



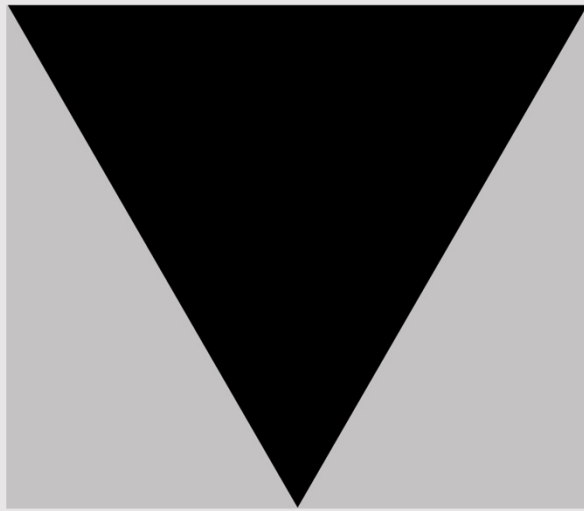
UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
FIRENZE

FORLILPSI
DIPARTIMENTO DI FORMAZIONE,
LINGUE, INTERCULTURA,
LETTERATURE E PSICOLOGIA

Sucar  Drom

 **CILD**

ASSOCIAZIONE
21 LUGLIO



REMEMBER
AGAINST
DISCRIMINATION



Funded by
the European Union

The following pages summarize the most important elements of the historical research carried out by Luca Bravi (Forlilpsi - University of Florence), Yuri del Bar (Sucar Drom Association), Giorgio Bezzecchi ("Fabrizio De André" Museum and Sucar Drom Association), Radames Gabrielli (Nevo Drom Association and Sucar Drom Association), Dzemila Salkanovic (21 Luglio Association). The research activity was structured with the aim of building a shared narrative space, starting with the recovery of voices, places and stories together with Sinti and Roma communities.

Foreword

The following paper is the result of the assessment of archival materials, interviews with direct and indirect witnesses, informal documents from families and individuals involved in the research phase of the European project "Remember against discrimination," which involved the participation of members of the Italian Roma and Sinti communities as junior researchers, alongside senior researchers. This text is divided into four historical stages that were structured on the basis of the research materials and are divided into chapters. The elaboration offered by the research allows for the examination and critical analysis of the historical narrative around the events that characterised the Roma and Sinti communities in Italy between 1922 and 1945, and analysis of the events themselves. This research makes it possible to highlight the historical passages that allowed prejudices about "Gypsies" to thrive well past the end of World War II. These are prejudices, allowed to persist, that have influenced post-World War II inclusive policies in Italy. The research also makes it possible to state with certainty that deportation which occurred in the last phase of the war (1943-1945) also involved Italian Roma and Sinti people, who were deported to the camps of the Third Reich. This element represents a pivotal point in building a European memory that, also in Italy, can introduce the memory of Roma and Sinti in the national legislation related to Nazi and Fascist persecution, deportation, and extermination.

I

1926-1938

Rejections and expulsion from the Kingdom of Italy

The fascist regime began to intervene frequently with regard to the "gypsy problem" from 1926. In a letter sent to the prefects of the land on February 19 of that year and having as its subject "gypsies," the Minister of the Interior indicated:

I have noted that in recent times there have again been non-infrequent infiltrations into the Kingdom of gypsies who, deprived of means of subsistence, go around, especially in the border areas, and through the various cities, without any determined purpose, indulging in, as is their custom, vagrancy and begging, with obvious dangers to public safety, as well as to public hygiene. Since in this regard there are peremptory regulations in force, the strict application of which should have prevented in any case the concentration in caravans of gypsies, even if they entered the Kingdom in isolation, I must believe that the offices of P. S. do not always attend with the necessary diligence to the observance of the instructions given in this matter [...] I intend that the instructions already given and repeatedly recalled should be strictly observed and that gypsies, circus folks and the like who would attempt in caravans or in isolation to enter Italy, even if provided with a regular passport, should be immediately rejected

from any source. Prefects should then want to personally ascertain whether foreign gypsies are presently staying in the territory of their respective Provinces and see to it that as soon as possible they are sent across the border¹.

On August 18, 1926, the Director General of Public Security again intervened on the same topic:

It is the intention of this Ministry that the purging of the national territory from the presence of caravans of gypsies whose risk in regard to public safety and hygiene it is superfluous to recall, should be promptly carried out and then maintained with such measures as will prevent any attempt that might frustrate the work accomplished. [...] In addition to this, in view of the provisions long since issued, it remains critical that the border offices reject in principle gypsies, even those with regular documents².

This tendency towards fascism therefore encouraged a feeling of need to cleanse the territory of caravans of Roma and Sinti, and the practices initiated included the rejection of those who showed up at the border and the expulsion of those who were already within the borders.

At first, measures were also implemented that forced Roma people to stay in their places of birth and in any case away from possible military targets (border areas were among these), but from 1926, Roma and Sinti were instead stopped, taken to a Public Security office and checked (in terms of their identity, demographic and criminal record) and anthropometric measurements followed. These interrogations, of which numerous documentary traces still exist, often saw those apprehended declaring that they were born or had lived in Italy for years and had no ties to other states. Archival documents attest that after an initial period of detention of the subjects in question under the category "foreigners dangerous to public safety," they were quickly deported, in particular to the Slavic border, at which point, however, they were sent back to Italy, again due to a lack of documents. It was for this reason that rejection from the border also included the deletion of any sign of having lived in Italy, and border crossings being undertaken largely in full clandestinity by authorities. The stories told by the archival papers are largely and strikingly similar; for example, on March 8, 1929, the Royal Prefecture of Trieste drew up a report concerning Michele Hudorovic saying that:

Following the even numbered report of February 24 b.c. I inform this honorable Ministry that Hudorovic ill. di Caterina, a gypsy, turns out to have been born by chance in Duttigliano, on May 18, 1887 and does not belong to the municipality of Trieste, or to that of Duttigliano or Postumia. The same cohabits with Maria Hudorovic, a gypsy woman of uncertain nationality and the subject of Report No. 7415 of the same date, and is illegally engaged in the wandering trade of horses and donkeys. He has no fixed abode and is engaged in vagrancy and idleness so as to be designated as dangerous to the national order of the state. As he is a gypsy belonging to a tribe of gypsies, of Croatian and Slovenia origin, who have been infesting the region of Venezia Giulia for more than 50 years, this office is of the opinion that he be transported, together with the members of his caravan to the next Yugoslav border, in order to be trespassed from the national territory in accordance with articles 153 and 158 of the P.S.(Public Security) Law.

