



1939—1945

FRANCESCA POZZOLI AND CHRISTIAN LUCHESSA

***LUGANO 1939-1945. GUIDA AI LUOGHI, AI PERSONAGGI E AGLI
AVVENIMENTI DELLA CITTÀ E DEI SUOI DINTORNI IN TEMPO DI GUERRA***

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The guide reconstructs the history of Lugano and its inhabitants during an extraordinary and crucial period of its history: the years of World War II. Each of the four chapters is dedicated to a topic which is explored by examining the places in the city and nearby that were used by particular organisations, institutions, services or people. The first chapter is dedicated to daily life in Lugano, covering aspects such as military and civilian mobilisation, the wartime economy, politics, education and culture. The second chapter illustrates the organisation of the camps set up for the civilian and military refugees who flocked to Lugano after the Italian armistice of 8 September 1943. It retraces the journey undertaken by the refugees, until the Liberation and their inclusion in the city's social life. The third chapter, which is closely linked to the previous ones, illustrates the cultural interchange between some outstanding refugees from the world of Italian politics and culture and the local reality. Lastly, the fourth chapter explores the role played by the city after 8 September 1943 when it became a centre for secret meetings and espionage, and the passage of money and information. In order to help the reader recognise names and events, the volume contains a biographical appendix, a bibliography and a timeline of major events. The guide is dedicated above all to the inhabitants of Lugano, from schoolchildren to all those who lived through the war years, but it is also intended for tourists interested in discovering a specific and little known aspect of the city.

Translations: each chapter contains a short abstract in English

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SHOW SOME IMAGES OF THE GUIDE



1. Two important figures from Lugano during the war: General Henri Guisan and Bishop Angelo Jelmini. [in Isidoro Marcionetti, *Angelo Jelmini: vescovo, Locarno, Armando Dadò, 1986*].



2. The warning siren for the Anti-Aircraft Protection system, built on Sassa hill in Via Zurigo between 1941 and early 1942, is one of the wartime constructions that can still be seen.



3. The dismantling of Sassello district, which was subsequently rebuilt, was the largest town-planning project carried out in the city in wartime. [Canton Ticino State Archive, Christian Schiefer photographic collection].



4. During mobilisation, cinema and theatre, at venues like the Kursaal Casinò, represented one of the few leisure opportunities. [Photo by Vincenzo Vicari, in Mario Agliati and Vincenzo Vicari, Lugano, *Racconto di ieri, I*, Lugano, Gaggini-Bizzozero, Fondazione Arturo e Margherita Lang, 1998].



5. Geo Molo, a presenter on Italian Swiss Radio, holding a gas mask within easy reach. [Photo by Vincenzo Vicari, in Mario Agliati and Vincenzo Vicari, Lugano, *Racconto di ieri, I*, Lugano, Gaggini-Bizzozero, Fondazione Arturo e Margherita Lang, 1999].



6. The terrace of Bar Argentino, which was then the local fascist meeting place, in the 1940s. [Canton Ticino State Archive, Christian Schiefer photographic collection].



7. The luxurious setting of Hotel Majestic transformed into a quarantine camp for Italian refugees after 8 September 1943. [Postcard, Christian Schiefer, Paradiso, in Antonio Gili (ed.), *Lugano Hôtels: alberghi, storia, architettura*, catalogue of the exhibition, Lugano, Museo storico Villa Saroli, 3.12.1998-2.4.1999, Lugano, Città di Lugano, "Pagine storiche luganesi" no. 9, 1998].



8. Trevano Castle was used to house the student camp for Italian refugees from May 1944 and had already been used by the army during mobilisation. [Canton Ticino State Archive, Christian Schiefer photographic collection].



9. Polish soldiers detained at Massagno in January 1942. [Private archive F. and G. Binek, Cureglia].



10. The backshop of Odoardo Masini's grocery (right) in Via Lucchini was one of the main rendezvous points for Italian refugees, particularly the "political" refugees. [Photo by Vincenzo Vicari, in Mario Agliati and Vincenzo Vicari, Lugano, *Racconto di ieri, II*, Lugano, Gaggini-Bizzozero, Fondazione Arturo e Margherita Lang, 1999].



