della Polizia*.[65] This comment was correct, but Magistrati ignored the fact that Himmler too had repeatedly tried to withdraw from these events, until Hitler in 1937 and Mussolini in 1938 had persuaded him of the diplomatic importance of his presence.[66] All the same, these exchanges of formal visits were an indication of the close police relationships and, more broadly, of the strong interactions between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Italian embassy thus feared that the participation of a low-profile police delegation risked being interpreted by the Germans as a sign of disrespect and indifference.

Mussolini and Bocchini decided to send some high-ranking police functionaries to Germany. The Italian delegation that attended the *Tag der Deutschen Polizei* in January 1939 included the *questore* of Rome, Amedeo Palma, who was the highest in rank; the *questore* of Turin, Giuseppe Murino; and the *vice-questore* of Napoli, Michele Broccoli. Bocchini limited the participation of the police directorate and sent only two representatives: the polyglot and ICPC vice president Pizzuto, and the deputy head of his secretariat Coriolano Pagnozzi. Apart from the latter, all the delegates had already met and interacted with the German police hierarchies and had even received German decorations. The delegation, which was joined upon its arrival in Berlin by the police attaché Chiavaccini, attended the official ceremonies and receipts organised by the Nazi authorities on 29 and 30 January, and then spent two days in Munich as guests of the local authorities.[67] Although Bocchini did not attend the event, the presence of an Italian police delegation was celebrated by the German police leadership.

Alongside official and private visits, the relationships between the two police forces and their leaderships were reinforced through extra-policing exchanges. At the beginning of 1939, Himmler dispatched to Italy some SS men to learn Italian cuisine from the chef of the police

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[64] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.10, f.656, Festa della polizia tedesca. Invio rappresentanti della polizia italiana, Himmler to Bocchini, 21 December 1938.
[65] Ibid., Chiavaccini to Manganiello, 7 January 1939.
[66] About Mussolini's invitation, see ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1938, b.9, f. Festa della Polizia Italiana, sf. Inviti delegazioni estere.
[67] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.10, f.656.

academy in Caserta.[68] During his Italian trips, the *Reichsführer* had discovered many Italian dishes and particularly appreciated 'pasta al pomodoro'. Bocchini was an expert gourmet and periodically sent Himmler boxes of pasta and sauce and, in winter, dried fruit, nuts, and Sicilian oranges.[69] A mutual exchange of traditional national and local products became a habit typical of Christmas time that continued in wartime and after the death of Bocchini in 1940. Sporting events also helped to improve personal relationships and to strengthen the ties between the two police forces. In April 1939, Heydrich – who was a passionate and skilled fencer – took part in a fencing tournament in Italy.[70] A year later, he received from Bocchini some swords and a fencing manual that the police chief had expressly ordered from a famous Italian fencer.[71]

Under the circumstances, the police collaboration on the ground proceeded without difficulties. The exchange of communication between the Gestapo and the Italian police continuously intensified, especially after the arrival of Herbert Kappler in Rome as new police liaison officer. His predecessor Helmerking had returned to Germany to apply for a diplomatic job. The attempt of 'don Theodoro' – as the Italians called him – to start a new career was not successful and he eventually left the police too.[72]

Kappler was more committed than Helmerking and had a more proactive approach to his tasks as Gestapo liaison officer in Italy. He arrived in Rome on 14 March 1939 from Innsbruck, where he had served at the local Gestapo office and had proved a qualified policeman, an expert in police interrogations. His ability was well-known in Berlin, as he was briefly recalled to Germany in November 1939 to participate in the interrogation of Georg Elser – a carpenter who attempted to assassinate Hitler on the occasion of the commemorations for the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich – and of two British intelligence officers kidnapped by Schellenberg and the SD in Venlo, at the German-Dutch border.[73] Moreover, Kappler already had a good knowledge of the German community in Italy and was familiar with the joint work with the Italian authorities as he had been deployed in Palermo on the occasion of Hitler's visit in 1938.

In Rome, Kappler established a good and friendly rapport with Raffaele Alianello who, as new head of the Office RG after Leto's transfer to the PolPol, was his main contact within the Italian police. The arrival of Kappler, however, created some frictions with Himmler's personal

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[68] See BArch, NS 19 (Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS)/2069.
[69] Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 249.
[70] Ibid., 248.
[71] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.39, f.1824, sf.2.
[72] See PA AA, Personalakten bis 1945, Theodor Helmerking, 1938-1941, b.5697. Not much is known about his later activity, apart that in 1943 Himmler himself ordered his demotion to simple SS man and the forcible conscription into the Waffen SS' Panzer Division 'Totenkopf' to punish a conduct that was considered detrimental to the honour of the SS; in BArch, BDC, R 9361-III/530257, Helmerking Theodor.
[73] See TNA, WO (War Office) 204/12798, Kappler. Ardeatine Caves Cases, Interrogation Report on SS Obersturmbannführer Kappler Herbert dated 8 June 1945, p.1.

envoy in Italy, Eugen Dollmann. In his memoirs, Dollmann described Kappler as ‘a secret but unmistakable foe of mine’.[74] Because of his role, Himmler’s envoy was in fact not accountable to the police attaché, and Kappler did not appreciate either his autonomy of action or his direct connections with Himmler, Bocchini, and the highest echelons of the Fascist regime.

As soon as the new police attaché took office, more members of the German community were placed under police scrutiny and the communication between the Gestapo and the Italian police increased. The exchange of information between the two police forces did not simply intensify, but it started to focus on new categories of ‘subversives’ not originally included among the targets of the police collaboration. Kappler began to request the Italian police information about the ‘moral conduct’ of unmarried German women and to denounce German homosexuals living in Italy.[75] Alongside other social outsiders, homosexuals, prostitutes, and women who were considered morally questionable either because they were unmarried or because they lacked a stable or racially approved relationship, were increasingly put under police scrutiny. Yet, they were not subjected to the secret extraditions until the outbreak of the war. Not even Jews, as the Nazi authorities did not initially want them back in Germany. The original extradition clause in the police agreement did not include these categories, and the Italian police preferred to keep the extraditions restricted to political subversives. Still, it was possible for Kappler and the Gestapo to circumvent any difficulty justifying a request of extradition by political reasons, as they increasingly did during the war years.[76]

The pressure on Italian and German emigrants and refugees grew so much at the end of the 1930s that many of them, voluntarily or forcibly, were displaced again. They had to confront more and more restrictions, denunciations, police investigations, and the constant threat of expulsions. An Italian, living in Germany since 1919 with his German wife and two adolescent sons who were born there, was repeatedly denounced to the Gestapo and, although the police found nothing against him, his whole family was ultimately expelled. He was first arrested in 1938 for some alleged declarations against Hitler and Mussolini during a quarrel with some German citizens but was immediately discharged. After a while, he and his two sons were again reported to the German authorities, this time the accusation was homosexuality. Such a synchronised series of denunciations appear questionable, if not deliberately orchestrated, not least because the German police always released the man immediately after questioning him. Even the Italian police confirmed to the Gestapo that he had maintained a good moral and political conduct before moving to Germany. Nevertheless, in 1939 the German authorities

[74] Dollmann, *With Hitler and Mussolini*, 91. See also, Eugen Dollmann, *Roma nazista* (Milano: Longanesi, 1951), 315-18.
[75] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.8, f. RG 28 and f. RG 49.
[76] Klaus Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 366-67.

decided to expel his whole family from the Reich, and any appeal to revise the judgment was rejected.[77]

Not only the police forces, but also the consulates reported anti-fascists and subversives and requested their extradition or expulsion to the authorities of the host country. The Italian consulate in Saarbrucken proved very keen on demanding that the Gestapo arrest and then expel Italians that were considered anti-fascist or politically unreliable and thus 'represented a danger for the Italian colony'.[78] In case of a pending police warrant in the country of origin, the expulsion was similar to an extradition. The deportee was escorted to the Italian-German border and there expelled, usually with no other possibly than to be arrested on the spot by the police authorities of his native country, as it had occurred to Agostino P. in 1936.[79]

The number of secret extraditions rose compared to the previous years, but this practice remained limited until the outbreak of the war. Until the end of 1938, it had been adopted against only two Germans and four Italians, with the latter all extradited after the Anschluss, i.e. once Germany and Italy shared a border. A few more extraditions occurred in the first months of 1939. Two cases involved German refuges and migrants who had used false documents to enter Italy and that had been arrested and sentenced for that. According to the local legislation, they were extraditable only once they had completed their jail term.[80] A few Italian ordinary criminals were subjected to the same fate as they had used a false identity in Germany. One of them remained in jail even longer than his original prison term, until the Gestapo received Rome's approval for the deportation. Once in the hands of the Italian police, he was first imprisoned for illegal expatriation and then transferred to his province of residence where he was sentenced again for his past crimes.[81]

The intensification of the cross-border police persecution meant a significant increase in communication between the PS and the Gestapo in 1939. To better manage it, in July 1939, Epifanio Pennetta, who had replaced Leto at the head of the DAGR, reminded the other police divisions that all incoming correspondence received from the liaison officer Chiavaccini (and thus communication with the Gestapo) had to be directly passed to the 'special Office RG', which was the competent office to deal with the matter.[82] The amount of information exchanged between the Office RG and the Gestapo rose exponentially after the outbreak of the Second World War as well as the number of extraction and deportations.

[77] See the correspondence about Giovanni B. in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.5 and 8, f. RG 35.
[78] See the case of Gaetano M., in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.8, f. RG 35.
[79] About this point, see also Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 24-5.
[80] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 1, 115-18.
[81] See the case of Giovanni M. in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.5 and b.8, f. RG 35.
[82] See Pennetta's communication dated 18 July 1939 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.8, f. RG 30.

As the war approached, not only did the mutual collaboration against political subversion go far beyond the resolutions agreed in 1936, but the broader police partnership between the two Axis powers intensified and expanded. In June 1939, the commander-general of the carabinieri Moizo visited Berlin, where he was celebrated by the chief of *Ordnungspolizei* Daluge and by Himmler.[83] Most important, the German police established strong connections with the Italian colonial police. At the end of the 1930s, Berlin started to consider how to govern colonial possessions. The predictable European war against the western democracies was indeed expected to reopen the issue of spheres of influence not only in Europe but also in the colonies. Therefore, Berlin sought inspiration and a model to follow for its future colonial administration and found it in Fascist Italy.[84]

In the summer of 1938, Himmler asked Bocchini's intercession to arrange a visit of some German policemen to study the Italian colonial police. The *Polizia dell'Africa italiana* (PAI, 'Italian Africa Police') were a new, specialised corps created by the Fascist regime after the conquest of Ethiopia and Himmler was particularly interested in their organisation and training. They were an armed police force under the ministry of the colonies (renamed 'ministry of Italian Africa' in 1937) with military structure and organisation. Its personnel were mainly recruited from the army, the militia, and the other Italian police forces, but also included indigenous units. The corps was not subordinate to the interior ministry, but the ties and connections between PS and PAI were close and frequent as well as between their chiefs Bocchini and general Riccardo Maraffa. It was the PAI that conducted in the colonies all those police activities and duties (including public security tasks, political policing, and intelligence gathering) that fell under the competence of the PS on the mainland.[85]

In May 1939, a German police delegation arrived in Italy to study the organisation of the PAI and establish contacts with its leadership. The delegation included three members of the uniformed police and one member of Sipo.[86] Heydrich too had developed a growing interest in colonial policing and had entrusted Friedrich Riese with the formation and training of a future colonial Security Police.[87] The German police interactions with the Italian colonial police

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[83] A detailed report of the visit that took place from 11 to 18 June 1939 is available in Archivio Storico dell'Ufficio Storico del Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri (ASACC), b.1001.11, f. Visita in Germania, 1939.

[84] For further information, see Patrick Bernhard, "Borrowing from Mussolini: Nazi Germany's Colonial Aspirations in the Shadow of Italian Expansionism," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 4 (November 2013): 617–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2013.836358; and also Patrick Bernhard, "Colonial Crossovers: Nazi Germany and Its Entanglements with Other Empires," *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 02 (July 2017): 206–27, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022817000055.

[85] About the organisation and tasks of the Italian colonial police, see ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.172, f.24, Polizia coloniale.

[86] In BArch, R 1001 (Reichskolonialamt)/9714, Polizei. Italienische Ostafrika, 1937-1941.

[87] PA AA, R 100741, Heydrich to the foreign office, 2 April 1941.

intensified after the visit. From 1940, about 150 German policemen and SS men were allowed to attend a training at the PAI academy in Tivoli, near Rome. Amongst them, Gerhard Köhler who became the Sipo's liaison officer to the PAI's high command, and Theodor Saevecke, a former member of one of the *Einsatzkommando* deployed in Poland, who served as Sipo liaison officer in Libya and later became head of Sipo and SD in Milan after the German occupation of the peninsula in 1943.[88]

In the end, the Third Reich did not manage to create a colonial empire and a proper German colonial police force was never formed. And yet, the Italian colonial police were an elite corps whose collaboration and expertise inspired the German police forces. In wartime, the partnership between the PAI and the German police proved solid and effective in northern Africa, and Maraffa proved very cooperative and willing to work close with the Germans.[89] In general, as Bernhard points out, the knowledge and expertise gained from the Italian colonial authorities inspired and shaped some of the practices that the Nazi forces embraced in eastern Europe during the war.[90]

### 4.3 The Outbreak of the Second World War and Police Diplomacy at Work

The previous sections indicated that the interactions and entanglements between the German and Italian police and their leaderships were strong and intense in 1939. They played a central role within the broader relationships between the two Axis regimes. Not surprisingly, Mussolini and Hitler turned to their police leaderships when, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the relationships between Berlin and Rome deteriorated. As in 1936, the two dictators benefitted from the mediation of Bocchini and Himmler to settle crucial political issues that their diplomacies had proved not able to resolve, namely the Italian decision not to join Germany in the war and the South Tyrol question.

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[88] In BArch, R 58/11085, Personalakten Saevecke Theo. Regardless of the atrocities and crimes committed during the war, Saevecke was recruited by the CIA and served in the intelligence of the German Federal Republic. For further information, see The US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Records of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 1894 – 2002, Record Group 263, Second Release of Name Files Under the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Disclosure Acts, ca. 1981 - ca. 2002, Saevecke Theo. These records are now available online at https://catalog.archives.gov/id/139390483 (last accessed on 20 March 2022).

[89] Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 251-54. See also Patrick Bernhard, "Behind the Battle Lines: Italian Atrocities and the Persecution of Arabs, Berbers, and Jews in North Africa during World War II," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (December 1, 2012): 425–46, https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dcs054.

[90] About this point, see Patrick Bernhard, 'Hitler's Africa in the East: Italian Colonialism as a Model for German Planning in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (1 January 2016): 61–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009414561825.