On April 25, 1929, the same prefecture informed that Michele Hudorovic had left the Italian territory, but on November 30, 1929, the same individual was again found to be within the kingdom, as he was arrested again, interrogated again, and rejected. During the interrogation Michele himself had repeated and placed on record that he had been born and always lived in Venezia Giulia and therefore had returned to Italy because he considered himself an Italian citizen. He was then deported and again found within the Italian borders on May 30, 1930,

¹ Central State Archives, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security, General Confidential Affairs Division, Massime, b. 26, *Zingari* (Gypsies).

² Central State Archives, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security, General Confidential Affairs Division, Massime, b. 26, *Carovane di Zingari* (Gypsy Caravans).

during a succession of repatriations that in fact came to nothing. The same fate would befall Rosina Hudorovic, who would continue to be apprehended and deported on several occasions between 1929 and 1935, and Giuseppe Hudorovic, born in Trieste on March 4, 1893, cohabiting with Luigia Hudorovic, and the father of three minor children all born in Italy, who was deported repeatedly through the Postojna crossing. Hundreds of interrogations indicate the same movements from outside to inside the kingdom, especially of people who continued to claim to have unique family ties in Italy. It is a policy that continued until 1940, but as early as 1939, the detention of Angela Levacovich added a piece to the historical reconstruction. On that occasion, the "gypsy daughter of Luigie di Rosa Raidich" already having been detained and placed under interrogation in 1936, was sent to Sardinia to the village of Lula. During her interrogation in 1936, checks on biographical data had indicated her "accidental birth in Villetta di Chions."

Angela (who also went by "Luigi" and "Maria" Raidich) was apparently born by chance in Villetta di Chions to parents who were part of a passing gypsy caravan. For this reason, her birth certificate was not able to be located in the records of said municipality. Her father appears to have been born in Buje and registered on conscription lists there. Being, therefore, according to Austrian laws, of that municipality, as Angela hadn't acquired domicile in any other municipality because of her nomadic life, she retained her father's domicile. Although Levacovich Angela is not on the list of full Italian citizens of Buje, she qualifies for supplementary registration there. As I have already reported, the said woman has no political history whatsoever in these documents³.

There was no record of any crime committed by Angela Levacovich - not even in 1938-39, when she was sent to confinement in Lula, a sign that the indications of fascism toward Roma and Sinti had become somewhat radicalised. Regarding the events during these years of rejections and expulsions, meanwhile, it is useful to point out the attempt of Italian municipalities to avoid registering the birth of children born within their territory but part of Roma and Sinti caravan groups. On the other hand, Public Security procedures provided for specific control practices for subjects declared dangerous by "the voice of the people," a common occurrence as regarded Roma and Sinti people, whose stereotypical image was associated with idleness and vagrancy, even when they were within villages to work. Ultimately, the apprehension of a Roma person frequently allowed for the substantiation of conditions that decreed their forced removal.

³ Central State Archives, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security, General Confidential Affairs Division, Massime, b. 24

II 1938-1942 Ethnic cleansing on the Italian eastern border

Sending Angela Levacovich to confinement in Sardinia was not an isolated case. The '*gypsy issue*' became one of the fundamental problems to be solved, as the latter were seen as dangerous subjects, particularly in the border areas, first in the east, but then also in the north. The conviction with which Benito Mussolini expressed that Jews and Roma persons were active spies against the state led to the ordering of ever tighter border controls and Istria became the testing ground for this new anti-Gypsy policy⁴.

On 17 January 1938, Arturo Bocchini ordered all Istrian Roma people to be counted and categorised, dividing them into categories: those with non-dangerous criminal records, those without criminal records and dangerous subjects. The Istrian prefect, Cimoroni, responded with very detailed lists of names and between February and May 1938 an order issued by Arturo Bocchini on 17 January 1938 initiated the ethnic cleansing of Istria against the Roma and Sinti. The documents produced at that time and in response to the order detailed the names of the Roma families present in Istria: Levacovich, Poropat, Raidich, Stepich, Carri - about eighty people in all. They were not the only 'gypsies' present. The Cavazza, Tapparello, Cassol, Camilot and Ben families also appeared and were indicated in the territory, but they were included in the category of "autochthonous national gypsies" and therefore were not affected by the confinement practices started in Istria in 1938 (the subsequent orders addressed to gypsies of Italian nationality in 1940 would have included them).

The controls carried out on these subjects also evidenced a constant permanence of these families in Istria; not uncontrolled "instinct of nomadism".

On 20 February 1938, the first instances of confinement took place (including all identified persons, except 'autochthonous gypsies') and they were taken to Sardinia, having embarked in Civitavecchia. Among them were many children: the regime had also assessed the cost of the hypothetical entrustment to the *Opera maternità e infanzia* (Maternity and Childhood Facility),

⁴ Pasino Historical Archive, Pula Police Headquarters, b. 20, f. Q1, circular of 1 November 1928 from Benito Mussolini to the Prefects, "*Carovane di Zingari*" (Gypsy Caravans).

but even if the cost of the journey to confinement turned out to be higher, the idea of entrusting the children to the State was discarded.

The names of those confined on the island on that day in February were: Luigi and Matteo Stepich, Rosa Raidich, Giovanni, Caterina and Anna Poropat, Anna Levacovich, Giovanni Stepich, Michele Stepich, Franco and Mario Udorovich, Matteo, Mario and Lucia Levacovich, Matteo and Maria Raidich (who would later be one of the first witnesses interviewed in the 1980s by Mirella Karpati), Mario Bucconi and Miralda Carri⁵.