11. The Cantonal Library, opened in 1942, was one of the most popular places frequently visited by Italian intellectuals who were refugees in Lugano. [Photo Vincenzo Vicari].



12. The jury of the "Libera Stampa" Prize, one of the most important initiatives founded through the collaboration between the cultural world of Ticino and the Italian refugees: From left: Carlo Bo, Giansiro Ferrata, Gianfranco Contini, Aldo Borlenghi, Piero Bianconi and Pietro Salati. ["Il Cantonetto", a. XXXI-XXXII, no. 3, August 1984].



13. Captain Guido Bustelli, head of the Swiss Army Intelligence Service in Lugano: he played a leading role in helping the Italian *Resistenza*. [Private archive Vanna Soldati, Locarno].



14. Lugano station in late 1930s. [postcard].



15. During the war, Casa d'Italia was a particularly interesting place because it served many functions, some of them contradictory: it was the seat of the Italian consulate, first fascist and then declared loyal to the new "Governo del Sud"; it was also a place of detainment and housed the Lugano Delegation of the National Committee of Liberation for Upper Italy.



16. Villa Ramona (also known as Villa Wesphal) in Cassarate: one of the bases used by the American secret services in Ticino. [Private archive G. C. A., Castagnola].



17. At the end of the war, Lugano was also used as a base for a few episodes of Operation "Sunrise" which was responsible for defeating the Nazi-Fascist troops in Italy. In the photo, Baron Luigi Parrilli (centre) with Guido Zimmer (right) in front of the Hotel Palace. [Max Waibel, 1945. *Capitolazione del Norditalia. Relazione originale del mediatore*, Porza-Lugano, Edizioni Trelingue, 1982]

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I.

DAILY LIFE IN LUGANO DURING MOBILISATION AND THE WAR

With the outbreak of the World War II, the Swiss population had to face military and civilian mobilisation, short rations caused by economic blockades, the danger of military aggression and also the emergency brought about by waves of refugees seeking asylum. Switzerland, faithful to its humanitarian tradition, and spared direct military involvement, did its best to support war victims, soldiers and civilian refugees alike. The last initiative of this nature was the *Dono Svizzero*, which began in January 1945 and lasted until after the war had ended.

Once the war was over and peace re-established, the people of Ticino remembered the difficult period of war as well as its less difficult aspects; this allowed many of them to become more appreciative of their own country and customs, and also of the precious democracy which they never ceased to enjoy.

Mobilisation

On 1 September 1939, the people of Ticino were not surprised by the announcement of the German invasion of Poland: three days before, the frontier-units had been called up and the Federal Assembly had appointed 65-year-old Henri Guisan (1874-1960) as General. In every town and village of the Canton posters were put up announcing the first general mobilisation on the 2 September. Active service was to last a total of six years, including periods of anxiety and long days of monotony.

Over the course of the war, the unavoidable moments of discouragement were counterbalanced by a will to resist – not only militarily and economically but also morally – the menaces of nazism and fascism. The so-called moral defence played an essential role: its objectives, officially defined as early as December 1938, were to oppose totalitarian politics, racism and fanatical nationalism with the basic values of Switzerland. Also, the charismatic personality of General Guisan was a key influence in strengthening national cohesion. Thanks to one of his initiatives, in November 1939 the institution *Esercito e Focolare* (“Army and Hearth”) was set up, charged with the task of maintaining soldiers’ morale over the long period of mobilisation and strengthening the will to resist amongst the civilian population.

In canton Ticino operated the 9th Frontier Brigade – a unit entirely composed of Ticino soldiers – integrated into 9th Mountain Division, which in turn was subordinated to the 2nd Army Corps. Created in April 1938, it had since 1941 been under command of the Lugano-born Colonel Guglielmo Vegezzi (1890-1955). Equipped with arms and ammunition and deployed along the border, the Brigade was supposed to hold back the initial assault in case of a surprise attack from Italy, and thus enable the general mobilisation of field troops.

During the six years of war, several buildings in Lugano were rented or commandeered as army cantonments, either on a temporary basis or else for the duration of hostilities.

In Villa Enderlin until October 1941 was located headquarters of the 9b Territorial District, later moved to Bellinzona. Commanded by the Ticino-born Colonel Antonio Bolzani, it was responsible for the security of Ticino and Mesolcina.