### 4.3.1. *A War in the Offing*

After the rapprochement in 1936, the German authorities had tried on several occasions to transform the asserted affinity and solidarity between the two dictators and their regimes into a formal military alliance. Yet, the Fascist regime had always replied in a non-committed or negative manner, not least on the occasion of Hitler's visit to Italy in May 1938. The situation had progressively changed in late 1938, when each regime adopted a more aggressive and belligerent foreign policy. In the spring of 1939, Rome and Berlin were ready to conclude an alliance, although latent tensions and reciprocal mistrust persisted.[91]

A 'pact of friendship and alliance' was publicly signed by Ribbentrop and Ciano at the Reich chancellery in Berlin on 21 May 1939. Its preface affirmed the perpetual inviolability of the common border, which implied that the Italian authority over South Tyrol was not negotiable. The main content of the agreement, which was symbolically called Pact of Steel, was unmistakably aggressive. It bound the signatories to automatically join and offer support to each other in case of war, even when it was deliberately provoked by one of the signatories.[92] This assertion was clearly in favour of the Third Reich, which intended to attack Poland at the first suitable occasion. In this regard, the agreement did not specify any time frame for the war. Ciano and Mussolini knew that Italy was not ready for a war and had vaguely mentioned it during the negotiations. They had thus signed the Pact expecting a conflict in about three years. A further point that remained undefined concerned the two regimes' own areas of influence, i.e. they did not settled in advance the direction of their respective military expansion. This was another potential reason for disagreement and frictions, as the partitioning of the Balkans later confirmed.[93]

The conclusion of the Pact of Steel encouraged Hitler to accelerate the preparations for the attack on Poland. The Fascist regime 'had effectively given carte blanche to the Third Reich'.[94] Mussolini and Ciano had bound Italy with Germany and subordinated their country's interests and objectives to the German ones. Berlin deliberately did not inform Rome about the ongoing preparations for war with Poland, although a clause of the agreement sanctioned mutual and constant consultations between the two countries.[95] The two regimes did not even elaborate a

[91] For further information, see "On the Road to War. 1938-9," chap.5 in Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 128-63.
[92] For the Italian text of Pact see Enzo Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, 440-42.
[93] Ibid., 423-40.
[94] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 158.
[95] On this point, see also Marco Palla, *Mussolini e il fascismo: L'avvento al potere, il regime, l'eredità politica*, 5th ed. (Firenze: Giunti, 2019), 114-16.

common strategy.[96] The military alliance was intended in Berlin as a deterrent to potential escalation, to dissuade Britain and France from intervening in support of Poland. The next steps in the German strategy were to isolate Warsaw and then find an excuse to declare war. Surprisingly, Berlin turned to Moscow to complete the encircling of Poland and to prevent a potential Soviet alignment with Britain and France, despite their ideological and political divergences.[97]

In previous years, the USSR had unsuccessfully tried to establish better relations with Nazi Germany, as it had done with Fascist Italy.[98] A rapprochement became finally possible in 1939. For Hitler, it was now convenient to temporarily put aside his hatred of Bolshevism and the Soviet Union and postpone his plans for a future expansion in the Soviet territory.[99] Stalin did not want to be involved in a European war. His main concerns were securing the Soviet borders, specifically in the Baltic area, and keeping Japanese expansionism in Asia under control. As a clear signal of détente, he even replaced the head of Soviet diplomacy Maksim Litvinov with Vyacheslav Molotov. Litvinov was more in favour of a rapprochement with France and Britain to oppose the German expansionism; besides, he had Jewish origins. It was thus Molotov who negotiated with his counterpart Ribbentrop, and the agreement was not just a generic rapprochement between Berlin and Moscow, but a broader economic and political accord. Their talks accelerated as soon as the German attack on Poland was ready. On 23 August 1939 in Moscow, they publicly signed the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.[100] The two signatories officially affirmed that their newly established diplomatic relationships were based on a reciprocal non-aggressive foreign policy. Most importantly, they secretly defined their respective spheres of influences in eastern Europe and agreed on a future partitioning of Poland.[101]

The conclusion of an agreement between the two archenemies Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union made a great impression worldwide. The fact that Nazism and Bolshevism were now shaking hands, after having fought each fiercely until that very moment, had profound repercussions for the activity of the anti-fascist front and of the communist parties around the world. Communist parties and militants had to accept and excuse not just Moscow's

[96] Davide Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo: Le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista in Europa, 1940-1943* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), 45.
[97] Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 713-18.
[98] See footnote no.22 in chap.1.
[99] On the impact of the German-Soviet rapprochement on the Nazi propaganda, see Waddington, "The Anti-Komintern and Nazi Anti-Bolshevik Propaganda in the 1930s," 592-94.
[100] Weinberg, *Hitler's Foreign Policy*, 718-64.
[101] The English version of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/nonagres.asp, whereas its additional secret protocol at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/addsepro.asp (last accessed on 20 March 2022).

rapprochement with Nazi Germany but also its expansionism in Poland and the Baltic caused massive confusion in the Comintern.[102] On top of that, the Soviet police proved eager to hand over several political prisoners to the Gestapo. These were members of the German Communist Party in exile who had been condemned and imprisoned by the Soviet authorities for their non-compliance with Stalin's views and who were now transferred to Germany and interned in concentration camps.[103] In short, communist parties, and especially the German and Italian ones, were disorientated and rendered even more vulnerable by the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.[104]

In the summer of 1939, Hitler finalised the invasion of Poland confident in the Soviet agreement and in the Italian support should the conflict escalate into a large-scale European war. Yet Mussolini and Ciano hesitated at the prospect of imminent war and tried to reassess the Italian commitment to the German ally. At that point, a postponement of the war was no longer possible, so they sought to delay Italy's participation. When Hitler attacked Poland and Britain and France declared war on Germany, Mussolini opted for a status of 'non-belligerency', a term he preferred to 'neutrality' with its pacifist connotations. In fact, he did not intend to repudiate the Axis alliance and to renounce fighting the western powers alongside the Third Reich. He wanted to join the conflict as soon as possible.[105]

### 4.3.2. *The Italian Non-Belligerency and Bocchini's Mediation with Himmler*

Bocchini was one of the leading figures within the Fascist regime to oppose Italian involvement in the conflict in the summer of 1939. Like Ciano, the police chief did not criticise tout court the idea of a war, but he was seriously concerned about the domestic consequences of a premature intervention in a conflict that the country was neither prepared nor willing to fight.[106] In other words, he feared that a long and difficult war risked paving the way to social and political disorder and thus to an overthrow of the regime. He had commissioned Leto to prepare a report for Mussolini on the mood of the population about the war, and this emphasised the

[102] See Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 91-101; Wolikow, *L'Internazionale comunista*, 170-82.
[103] About this point, see Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators: Prisoner of Stalin and Hitler* (London: Pimlico, 2009).
[104] About the repercussions of the Nazi-Soviet alignment on the German and Italian communist parties, see Hermann Weber et al., eds., *Deutschland, Russland, Komintern. I: Überblicke, Analysen, Diskussionen: Neue Perspektiven auf die Geschichte der KPD und die Deutsch-Russischen Beziehungen (1918-1943).* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 386-91; Allan Merson, *Communist Resistance in Nazi Germany* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 211-16; Bertelli, *Il gruppo*, 82-92.
[105] For further details, see Collotti, *Fascismo e politica di potenza*, 443-65; Robert Mallett, "Commitments," chap. 11 in *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War, 1933-1940* (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 196-220.
[106] About this point, see Colarizi, *L'opinione degli italiani sotto il regime*; and also Claudia Baldoli, "Il fallimento militare del regime: la guerra e i bombardamenti," chap. 3 in *Il fascismo italiano: Storia e interpretazioni*, ed. Giulia Albanese (Roma: Carocci, 2021), 69-92.

unpreparedness and reluctance of the Italian population to fight. This view generated a harsh and almost physical confrontation between the police chief and the party secretary Starace, who was a fervent supporter of the Axis and of intervention. Starace was a foe of Bocchini and had long wanted to replace him with someone associated with the party. He accused the police chief of having manipulated the information and that generated an intense altercation between the two men right outside Mussolini's office.[107] In the end, the dictator took Bocchini's opinion and the police report into account when deciding to keep Italy out of the conflict. He even replaced Starace and appointed Ettore Muti as the new party secretary.

Bocchini's position not only helped to convince Mussolini to postpone the Italian intervention. His strong ties with Himmler proved once again beneficial and useful in diplomatic terms in a delicate moment for the relationships between the two regimes. The declaration of the Italian non-belligerency had profoundly irritated Hitler and his entourage, and the direct official communications between the two dictators were interrupted.[108] Mussolini thus decided to resort to Bocchini's mediation and his friendly relationship with Himmler to try to ease the diplomatic tensions between the Axis partners.

On behalf of Mussolini, Bocchini did send Himmler, and indirectly Hitler, a letter on 18 September 1939 in which he tried to justify the Italian non-intervention as a strategic choice in favour of the Third Reich.[109] Had Italy entered the war, he affirmed, it would have been exposed to an immediate British and French reaction and 'in that case, Italy could have not provided assistance to your country, rather it would have requested it'. He thus tried to convince the ally that it had been more advantageous for Germany to have Italy on its side, but out of the war. With the non-intervention, Rome had in fact disrupted the plans made in London and Paris and had proved decisive in keeping the war limited to Poland. In other words, Bocchini tried to vindicate the Italian non-belligerency as a strategic choice 'in the German interest', which Berlin should appreciate and not criticise. In doing so, on the other hand, he incidentally admitted that Italy was military vulnerable and not prepared to fight.[110]

The same letter drew attention to another issue affecting the relationship between Rome and Berlin at that time. Bocchini complained about the growing agitation in South Tyrol and urged his German colleague to arrange the definitive repatriation of the German citizens living there

[107] Guido Leto, *OVRA*, 204-05; Carmine Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia: 1940-1943* (Roma: Ruffolo, 1946), 38-39.
[108] Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 158-63.
[109] According to Bocchini's deputy and then successor Carmine Senise, Mussolini himself dictated the Italian police chief a letter to the *Reichsführer* to persuade him – and indirectly Hitler – about the motives that had brought Italy to abstain from the current conflict. Senise over-emphasised the content of the letter in his post-war memoirs and presented them as a clear evidence of the Italian reluctance to be involved in the war; see Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia*, 36.
[110] BArch, NS 19/2069, Bocchini to Himmler, 18 September 1939.

'without further delays, which might cause incidents'.[111] During the negotiations for the Pact of Steel, Hitler had indeed offered the complete repatriation of the ethnic Germans living in South Tyrol and had put Himmler in charge of the whole process.[112] Despite the declarations and verbal agreements, the South Tyrol question remained unsolved. The outbreak of the war and the tension between Rome and Berlin that followed affected the situation in the border area and concerned Rome. The declaration of non-belligerency and the German successes in Poland bolstered the anti-Italian and pan-Germanist stances in the area, which were fuelled by Nazi propaganda. The conspicuous German minority in South Tyrol became very turbulent and troublesome, and the Italian authorities were urged to find a solution other than enforcing harsher repressive policies.[113] They thus took advantage of the good relationship between Himmler and Bocchini to unravel the intricate situation.

The *Reichsführer* reassured Bocchini about his full understanding of the whole situation and his determination to cooperate. With regard to the repatriation of the Germans from South Tyrol, he assured his Italian colleague of his 'will to find a solution to every problem that might arise' and invited him to organise a meeting to discuss and definitively solve the questions. He also added that, with the victory over Poland, new territories would become available for the resettlement of the South Tirolese.[114]

A bilateral meeting took place in Tremezzo, on Lake Como, from 11 to 13 October 1939. Right before the conference, Himmler had been formally appointed by Hitler *Reichskommissar für die Festigung Deutschen Volkstums* (RKFDV, Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom) to carry out the racial reordering of the annexed territories.[115] That meant he was in charge of the removal of the 'alien races' from these territories and of the transfer and resettlement there of *Volksdeutsche* and *Reichsdeutsche*, tasks that required an 'extensive use of his police apparatus'.[116] Without the intervention of the foreign offices, the two police chiefs revised the previous arrangements concerning the repatriations and broke any deadlock. The resolutions agreed were then converted into a written treaty that was signed in Rome on 21 October 1939.[117]

[111] Ibid.
[112] Federico Scarano, *Tra Mussolini e Hitler: Le opzioni dei sudtirolesi nella politica estera fascista* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2012), 160. For context, see also Mario Toscano, *Storia diplomatica della questione dell'Alto Adige* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1967).
[113] Scarano, *Tra Mussolini e Hitler*, 196-97.
[114] BArch, NS 19/2070, Himmler to Bocchini, 28 September 1939.
[115] For further information, see Robert Lewis Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945: A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).
[116] Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism 1919-1945. A Documentary Reader. Vol. 3: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1988), 931.
[117] The Italian text of the agreement signed on 21 October 1939 is published in *DDI*, 9, vol. VII (25 Ottobre – 31 Dicembre 1939) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1957), Appendix II.

As on other occasions, Bocchini compiled for Mussolini detailed reports that illustrated his personal impressions of the negotiations and revealed the content of his private conversations with the *Reichsführer* in Tremezzo. These talks did not focus exclusively on South Tyrol. The only report that has apparently survived, dated 13 October 1939, describes the police chiefs' discussion about the Italian declaration of non-belligerency and the developments of the war. Bocchini appears disillusioned about the German conduct but also aware that the existing conflict – that Mussolini was impatient to join – was going to be a long one.

In a friendly atmosphere and with great cordiality, the two police chiefs discussed and defended their own governments' decisions at the time of the declaration of war. A clarification, commented Bocchini, that confirmed the Germans' insincerity and evident lack of trust towards the Italians. With 'a remarkable loquacity', Himmler then described the successes of the German army in Poland and informed his colleague about the creation of the General Government to administer the occupied territory and about the intention to create a special territory for Polish and German Jews. Himmler 'laughing' commented that 'it would be Germany's ghetto'.[118] At the moment, the Third Reich was preparing a rapid and decisive attack on France, but Himmler did not exclude the possibility of a future war against the Soviet Union. Berlin was currently 'holding out an olive branch', but that was considered a provisional situation. At any rate, the *Reichsführer* had added, 'foreign policy is one thing, domestic policy is another thing' and the repression of communist activities in the Reich had not ceased. On the contrary, 'it continues and will continue with the current methods', i.e. ruthlessly. The German home front was perfectly under control under the current state of war.

About Italy's situation, Bocchini informed Mussolini that Himmler had taken note that the military preparation 'could be done by next spring', in spite of the rumours circulating in Germany. This declaration confirms Mussolini's general inclination to intervene in the war as soon as possible, and yet it was an exaggeration pronounced to reassure the ally of the Italian intentions in a period of diplomatic frictions characterised by no direct communication between Mussolini and Hitler. Still, the Italian dictator considered the Italian period of non-belligerency only temporary. It had caused him a great 'embarrassment' and 'discomfort' to 'proclaim peace

About the meeting and its further developments, see also Matthew Frank, *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 129-34. The South Tyrol question remained open throughout the war years, causing endless unrest and frictions between the German population and the Italian authorities. Further consultations between Fascist and Nazi representatives did not bring any decisive result; see Scarano, *Tra Mussolini e Hitler*.

[118] About this point, Bocchini soon started to receive information about the atrocities perpetrated in Poland by the German occupiers; see ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1940, b.17, f. Situazione della Polonia dopo l'occupazione tedesca.

after having repeatedly talked about war', Bocchini told Himmler.[119] Despite some wavering, Mussolini was anxious to join the conflict at the earliest opportunity.[120] On 10 June 1940, right before the fall of France, Italy entered the war.