These people were taken on ferries to be confined within dozens of Sardinian villages between the provinces of Nuoro and Sassari. Thus it is feasible to link the sending of Angela Levacovich to Sardinia in 1939 to this same practice of ethnic cleansing. In fact, the removal of Istrian Roma people to Sardinia continued throughout 1939 and 1940, until all 80 Roma people originally counted were removed from the eastern border. The same fate befell the 'gypsies' in Trentino Alto Adige; in this respect members of the Gabrieli and Herzemberg families were confined to Sardinia.

The documents kept in Pasino's historical archive also indicate the places of confinement and the number of families who were sent there: Lula (2 families), Urzulei (1), Bortigali (2), Ovodda (1), Talana (2), Loceri (2), Nurri (2), Posada (1), Laccru (1), Padria (1), Martis (1), Chiaromonti (1), Illorai (1). Other documents in the Nuoro historical archives add the locality of Perdasdefogu to this list of places of confinement. The locality of Perdasdefogu plays an important role because it allows us to shed light on these past events.

In one of the first testimonies collected by Mirella Karpati among the Roma and Sinti in Italy, in relation to the period of World War II, the account of Rosa Raidich was proposed (today we can confirm that her name appears correctly among the confined people transported from Istria to Sardinia):

My daughter Lalla was born in Sardinia in Perdasdefogu on 7 January 1943. We were there in a concentration camp⁶.

From that testimony, people had begun to point to Perdasdefogu as the site of a concentration camp; in fact, historical documents seem to point to it rather as a place of confinement, although there must have been a defined area in Perdasdefogu anyway, perhaps by a fence, where Roma were obliged to stay:

During the war we were in a concentration camp in Perdasdefogu. There was terrible hunger. One day, I don't know how, a hen got into the camp. I threw myself on it like a fox, killed it and ate it from hunger. They beat me up and I got six months in jail for theft⁷.

However, archive documents corroborate Rosa Raidich's first account made in the 1980s. Rosa Raidich's personal file has remained amongst the archived documents and other documents attest to her move, ordered on 12 December 1940, from Ovadda to Perdasdefogu; from this second place of confinement Rosa would write several times in stunted but comprehensible Italian; the first time to the podestà to obtain some cloth (on 28 April 1942), and the following times to claim her subsidy that was never paid. Then she was moved again to Seulo. Rosa Raidich wrote a last letter addressed to the prefecture of Nuoro on 29 March 1954. The letter once again confirms her stay on the Sardinian island with her children; in fact, Rosa claimed

⁵ Pasino's Historical Archive, Pula Police Headquarters, b. 20, f. Q1 (1938), gypsies deported to Sardinia on 20 February 1938.

⁶ M. Karpati, *La politica fascista verso gli zingari in Italia*, 'Lacio Drom', 2/3, 1984, pp. 42.

⁷ *Idem*.

certification of her residence in the province of Nuoro during the war years in order to obtain the documents of her children, in particular of Lalla (Graziella) born in that municipality, and listed: Marcello Raidich born in the province of Pola, Vittorio Raidich born in the province of Pola, Antonio Raidich born in Busachi (the province of Cagliari; today Oristano), and Graziella Raidich born in Perdasdefogu in the province of Nuoro.

Graziella was the Lalla - Rosa's daughter - whom the former internee had claimed was born inside the Perdasdefogu camp when she was first interviewed.

In June 1942, a convoy of Roma people finally departed from Ljubljana and was moved to the Tossicia concentration camp in the province of Teramo. First-hand accounts about this place of deportation exist from Benito Brajdic and Goffredo Bezzecchi, Stanka Brajdic and Francesco Brajdic, all of whom were on the camp's lists of internees.

On 20 October 1942, Istrian prefect Berti was able to declare that there was not a single Roma person⁸ left in Istria; and he was right - the last round-ups had been completed that year. Roma and Sinti persons confined to Sardinia only began to leave the island in 1945.

⁸ Pasino Historical Archive, Pula Police Headquarters, b. 20, f. Q1 (1938-1943).

III

1940-1943

Fascist concentration camps in Italy

On September 11, 1940, Police Chief Arturo Bocchini issued a landmark order that represented the decisive crackdown with respect to the "gypsy problem" in Fascist Italy:

By telegraphic circular of 11 June just past, No. 10 . 44509, concerning gypsies and gypsy caravans, it is reported that, according to reports received, although gypsies operate especially in the border provinces, they are also scattered in other provinces of the Kingdom. It is indispensable that all gypsies be controlled, since in a state of freedom they are easily able to escape searches, and searches for evidence of their wandering life. It is ordered that those of Italian nationality, certain or presumed, who are still in circulation be rounded up as soon as possible and concentrated under strict surveillance in the most suitable places in each province - far from factories, explosive sites or in any case from works of military interest [...]⁹.

Special concentration camps were also set up for Italian Roma and Sinti people, which later became places of internment for anyone recognised as a 'gypsy', regardless of their citizenship. The order of 11 September brought legislation into line with popular perception: ultimately, the Italian citizenship of Roma and Sinti people had always been crushed by the massifying ethnic characterisation that made 'the Gypsies' a dangerous group and perceived in any case as 'foreign'; an *outgroup*.

The history of the individual internment camps wanted by the Duce was later brought to light by research in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

From our point of view, the novelty to be emphasised is not having spoken of those camps again, but having succeeded in reconstructing the path to Fascism in the attempt to solve the 'gypsy problem' in Italy. Historiography was already aware of the existence of camps such as Boiano, Agnone and Tossicia, but had never clarified what role they had played in the specific piece of history that was the deportation of Roma and Sinti people between 1940 and 1943.

It can be said that the order of 11 September was put into practice abruptly by the prefectures throughout Italy, because the rounding up of 'gypsies' began immediately.