Villa Monico was commandeered by the Municipality of Lugano for the establishment, from January 1944 to 20 July 1945, of the headquarters of the 2nd Demolition Squad, charged with the task of mining streets, bridges, tunnels, etc., to be blown up in case of an attack from Italy.

Villa Caccia (or Malpensata), today the Museum of Modern Art, hosted from the summer of 1940 until the war's end a military infirmary of the 9b Territorial District. Three rooms on the second floor were set aside for air-raid defence.

In February 1940, in the primary schools of Molino Nuovo was constructed an anti-aircraft shelter. Already before the war, the gymnasium and a number of halls, *inter alia*, had been made available for recruitment and, during school vacations, were taken over by troops.

The kindergarten in Molino Nuovo hosted the military medical service. During the summer it was also used for medical inspections of recruits.

The Casermette della Villa Ciani (formerly stables), and for a long time a fire-brigade station, were taken over by military headquarters. This arrangement was supposed to be temporary but it became permanent, so that the Municipality was forced to intervene to ensure that the fire-brigade's proper headquarters were returned to it.

From September 1934 on, the Federal Council announced a number of regulations concerning the establishment and organisation of anti-aircraft protection (PA). At the beginning of the war, the principal centres of Lugano were still unprepared to face the threat of bombardment. In Lugano, an attempt was made to make up for lost time by creating private and public shelters or by instructing the soldiers. Cantonments for PA troops were located in Villa Soldati.

The authorities also tried to instruct the population regarding precautions concerning night air-raids. During August 1940, when Allied aircraft first flew over the town, the inhabitants of Lugano responded appropriately; yet, with the passage of time, several instances of non-compliance occurred, caused by the fact that it was difficult for the people of Ticino to associate the air-raid alarm with real danger. For example, in August 1941 during an alarm, in the shelter of Palazzo Maraini the assembled crowd started dancing and shouting.

In 1940, a Federal decree imposed on every major urban centre the requirement to construct a headquarters-post and anti-aircraft alarm exchange. During the first months of the war, the use of bombs of 100 kg and over made it necessary to find especially well protected underground locations. In Lugano, such a place was constructed under Via al Colle – having natural protection in the form of a thick rock-wall.

Construction of PA Lazaretto, insistently requested by the Federal authorities from the very outset of the war, was the subject of numerous protests, since Lugano and its neighbouring communities did not consider this necessary, finding the danger of air attack to be low and the construction costs excessive. At the end of February 1944, since suitable underground shelters were lacking in Lugano, it was finally decided to construct PA Lazaretto on land belonging to the Ospedale Civico.

World War II imposed on Switzerland not only a military mobilisation but also a civilian one. In order to deal with the situation, various bodies were established. In May 1940, the Federal Council, following a proposal of General Guisan, constituted a special armed corps, the *Guardia Locale*, composed of volunteers having no military obligations – young marksmen aged 16-20 and auxiliaries excused from service. Its principal tasks were to oppose the sabotage of vital

installations and, in the event of invasion, to protect families and property. Also in Lugano, all men capable of using a gun and determined to defend themselves to the last were invited to attend. The administration offices and depot of the Lugano headquarters were located in the former town gas-works.

Established in 1939, the Women's Auxiliary Service (SCF) allowed Swiss women for the first time to enter the masculine world of the army. In Ticino, calls for recruitment met with great success: in the period May-June 1940, almost 900 women showed up at SCF headquarters, temporarily installed in Palazzo Maghetti. The auxiliary personnel were involved in various activities: medical services, air-observation, communications, in administrative departments, kitchens, laundries, etc.

Palazzo Conza, recently restored, hosted the support office for Swiss citizens returning from abroad as a result of the war. The office also rendered legal assistance and helped with job-seeking.

The war economy

The war economy was introduced in stages throughout Switzerland, well before the outbreak of war – the experience of World War I having demonstrated the advisability of acting in advance. As early as April 1939, the Wahlen Plan was put into action with the aim of extending the area under cultivation, and citizens were encouraged to stockpile essential goods. During the first two months of the war, both buying and selling were actually prohibited; people were expected to survive on their provisions reserve. In any event, since not everyone was able to meet this requirement, ration-cards were introduced for repatriates and the poor.