## 4.4 Conclusions

At the outbreak of the war, the German and Italian police apparatuses had their domestic situations under control. Even the major menace represented by anti-fascist parties and activists in exile appeared ineffectual and perfectly manageable. They were affected by years of police repression and tensions within the anti-fascist front. Especially the communist parties were increasingly vulnerable as the war approached, agitated by a profound internal crisis determined by hard-line Soviet and Comintern policies. Still, police repression intensified in the late 1930s. Over the years, the range of enemies of the fascist regimes extended and the attention of their police forces progressively focused on a wider spectrum of objectives. Organised political opposition and dissent were no longer their major objectives because they were now targeting a much wider range of dissenting and non-conformist behaviour. This was a wide-ranging category that included members of religious minorities, social outsiders, and other alleged non-conforming groups who, at the end of the decade, were increasingly criminalised and subjected to police measures as political criminals. This shift of emphasis in policing prompted a renewal and reorganisation of the two regimes' police apparatuses in preparation for the war, embodied in the creation of a new Nazi central security agency – the RSHA – and the expansion of the Italian political police services. It also inevitably reflected on their cooperation, especially after the arrival of Herbert Kappler in Rome in the spring of 1939. As the war approached, the authorities of the two regimes proved increasingly eager to detect and remove any real or potential trouble and threat from their jurisdictions, so the exchange of information between the two police forces and as well as the expulsions of suspect and unwelcome foreigners increased. They continued to expand in wartime.

In general, the broader police partnership and connections between the two Axis powers intensified before the outbreak of the war, not just between the German police and the PS, but also with the other police corps. In particular, the Italian colonial police. The Axis partnerships was solid and firm in mid-1939, as the conclusion of the Pact Steel confirmed. Yet, latent suspicion and duplicity between Berlin and Rome endured. It became evident when Hitler

[119] See Bocchini's report dated 13 October 1939 in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Bocchini, Ff. correnti, 1939, b.7, f.415.1, Relazione del capo della polizia su conversazione con Himmler.

[120] For an examination of Mussolini's attitude in the period of non-belligerency and of his decision to enter the war, see Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 164-86; and Mallett, *Mussolini and the Origins of the Second World War, 1933-1940*, 207-20.

decided to invade Poland and Mussolini decided not to fight alongside the ally. At that point, the good personal relationship between Himmler and Bocchini contributed to ease the diplomatic tensions between Rome and Berlin that followed the Italian declaration of non-belligerency. Police diplomacy proved beneficial for the two regimes, like in 1936. In wartime too they resorted to police mediation to break diplomatic dreadlocks that their foreign offices were not able to address.

# Chapter 5. The Axis Police Partnership at War: Wide-ranging Collaboration and Involvement (1939-1943)

This chapter examines the Axis police partnership and collaboration between the outbreak of the Second World War and the Italian armistice of September 1943, which ended the bilateral cooperation. In so doing, it investigates how the state of war and the progress of the conflict influenced the relationships and joint work between the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In particular, it focuses on the continuing expansion of targets and objectives of the cross-border collaboration. This went far beyond the resolutions agreed in 1936 and produced, on the one hand, an internal debate among the Italian authorities and, on the other hand, an increasing radicalisation of police policies and practices. It also highlights the territorial expansion of the collaboration, which encompassed those territories that were progressively occupied by the Axis powers. In wartime, the two fascist police forces cooperated on the ground outside their original jurisdictions, but this collaboration was at times complicated. Despite the official proclamations, the Axis powers and their police forces continued to pursue different interests and goals, thus their strategies and policies did not always converge. The war also exposed and increased the weaknesses and vulnerability of the Fascist regime, which ultimately determined the fall of Mussolini in July 1943. The leadership of the interior ministry's police contributed to those internal manoeuvres, specifically Carmine Senise who became police chief after Bocchini's sudden death a few months after Italy's entry into the war. Senise's appointment neither affected the organisation and workings of the Italian PS nor, at least initially, the interactions with the German police. These, however, deteriorated progressively and culminated in the arrest of the Italian police chief in September 1943 by order of Himmler.

## 5.1 The Sudden Death of Bocchini and the Appointment of Senise as Police Chief

When on 10 June 1940 Mussolini declared that Italy would join its German ally in the conflict, the Italian police apparatus was prepared to comply with its wartime duties and functions. Bocchini opposed the intervention in September 1939 but, since the period of non-belligerence was considered temporary, he instructed the local police headquarters about the measures to implement in case of war.[1] They were requested to identify all the foreign citizens residing within their jurisdictions and compile lists of those to be expelled, interned, or monitored in time of war.[2] Furthermore, at the beginning of 1940, he put Guido Lospinoso in charge of the

[1] In his diary, Ciano noted with surprise Bocchini's unusual and strictly confidential criticism of Mussolini's wavering during the non-intervention months, see the entry dated 27 December 1939 in Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1939-1943*, 4. ed (Milano: Rizzoli, 1969), 229.
[2] Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 85-86.

identification of suitable locations for the internment of enemy aliens and other foreigners perceived as dangerous or suspicious elements, like foreign Jews regardless of their citizenship.[3] A few weeks before the declaration of war, the frontiers were closed and the entry into the country became possible only with a visa certified by the interior ministry, which explicitly instructed the border authorities to refuse entry to foreign Jews.[4] In June, Alianello of the Office RG met a representative of the Gestapo and they agreed on facilitating the reciprocal issue of entry visas to Italian and German citizens to hasten the crossing of the common frontier and further the interactions between the Axis partners. Again, Jews were excluded.[5]

The Italian police promptly complied with the Fascist war effort and tightened their control over the country as soon as the war was announced. Their wartime tasks also included the direction of the internment camps for civilians that were established and administered by the Italian interior ministry. These camps were termed 'concentration camps', but they had little in common with the Nazi ones. The PS knew the organisation of the SS camps, since Italian police functionaries visited them on different occasions and wrote detailed accounts for their superiors, specifically about the condition and treatment of the inmates.[6] Not least, Bocchini expressly requested information from Heydrich in the summer of 1940.[7] At any rate, the Italian authorities did not draw inspiration from the Nazi model for the establishment of their wartime camps. Not even from the 'work education camps' (AEL, *Arbeitserziehungslager*) for German civilians and foreign workers run directly by the Gestapo with the collaboration of Daluege's uniformed police and that were separated from the SS concentration camps' system.[8] The Italian wartime camps for civilians were rather modelled on the Fascist regime's own confinement system and on the camps for war prisoners and insurgents in the colonies.[9]

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[3] Ibid., 123. About the internment of foreign Jews, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 7-10, and also 44-51.

[4] Numerous Jewish refugees still managed to reach Italy or the territories occupied by the Italian army; on this point see Ibid., 22-44.

[5] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.70, f.64, N. 25 Ingresso stranieri nel Regno, sf. 3, *N. 2* Germanici.

[6] On this point, see footnote no. 110 in chap. 1. Pizzuto too visited Oranienburg after Heydrich's funeral in 1942; in, ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, vers. 1959, b.77, f. Pizzuto Antonino.

[7] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.9, f. RG 33 Corrispondenza varia con la Gestapo. Unfortunately, the report on the organisation of the Nazi camps provided by the chief of the RSHA has not survived.

[8] See Gabriele Lotfi, "Stätten des Terrors: Die 'Arbeitserziehungslager' der Gestapo," in *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, eds. Paul and Mallmann, 255-69. Also Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119-24.

[9] For a detailed account of the Fascist regime's concentration camps and on the internment of civilians in wartime Italy, see Capogreco, *I campi del duce*; Simonetta Carolini, ed., *Pericolosi nelle contingenze belliche: Gli internati dal 1940 al 1943* (Roma: ANPPIA-Associazione nazionale perseguitati politici italiani antifascisti, 1987).

A few months after Italy's entry into the conflict, the sixty-year-old police chief Bocchini suddenly died on 20 November 1940.[10] Mussolini organised a state funeral to celebrate the man who had been his police chief and close collaborator for fourteen years, and an impressive funeral procession and ceremony took place in Rome before the burial in Bocchini's hometown, San Giorgio del Sannio. Himmler was promptly informed about the occurrence by Bocchini's deputy, Carmine Senise.[11] In spite of their differing manners and ways of life, Himmler sincerely admired his older and experienced colleague and was genuinely saddened by the loss of his friend.[12] He immediately flew to Rome with Heydrich and Wolff to attend the funeral, and Hitler commissioned a wreath.[13]

Bocchini's sudden death did not just reveal Himmler's sincere affection for his older friend and colleague. It also opened the delicate question of his succession. The undersecretary Buffarini succeeded in assigning the position to Senise and, according to Dollmann, had even requested Himmler's endorsement before presenting his candidacy to Mussolini.[14] The fifty-seven-year-old Neapolitan was Bocchini's deputy and friend, a qualified professional and career state official with no party connections, who was known and appreciated by the Germans. Therefore, he represented a choice of continuity. At the same time, Senise's appointment was a strategic move for Buffarini. He had not liked Bocchini's influence, autonomy, and direct connection with Mussolini, but the police chief's power and position proved too solid to attempt an open conflict.[15] Buffarini thus saw a good opportunity to expand his influence and authority with the end of the reign of the powerful and apparently untouchable Bocchini. He believed that his successor Senise was going to be a much more collaborative and less independent police chief, in other words more submissive.[16] Without doubt, the new police chief was more discreet than Bocchini and never enjoyed the same privileged connection with either Mussolini and

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[10] Interestingly, there is no mention of Bocchini's death in Ciano's diary although the minister and the police chief had a close relationship. In light of their connection and Ciano's interest in exerting influence over the police, the lack of any mention to Bocchini's death or funeral in the diary is at least intriguing.

[11] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.39, f.1822, Himmler Ecc. Heinrich, Sf.4, Telegrammi augurali scambiati in occasioni vari, Senise to Himmler, 20 November 1940.

[12] After his death, he remained in contact with the widow and continued to celebrate his friend's memory. Every year, SS men brought flowers to Bocchini's gravestone on his behalf. After the German occupation of the country, the *Reichsführer* also invited the Italian police authorities to commemorate Bocchini on the anniversary of his death; in BArch, NS 19/2069.

[13] See the photos of the ceremony in Rome, in BArch, B 121(Sammlung Adolf von Bomhard) Bild 2049-2050-2051-2052-2053-2054. These photos are available online at: https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/de/search/?channelid=dcx-channel-channel_barch_bilder&query=Bocchini&day=&month=&yearfrom=&yearto=&imageid=&title=&farbe=&kostenfrei=&ausrichtung=&view=gallery&submit= (last accessed on 30 March 2022).

[14] Dollmann, *With Hitler and Mussolini*, 97-99.

[15] See footnote no. 35 in chap. 1.

[16] In the end, the 'funny' Senise that looked like a 'Bourbonic minister' to Ciano proved much less accommodating than the undersecretary had expected. Quite the contrary, he openly criticised Buffarini's corruption in private meetings with the foreign minister. For Ciano's description of his first meeting with the new police chief Senise, see the entry dated 1 November 1941 in Ciano, *Diario 1939-1943*, 463.

Himmler. The relationship between the 'comrade' Senise and the 'excellency' Himmler – as they called each other – was apparently good but certainly more formal than with the late Bocchini. In any case, the appointment of Senise was a clear choice of institutional continuity and represented a good premise for the preservation of the police partnership. It was thus praised by the Nazi police leadership.[17]

## 5.2 'The bonds of genuine and devoted camaraderie that indissolubly bind our two police forces ever more consolidate in the total certainty of a glorious victory':[18] Wartime Developments of the Police Collaboration

Senise's appointment ensured continuity with Bocchini's era, and no significant changes occurred neither in the organisation and work of the PS nor in the interactions and cooperation with the German police. Alianello was confirmed at the head of the Office RG and, since his professional skills and dedication were so much appreciated by Senise, he was also attached to the staff of the police chief's secretariat, which was now directed by Coriolano Pagnozzi after the dismissal of Manganiello in April 1940.[19] Alianello remained in charge of the Office RG until the end of the collaboration in September 1943. During this time, the exchange of communications between the PS and the Gestapo (now RSHA Office IV) increased sharply. The war intensified and expanded the joint persecution of political opponents and migrants established in 1936. Besides, this collaboration across borders went far beyond the resolutions previously agreed, following a practice already in place at the end of the decade and notably after the arrival of Kappler.[20]

The Gestapo liaison officer requested further assistance to cope with the mounting mass of communications with the Italian police and with Berlin, as he reported to his superiors at the RSHA once or even twice a week.[21] At the beginning of 1940, Kappler's office at the German embassy was connected to the Italian interior ministry with a direct phone line to facilitate the contacts with the Italian police authorities. At the same time, Otto Lechner was transferred from

[17] The German police bimonthly, for example, published an article entitled "Bocchini und Senise" in *Die Deutsche Polizei* 8, no. 24 (15 December 1940).

[18] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.39, f.1824, sf.2, Bocchini to Heydrich, 20 October 1940.

[19] About Senise's appreciation of Alianello's loyalty and collaboration, see AS Roma, CAP, Corte di Assise Speciale di Roma (CAS), Sentenze, 1946, Sentenza no. 36 del 16 Novembre 1946 nella causa penale contro Raffaele Alianello. On the dismissal of Manganiello by order of Bocchini, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 63.

[20] Patrick Bernhard estimates that the communications between the two police forces in the period between 1936 and 1943 amounted to a total of 9,000 letters relating to 15,000 individuals. Their vast majority dated to the period of the war. From 1936 to 1939, the first three years of collaboration, the correspondence between the two police forces amounted to about 750 files per year. It grew to about 2.300 files per year between 1940 and September 1943; see Bernhard, "Konzertierte Gegnerbekämpfung im Achsenbündnis," 246-47.

[21] Unfortunately, the documentation that survived the war is scarce and fragmented, see PA AA, R 100763, Italien: Berichtverzeichnisse des Polizei-Attaché in Rom. 1940-1943.