Today we know that there was a sort of double track along which the project to concentrate Roma and Sinti people in one area developed: on the one hand, a policy at the central level that identified specific places and routes for the imprisonment of Roma and Sinti people (rounding

⁹ Central State Archives, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security, General Confidential Affairs Division, Massime, b. 105.

up, arrest, imprisonment, sending them to a specific camp), and on the other hand, the diligent and proactive response of some local authorities which, having rounded up Roma and Sinti people, set up places on their territory for the forced detention of 'gypsies' that did not appear in the Ministry of the Interior's records.

These specific plans reserved for the 'gypsies' probably still lacked some detail when, in September 1940, the first arrests commenced. Rosina Hudorovic, who had previously been deported several times, was arrested again and on 29 September 1940 she was sent to the camp at Vinchiaturio in the province of Campobasso. This was not an internment place for 'gypsies' only. Giuseppe Hudorovic was sent, also in 1940, to the Tremiti Islands, again together with other categories of internees. The same place of detention was described by Vittorio Reinhardt (Thulo) in an interview with Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. Vittorio's brother Vittorio Luigi also distinctly recalls it. In a recent interview, he also mentions his brother Antonio (Chico), who was imprisoned in a camp with other relatives, but after 1940. Cesarina Reinhardt (Bibi Dona in Sinto) found herself, again in 1940, imprisoned in the women's camp in Casacalenda (Campobasso), alongside other interned women.

Again, the most recent interviews with the relatives of former internees commonly express the compelling reality that hundreds of Sinti and Roma families with Italian citizenship hid in caves on the Maiella between 1940 and 1943 in an attempt to escape capture.

The last months of 1940 evidently allowed the regime to organise itself, but by 1941 it seemed that the 'gypsy issue' and the way of dealing with it, had reached some level of systematisation centrally. A coordination that increasingly corresponded to the names of specific camps, located particularly in Molise.

Boiano (Campobasso)

The former Saim tobacco factory, a few metres from the railway, was chosen as an internment site in the summer of 1940. It was not immediately reserved for Roma and Sinti people, although most of the deportees were 'gypsies'. A document about the camp indicated, amongst other things, that it could accommodate either 250 normal prisoners or 300 "gypsies". By 1941 it seemed quite clear that the Boiano concentration camp was to become the specific place of internment for 'gypsies'. Police reports evidence that at least thirty members of the Hudorovic family were sent from various parts of Italy to Boiano. In 1941, if a 'gypsy' was arrested, the intended destination was always the concentration camp in the province of Campobasso.

On 9 April 1941, a caravan of 'gypsies' was stopped in the Udine area. The caravan consisted of eight people: Suffer Antonio, his wife Locato Genoveffa and their children Cesarina, Nerina and Albino with their grandchildren Locato Maria and Locato Nerina. Two other Sinti people were travelling with them, and were also arrested: Reinardi (this is how she identified herself) Annetta, who had her three-year-old son Celestino with her. Annetta had Italianised her surname, but it was the Reinhardt family, of German origin and who had come to Italy fleeing Germany at the turn of the century at the hands of the Bavarian police. The arrest document concluded: 'being socially dangerous elements, without stable employment and without a fixed abode, internment in a concentration camp is proposed'. It was 1941 and the name of the camp to which they were to be sent, noted in pencil, was once again Boiano, where they arrived a few weeks later, escorted by the Carabinieri (police).

The three warehouses were surrounded by fences with bars on the windows and were very useful for the internment of Roma and Sinti. In one of the three spaces, horses were left, which were then taken away by the Carabinieri, while in the other areas the kitchen was located as well as the refectory and other facilities. It was directed by the Police Commissioner that supervision was to be entrusted to the Carabinieri, who had a fixed post in the camp, alongside another type of policemen. In the summer of 1941, following a proposal to use the former tobacco factory for broom manufacturing, the Inspector General of the Ministry ordered the camp to be closed and the prisoners were moved to other concentration camps; the Roma and Sinti people (who at that time were comprised of 58 individuals) were taken to the nearby Agnone camp.

Agnone (today the province of Isernia, formerly the province of Campobasso)

The Agnone camp is as present in the memory of the Roma and Sinti communities as it is absent and unknown in the historiography of the majority culture.

Zlato Bruno Levak had narrated its events in "Lacio Drom" in 1976, the aforementioned magazine published by the Gypsy Study Centre and directed by Mirella Karpati:

In Italy we were also in a concentration camp, almost without food. I was in Campobasso with my family. There were many of us. There were my uncles called Bogdan and Goman. There were also Italian Roma people, from up in Austria - half-German. It was bad there too. We were in a convent, all locked up with guards around like a prison¹⁰.

The first testimony in 1976 already spoke of a concentration camp in a convent. The idea that this history was not known because of the oral tradition of the Roma and Sinti people is not acceptable. What suddenly awakened the memory of the non-Roma and non-Sinti Italians was the arrival of Milka Emilia Goman in Agnone in April 2005.

Milka is a stateless Roma woman who has lived in Rome for more than half a century. The last nomad camp in the capital where she lived was Foro Boario, which was cleared just a few years after her visit to Agnone. Milka Goman was one of the internees from Agnone who, sixty years later, during an activity carried out with the Osservatorio Nomade di Roma also in Foro Boario, began to recount her imprisonment in a concentration camp in the village of Agnone, in Molise. At the same time, in the town in upper Molise, a high school teacher, Francesco Paolo Tanzj¹¹, was conducting a local history workshop with his students who were struggling to reconstruct the history of the concentration camp that had been set up there between 1940 and 1943; no one seemed to pay attention or give any credibility to the story Tanzj was beginning to tell. The lists of 150 internees had also been traced and among them were actually the names of Milka Goman and also that of Tomo Bogdan, another direct witness who lived in Rome, and also in Boario. Among the names of the internees on the lists was also that of Reinhardt Annetta with her son Celestino. Evidently they were among those 58 persons moved to Agnone when the Boiano camp was closed.

¹⁰ Z.B. Levak, *The Persecution of the Gypsies. A testimony*, in "Lacio Drom", no. 3, 1976, pp. 2-3.