In September 1939, the war economy was put in practice, with price-controls and the phased-in rationing of consumer goods. In already-poor Ticino, housewives were forced to adapt to the limitations. Nutrition habits changed, both with regard to quantity and quality, and in kitchens one also had to face limitations in fuel and economise in cooking.

Other measures had to be taken in the face the import blockades. Kitchen waste was recycled and used for the production of industrial oils, as was metal for the steel industry; rubber, paper and textiles were collected as well. Rubber was necessary for car tyres, there was a shortage of petrol. Some vehicles were equipped with gazogene, a system producing combustible gas and fuelled with coal or wood. The lack of combustibles was felt also in private houses and public buildings: the shortage of wood and coal was addressed by using paper-balls left out to dry, with turf or with coking coal. Difficulties in the supply of industrial fats led to the rationing of soap. Other non-food rationing covered textiles, footwear and paper.

Not only was the range of goods rationed steadily increased but the incidence of penalties imposed by the authorities also rose.

Rationing did not cease once the danger was over; the return to normality required time, with coupons remaining in use until the beginning of July 1948.

In this situation women, who were already involved in important charitable activities, took up new responsibilities: since men were under mobilisation, they took on functions which had so far been assigned exclusively to men, while continuing to fulfil their original duties of taking care of home and family. Thus during the war, women became important actors in the country's economy. For this reason, they were able to aspire to more active functions in post-war society and renewed

claims arose for voting rights and maternity benefits, which were however ignored for a long time to come.

An important showcase of the war-time economy and society was the *Fiera di Lugano*, exhibition, which took place annually in Campo Marzio. Initiated in 1933, in 1937 it gained the title *Fiera Svizzera* (Swiss Exhibition) and its success was ever-increasing. From 1937 on, the exhibition included its own opera season and was often the occasion for an annual art exhibition. Yet the most famous event was the wine-harvest festival – the *Festa Della Vendemmia* – with its traditional procession. In the southern part of the area, pavilions were built; between the river, Lido and Viale Castagnola was a sports-field in which military parades and demonstrations were organised. There, Local Guard exercises also took place, as well as sporting and military events, one of which was participated in by General Guisan.

Characteristic of the period, also due to the necessity of the long-term storage of foodstuffs, was the activity of the ice-factory, where people could buy ice for home use, before refrigerators became widespread.

The introduction of rationing made it necessary to set up war-economy offices. In the early days, in Lugano their provisional headquarters were located in a hall of the Community Council and in corridors of the Palazzo Civico. Later on, the office changed its location a number of times, due to the increasing workload. Besides the central one, there were also district offices, where inhabitants could periodically obtain ration cards and coupons entitling them to acquire goods of various kinds.

Town-planning and services

The most important urban transformation of the war period concerned the Sassello district, where a radical reconstruction completely altered the historical centre. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, concerns had arisen with regard to the poor level of sanitation of many of the buildings and also due to the social decline of Sassello. In 1935, the municipal authorities decided to announce a competition for the remedying of this situation. Initiated in July 1939, work took longer than anticipated due to the war, which – apart from labour and materials shortages – led to a significant rise in construction costs. Of the three major buildings designed for the centre of the district, only one – the Assicurazioni Pax in Via Nassa – was completed on time and inaugurated at the beginning of November 1941.

Also, the Besso district was a place of major reconstruction work. Since the end of the nineteenth century, it had developed strongly as a residential and hotel area. Traffic access to the part of the city below the train station soon turned out to be inadequate and the situation became even worse with the introduction of cars. The problem was partially solved in 1926 with inauguration of the Besso tunnel and the opening of an underground pedestrian passage. In 1942, in order to provide the district with a centre, the construction of the Piazzale was commenced, this being inaugurated in 1943.

The history of the municipal and social institutions had its origins between the end of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century. In 1909, the Municipality decided to create the Ricovero Comunale Di Assistenza, which gave shelter to the aged and to abandoned

children in need. For the construction of the Asilo Dei Ciechi (home for the blind), carried out over the two years 1935-1936, the Ricordone area was chosen. The Girls' Orphanage was founded in 1871 by Angela Antonia Vanoni. The Boys' Orphanage of Lugano had been established, in buildings belonging to the Maghetti family, in 1844; subsequently, in 1939, it was moved to Castel San Pietro. In the *Casermette* of Villa Ciani, breast-feeding women could still, even during the war years, obtain consultations and medicines.