Innsbruck to Rome to provide him clerical assistance.[22] In January 1941, the liaison officer was assigned two more assistants: a typist, and Erich Priebke, who assisted him with police matters.[23] For Priebke, this was a return to Italy. Before joining the police, he had worked in a hotel in Rapallo, near Genoa.[24] Most important, he had accompanied Gestapo chief Müller to Italy on the occasion of Hitler's visit in May 1938.[25]

The personnel of the police liaison office in Rome continued to grow throughout the war years. Notwithstanding some adjustments, between 1942 and 1943 it normally consisted of Kappler and five other collaborators, plus Gerhard Köhler who was attached to the PAI headquarters. The staff included not only Gestapo functionaries and administrative staff, but also SD officers. The two fascist regimes formally prohibited the gathering of intelligence on each other. Yet, reality was different, as observed in the previous chapters. The SD was active in Italy during the war years. The country was a perfect base for observing the Mediterranean area but its agents, at the same time, informed on the Fascist regime.[26] At times, this activity was discovered by the Italian authorities.[27] Such incidents alarmed and irritated Rome, but Kappler and the Gestapo did not appreciate the attempts of the SD to operate in the country either. The intelligence agency was evading their supervision and monopoly and endangering the good relationships with the Italian police. This delicate situation prompted the new head of the RSHA Office VI Schellenberg to a more collaborative approach with the Office IV and the diplomatic corps. He renounced the deployment of SD representatives to Rome and entirely entrusted Kappler with the provision of intelligence reports, which was a special task that Himmler had specifically assigned to the police attachés, whose role and functions were officially delineated at the end of 1941.[28]

### 5.2.1. *The Institutionalisation of the Role and Tasks of the Police Attachés*

At the beginning of the Second World War, the German police had four official representatives in foreign countries: Kappler in Rome, Winzer in Madrid, Helm in Belgrade, and Huber in Tokyo. Although they were frequently presented in the official documentation as 'police attachés' and interacted with the authorities of the host countries, their presence and role were

[22] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.9, f. RG 30.
[23] In PA AA, R 100762, Italien: Tätigkeit des SD, der Abwehr, der Agenten und der Polizeiattachés, 1939-1945, Müller to the foreign office, 13 Januar 1941. Although the decision had already been made, Heydrich formally requested Senise's approval to confirm their transfer to Rome, in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.39, f.1824, sf.1, Corrispondenza Senise, Heydrich to Senise, 14 January 1941.
[24] See BArch, BDC, R 9361-III/155389, Priebke Erich.
[25] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, b.6, f. RG 55.
[26] For a comprehensive reconstruction of the activity of the SD in Italy during the war, see "Doing Intelligence. Italy as an Example," chap. 6 in Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*, 181-217.
[27] See the episode concerning Hans-Joachim Böttcher in Ibid., and Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 194.
[28] Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*, 181-93.

not official. They neither appeared in the lists of the embassy personnel nor enjoyed diplomatic status. They were essentially liaison officers attached to the German legations and, as such, they were accountable to the head of diplomatic missions. Yet, at times they tried to avoid this supervision.[29]

During the war years, an increasing number of police attachés, liaison officers, and special envoys were deployed abroad. The diplomatic corps perceived the growing presence and activity of the RSHA in foreign countries as a clear challenge to its competence and exclusive political prerogatives. The confrontation between the SS apparatus and the foreign office became even more intense when Himmler's men started to intrude into the domestic politics of foreign countries and caused diplomatic incidents and embarrassment in Berlin. Concerned about the creation of a parallel 'SS diplomacy', Ribbentrop urged the negotiation of an accord with Himmler to delineate the functions and responsibilities of SS, Sipo, and SD representatives abroad and the coordination of their activity with the diplomatic corps.[30] The question was addressed in August 1941. The RSHA and the foreign office agreed that, from 1942, the police attachés received a diplomatic status. They were recognised as official members of the legations' personnel and formally assigned the supervision of all the affairs and questions of police interest. As such, they remained accountable to the heads of the diplomatic missions. The latter continued to supervise their communications with Berlin, although they were not informed about the additional intelligence work that Himmler had secretly assigned to the police attachés.[31]

With time, the number of police attachés, liaison officers, and other Sipo and SD special representatives (included specialists in Jewish affairs) that were attached to the German legations and diplomatic missions abroad continue to increase.[32] In August 1942, the *Reichsführer* created a police *Attaché-Gruppe* (Attaché Group) within the RSHA that managed their activities and correspondence and that was directly responsible to the chief of the RSHA.[33] The Group was initially directed by Heydrich's former adjutant, Achim Ploetz, and after his death on the eastern front in August 1944 by Karl Zindel.[34] Alongside the activity of the RSHA

[29] On this point, see footnote no.102 in chap.2.
[30] Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 648-50.
[31] BArch, R 58/243, Himmler to the highest police authorities, 25 May 1942.
[32] By the middle of October 1943, there were about 70 RSHA men deployed in 12 countries, mainly in Europe but a few also in Asia. For a detailed overview of the activity of the police attachés, see Sebastian Weitkamp, "SS-Diplomaten. Die Polizei-Attachés des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes," in *Die Polizei im NS-Staat. Beiträge eines internationalen Symposiums an der Deutschen Hochschule der Polizei in Münster*, ed. Wolfgang Schulte (Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2009), 339-70.
[33] See Himmler's order on the creation of an Attaché Group dated 12 August 1942, in PA AA, R 100743, Angelegenheiten der Polizeiverbindungsführer sowie Nachrichtenübermittlung an Chef Sipo und SD. 1943-1944.
[34] Weitkamp, "SS-Diplomaten," 352.

representatives out of the country, they supervised the contacts and interactions with the foreign police representatives that were in Berlin.[35]

Amongst them was Osvaldo Chiavaccini, who was officially confirmed as Italian police attaché in Berlin in 1942, after Mussolini assented to the institutionalisation of the role proposed by the German authorities.[36] Chiavaccini's designation did not actually change since he had been usually indicated as the *addetto di polizia* (the Italian form of 'police attaché') in Berlin, but his responsibilities were increased. Together with the officialisation of their roles, the German authorities suggested an involvement of the police attachés to extend the police collaboration in other areas, for example in the prevention of terrorist and sabotage acts or to fight the counterfeit of money. The cooperation in those fields fell within the scope of the International Criminal Police Commission, whose headquarters was transferred to Berlin exactly at the time of the institutionalisation of the police attaché and of this proposal.[37] In this regard, the Nazi authorities likely aspired to intertwine or replace the ICPC with the Attaché Group, whose two headquarters were both located in Berlin-Wannsee. In effect, not only did the last head of the Attaché Group, Karl Zindel, come from the ICPC, but he explicitly planned a future involvement of the police attachés in the post-war 'international fight against crime', which resembled the mission of the ICPC.[38] This plan was consistent with the Nazi police leadership's aspiration to take the lead in international policing, yet it was never put into force.

### 5.2.2. *New Wartime Tasks for the Police Attachés: Dealing with the Italian Workers in Germany*

As part of the wartime redefinition of the role and tasks of the police attachés, the German authorities called for their direct involvement in a delicate matter that was causing tensions between Rome and Berlin and that the diplomatic corps appeared not able to address. Their intervention was required to address 'the police questions relating to the employment of foreign workers in Germany'.[39] In other words, Rome and Berlin were not able to find an agreement on the question concerning the punishment of any misconduct and insubordination of the Italian labour force that was employed in the Reich and requested the mediation of their police forces.[40]

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[35] PA AA, R 100743, Himmler's order, 12 August 1942.
[36] ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, vers. 1957, b.236-ter, f. *Chiavaccini Osvaldo*, The foreign office to the police, 9 November 1942.
[37] On this point, see footnote no.73 in chap.3.
[38] In PA AA, R 99519, Polizeiattachés und SD-Leute bei den einzelnen Missionen: China, Dänemark, Portugal, Japan, Kroatien, Slowakei, Spanien und der Schweiz. 1943-1944. See also Weitkamp, "SS-Diplomaten," 352.
[39] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.58, Accordo fra la Polizia italiana e la Polizia tedesca. Istituzione della carica di 'Addetto di Polizia', The foreign office to the police, 28 November 1941.
[40] For context, see footnote no.156 in chap.3.

To support the war effort, Nazi Germany's pressing need for manpower determined an exponential growth in the number of foreign workers in the Reich, including Italians. The citizens of Germany's allied countries were usually treated like German workers, and the Italians were granted additional privileges.[41] As the war progressed, however, their conditions of employment and life worsened, instigating protests and demonstrations. More and more Italian workers decided to violate their job contracts and return home. Unlike the majority of the foreign workers employed in Germany, the Italians were free citizens of an allied country and were not expected to be treated with the same ruthless, repressive police measure that the Nazi authorities implemented against other foreign workers and citizens of occupied countries.[42] And yet, the German police severely punished any act of transgression or disobedience of the Italian labourers, and frequently sent the undisciplined elements directly to the work education camps without informing the Italian authorities. This situation upset the Italian diplomats, although they wanted to preserve the prestige of the regime rather than to protect the Italian labour force from any brutal treatment by hands of the German authorities. These were concerned about the growing episodes of indiscipline and insubordination amongst the Italian workers and lamented the loss of manpower and the impunity they faced once back in Italy.[43]

The two regimes did not succeed in finding a definitive diplomatic solution to the question. The Gestapo considered the matter of strict police interest and decided to handle it directly with the Italian police, through the police attaché Chiavaccini. At the end of 1941, Gestapo chief Müller and Chiavaccini agreed on a solution to the question, which received the approval of Mussolini and Ciano. It was decided that any significant infringement of the job obligations by the Italian workers should be now disciplined by the Gestapo in cooperation with the PS, avoiding diplomatic red tape. The cases that for the German authorities deserved a severe punishment were communicated straight to Chiavaccini who, after consultation with the Gestapo headquarters, could demand repatriation and report the undisciplined worker for a police sanction to be executed in Italy.[44] The usual sanction was the *confino*, which also applied

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[41] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 98.

[42] For a detailed analysis about the employment and treatment of the foreign workers in Nazi Germany during the early stages of the war see "Blitzkrieg Euphoria and Extensive Labor Deployment", chap. 5 in Ibid., 95-136. See also Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, and Christoph Thonfeld, eds., *Hitler's Slaves: Life Stories of Forced Labourers in Nazi-Occupied Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

[43] For a comprehnesive analysis, see Mantelli, *Camerati del lavoro*, 209-19; Bermani, "Andarsene a tutti costi dalla Germania," chap. 17 in *Al lavoro nella Germania di Hitler*, 151-64.

[44] The agreed 'Disciplinary measures concerning the Italian workers in Germany' were communicated by Chiavaccini to Senise on 5 December 1941. The accompany letter presents the stamp 'Seen by the Duce' and below the handwritten comment 'It is alright'; in ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.223, f. 2, Operai italiani in Germania e tedeschi in Italia, sf. Rimpatrio connazionali che si rendono colpevoli di violazioni agli obblighi di lavoro.

to the workers who irregularly returned home without the prior approval of Chiavaccini, i.e. who had abandoned their workplace in Germany before the end of their employment contract.[45]

The intervention of the police forces in the question confirms the effectiveness of police diplomacy in dealing with delicate situations when the diplomacies did not manage to reach an agreement. It also reflects the enlargement of the scope of the bilateral police collaboration that occurred in wartime.

### 5.2.3. *The Main Objectives of the Wartime Police Collaboration*

Since his arrival in Rome in the spring of 1939, Kappler had started to report to the Italian police Jews and asocial elements amongst the members of the German colony in Italy. A year later, he requested that the Italian police report to him any activity relating to the political and moral conduct of the German citizens living in the country that might 'undermine the dignity of the (German) Nation'. In doing so, he declared, the Italian police would reciprocate what the German police were already doing with regards to the Italians living in the Reich.[46] The increasing volume of communication exchanged by the two police forces in wartime shows that the Italian and Germans citizens that passed through this joint police scrutiny and faced expulsion or deportation were numerous.[47] The repatriation was a decisive means for the two police forces to extend their reach across and beyond borders and implement the persecution of the enemies of the their regimes outside their jurisdiction. From 1940 to 1943, the requests for expulsion, forceable repatriation, and secret extradition advanced by the two police soared compared to the previous years of cooperation.[48]

In wartime, Italian requests to the Gestapo continued to prioritise the capture and repatriation of anti-fascists and political opponents. In this regard, the Fascist authorities took advantage of the German expansion in western Europe to reach the numerous Italian anti-fascist expatriates and migrants that had not fled before the arrival of the German troops. Citing the police agreement signed in 1936, the Italian authorities requested the assistance of the Gestapo to locate and capture the anti-fascists that still hid in the Nazi-occupied territories, especially in Belgium and France, which had been the main centres of Italian anti-fascism abroad.[49] To

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[45] In Ibid.
[46] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.9, f. RG 30, Kappler to the Italian police, 4 September 1940.
[47] See the case files related to the years 1940-1943 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.9-14.
[48] Their exact number is not certain due to the gaps in the documentation, but Voigt estimates that about 30-40 Italians, 50-60 Germans and former Austrians, plus 15-20 citizens of countries occupied by the Third Reich were forcibly repatriated. This was a considerable growth compared to the twelve cases registered from 1936 till 1939; see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 371. Even more numerous were the cases of expulsion that were unilaterally decided and executed by the German and Italian authorities that, in wartime, were inclined to expel any real or suspect troublesome or unreliable foreigner.
[49] France in particular was the centre of the main anti-fascist parties and organisations in exile and the principal destination of the anti-fascist migration; see *L'Italia in esilio: L'emigrazione Italiana in Francia tra le due*

facilitate their capture, the Gestapo received lists of the most dangerous Italian anti-fascists who lived in exile in the two countries and that Rome wanted to be arrested and repatriated in accordance with the 1936 resolutions. Both lists were detailed and included names, political affiliation and, whenever available, photos and addresses.[50] Moreover, the Italian authorities and Fascist representatives in these countries assisted the German police in the identification of the anti-fascist expatriates who, once in the hands of the Gestapo, were transferred to the Reich (initially to Trier and then to Innsbruck) and ultimately handed over the Italian police at the Brenner Pass.[51]

Numerous rank-and-file militants and cadres of the anti-fascist parties and organisations in exile, politically suspicious migrants, and veterans of the Spanish Civil War were caught in this broad police net and forcibly repatriated to Italy, where the Fascist authorities sentenced them to prison and to *confino*.[52] One of them was the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party, Pietro Nenni. The Gestapo arrested him in France in 1943 and then deported him to Italy, where he was first imprisoned in Rome and then sentenced to *confino*.[53]

Under those difficult circumstances, a certain number of anti-fascists and their families preferred to voluntarily return to Italy and make amends for their political past rather than live in the German-occupied territories, where they were hunted by the Gestapo and risked being interned in the SS camps. Others refused to make a similar 'act of submission' to the Fascist regime and moved to the unoccupied territory of Vichy France.[54] Even there they were forced to live clandestinely to avoid arrest and deportation at the hands of the collaborationist French authorities, in accordance with the clauses of the Italian-French armistice treaty.[55] The capture and repatriation of the Italian anti-fascist expatriates with the Vichy authorities was coordinated on the spot by Rosario Barranco, who had been assigned to Nice after his return from Bolivia. He organised the repatriation of many anti-fascists from France, included Luigi Longo, who

*guerre / L'Italie en exil: L'émigration italienne en France entre les deux guerres* (Roma: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria, 1984).

[50] See Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 472-73; Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 382-83. For the Belgian list see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.9, f. RG 22. For the French one, see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, CPC, b.3294, f. Minardi Ruggero.

[51] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.51, Trattato di estradizione fra l'Italia e la Germania.

[52] Many are the cases reported in the files of the Office RG that covers the war years; see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.9-14.

[53] See Franzinelli, *I tentacoli dell'Ovra*, 385-86.

[54] In ACS, MI, DGPS, PolPol, Materia, b.263, f. Rimpatrio fuorusciti, Barranco to Leto, 7 October 1940. About this point see also Franzinelli, 385-86. In the Appendix, Franzinelli includes two interesting police informants' reports on the condition of the Italian anti-fascist community in France after the capitulation; in Ibid., 615-23.

[55] On Vichy France and the collaborationist French authorities, see Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). The text of the Franco-Italian armistice is in *DDI*, 9, vol. V (11 Giugno – 28 Ottobre 1940) (Roma: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, 1965), doc. 95. For further details about the armistice and the Italian occupation policies in the seized French territory see Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*.

later became secretary of the Italian communist party.[56] Between June and September 1940, about 800 German anti-Nazi activists and political refugees suffered a similar fate, as the Vichy authorities handed them over the Gestapo in agreement with the Franco-German armistice treaty.[57]

While the Italian authorities remained generally focused on the capture and repatriation of political opponents even, the German requests were more diverse and not always in conformity with the original resolutions of the 1936 police agreement. This was a trend that was already noticeable before the outbreak of the conflict, but now the German authorities expanded it. In other words, they used the collaboration to progressively tighten their grip on the German community in Italy and ruthlessly imposed on it the same oppressive control and persecutory measures that were already in place in the Reich.[58] At the end of 1940, for example, the German consulate in Fiume (today, Rijeka, in Croatia) achieved that an Austrian woman (a German citizens after the Anschluss) was expelled from Italy because she was working as a maid for a local Jewish family. Her employment was not against the Italian racial legislation because she was a foreigner, but it was a clear breach of the Nazi racial laws. Hence, the consulate demanded her expulsion, which meant the return to Germany. They made it also clear that, in case of a lack of collaboration from the Italian authorities, they did not intend to renew her passport, making her liable for eviction. Interviewed by the local police headquarters, the woman expressed her desire to remain in Fiume, not least because after more than ten years in Italy she had neither family connections nor the certainty of an employment in the Reich. Regardless of her wishes, the Italian authorities authorised her repatriation.[59] This case was not unique and illustrates how the joint work between the Gestapo and the Italian police expanded its scope and targets in wartime, mainly inspired by the German side.