¹¹ F. P. Tanzj, *Milka è tornata* (Milka is back), Meridione, 2011.

Milka's return to Agnone was like lifting a lid from a boiling pot: what was once forgotten returned within the memories of the people of Agnone and what would seem far-fetched turned out to be historical events that had most definitely taken place.

The documents that were tracked down then made it possible to recount in great detail how Agnone was the central location of the Italian Porrajmos. Agnone was a concentration camp from July 1940. The site was the former Convent of St Bernardino of Siena, owned by the Diocese of Trivento.

It had a capacity of 150 places and was directed by Police Commissioner Guglielmo Casale, with supervision being carried out by the Carabinieri, who were based in the building.

When it opened, the internees were only men, belonging to the categories of enemy subjects (mainly British) and foreign Jews (mainly Germans and Austrians). Later, the prisoners were transferred to other camps. On 15 July, 58 Roma and Sinti people arrived from the Boiano camp, which had been finally closed. From then on, the camp became the place of internment reserved for 'gypsies'. In 1943 there were 150 internees, all of Roma and Sinti background. The names of the deported families were Alossetto, Brajdic, Bogdan, Campos, Ciarelli, Gus, Halderas, Held, Hudorovic, Hujer, Karis, Locato, Mugizzi, Nicolic, Rach, Reinhardt, Rossetto, Suffer, Waeldo.

The town of Molise had forgotten all about it, because the former convent of San Bernardino had first been turned into a boarding school. Today it still stands as a nursing home. No sign remained of the shameful history that had occurred there.

Milka Goman, on the other hand, offered precise accounts, but so did the relatives of Mignolo Hujer, who was interned in the convent between 1941 and 1943. Chico Reinhart also expressed the same in an interview with the Shoah Foundation.

The former convent of San Bernardino was therefore the place that Fascism singled out for the specific segregation of the Roma and Sinti who were rounded up. The 'gypsies' arrested and detained in prisons all over Italy, from 1941/1942, were practically all sent to Agnone.

When the camp was liberated in September 1943, and the guards all left their posts, Milka Goman and the other Roma and Sinti people of Agnone took to the road again, and not far from the place of internment, Milka gave birth to her son Franco.

In January 2013, on the wall of the former convent, the European project Memors, in collaboration with the municipality of Agnone, finally placed a plaque in memory of the families imprisoned there. At that point seventy years had passed since the events narrated thereon.

Tossicia (Teramo)

The history of the Tossicia camp is instead linked to the ethnic cleansing project in Istria. Rave Hudorovic described it:

Then one day we were stopped in one place, Rasuplje is its name, and the Italians arrived. We were a group of 50 Sinti people - maybe more. My wife's whole family was there. They came by truck and said "get ready, we're going to Ljubljana". Everyone bundled up their things and off we went [...] When we arrived in Ljubljana they told us they were taking us to Italy and we were very happy. In Ljubljana they put us together with many other Sinti people. We stayed in Ljubljana for a week, then went by train to Tossicia, near Teramo. I don't remember

exactly what month it was, but it was summer, maybe July. I spent eighteen months in Tossicia [...] in Tossicia everyone there was Sinti [...] one day we heard that the Germans had arrived and we were off to the mountains. From Tossicia to Bologna, never on the plains - always in the mountains. In the mountains we were united with the partisan rebels. We always went on foot, even when I had to cross waterways. I carried Anton on my shoulder. I had to cross, because otherwise the fascists would get me ... they would kill people.¹²

This was confirmed by the story of Giuseppe Levakovic:

Here in Teramo we met a Romni who was going to beg [...] She told us that she was in the concentration camp with about eighty people originally from Yugoslavia who had been taken to Trieste. Roma people were locked up there, lived in miserable conditions in shacks, and slept on the ground even without bed. They had little to eat and rationed.¹³

The Tossicia camp consisted of three buildings. Two of them, the one owned by Giulio De Fabii and Francesco Mattei and the one owned by the lawyer Domenico Mirti, both in Piazza Regina Margherita, were used as concentration camps in June 1940. On the other hand, the premises owned by Alfredo Di Marco were rented by the Ministry of the Interior in November 1941. The camp was managed until its closure by the Podestà Nicola Palumbi, assisted by the Vice Podestà Mario Franceschini and the municipal secretary Michele Marano. The surveillance was overseen by the marshal and four carabinieri of the local police station, which was about fifty metres from the first two buildings. The first internees arrived in Tossicia in August 1940, and they were almost all German Jews. On September 16, after the arrival of some Chinese nationals, the camp reached 27 internees. In the following month, other Chinese nationals were sent by the Ministry of the Interior to Tossicia and by November 1940, the camp was almost entirely occupied, with 112 internees. During 1941, the few remaining internees of German nationality were transferred, and only the Chinese internees remained in Tossicia. The camp, in the first months of 1942, was now complete and the internees, forced to live in a small space and in poor hygienic conditions, began to show signs of intolerance. On 16 April 1942, six Chinese internees, suffering from scabies, were removed from the camp. A month later, the Chinese internees in Tossicia were transferred to the Isola del Gran Sasso camp. Following the relocation of the Chinese internees, the camp remained empty until 22 June, when the first 35 "Gypsies" arrived from Ljubljana. The following July other "gypsies" were sent to Tossicia, and the camp, in autumn of 1942, reached 115 internees. They were all Roma and Sinti Slavs and the Istrian prefect Berti would declare during that same year that he had cleansed Istria of the presence of "gypsies".

In January 2013, also in Tossicia, the Memors project, in collaboration with the municipality, placed a plaque in memory of the families locked up there. Giorgio Bezzecchi, the son of Goffredo, one of the ex-deportees, discovered the plaque.

¹² Testimony collected and published in 1983 by Jane Dick Zatta with the title "La storia di Rave" and fragment reproduced in M. Karpati, "La politica fascista verso gli zingari", op. cit., page 43.

¹³G. Ausenda, G. Levacovich, *Tzigari*, Bompiani, Milan, 1976.