German citizens who had recently arrived in an Italian city and were still unknown to the Nazi representatives were subjected to joint police examination as they could be refugees or illegal expatriates who had just escaped from the territory of the Reich. They needed to be immediately identified and possibly expelled or handed over to the German police. German deserters, draft evaders, social and sexual outsiders were also subjected to Kappler's requests

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[56] About the activity of Barranco, who also joined forces with the military intelligence, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 474.

[57] Michael Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 69-71.
The English version of the armistice is available online at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/frgearm.asp (last accessed on 30 March 2022).

[58] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 367-8.

[59] See the case of Sibylle F. in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.10, f. RG 39 Informazioni varie alla Gestapo.

of expulsion or of surrender to the German police at the frontier.[60] The German authorities focused on unmarried women, who 'had to be sent home' to prevent that improper relationships with Italians risked contaminating the German race, i.e. result in not racially-approved childbirth.[61]

Overall, the Italian authorities proved cooperative and compliant with the German requests, but they manifested some reservations with regards to homosexuals and prostitutes with German citizenship. The interior ministry, for example, suspended the expulsion of German prostitutes from the fall of 1940 until the spring of 1941, but the reason for this decision is not clear. In any case, the German police could always circumvent any formal obstacle or Italian reticence and justify requests for extradition by mentioning a political motivation, which fell within the cases included in the 1936 agreement. Still, the German authorities usually encountered a willing Italian police.[62]

Both sides, when they approved and carried out a deportation or expulsion, did not take into account the will of the deportees nor the possible dramatic outcomes of their repatriation, as in the case of the Austrian woman in Fiume. For those who had already experienced Nazi brutality and persecution and had managed to escape them, the prospect of a return to the Reich was dreadful. Some expatriates who had received the order of expulsion or were awaiting an imminent surrender to the German police committed suicide. Failed suicide attempts, on the other hand, just delayed the deportation but did not alter the decision.[63] In a few cases, the DGPS even complained that some benevolent local police functionaries had autonomously suspended a repatriation on account of real or alleged health motivations. For Rome, such delays and difficulties 'represent a discordant note within the context of the relationships with the German police' which, on the contrary, 'immediately give effect to all our requests' of repatriation.[64]

The cooperative German approach towards the Italian requests of repatriation and expulsion is a recurrent theme within the documentation of the Italian police. The Gestapo was glad to get rid of any troublesome or politically unreliable foreign element in the Reich and in the German-occupied territories. It was inclined to approve the requests of extradition and repatriation

[60] To facilitate the communication with the Italian police, the German authorities decided to forward the requests of repatriation of German citizens exclusively through the police attaché; see ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.9, f. RG 30, Kappler to the Italian police, 4 September 1940. For the requests of extraditions and expulsion, see the files RG 28 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.9-14.
[61] Bernhard, "Blueprints of Totalitarianism," 152. On this point, see also Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 83.
[62] For an overview of the extensive police cooperation see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 366-72.
[63] Ibid., 370-71.
[64] See the note for the *questore* of Spalato (Split) dated 15 April 1943 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.11, f. Massima. Gennaio 1942-Maggio 1943. About this point, see also Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 370.

coming from the Italian authorities. The Italian police were eager to return the favour and Bocchini had already endorsed a wider interpretation of the clauses of the 1936 treaty when dealing with German citizens.[65] Counting on that cooperative approach, the German authorities not only tightened their grip on the German colony in the peninsula, but they also progressively called the Italian attention to different targets and objectives that were outside the original scope of the bilateral agreement. Amongst the others, Kappler started to signal for capture and possibly deportation prisoners of war and foreign workers that had escaped from German camps, enemy spies, and citizens of enemy and occupied countries who were in the Italian territory.[66] Furthermore, from July 1942, the German police started to explicitly request the extradition of the foreign Jews – Germans included – who had found refuge in the territories under Italian occupation, with no other motivation than their racial classification.[67]

Until that point, the extradition of German Jews from Italy just for racial motives had been rare and, in a few cases, the German police had explicitly refused the repatriation of individual Jewish expatriates that were detained by the Italian police.[68] The Nazi authorities had long considered migration as the best solution to the 'Jewish question' and had thus fostered it enforcing increasingly antisemitic policies and extending the activity of the Central Office of Jewish Emigration organised by Eichmann to the whole German territory.[69] The migration policy had been progressively abandoned with the outbreak of the war and substituted with forced deportation to the occupied territories in eastern Europe. There, native and deported Jews alongside other 'undesirable' elements were subjected to brutal Nazi racial policies and segregated in ghettos, killed in mass executions, or murdered or exploited to death in concentration camps. It was with the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 that systematic extermination became the sole and 'final solution' (*Endlösung*) to the 'Jewish problem' accepted by the Nazi authorities. At the end of 1941, the migration of Jews from the territory of the Reich was officially prohibited, and Berlin implemented their extermination through work or starvation, or in the new extermination camps where the inmates unfit for work were killed in gas chambers.[70]

[65] Ibid., 383.
[66] See the case files related to the years 1940-1943 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG, bb.9-14.
[67] Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 381.
[68] Ibid., 380-81.
[69] See footnote no. 35 in chap. 4.
[70] For an examination of the development of the Nazi approach to the 'Jewish question' and of the Final Solution, see Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). See also Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), especially its chap. 3, "Killing Space: The Final Solution as Population Policy," 79-98.

In Heydrich's view, the Final Solution was a policing issue. With the decisive support of Göring, the task was indeed assigned to the SS and the police, and Heydrich himself was put in charge of its organisation and implementation as head of Sipo and SD.[71] This pre-eminence of the SS and the police was sanctioned at the conference that Heydrich organised on 20 January 1942 in Wannsee to coordinate the definitive extermination of European Jewry with the ministries and other state and party agencies that were concerned about the 'Jewish question'.[72] On that occasion, Heydrich alluded to the possibility of discussing the fate of the 58,000 Italian Jews directly with the Italian police chief. There is no evidence that he eventually proposed Senise a complete surrender of the Jews in Italy, whether native or refugee. All the same, the German requests of extraditions of non-Italian Jews rose in the months following the Wannsee Conference.[73]

The new types of requests of expulsion and deportation that the German authorities submitted, neither fell within the resolutions approved in 1936 nor did concern German citizens (like the Jews, who had been deprived of their German citizenship). They had wider implications and went far beyond an extensive interpretation of the original bilateral agreement that the DGPS, albeit generally collaborative, had to seek superior approval. A meeting between representatives of the Italian foreign office and of the DGPS took place on 11 December 1942. The PS was represented by Alianello of the Office RG and Giovanni Padellaro, the head of the DAGR Section III that oversaw the surveillance of the foreigners in the country. 'After a long discussion', it was agreed that the DGPS had to request the opinion of the foreign office on all the cases concerning the surrender of Jews and on other 'very special situations', whereas it was free to handle 'all the normal cases', even those not precisely encompassed by the 1936 treaty.[74] The meeting, however, did not solve the dispute; different opinions about an extensive application of the extradition persisted.

The PS complained that restrictions and diplomatic red tape risked compromising the smooth and effective cooperation with the German police. On 10 May 1943, the DAGR prepared a memorandum for Mussolini that aimed to solve the question once and for all. Building on the specific case of the deportation of a German deserter that the foreign office had stopped, the memorandum highlighted that the agreement with the German police had been signed in 1936,

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[71] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 210-11.
[72] The RSHA was represented, apart from its head Heydrich, by Gestapo chief Müller and Adolf Eichmann, who was now head of the Gestapo section B4 in charge of the Jewish affairs. A digitized version of the original protocol of the Wannsee Conference and of other documents related to the Final Solution are available online on the *Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz Gedenkstätte* website: https://www.ghwk.de/de/konferenz/protokoll-und-dokumente (last accessed on 30 March 2022).
[73] About this point, see Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 380-81.
[74] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.51, Note of the DGAR for the police chief, 16 December 1942.

long before the outbreak of the conflict, and could thus not have envisaged many of the cases and situations that arose at the present time. Again, the author emphasised the long-standing collaborative approach of the German police which 'had never and especially since the declaration of war expressed any objection to our requests, even when they had exceeded the limits of the agreement'. In time of war, the impunity of certain crimes risked 'disturbing the strong cordiality now existing' with the German police. The memorandum thus advocated an extensive reinterpretation of the letter of the 1936 agreement. The Italian police should surrender to the partner police not only German citizens and political criminals, but also citizens of territories under German occupation, stateless persons, Jews, other individuals who appeared suspicious and dangerous for military safety reasons and, where appropriate, ordinary criminals too.[75] In the end, this memorandum was not submitted to Mussolini. Notwithstanding, the police chief decided that 'the foreign office's judgments should not limit our decisions'.[76]

As the memorandum indicates, in the spring of 1943, the DGPS assumed a more compliant position in relation to the surrender of foreign citizens to the German police. This line of conduct also reflected an internal reshuffle in the police administration and the subsequent adoption of more radical policies, which are examined in the following sections. And yet, not everyone within the DGPS appreciated the extensive reinterpretation and application of the extradition clause contained in the 1936 protocol. Padellaro, for example, did not conceal his reservations with Savino Dadduzio, who had been appointed chief of the DAGR on 7 May 1943 and was probably the author of the memorandum. Padellaro confirmed that he would comply with the orders received but invited his superior to take into consideration the position of the foreign office, which was cautious towards an excessive and indiscriminate compliance with all the German requests, especially in relation to the Jews.[77] In light of his role, Padellaro was well aware of the terrible fate to which Jews were exposed once in the hands of the Nazi authorities, and had recently intervened to impede the expulsion of three Jewish refugees from Poland who had illegally entered the country to escape the Nazi persecution.[78]

Ultimately, the police agreement was not used by the two police forces to surrender Jews (except some individual cases) and the German authorities never explicitly requested a mass deportation from mainland Italy of Jewish refugees before the armistice of September 1943. Nevertheless, as Voigt's research shows, from 1942 their refuge became increasingly more

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[75] ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.11, f. Massima, Memorandum to the Duce, 10 May 1943.
[76] See Alianello's handwritten comment in the margin of the memorandum, in Ibid.
[77] In ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.41, sf.5, Accordo fra la polizia italiana e quella tedesca circa l'arresto dei criminali politici.
[78] See Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 385-87.

precarious.[79] The insecurity of their situation was even more evident in the Italian-occupied territories. In France, Yugoslavia, and Greece the Italian authorities adopted different policies towards the Jewish refugees and were more inclined to accommodate the German ally and its requests.[80] Non-Italian Jewish refugees were refused entry at the border, expelled, or forcibly repatriated, even though the Italian authorities knew what they risked once in the hands of the Nazis.[81] More than passive attitude or compliance, the Italian approach reflected an increasing radicalisation of the Fascist regime's racial policies and its orientation towards an alignment with the more extremist Nazi policies, which were then fully embraced by Mussolini's Italian Social Republic.[82]

## 5.3 The Territorial Enlargement of the Police Collaboration: Cooperation and Interactions in Slovenia, Croatia, and France

The previous sections highlighted how the scope of the bilateral collaboration as well as its targets expanded after the outbreak of the war. This process led to an intensification of the cross-border persecution of the enemies of the two fascist regimes that their two police forces had set up in 1936. At the same time, the police cooperation expanded territorially as the Axis powers enlarged the territories under their direct control and influence in the course of the war. This section examines key examples of collaboration on the ground that two fascist regimes established in the territories under a joint occupation, specifically in Slovenia, Croatia, and France. In so doing, it highlights how the cooperation and interactions there were at times tense and problematic.

### 5.3.1. *Police Interactions in Slovenia and in Croatia: Between Cooperation and Competition*

The Balkans were one of the areas where the two police forces extended their collaboration on the ground following the German invasion in the spring of 1941. This rapid and successful military campaign was directed to assist the Italian ally embroiled in Greece and to respond to an anti-Axis military coup in Belgrade that took place after Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite

[79] In Ibid., 372-96.

[80] For comprehensive examination, see Ibid., especially its chap. 3 "I profughi ebrei nelle zone annesse e occupate della Jugoslavia," and chap. 4 "I profughi ebrei nella zona di occupazione italiana in Francia"; Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista: Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, 2nd ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), 221-26.

[81] For furher information, see Michele Sarfatti, "Benito Mussolini e il respingimento degli ultimi ebrei croati verso la morte," *Documenti e Commenti*, no. 6 (April 26, 2017), https://www.michelesarfatti.it/documenti-e-commenti/Benito-Mussolini-e-il-respingimento-degli-ultimi-ebrei-croati-verso-la-morte; Davide Rodogno, "Italiani Brava Gente? Fascist Italy's Policy Toward the Jews in the Balkans, April 1941-July 1943," *European History Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 1, 2005): 213–40, https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691405051464.

[82] About this point, see the final chapters in Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*; Voigt, *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2.

Pact. Hitler feared the presence of a vulnerable flank in south-east Europe that risked compromising the imminent attack on the Soviet Union, which was eventually launched on 22 June 1941.[83]

Once Athens and Belgrade were defeated, the Axis powers enforced a reorganisation of the region.[84] Greece was subjected to a joint military occupation, although a collaborationist government was established in Athens.[85] Yugoslavia was dismantled and partitioned. Mussolini finally managed to extend Italian rule over the whole Adriatic Sea, but his original imperialistic aspirations over the Balkans – acknowledged but not formally included in the text of the Pact of Steel – were frustrated by Berlin, which downsized and limited Rome's ascendency in Balkans and partitioned the area for its own benefit.[86]

The German army occupied and administered Serbia with the support of a collaborationist local government.[87] Slovenia was split. The Third Reich occupied the northern and richer part, which intended to Germanise by force and integrate into Austria.[88] The capital city Ljubljana and the remaining part of Slovenia (with the exclusion of a small portion seized by Hungary) were incorporated into Italy as the 'autonomous province of Ljubljana'.[89] Rome also occupied Montenegro, annexed part of Dalmatia and of the Croatian coastline, and incorporated Kosovo and the western part of Macedonia into Albania. Bulgaria and Hungary too took control of parts of former Yugoslavia.[90] In addition, the Ustaša proclaimed the foundation of the 'Independent State of Croatia' (NDH, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*), with their leader Ante Pavelić at its head.[91]

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[83] See Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 132-133. On the Italian unsuccessful Greek campaign, see John Gooch, "Defeat, Disaster and Success," chap. 4 in *Mussolini's War: Fascist Italy from Triumph to Collapse, 1935-1943* (London: Penguin, 2020), 140-85.

[84] For further information on the partition and administration of the territories that were occupied by the Axis powers, see Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, 2nd ed. (Clark, N.J.: Lawbook Exchange, Ltd, 2008).

[85] Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 20-22; Paolo Fonzi, *Oltre i confini: Le occupazioni italiane durante la seconda guerra mondiale (1939-1943)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2020), 55-56. For a detailed examination of the Italian occupation of Greece, see also Paolo Fonzi, *Fame di guerra: L'occupazione italiana della Grecia (1941-43)* (Roma: Carocci, 2019).

[86] On the original ambitions of the Fascist regime towards the Balkans and on the negotiations with Berlin in the spring of 1941, see H. James Burgwyn, "The dismemberment of Yugoslavia," chap. 2 in *Empire on the Adriatic: Mussolini's Conquest of Yugoslavia, 1941-1943* (New York: Enigma, 2005), 18-47; and Jozo Tomasevich, "The Partition of Yugoslavia," chap. 2 in *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 47-82.

[87] About the German administration of Serbia, see Ibid.; and Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. V/1, 95-99.

[88] About this point, see Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 132-133; Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 83-94; and Gregor Joseph Kranjc, "Reality Subverted, 6 April-22 June 1941," chap.3 in *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 51-68.

[89] Ibid.; Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 156-57.

[90] See Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, 241-64.

[91] See footnote no. 52 in chap. 2.

Notionally independent, the new Croatian state was a puppet state subjected to a joint German and Italian occupation, which generated an immediate competition to gain the predominant role in the country and to extent their influence over the Ustaša.[92] This situation inevitably influenced the relationships between the Axis police forces and the police of the new Ustaša regime, which was headed by Eugen Kvaternik, the son of the new chief of the Croatian army, Slavko.[93] While competing in Croatia, the Axis police forces proved more willing to cooperate in Slovenia.[94] A further examination of these two case studies reveals the differences of opinion and practices that characterised the Axis police interactions in these two occupied territories.

At the time Berlin enforced the Germanisation of its part of Slovenia, the Italian authorities offered their support to relocate the ethnic Germans residing in Italian-occupied Slovenia to the territory of the Reich.[95] At the end of 1941, a major Holst of the *Ordnungspolizei* was sent to Ljubljana to coordinate the transfer of about 14,000 *Volksdeutsche* from the new Italian province with the local authorities.[96] Once the relocation was completed, the Orpo headquarters asked that Holst remained in Ljubljana as liaison officer with the Italian police to facilitate police interactions and help coordinate the repression of the partisan groups operating across the two occupied sectors. The Italian high commissioner that administered the Slovenian province, Emilio Grazioli, not only approved the German proposal but suggested that a police representative was assigned to German-occupied Slovenia.[97] Senise accepted the recommendation and, at the end of summer 1942, Alessandro Borgomanero – recently returned

[92] Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 47-64. See also Alexander Korb, *All'ombra della Guerra mondiale: Violenze degli Ustascia in Croazia contro serbi, ebrei e rom (1941-1945)* (Bolsena: Massari, 2018), 79-81.

[93] Ibid., 59-60; Sanela Schmid, *Deutsche und italienische Besatzung im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110623833, 47.

[94] For further information about the joint occupation of Slovenia and the two regimes' policies and interactions in the area, see Rolf Wörsdörfer, "Transnationale Aspekte italienischer und deutscher Besatzungsherrschaft in Slowenien 1941 bis 1945," in *Die "Achse" im Krieg. Politik, Ideologie und Kriegführung 1939-1945*, eds. Lutz Klinkhammer, Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, and Thomas Schlemmer (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 340-67.

[95] Ibid.; Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 95.

[96] Alongside Sipo and SS men, the German uniformed police were largely deployed in the occupied territories and actively complied to the enforcement of the Nazi racial and occupation policies, including racial cleansing and the forcible Germanisation of the seized territories that Himmler as Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom directed. They also participated in the repression of anti-German activities and in the fight against partisans; see Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017).

[97] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, vers. 1961, b.17, f. Collaborazione fra la polizia italiana e quella germanica. Like the other Italian security and police corps, the PS was actively involved in the repression of anti-Italian activities and partisan groups in the border provinces and in the occupied territories of Yugoslavia, where they were subjected to the army command; see Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 156-58; Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 322 and 494; Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *The Italian Army in Slovenia: Strategies of Antipartisan Repression, 1941-1943* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 28-29.

from the mission in Peru – was assigned to Bled, in the German territory.[98] Borgomanero worked together with the German police in Bled for about a year, until the Italian armistice of September 1943 suddenly interrupted his mission. The documentation available reveals that he returned to Italy only in October 1943, but in general – as Canali observes – almost nothing is known about his activity there.[99]

Not much information is available about the mission of Walter Krüger either. The German policeman arrived in Ljubljana when Borgomanero was in Bled, but the documentation consulted does not indicate whether he was a substitute or collaborator of major Holst of the *Ordnungspolizei* or a representative of the Gestapo. He was sent to Ljubljana to coordinate with the Italian authorities the anti-partisan action, the same as Borgomanero in German-occupied Slovenia. Krüger's mission as liaison officer was to work together with the Italian authorities, and yet his approach was not particularly cooperative. During his first meeting with Grazioli, Krüger announced his intention to operate autonomously within the Italian jurisdiction and encountered the resistance of the high commissioner. The progress of this cooperation is not known but its premises were not particularly encouraging, as Senise noted.[100]

Further frictions emerged as the partisans' activity in the area intensified and started to disrupt the connections between the occupied territories, especially the strategic Ljubljana-Zagreb railway. Such dislocation affected in particular the activity of the personnel of the new OVRA zone that spanned across the Italian-occupied territories of Slovenia, Dalmatia, and the allied but partially occupied Croatian state, and whose headquarters was located in Zagreb.[101] At the beginning of 1943, the growing presence of 'rebels' in the area made the connections between Zagreb and Ljubljana (and thus the rest of Italy) increasingly dangerous and problematic. Therefore, the head of the OVRA zone Ciro Verdiani requested the German diplomatic corps in Croatia permanent permits for his collaborators to transit across German-occupied Slovenia and thus guarantee their safety and the continuity of their service. The German foreign office, however, rejected his demand. Once more, the police chiefs intervened

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[98] In ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, Vers. 1961, b.17, f. Collaborazione fra la polizia italiana e quella germanica. Bled was the seat of the 'Overall Commander of the Order Police'(BdO, *Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei*) in the region and of 'Commander of the Security Police and of the SD' (KdS, *Kommandeure der Sipo und des SD*), who coordinated the activity of Gestapo, Kripo, and SD in the district; see Jože Dežman et al., *Deutsche und Partisanen: Deutsche Verluste in Gorenjska (Oberkrain) zwischen Mythos und Wahrheit* (Kranj: Gorenjski Muzej, 2017), 23-24, https://www.gorenjski-muzej.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/deutsche-und-partisanen_ebook_gorenjski-muzej.pdf.

[99] See note no. 348 in Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 695.

[100] The police chief wrote an ironic 'what a good start!' on the report received from Grazioli on 6 June 1942, in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.11, f. Massima.

[101] About the organisation of this OVRA zone, see Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 398-99.

to avoid the obstacles posed by diplomats to policing activities. Senise contacted Himmler, who requested his special envoy Dollmann to intervene and solve the matter.[102]

Verdiani was in Zagreb not only to direct the OVRA zone but also as liaison officers with the Ustaša police. As such, he interacted with the Croatian authorities and tried to extend Italian influence over them. Yet, he had to deal with a strong German presence and competition. Hans Helm – the former Gestapo liaison officer in Belgrade – was appointed police attaché in Zagreb in March 1942.[103] The Croatian capital also hosted the headquarters of one of the Sipo and SD *Einsatzkommandos* that operated in the Independent State of Croatia.[104] This concurrent presence of Italian and German policemen in Croatia created a competition between the two Axis partners for exerting more influence over the Ustaša police, which was instrumental in their wider rivalry in the area.[105]

Rome considered the Croatian state and its police within its sphere of influence. It was thus concerned about the growing influence and appeal exercised by the Third Reich over the Ustaša regime. With regards to the field of policing, the sizeable presence and activity of Gestapo functionaries in Croatia did not pass unnoticed. The Italian ambassador in Zagreb and the foreign office urged the DGPS to deploy more functionaries in the country, especially in the areas where the Italian presence was scarce. A reinforcement of the Italian police's presence and influence in Croatia was considered valuable in light of the 'intensification of the communist menace' in the region and to balance the significant deployment of 'police elements of the other nation', i.e. Germany, in the country. This way, the ambassador commented, the Italian policemen would report on the German 'interference' (*ingerenza*) in the area and 'possibly diminish it with their presence'.[106]

The ambassador's jealousy and resentment at the Gestapo's presence in Croatia was not new. He repeatedly encouraged the PS to seize the initiative and reinforce their collaboration with – and control over – the Ustaša police, like the Germans were doing.[107] The competition was evident, but the proposals advanced by the Italian diplomatic corps were not eventually satisfied. Senise and Verdiani acknowledged the benefits associated with an additional

[102] In ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.40, f.1874, Ispettorato Generale di PS presso la Regia Legazione d'Italia a Zagabria.
[103] About the activity of Helm in Croatia, especially his contribution to the persecution and deportation of Jews, see Schmid, *Deutsche und italienische Besatzung*.
[104] In BArch, R 58/241.
[105] About this point, see Srdjan Trifković, 'Rivalry between Germany and Italy in Croatia, 1942–1943', *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 4 (1993): 879–904, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00014540.
[106] ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, vers. 1961, b.16, f.9074.11, Croazia. Funzionari di Polizia, sf.2, Croazia. Funzionari di Polizia, The foreign office to the police, 16 June 1942.
[107] Ibid., Note from the office of the inspector general in Croatia, 2 April 1942.

deployment of functionaries in Croatia but also its impracticability on account of the shortage of personnel and the lack of officers with the necessary language skills.[108]

In Croatia, the two Axis police forces did not only compete to extend their direct influence on the ground. They were also rivals as models for the organisation of the Croatian police. In June 1941, the chief of the Ustaša police visited the Third Reich and Italy to establish institutional and personal connections and to study the organisation of the two regimes' police forces. He returned from Berlin very impressed with the German reception as much as with the organisation and work of the German police. Hence, Verdiani recommended Senise 'to prepare a rather spectacular programme to counterpose and possibly outdo those impressions' left on him by the trip to Germany. Besides, Kvaternik wanted to buy armoured cars, it was thus advisable to do as much as possible to 'beat the German competition'.[109]

In the end, the interactions between the PS and the Croatian police undoubtedly strengthened over the years, but Rome lost the competition with the German police. The documentation examined indicates that their relationships remained shaped by a persistent rivalry with Berlin and by a growing mistrust towards the brutal and increasingly pro-German Ustaša regime, which also took advantage of this rivalry and played off the two Axis partners against each other.[110]

### 5.3.2. *The Persecution of Jews in Italian-occupied France*

In France, the joint work between the Axis police forces proved effective when dealing with the capture and surrender of anti-fascist militants, in keeping with the 1936 agreement. The collaboration proved more problematic and contested when, after German and Italian troops took control of the territory of Vichy at the end of 1942, the Nazi and collaborationist French authorities focused their attention on the Jews that fled to the Italian sector.[111] About 20,000 French and foreign Jews indeed sought refuge in the Italian-occupied territory to escape the persecution and deportation conducted in the rest of France by the Nazi and Vichy authorities.[112]

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[108] Ibid., The police to the foreign office, 27 July 1942.

[109] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.52, f.2434, Missione di Polizia Croata, Verdiani to Senise, 23 June 1941.

[110] On this point, see Schmid, *Deutsche und italienische Besatzung*; Trifković, 'Rivalry between Germany and Italy in Croatia, 1942–1943'.

[111] Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 467-76. For further information on the Italian occupation of south-eastern France, see Emanuele Sica, *Mussolini's Army in the French Riviera: Italy's Occupation of France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

[112] See Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*; Voigt, "I profughi ebrei nella zona di occupazione italiana in Francia," chap. 4 in *Il rifugio precario*, vol. 2, 293-334. About the contribution of the Vichy authorities in the persecution and extermination of the Jews, see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*.

Initially, Berlin prompted Mussolini to order the removal and confinement of enemy aliens and non-Italian Jews from the army operational zone and from the coastline, where a landing of the Allies was feared. This operation was directed by Rosario Barranco, who was in charge of a 'Special Border Police Section' whose aim was to secure the Italian army's rear.[113] The non-Italian Jews that were identified by Barranco and his men were then interned or assigned to a forced residence. Yet, when the Nazi or Vichy authorities started to demand their surrender, the Italian army command not only denied it but countered any external intervention within its jurisdiction.[114] Under German pressure, in March 1943 Mussolini transferred the direction of the Jewish policy in the area from the army to the police. The dictator established an 'Inspectorate of Racial Police' under the direction of Guido Lospinoso, the functionary involved in the establishment of the interior ministry's internment camps who had already worked at Italian consulate in Nice before the war. Lospinoso took over the 'Jewish question' from Barranco, whom the German police did not consider particularly cooperative, and implemented the identification of stateless and non-Italian Jewish refugees in the Italian sector and their interment.[115]

The documentation concerning the inspectorate is lacking and it is not possible to reconstruct in detail the activity and tasks that Lospinoso carried out. Yet, recent research has revealed that the position of the Italian authorities and police towards the 'Jewish question' became more radical and more compliant with the Nazi requests in the course of 1943. As Fenoglio and Sarfatti point out, in July 1943, Lospinoso was ready to surrender all the German and ex-Austrian Jews to the Gestapo in agreement with a direct order from Rome. The deportation did not eventually take place because of the fall of the regime on 25 July, but the instruction sent to Lospinoso and the latter's acquiescence show that the Fascist regime and the PS were well disposed to organise a mass surrender of foreign Jews, albeit limited to the German Jews in France.[116] Even Lospinoso's activity in the weeks that followed Mussolini's fall is controversial. Not only did he and his assistant continue to meet and interact with the Gestapo until the beginning of September 1943, but they left Nice several days after the German takeover of the city which followed the Italian armistice of 8 September. During those days, the Gestapo chased, arrested, and deported all the Jews that had not managed to leave the area

[113] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 474-76.
[114] Rodogno, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, 471-72; Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 315-21.
[115] Ibid.
[116] See Michele Sarfatti, "Fascist Italy and German Jews in South-eastern France in July 1943," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3, no. 3 (September 1, 1998): 318–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/13545719808454984; and Luca Fenoglio, "Between Protection and Complicity: Guido Lospinoso, Fascist Italy, and the Holocaust in Occupied Southeastern France," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 33 (April 1, 2019): 90–111, https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dcz008. Safatti's article includes the text of the police chief's order to surrender the German Jews, which is dated 15 July 1943.

during the retreat of the Italian troops. As Canali argues, it cannot be excluded that the two Italian police functionaries assisted the Gestapo in this anti-Jewish operation.[117]

### 5.4 The Italian Armistice and the End of the Police Collaboration in September 1943

The relationships and collaboration between the Italian and German police forces were effective and solid during the war years, despite occasional tensions and incidents, persisting diffidence, and conflicting national interests. As the war progressed, however, the structural weaknesses and unpreparedness of the Fascist regime and of the Italian army became increasingly evident and their effects reflected on the internal dynamics of the Axis partnership and, accordingly, on the police relationships.

The worsening of the war operations and of the Italian home front from the second half of 1942 created growing apprehension in Rome and Berlin about a domestic and military collapse of the Fascist regime, and strong rumours on an imminent dismissal of Mussolini started to circulate.[118] The Nazi authorities reckoned that a change of political direction with an overthrow of Mussolini implied the possibility of an Italian surrender or defection. They thus monitored the fragile political situation and the condition of the home front in Italy with growing attention.[119] Himmler was particularly involved. He requested Senise to be promptly informed, via Dollmann, about the damages and victims caused by the Allies bombings in the Italian cities, which were exposing the vulnerability and military inadequacy of the regime.[120] In October 1942, he had the possibility of studying the Italian situation on the spot during a short visit to Rome at the invitation of Ciano, who probably wanted to reassure the ally on the Fascist regime's solidity.[121] On the occasion, Himmler met the foreign minister, Buffarini, Senise, and other high-rank Fascist functionaries. Most importantly, he had a long, private conversation with Mussolini about the developments of the war, the 'Jewish question' in the East, and the general situation in Italy.[122] The visit was a display of unity between the Axis partners and contributed to reinforce the position of Mussolini. Yet, the Nazi apprehension and vigilance did not cease.