The families that were held there were: Brajdic, Hudorovic, Levakovic, Rajhard and Malovac. The lists of 108 Roma and Sinti people interned in that camp from 1942 was published for the first time in 1985 by Italia Iacoponi in the essay published in the "*Rivista abruzzese di studi storici dal fascismo alla resistenza*".

Gonars (Udine)

The Gonars camp was not a place of internment for Roma and Sinti people alone. The camp was established in the spring of 1940, but when Stanka and Francesco Brajdic (two witnesses who recounted their experience within the Memors project) arrived there, after a journey on a barge, coming from Ljubljana, it was the spring of 1942. By that point the camp had been intended for the internment of civilians within what was called the "Italian Province of Ljubljana".

The infamous Circular 3C of General Roatta, commander of the Second Army, established the repressive measures to be implemented in the territories occupied and annexed by Italy after Nazi-Fascist aggression against the-then Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941. Stanka and Francesco arrived there with their mother Maria Brajdic and their four brothers.

1942 was the year in which prefect Berti declared Istria free from Roma and evidently these removals, together with those to Tossicia, represented the last known removals of Roma and Sinti people from the eastern border area.

The presence of Roma and Sinti people within the Gonars camp is confirmed by documents of various kinds, collected and made available by Alessandra Kersevan, the scholar who first engaged in the detailed reconstruction of the history of this camp. One Brajdic Maria appears in the list of the dead: she was not the mother of Stanka and Francesco, who instead managed to leave the camp.

In May 1943, a letter was sent from the command post of the Agnone camp (reserved for "gypsies" only) and received by the command post of the Gonars camp: Hudorovic Antonio and Hudorovic Pietrosi, prisoners in Agnone, asked for news of the internees Hudorovic Giuseppina and Mara in Gonars.

There is no count of the Roma and Sinti internees in Gonars, but their presence in the camp is a certainty. However, the total number of prisoners in the camp is evidenced: on 25 February 1943, there were 5,343 internees in Gonars, of whom 1,643 were children. There were entire families from Ljubljana or from the camps of Arbe (Rab) or Monigo (Treviso); two thirds Croats and one third Slovenians. The presence of Roma people was also confirmed, again by Alessandra Kersevan, at the nearby Chiesanova camp.

Boiano, Agnone, Tossicia, and Gonars represent the stages of a centrally implemented pathway towards "resolution" of the "gypsy question" - a project aimed at the imprisonment of Roma and Sinti people, rounded up on the move along the peninsula or stopped in order to clear borders areas of the presence of this unwelcome group.

This response to the "gypsy problem" also cropped up in other places, something that seems to have arisen more from the initiative taken at the local level (within the prefectures) in response to the order of the chief of police of 11 September 1940 rather than a coordinated effort at a national level.

Prignano sulla Secchia (Modena)

The case of the camp in Prignano sulla Secchia, in the province of Modena, has become perhaps the best known amongst peripheral activities aimed at the imprisonment and control of Roma and Sinti people; this is also thanks to the municipal administration that, as early as April 2010, in collaboration with the Roma and Sinti Federation, placed a plaque in memory of the internment of "gypsies" which took place there. In this case, the documents of the Ministry of the Interior do not indicate any trace of the Prignano camp.

On the other hand, there had been the narration of a direct witness who had published a story aimed mainly at children: Giacomo De Bar (Gnugo in Sinti) had told of being born in Prignano, in a concentration camp, where all the Sinti community (all of Italian citizenship), had been imprisoned between 1940 and 1943.¹⁴ The narration continued in a sort of community story edited by anthropologist Paola Trevisan.¹⁵ Another witness then joined in - Giuseppe Esposti - who was six-years-old at the time of his internment. Paola Trevisan and Vladimiro Torre, a Sinto active in local historical research, then went to the municipality of Prignano in search of traces of internment. Evidence of the imprisonment was evident: the cards, titled as "internees", on which all the names of the Sinti families concentrated in Prignano were listed, are still preserved in municipality records.

What was absent from the central state archives was present in the small local municipal archives of the town and within some documents in the Modena archive which provided further proof of the presence of the camp. They report disputes with the owner of the area, the lack of adequate subsidies and the problems related to the concentration camp with respect to citizenship.¹⁶ The records kept in the Municipality made it possible to give a name and a surname to all 79 Sinti internees. The families they belonged to were: Argan, Bonora, Bianchi, Colombo, De Barre, Esposti, Franchi, Innocenti, Lucchesi, Marciano, Marsi, Relandini, Suffer, Tonoli, Torre, Triberti, Truzzi, and Zanfretta.

The concentration camp seems to have been established in the autumn of 1940 on cultivated land owned by Gino Baldelli who repeatedly complained about the presence of Roma and Sinti people, claiming he suffered damage. Management of the camp was entrusted to the Podestà while security and enforcement was entrusted to the Carabinieri. In Prignano there were no shacks, but instead real agricultural land. After 1940 there were no new internees - the families

¹⁴ G. De Bar, L. Puggioli, *Strada patria sinta. Un secolo di storia nel racconto di un giostraio sinto*, Fatafrac, Florence, 1998.

¹⁵ P. Trevisan, *Storie e vite di sinti dell'Emilia*, Cisu, Rome, 2005.

¹⁶ P. Trevisan, *Un campo di concentramento per zingari italiani a Prignano sulla Secchia (Mo)*, in *L'Almanacco. Rassegna di studi storici e di ricerche sulla società contemporanea*, no. 55-56, December 2010, pages 7-30.

remained the same until the day of the armistice when the control of the Carabinieri loosened and the families resumed their path.