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[117] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 476-79.

[118] On the Italian military setbacks, see Gooch, *Mussolini's War*, especially its chapters 8 and 9. On the disintegration of the Italian home front in 1942, see Simona Colarizi, *La seconda guerra mondiale e la Repubblica*, 2nd ed., Storia d'Italia 23 (Torino: UTET, 1995), 126-34.

[119] See Frederick William Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler and the Fall of Italian Fascism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 71-75.

[120] ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.27, f.1295, Note for the police chief, 22 November 1942. On the bombing campaigns in Italy and its effect on the home front, see Baldoli, "Il fallimento militare del regime."

[121] Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, 75-76.

[122] See the report that the *Reichsführer* compiled for Hitler and Ribbentrop in "Un resoconto di Himmler sulla sua visita a Mussolini dall'11 al 14 Ottobre 1942," *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia* 47 (Aprile-Giugno 1957): 49–52, https://www.reteparri.it/wp-content/uploads/ic/RAV0068570_1957_46-49_10.pdf.

In the meeting with Mussolini and, in general, during his stay in Rome, the *Reichsführer* had carefully examined the positions of the Vatican and the monarchy. The Nazi authorities recognised that only an initiative endorsed by the Italian king could enforce an effective change of political direction and – what they feared most – bring Italy's participation in the war to an end.[123] As Berlin expected, at the time of Himmler's visit, the king and his entourage had indeed started a secret and cautious manoeuvre to end Italy's participation in the war.[124] In the fall of 1942, when the domestic situation was progressively getting out of control and a military defeat of the Axis was becoming more likely, prominent figures within the army and the state apparatus, but also some moderate Fascist leaders, started to make secret arrangements for a change of regime and looked for the decisive backing of the monarchy. The police chief Senise was amongst them. He established contacts with representatives of the king and started to prepare the ground for an overthrow of Mussolini. These preparations included preventing any initiative or reaction of the most radical Fascists.[125]

Senise had always maintained a low-profile attitude, although he had been involved in all the most important activities and decisions concerning the Italian police.[126] He was a trusted, dedicated, and competent police functionary who had greatly contributed to the reorganisation of the interior ministry police under the Fascist regime and to the successful repression of its enemies first as head of the DAGR and as Bocchini's deputy and then as police chief. The documentation about him is however scarce, and the use of his post-war memories to determine his actions and profile requires caution. They were written with the clear intention of dissociating himself from the crimes committed by the regime, thus he explicitly avoided mentioning his complicity and involvement with it as well as his relationships and collaboration with Himmler and the German police. He stressed his and the PS independence from the interfering and corruption of the regime and emphasised his contribution to the overthrow of Mussolini and his anti-German attitude. Still, as Senise admitted, Mussolini had never doubted the loyalty of his police chief. He had indeed willingly served the regime and ruthlessly implemented its repressive and racial policies over the years. Therefore, when the domestic and military situation deteriorated, his increasingly cold and equivocal attitude towards the regime aroused suspicion.

At the beginning of March 1943, Mussolini received a confidential report on Senise from an intelligence bureau of the Fascist Militia, which underlined the police chief's ambiguous

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[123] Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, 76-78.
[124] Ibid., 71-74.
[125] Ibid., 130-32. See also Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia*, 140-49.
[126] For further information on Senise, see also Savella, "Mussolini's 'Fouché'; about this point, in particular p.4 and p.242.

activities in preparation for a change of regime and his connections with the entourage of the king.[127] On those same days, mounting popular protests and industrial action combined and erupted into mass strikes at the FIAT car factories in Turin and rapidly spread to other industrial areas. These large-scale working-class protests, the first of this kind in Fascist Italy and in Axis Europe, uncovered the regime's evident decline in support as well as its inability to maintain the domestic situation under control. The reaction of the regime was neither adequate to crush the protests nor did it manage to mobilise the population and workforce in support of the war effort. On the contrary, it contributed to create a fertile ground for a successful reprise of communist propaganda and activism in the Italian industrial areas that further facilitated the collapse of the home front.[128]

The deterioration of the Italian situation alarmed the Axis partner. Probably, the 'private' three-day visit of Gestapo chief Müller to Rome in March 1943 was organised to examine the recent Italian developments.[129] On that occasion, he met with Senise, even though the Nazi authorities had received clear indication that the Italian police chief was no longer a trustworthy partner and that his private views were very critical of the Germans and of the future of the Fascist regime.[130] Their confidential source was Coriolano Pagnozzi, the head of the police chief's secretariat. Pagnozzi was a convinced Fascist and had developed close ties with high-rank Nazi functionaries over the years. With Dollmann in particular, who was a regular visitor to the DGPS and to whom Pagnozzi reported on his chief's opinions, behaviour, and appointments.[131]

The information gathered by the Nazi authorities probably confirmed Mussolini's doubts about his police chief.[132] He dismissed Senise right after a visit to Hitler in April 1943. The official reason for that decision was the inadequate police reaction to the March strikes and

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[127] The report dated 6 March 1943 is in ACS, SPD, RSI, Carteggio Riservato (CR), 1943-1945, b.7, f. 29, Senise Carmine, sf. 1, Carte dal 27/11/1935 al 5/5/1943. See also Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 472.

[128] For a detailed reconstruction of the events and for an analysis of the impact of the Turin strikes see Claudia Baldoli, "Spring 1943: The Fiat Strikes and the Collapse of the Italian Home Front," *History Workshop Journal* 72, no. 1 (October 1, 2011): 181–89, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbr022; "The Turin Strikes of March," chap. 8 in Timothy W. Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class*, ed. Jane Caplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 274-94.

[129] See ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.55, f. *Müller Gen. Heinrich*.

[130] On the occasion, Müller apparently urged a more collaborative approach of the Italian authorities towards the German demands that concerned the surrender of the Jewish refugees in Italian-occupied France; in Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia*, 62-3.

[131] See ACS, MI, DGPS, DAR, Categorie permanenti, Ctg. B, Ff. personali, 1949-1965, b.272, f. Pagnozzi Coriolano. See also Mimmo Franzinelli, *Delatori. Spie e confidenti anonimi: L'arma segreta del regime fascista* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2012), 53-55.

[132] Pagnozzi later submitted a report on Senise's misconduct and treachery directly to Mussolini, which contained information on the police chief's duplicity and contribution to events of July 1943. The dictator underlined some passages of the report, which probably contributed to determine Senise's fate after the German occupation of Rome. See the report dated 14 September 1943 in ACS, SPD, RSI, CR, 1943-1945, b.7, f. 29, Senise Carmine, sf. 2, Carte dal 14/9/1943 (R.S.I.).

protests. The dictator imposed a clear-cut change at the direction of the PS with the appointment of Renzo Chierici, who was neither a career policeman nor an expert in police affairs but was an expression of the Fascist Party.[133] Chierici's profile was that of a genuine Fascist devoted to Mussolini: he was a veteran of the Fascist squads and a general of the Militia. As Dollmann informed the German ambassador, he was expected to give new energy to the Italian police after the loss of vigour that had followed the death of Bocchini, i.e., when Senise was in office.[134] The new Fascist police chief was also close to the new undersecretary of the interior ministry, the prefect of Naples Umberto Albini. Mussolini had indeed imposed a general restructuring of the state and regime administration at the beginning of February 1943 and, on the occasion, dismissed his son-in-law and foreign minister Ciano (who was nominated ambassador to the Holy See) and the undersecretary Buffarini.[135]

In conjunction with Senise's dismissal, a general changing of the guard occurred in the DGPS. Epifanio Pennetta was replaced at the head of the DAGR by Savino Dadduzio, who had directed the police headquarters in Florence. Leto too was initially set aside and destined for Perugia, but he managed to return at the direction of the Political Police Division after a few days.[136] Pagnozzi was transferred to the prefecture of Rome, whereas Alianello was confirmed at the head of the Office RG and in the new police chief's secretariat. In light of his roles, it is likely that he kept Senise informed about any developments within the direction of the PS and on the interactions with German police.

The German police leadership was promptly informed by Kappler about this 'change in the Italian police'.[137] Kappler was even summoned to Berlin for a meeting with his superiors and a representative of the foreign office (probably Ribbentrop himself) to report on the Italian situation and the declining consensus in support of the Fascist regime.[138] The Nazi authorities were alarmed about the evident deterioration of the Italian home front and the increasing difficulties of the Fascist regime. The development of the situation was thus monitored with growing apprehension.

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[133] At the same time, Mussolini changed the leadership of the party that was now directed by the intransigent and hard-line Carlo Sforza; see Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, 351-55.
[134] PA AA, Deutsche Botschaft Rom (Quirinal), Geheimakten, 1920-1943, b.125, Italien: Innenpolitik, Bd.2, January 1943-May 1943, Dollmann to the ambassador von Mackensen, 17 April 1943.
[135] Deakin, *The Brutal Friendship*, 165-75.
[136] Canali, *Le spie del regime*, 472.
[137] See the list of reports communicated by Kappler to the RSHA Attaché Group on 22 April 1943, in PA AA, R 100763. Unfortunately, these reports have not survived the war, but the foreign office kept the accompanying letters that enlisted their titles or topics.
[138] See Kappler's interrogation report dated 21 August 1947 in Tribunale Militare Territoriale di Roma (TMR Roma), Procedimento penale contro Herbert Kappler e altri. Fosse Ardeatine, b.1, vol.VI, Fosse Ardeatine. Atti e documenti pervenuti dagli Alleati, doc. no. 54-56.

After the Allies' landing in Sicily on 10 July 1943, Berlin knew that a coup against Mussolini was imminent, and that marshal Pietro Badoglio had already been designated to lead a new cabinet.[139] The coup eventually took place on 25 July. The Fascist Grand Council, i.e. the cabinet-like council that reunited the highest Fascist officials, passed a motion against Mussolini that was presented by the former minister of justice Dino Grandi. The vote of the Fascist notables indicated the necessity of a change in the conduct of the war and, although not binding, offered the Italian king the possibility of dismissing Mussolini. The dictator was removed from office and arrested in the afternoon of 25 July 1943, after his routine audience with the monarch.[140]

With Badoglio at the head of the new government, Senise resumed the position of police chief. One of his first acts as he returned to office was to inform Himmler about his reappointment.[141] Despite the dismissal and arrest of Mussolini, the Axis alliance and the Italian commitment to the war against the Allies were still in place. The connections and cooperation between the Axis police forces remained in force as well. Notwithstanding, the Nazi authorities did not trust the Italian side anymore and made plans for taking control of the situation. First, Hitler wanted to locate and liberate Mussolini, and Himmler engaged Kappler and the SD with the task.[142] Second, more German troops were sent to Italy and deployed throughout the peninsula, ready to intervene in the eventuality of an Italian volte-face and agreement with the Allies. As Berlin expected, an armistice was signed in secret on 3 September 1943 and announced on 8 September. The king, Badoglio, and his government fled from Rome at once. They feared a German retaliation and moved southwards, towards the advancing Allies troops. Italian civil and military authorities were left without instructions, while the German army occupied the country.[143]

The proclamation of the armistice and the German occupation of Rome determined the end of the Axis police collaboration that had been in place since in the spring of 1936.[144] The Italian

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[139] Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*, 196-97.
[140] See Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy*, 493-95; Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 248-53.
[141] Senise's telegram was sent at 14.10 on 27 July 1943, Himmler replied only on 3 August; in ACS, MI, DGPS, SCP Senise e Chierici, Ff. correnti, b.39, f.1822, sf.4.
[142] For further details about the German plans for the liberation of Mussolini, see Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services*, 198-201.
[143] On the proclamation of the armistice and on the German reaction, see Elena Aga Rossi, *A Nation Collapses: The Italian Surrender of September 1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Goeschel, *Mussolini and Hitler*, 254-63.
[144] Interestingly, on the day after the declaration of the Italian armistice someone within the DGPS decided to check the text of the agreement signed in 1936, which now was no longer in force. A copy of the police accord was indeed re-catalogued on 9 September 1943 with a new reference number; in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, AG, Massime, b.258, f.41, sf.5.

police ceased to be a partner and became subordinate to the German police and authorities.[145] Under the new circumstances, the Office RG ceased its activity.[146] The Italian police attaché Chiavaccini was arrested together with the personnel of the Italian embassy in Berlin on their way to Italy on 9 September 1943. They were stopped near Munich and interned. After the liberation of Mussolini on 12 September and the establishment of the Italian Social Republic in German-occupied Italy on 18 September, they were offered the possibility of joining the new Fascist puppet state and release. Chiavaccini rejected the offer and remained in German captivity until December 1943, when he was transferred to Italy and then pensioned off.[147]

After the armistice, Alianello became the liaison officer between the DGPS and the German police authorities in Rome, primarily with Kappler who now commanded the Sipo and SD *Aussenkommando* in Rome, a 'detached headquarters' of the BdS Italy (*Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*, 'Overall Commander of the Security Police and of the Security Service') that coordinated the activity of the German security forces in the occupied country and that was based in Verona.[148] Alianello assisted Kappler and the German police but as a subordinate and no longer as a pair. At the liberation of Rome, he was captured by the Allies and interned. It then emerged that he had secretly provided information to the British intelligence since the autumn of 1943.[149] Kappler moved to northern Italy where he acted as liaison officer between the BdS Italy and the offices of the DGPS that had been relocated in the north.[150] Taken prisoner by the Allies in May 1945, Kappler was tried by an Italian military

[145] About the Italian-German police relationships after the armistice, see Lutz Klinkhammer, "Polizeiliche Kooperation unter deutscher Besatzung. Mechanismen der Repression in der *Repubblica Sociale Italiana*," in Klinkhammer, Osti Guerrazzi, and Schlemmer, *Die "Achse" im Krieg*, 472-91. For a detailed reconstruction of the German occupation of Italy, see also Lutz Klinkhammer, *L'occupazione Tedesca in Italia, 1943-1945* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2016).

[146] Within the documentation of the Office RG, a few communications for the German police are dated 4 October 1943, but these were replies to enquiries received before the armistice; in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAGR, Ufficio RG b.14, f. Pronte. Ka-D.Pol.

[147] After the liberation, Chiavaccini collaborated with the National Liberation Committee in Venice. He was then recalled into service and destined to Bolzano (together with Antonino Pizzuto) because the Italian post-war authorities did not recognise his retirement that had been sanctioned by the RSI. The former police attaché in Berlin appealed and managed to reverse the decision; in ACS, MI, DGPS, Div. Personale PS, Personale fuori servizio, vers. 1957, b.236-ter, f. Chiavaccini Osvaldo.

[148] On the structure and activity of the BdS in Italy and of the *Aussenkommando* in Rome see the essays in Sara Berger, ed., *I signori del terrore: Polizia nazista e persecuzione antiebraica in Italia (1943-1945)* (Sommacampagna, Verona: Cierre edizioni; Istituto veronese per la storia della Resistenza e dell'età contemporanea, 2016).

[149] Alianello is mentioned as subsource 'Pompeo' in TNA, WO 204/12798. After the war, he was acquitted of any accusation of collaborationism also thanks to the favourable testimony of a British intelligence officer, see AS Roma, CAP, CAS, Sentenze, 1946, Sentenza nella causa penale contro Raffaele Alianello. The former head of the Office RG made a brilliant career in the post-war police. He became police chief in Brescia and Naples and retired in 1972.

[150] For a comprehensive reconstruction of the organisation and activity of the PS during the RSI and of the failed post-war purge of its personnel, see Canali, "Guerra e dopoguerra," chap. 7 in *Le spie del regime*. Even the head of the Political Police Division and of the OVRA Leto – who served also as deputy chief of the RSI police – was reinstated and eventually retired at the end of 1952.

court for the massacre of 335 civilians at the Fosse Ardeatine, near Rome, that he had led in March 1944 and for the requisition of the gold of the Jewish community in Rome in October 1943.[151]

Senise was arrested on 23 September 1943 and deported to Germany together with his deputy Salvatore Rosa.[152] Once in Germany, according to his memoirs, he was read a message from Himmler who accused him of disloyalty towards the German police.[153] On the day of Senise's arrest, the heads of departments of the interior ministry and of the police were summoned to a meeting by Karl Wolff, whom Himmler had just appointed Highest SS and Police Leader in Italy. In his speech, a witness recalled, Wolff celebrated the memory of the late Bocchini and curiously commented that 'had he still been alive, the unpleasant events occurred would have not happened'.[154] In other words, the police partnership and bilateral cooperation that Bocchini had helped establish and develop now come to end.

## 5.5 Conclusions

This chapter reconstructed the way in which the Axis police partnership progressed during the war years and how it suddenly ended in September 1943, following the declaration of the Italian armistice and the German occupation of the peninsula. In so doing, it highlighted that the interactions and joint work between the police forces of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy intensified in wartime. Notwithstanding the sudden death of Bocchini and an evident pre-eminence of the German interests and position within the partnership, the police collaboration remained effective and increasingly expanded its scope and targets, notably on German request. Each police force pursued its own interests and national strategies but, overall, they willingly cooperate.

With regards to cross-border persecution of political opponents and migrants, the Italian police continued to focus its requests to the Gestapo on the capture and repatriation of the Italian anti-fascists that remained in the countries now under German occupation, specifically Belgium

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[151] About these events, see Martin Baumeister, Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, and Claudio Procaccia, eds., *16 ottobre 1943: La deportazione degli ebrei romani tra storia e memoria* (Roma: Viella, 2016). Kappler was sentenced to life imprisonment but unexpectedly escaped in 1977. He returned to Germany, where he died a year later. For further information, see Felix Bohr, "Flucht aus Rom. Das Spektakuläre Ende des 'Falles Kappler' im August 1977," *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte* 60 (January 15, 2012): 111–41, https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/heftarchiv/2012_1_5_bohr.pdf. The judgements of the Italian military courts against Kappler are available online at: https://www.difesa.it/Giustizia_Militare/rassegna/Processi/Kappler/Pagine/default.aspx (last accessed on 30 March 2022).

[152] After a few months in Dachau, they were transferred with other Italian prominent prisoners to Hirschegg, in the Austrian Alps. They were liberated at the end of the war and returned to Italy. Senise was put under investigation by the High Commission for the Sanctions against Fascism but eventually not tried; in AS Roma, CAP, Sezione Istrutoria, b.1612, f.73, Senise Carmine. He was pensioned off and died in 1958.

[153] In Ibid. See also Senise, *Quando ero capo della polizia*, 262-69.

[154] See the memorandum of the prefect of Venice dated 27 February 1951 in ACS, MI, DGPS, DAR, Categorie permanenti, Ctg. B, Ff. personali, 1949-1965, b.272, f. Pagnozzi Coriolano.

and France. The German police, on the other hand, went far beyond the letter of the 1936 agreement. With the assistance of the Italian police, the German authorities effectively extended their reach over the German expatriates in the peninsula and managed to impose on them the same repressive measures that were in force in the Reich. As a result, the number of Germans extradited and repatriated increased in the war years. The German police did not only stretch to the limit the extradition clause included in the 1936 protocol, but their requests went far beyond that. They asked the PS to hand them over citizens of other countries and, from 1942, also Jewish refugees. In this case, however, the Italian authorities proved less cooperative, although the leadership of the police assumed increasingly radical and compliant positions.

The collaboration between the two police forces also expanded geographically, because of the territorial expansion of the Axis powers. The three case studies examined – Slovenia, Croatia, and France – show how the PS and the German police interacted and cooperated in the territories under joint occupation. They also highlight the continuing presence of differences in policies and practices that, at times, caused tensions and rivalry between Rome and Berlin. In this regard, police diplomacy and mediation proved once more beneficial in dealing with question that the diplomatic corps of the two regimes were not capable to address. After the failure of diplomatic negotiations, Gestapo chief Müller and the Italian police attaché Chiavaccini reached an agreement on the measures to implement to punish any misconduct or transgression of the Italian labour force in the Reich. Chiavaccini was involved not just in the negotiations with the Gestapo but also in the execution of the measures approved. This additional assignment reflected an increase in the responsibilities and tasks of the police attachés that occurred in wartime and which prompted the German authorities to redefine their roles and functions in 1942.

Despite persistent differences and disagreements, the cooperation between the Axis police forces intensified during the war years and proved effective until the Italian armistice of September 1943, which sanctioned its conclusion. The relationships between their police leaderships, on the other hand, developed wary in 1943. The worsening of the situation in Italy and the exposed weakness of the Fascist regime affected the interactions between Rome and Berlin. The two police leaderships did not consider each other trustworthy partners any longer. Accordingly, the Italian police chief Senise was arrested by the German police after the occupation of Rome.

# Conclusion

In the spring of 1936, the head of the Italian police Arturo Bocchini and the leader of the SS Heinrich Himmler met for the first time in Berlin and signed a protocol that sanctioned the beginning of police cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. About seven years later, at the end of September 1943, Himmler ordered the arrest of Bocchini's successor, Carmine Senise. After years of interactions, exchange of visits, and joint work, the collaboration and partnership between the German and Italian police forces came to an end. This work has analysed how this partnership was established, consolidated, and developed between 1936 and 1943 with the aim to contribute to the existing scholarship on the Axis. Therefore, considering the initial research questions, what do the transnational interactions and collaboration between the two fascist police forces tell us about the relationship between their regimes? In other words, what does this analysis of the Axis police partnership reveal?

First, before 1936, the establishment of regular interactions and solid connections between the police forces of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany proved unsuccessful. Police cooperation was usually motivated by strategic and diplomatic considerations, rather than political or ideological affinity. Accordingly, the PS proved more willing to cooperate with the police departments of the Weimar Republic, with which it could exchange information on numerous anti-fascist organisations and expatriates based in the country. On the contrary, the PS saw no benefit in stable police connections with Nazi Germany, because anti-fascist organisations had been banned and their militants imprisoned or forced to leave the country. After years of cool interactions, the situation changed at the end of 1935, when Rome and Berlin intensified their contacts to evade diplomatic isolation. During their rapprochement, the two fascist regimes made use of anti-communism as a common ground on which to grow lasting and good relationships. They shared an interest in fighting political subversion and in countering the Bolshevik threat and, although differences persisted, they concentrated on this common position to initiate a police collaboration. The secret agreement that Bocchini and Himmler concluded in April 1936 sanctioned the beginning of the partnership between the PS and the Gestapo and, at the same, contributed to the closer relationship between Rome and Berlin that culminated in the announcement of the Berlin-Rome Axis. Mussolini in person engaged in the establishment and consolidation of the police partnership. He suggested an exchange of liaison officers and, over the years, continued to give his attention to the development and political significance of police relationships.

Second, each regime recognised the diplomatic value of police connections and collaboration. The second half of the 1936 saw an increase in their use of police diplomacy as

means to establish contacts and to extend influence abroad, avoiding diplomatic red tape and impasse. The interests pursued and the agendas implemented were different but anti-communism, and more broadly the fight against political subversion, remained the means that both Rome and Berlin used to develop police interactions. They recognised that, especially after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, it could attract other governments and police forces. In diplomatic terms, it was more beneficial to concentrate on this common aspect rather than openly promoting fascist policies and stances. The Nazi authorities engaged in an ambitious plan and put their efforts on the creation of a broad anti-communist bloc of states. Yet, their aspiration to form and lead an international political police organisation was never fulfilled. All the same, they developed a broad network of interactions and promoted multilateral events, like the international anti-communist police conference that took place in Berlin in 1937. The Italian police were less proactive in their international interactions than their German partner. The PS appeared less interested in political manoeuvres and generally followed the directives of the foreign office, which aimed to gain a foothold in the countries included in the Italian spheres of influence, specifically in the Balkans, in South America, and the Iberian Peninsula. At times, however, the German and Italian interests clashed and developed into a competition for exerting more authority over the local police forces, as in Spain and Portugal.

In brief, for the Axis powers, police diplomacy was beneficial in developing international connections, exerting power and influence abroad, and gaining a foothold in foreign countries. In many cases, these outcomes appeared more valuable than the organisation of an effective anti-communist police cooperation. For the same reason, the German police leadership took advantage of the annexation of Austria in 1938 to take control of the International Criminal Police Commission and assume a leading position in the field of international policing.

Third, the bilateral police cooperation between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany continued to progress and strengthened in the pre-war years, despite different approaches and goals as well as a persistent mutual distrust. They put into effect a cross-border repression of political subversion and offered each other mutual assistance in dealing with potentially dissident and hostile elements within the communities of expatriates. The exchange of visits between Mussolini and Hitler in 1937 and 1938 furthered the cooperation. The two police forces kept each other informed about anti-fascists and suspicious elements and enforced strict preventive measures against them. At the same time, the pre-eminence of the German police within the partnership became increasingly evident. During the German dictator's trip, in fact, the Gestapo directly operated and intervened in Italy and managed to put the community of German expatriates under growing pressure. Notwithstanding latent tensions, disagreements, and rivalry, the ties and exchanges between the two police forces intensified and their cooperation

effectively progressed. The joint work along with conferences and ceremonies like the *Festa della Polizia* and the *Tag der Deutsche Polizei* helped cement their bond and the personal connections between their leaderships, in particular between Bocchini and Himmler. They established a close relationship that revealed valuable in deepening the police partnership as well as in easing difficult situation and frictions that developed between Rome and Berlin.

Fourth, as the war approached, the focus of police surveillance and persecution shifted from organised political activity to a broader spectrum of perceived non-compliance. Each police force strengthened its control at home and started to enforce more radical and wide-ranging preventive and repressive measures. This development was reflected on the police interactions and on the cross-border persecution they had set up in 1936. Accordingly, the communication between the Gestapo and the Italian police's 'Office for the Relationship with Germany' expanded considerably and the pressure over the expatriates increased, especially after the arrival of Herbert Kappler in Rome. Indeed, the new German police liaison officer started to zealously monitor and denounce any form of real or supposed nonconformity and dissent amongst the Germans living in Italy, putting into place a course of action that developed fully after the outbreak of the war. In this regard, when the Italian declaration of non-belligerence in September 1939 put the Axis partnership at risk and the official channels of communication between Rome and Berlin stopped, Mussolini turned to his police chief and his good relationships with Himmler to ease the diplomatic tensions with Berlin. As in 1936, the informal links that police diplomacy created helped improve the relationship between Rome and Berlin at delicate times.

Fifth, the collaboration between the German and the Italian police forces expanded and intensified in wartime. During the war years, the joint cross-border persecution of political opponents and migrants went far beyond the resolutions initially agreed in 1936. Whereas the Italian police continued to concentrate mainly on the Italian anti-fascists in the territories invaded by the Third Reich, the Gestapo expanded its requests for surveillance and repatriation to subjects not initially included in the original agreement. Although differences in policies and methods remained, they generally encountered a cooperative and compliant attitude on the part of the Italian authorities, but for the demand for the surrender of German and foreign Jews, advanced from 1942. In that case, the Italian police leadership demonstrated a more radical and compliant mentality, but the foreign office remained more cautious. New police assignments and tasks that emerged in wartime also fell within the scope of the police collaboration. For example, the police forces resolved an issue that the diplomatic corps were not able to address: the treatment of any misconduct and transgression by Italian workers employed in Germany.

The growing wartime responsibilities and deployment abroad of the German police representatives prompted the RSHA and the foreign office to clarify the role and functions of the police attachés, like Kappler. His activity and joint work with the Italian authorities indeed intensified during the war years as a consequence of the new assignments and of the expansion of the cross-border surveillance and persecution. The police collaboration also expanded geographically during the war years, as the Axis powers extended the territories under their control. They established forms of cooperation in the territories under a joint Italian-German occupation, although their relationships there were more complicated and problematic than at home. In Croatia, France, and Slovenia, they were characterised by disagreements and competition and exhibited more clearly the German pre-eminence within the partnership.

Lastly, whereas the police collaboration extended and intensified during the war years, the rapport between the two police leaderships progressively deteriorated. The lack of cohesion and mutual trust became evident in the summer of 1943. Bocchini's successor, Senise, was no longer considered a trusted partner in Berlin since he had been involved in the plot against Mussolini. Therefore, after the German occupation of Rome in September 1943, he was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to Germany.

To conclude, this research argues that, although each police force pursued its own objectives and national interests, the Italian and German police forces interacted effectively and worked together between 1936 and 1943. Differences of opinion and attitudes, clashing interests, and distrust persisted, but they also shared objectives and responsibilities, specifically the protection of their regimes and the removal of any real or potential menace. Although statistically marginal compared to the immense figures of the victims of fascist violence and repression, the number of people that fell under the joint police scrutiny is significant and shows how the two regimes set up an effective transnational system of persecution. In addition to this, this work reveals that broader police interactions and partnership had implications that went beyond strict policing. Specifically, this work proves that the two police forces, through their chiefs and representatives, did play the role of intermediaries to ease diplomatic tensions and to circumvent diplomatic red tape. This investigation can thus be regarded as a contribution to the existing historiography of fascism not only because it provides further substantial evidence of the presence of effective transnational interactions between Berlin and Rome but also because it illustrates the importance of police relationships for the two regimes and their broader partnership. This research in fact demonstrates that, between 1936 and 1943, the general relationships between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany benefitted from these police connections and collaboration.

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  - Divisione Polizia Politica;
  - Divisione Servizi Informativi e Speciali;
  - Segreteria del Capo della Polizia;
  - Ufficio Centrale di Polizia Internazionale.

Segreteria Particolare del Duce:

- Carteggio Ordinario;
- Carteggio Riservato;
- RSI. Carteggio Riservato.

*Archivio di Stato Livorno*:

Questura;

Prefettura.

*Archivio di Stato Roma*:

Corte d'Appello.

*Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*:

Direzione Generale Affari Politici, 1931-1945: Germania;

Gabinetto del Ministro, 1923-1943;

Rappresentanza Italiana a Berlino, 1867-1943.

*Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde*:
Berlin Document Center;
NS 19 Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS;
R 19 Chef der Ordnungspolizei/ Hauptamt Ordungspolizei;
R 58 Reichssicherheitshauptamt;
R 70 Deutsche Polizeidienststellen in Italien;
R 1001 Reichskolonialamt.

*National Archives of the UK*:
KV Record of the Security Service;
MEPO Records of the Metropolitan Police Office;
WO War Office Records.

*Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*:
Botschaft Rom:
    Akten;
    Geheimakten;
    Personalakten;
Personalakten;
RZ 107 Dienststelle Ribbentrop;
RZ 214 Referat Deutschland/Abteilung Inland, 1920-1945.

*Tribunale Militare Territoriale di Roma*:
Procedimento penale contro Herbert Kappler ed altri, Fosse Ardeatine.

*Ufficio Storico del Comando Generale dell'Arma dei Carabinieri*:
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