Berra (Ferrara)

The town of Berra is another of the Italian places depicted on the aforementioned map in the exhibition dedicated to the Porrajmos, in the Auschwitz museum, alongside other documents relating to the extermination carried out by the Nazis. The reason for this is linked to the discovery of documents in the Central State Archives showing the imprisonment of a group of about twenty Roma and Sinti people there, in the Ferrara area. It was quickly referred to as a concentration camp and, in Berra, the sign of that forced imprisonment has remained in the toponyms: there is a place called "the ghetto", said Davide Guarnieri, archivist at the State Archives of Ferrara (to whom we owe the merit of this narration) which, however, has and had the unexpected connotation of a piece of agricultural land. It was presumably there that the members of that caravan of "gypsies" who had been stopped in 1941, in response to the roundup and concentration order signed by Arturo Bocchini on 11 September 1940, were forced to stay. They had also tried to change their identities and documents, but the path followed by this group, in relation to the choices of the regime, confirms the hypothesis whereby Boiano and Agnone would have been two concentration camps for the "gypsies". At the beginning of 1941, the entire caravan was moved to Boiano and then, upon its closure, to Agnone. Berra was therefore a sort of forced "stopover camp" where they awaited more permanent confinement.

A further element was the choice to also provide incomplete data related to the testimonies received. This resulted in names of places where some Roma and Sinti witnesses claimed to have been imprisoned, sometimes only with other Sinti and Roma people, in other cases with other categories of internees. The decision to name them is given by the awareness that leaving traces of them may lead to further investigations in the future, as was the case in particular for the confinement of Istrian Roma in Sardinia, of which only a few fragmentary details had been received.

One of these stories was told by Adelaide De Glaudi who recounted her internment in a closed camp near Novi Ligure. There is some interesting data regarding Novi. Firstly, the fact that convoy no. 39 from Italy to Mauthausen (8 April 1944) left from this city between Piedmont and Liguria. In Cairo Montenotte (Liguria), at the campsite, there was an area reserved for Italian-Slovenians (other Roma people indicate internment in that camp) which saw the deportation of 985 people to Gusen (8 October 1943) and their displacement a year later in Mauthausen. There are no certain indications, but the direct testimony of Adelaide De Glaudi certainly claims the presence of a camp near the Novi station that deserves at least a mention and, if possible, an investigation. Gennaro Spinelli, Santino Spinelli's father, told of the rounding up of his community in Abruzzo, near Chieti. He recalled the journey from Torino di Sangro to Bari, only to be locked up in a farmhouse in the open countryside, in a sort of confinement area in which he was forced to stay, under the control of the Carabinieri.

In any case, the concentration system, linked to the work of the Ministry of the Interior, which also included the camps reserved for "gypsies", collapsed following the armistice of 8

September 1943. However, it should be remembered that, in 1941 and 1942, Italy maintained a relationship with what was happening in the Third Reich as regarded the "Gypsy problem" (these were the years in which racial investigations were carried out and the hereditary "defects" of Roma and Sinti people were identified and then sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau); proof of this can be found in the above-mentioned document of 9 April 1942 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and directed, among others, to the Demography and Race Office:

For the sake of information, we have the merit of communicating that the Royal Embassy in Berlin has made it known that, with a recent provision, the gypsies residing in the Reich have been equated with Jews and therefore the anti-Semitic laws currently in force will also apply to them. force. Gypsies are considered not only those who are 100% Gypsies but also those who have any Gypsy blood.

IV

1943-1945

Deportations to the concentration camps of the Third Reich

After the armistice and the change of alliances, Roma and Sinti people in Italy tell of having left the fascist concentration camps of the south (the so-called camps of the Duce of 1940-1943) and of having moved slowly towards their places of origin, always passing through mountains, in search of relatives. On the other hand, most of those confined to Sardinia remained on the island at least until 1945; those who had been repatriated to the east, in reference to the first legislation of the 1920s, had found themselves in areas that had subsequently been annexed to the Third Reich and therefore often fell victim to the extermination carried out, through mass killings, during the Nazi advance in the East.

The research carried out focused on deportations from Italy between 1943 and 1945, because this is a controversial period compared to the little and still insufficient in-depth study that national historiography has dedicated to the deportation of Roma and Sinti people in this last period of war.

Between 1943 and 1945, was there an Italian deportation of Sinti and Roma people to the concentration camps of the Third Reich? The answer that the research has provided is a resounding "yes".

This statement needs further investigation, because the debate on the deportation of Roma and Sinti people in Italy is played out on two levels: on the one hand, in our nation it has frequently been reported that there were no Roma and Sinti deportees in our country (an assertion that turns out to be incorrect), and on the other hand it is often added that there was no specific order of racial persecution directed against "gypsies" between 1943-1945 in Italy.

These two assertions are at the centre of the debate on the possibility of amending the text of the Italian law that established its Remembrance Day (Law 211/2000) by including a reference (currently missing) to the deportation and genocide of Sinti and Roma persons.

The research carried out offers an important contribution, clarifying the characteristics and specificities of deportations of Sinti and Roma people between 1943 and 1945.

To date, no document has been found that ordered the specific persecution on racial grounds of "gypsies" in Italy, during the period of the fascist regime. On the other hand, there is certainty that Roma and Sinti people were deported to Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbruck (just to mention some concentration camps where the arrival of convoys included those containing Sinti and Roma people deported by Italy). This last element is fundamental, because it underlines the positive approach of including communities in the research that has characterised the "Remember against discrimination" project.

In many cases, the names of Sinti and Roma deportees from Italy were already present in the lists of Italian deportees drawn up by numerous studies (see for example the list of Italian deportees contained in the volumes B. Mantelli, N. Tranfaglia, *Il libro dei deportati*, Mursia, Milan, 2010), but it had never been found that those names corresponded to Sinti and Roma people, because contact with their families had never been confirmed (the Roma and Sinti direct witnesses have now disappeared and they have never been contacted sufficiently for a more complete reconstruction of the facts). The REM project therefore made it possible to recognise those names already present in the lists of Italian deportees and link them to the history of deportation of Roma and Sinti communities. The involvement of junior researchers belonging to the communities was fundamental, because this also made it possible to collect direct family accounts around arrests. Thus, in all cases, indirect testimony (which arises from the stories told in the family by the same former deportees who were saved) indicates that Roma and Sinti were always arrested due to being recognised as "gypsies", especially when they were in a caravan (at that time they frequently moved to hide). These arrests, which then were always referred to as "preventive arrests", alleged danger but without specific illegal activities having taken place, linked to what we could call a "public image" of social danger. These arrests would occur just before they would be sent to prison and, in many cases, deportation then took place. This aspect of being indicated as "dangerous no matter what", by virtue of being recognised as "gypsies" bears weight in the events that have been reconstructed. There is therefore no specific order linked to "race" that leads to the deportation of "gypsies", but the category of "gypsy" is constantly and always used to define dangerous people who are recognised as part of those communities, without a reference to any individual illegal activities. Gypsy is a label that always implies a social dangerousness of an entire group. There is therefore a racist reasoning that is activated with each arrest of a Roma person or a Sinto person. Pointing this out changes the approach to historical reconstruction, but above all allows us to analyse the mechanics of the preservation of the stereotype of the "gypsy" in the present.

If this Italian racist specificity at a historical (and cultural level), implied in a socially widespread stereotype, is not emphasised, there is a risk of failing to correctly elaborate not only the history of these communities, but also the fight against prejudice in the present.

A final element is the reference to Auschwitz Birkenau and to the Zigeunerlager (Section B-IIe of Birkenau) reserved for the "gypsies" in that Nazi extermination camp, established in Poland. Italian Sinti and Roma persons were not deported to Auschwitz (to date, at least, there is no documentation on the matter) not because they were exempt from deportation, but because the sector of Birkenau reserved for the "gypsies" category was liquidated on the night of 2 August 1944. The deportation of Italian Roma and Sinti people took place after that date and that is why they were directed to other concentration camps in the Austro-German area.

To conclude, we propose the example of a story of an Italian Roma/Sinto deportee, a story recovered from the REM project (together with the others that have been at the centre of the research activity and that will appear on the virtual museum website), to understand how the research carried out with the communities has made it possible to give life to a choral narrative of the Italian deportation, where even Roma and Sinti people themselves can find their own stories and therefore find opportunities for recognition in Italian national history:

Romano Held, born in San Pier d'Isonzo on 21 January 1927 - survived the Dachau concentration camp and died in 1948 due to the debilitating physical conditions he had to live with after his return to Italy.

Brief description of the deportation story of Romano Held

A family of Sinti musicians, also related to Roma families (Suffer, Hudorovic, Bezzecchi families) lived in the Trieste area until, in the 1940s and in particular after the armistice of 1943, they moved to the mountains above Udine, in the Fagagna area. It is at that time that Romano Held was arrested while he was travelling with his caravan in the Palmanova area, on 1 May 1944, when Romano was only 17 years old. These facts are also recounted by his sister, Maria Held, in the 2009 audio-documentary produced by Audiodoc and Andrea Giuseppini. His sister recounts that he was caught at 17 years old, also thanks to an Italian fascist collaborator. Romano Held was transferred to the Udine prison, where he remained until 31 May 1944, when prison documents confirm his "release", a term actually used to imply deportation. The documents attest that Romano Held was on convoy no. 48 which left Trieste on 31 May 1944 bound for Dachau and arrived there on 2 June 1944. Held was among the deportees who were added to convoy 48 at the Udine stop, the other stop being in Gorizia. The convoy arrived in Dachau on 2 June 1944 and on that date, Romano Held was registered there, bearing serial number 69525. He was freed in Dachau by the American army and returned to Italy to his family where he continues to work as a musician. The family members contacted were Rolando and Alberto Suffer, Romano Held's nephews, who gave indirect testimony on the story of their uncle Romano Held and their father, Berto Held, who was also deported.

On convoy no. 117, which departed from Trieste and stopped in Gorizia and Udine, aboard was Maria Brajdic (born on 22 January 1903) and Emma Brajdic (born on 23 April 1921) - also part of Roma families who now live in Milan with their community.

Other Roma and Sinti people who left Italy travelled on convoy no. 2, which departed from Peschiera and arrived in Dachau on 22 September 1943. Antonio Gabrielli (who also went by

the surname Gabrieli), born in Taurisano and arrested in Veneto, reached Buchenwald on 22 September 1943, while Carlo Lewakowitsch, born in Ruda (now the province of Udine) arrived in Allach, a Dachau sub-camp, on 2 June 1944; Dorlilndano Pavan, born in Premariacco, province of Udine, in February 1922, was a prisoner in Buchenwald from 5 July 1944. Vittorio Demetrio, another Sinto born in Bussolengo, on 24 October 1926 and was deported to Germany. Fausto Gabrielli, born on 6 June 1903 in Quigentole (province of Mantua) was another Sinto who was deported to Mauthausen on 3 March 1944; Johann Brajdic born in Silea, in the province of Treviso, on 24 June 1882, was also in Mauthausen at least since January 1944. Beniamino Lewakowitsch was deported by the Security Police (SIPO) from Udine-Trieste and was transferred to Natzweiler from 20 April 1944; Eriko Lewakowitsch, born in Umaco on 17 February 1913, was also in Dachau since 2 June 1944, Lionello Lewakowitsch, born in Porpetto (Udine) on 2 May 1920, was transferred to Natzweiler in April 1944, then died in Ohrdruf on 20 February 1945, while Bruno Tapparello was among the prisoners of Mauthausen, the place where he died.

The peculiarity of this fragment of history is seen within the fact that all the Roma and Sinti people arrested in Italy were apprehended for being "gypsies", but when they arrived in the Nazi concentration camps they were classified as asocial or vagabond. This is also the element that makes it difficult to detect Roma and Sinti people amongst those in these concentration camps between Austria and Germany; many dozens more are the stories collected by the REM project.

An important certainty remains: Italian Roma and Sinti people suffered deportation to the Third Reich between 1943 and 1945. The absence of this topic in the public debate on the deportation of Italians, generates further distance between the Roma and Sinti communities and the majority population, because it denies that Roma and Sinti people are also part of Italian national history. Acknowledging this is first and foremost an act of justice. Studying it, processing it, reflecting on it, and narrating it is a formative-educational tool which can build inclusion in the present and ensure better memory of the past, so that it can consciously blossom into better inclusion.