Education

The young inhabitants of Ticino viewed the war also in the light of their schooling. In Lugano there was a number of kindergartens and schools of different levels. After 8 September 1943, many of them also admitted refugee Italian students.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the gymnasium of the Scuola Professionale Femminile (women's trade school) was used for various mobilisation-related purposes. Its large area and central location were advantageous for hosting activities and events requiring an auditorium. In July 1940, sports and military exercises were organised there, as well as a training course for the Local Guard. On two other occasions it hosted an art exhibition for Ticino soldiers.

Culture and entertainment

The war produced great social and cultural changes in the whole country. On a Federal level, as early as the 1930s, the moral defence policy was instituted. With the outbreak of the war, thousands of men had to leave their families and work for shorter or longer periods. These two factors had an impact not only on relations between the social classes but also on cultural life and the spending of free time. Throughout the Confederation there was a spread of patriotism and a sense of belonging to a Swiss community, to a degree previously unknown.

In canton Ticino, linguistically and culturally connected with Italy yet politically with Switzerland, this situation also influenced intellectual and artistic circles, creating two opposite trends. The opposition between Swiss values and Italian cultural ties was reflected in people's feelings too: many of them firmly identified Italy with fascism, which made it difficult for them to recognise Italian refugees arriving after the armistice as genuine victims of fascism.

From the first months of the war on, the difficult situation of mobilised men – separated from their homes and unsure of the future – persuaded the authorities to limit the number of public balls. They also instigated mandatory midnight closing of public meeting-places.

Also, the Town Theatre was forced to follow a certain artistic autarchy, since foreign troupes and artistes could not move about freely. On the other hand, cinema shows were organised. More so than artistic quality, people were looking for the possibility of entertainment, so necessary in difficult times; the proceeds of many of the events were given to charity. The Lugano theatre also organised concerts in the Belvedere pavilion.

Cinema halls, where one could be entertained or informed by newsreels and Radio Monteceneri programmes, were well attended.

For Villa Ciani Park, the outbreak of the war spelt the definitive collapse of an ambitious project: a “Concerto Lirico” participated in by Beniamino Gigli and Toti Dal Monte. The great meadow at the Via Pasquale Lucchini entrance hosted, for the first and only time in 1945, the second International Film Festival, later moved to Locarno.

During wartime, in Palazzo Riva the local “Circolo di Coltura” and the Ticino section of Lyceum Club had their headquarters. The *Circolo* organised conferences, exhibitions, receptions with famous artists and also events combining cultural and humanitarian aims.

The Lyceum Club during the war conducted intensive social activity, with initiatives in support of soldiers, war-victims, repatriates and refugees.

Information and censorship

In Switzerland, censorship had been introduced as early as 1934. From the beginning of war, control of the media was given over to the Press and Radio Section of the General Staff, a military body that was nevertheless subordinated to the Police and Justice Department.

Already in January 1939, censorship commissions, responsible for supervision and penalties, were active at district level. Regulations were also issued concerning the comment of news: these were suggestions, lacking in legal force but clearly indicating the intentions of the authorities, worried about the possible reaction of the Nazis. The severity of these regulations diminished steadily, in line with the waning power of the *Reich*.

Also, books and films were placed under control and had, unlike the press and radio, to undergo preventive censorship. An important criterion for press control was to avoid panic and defeatism among the population, whilst maintaining vigilance appropriate to the seriousness of the situation.

Censorship was harshly criticised, mostly by those on the political left, and was accepted with much reserve by those responsible for the media. Yet international opinion greatly appreciated the objectivity of Swiss press.

Italian-speaking Switzerland had had its own radio station since the beginning of the 1930s. It broadcast from a studio located in a small room in Lugano’s Central Post Office, but it was soon decided to construct a studio at Campo Marzio called Studio Foce, inaugurated on the 29 October 1933.

The war brought great changes also to the Radio and its organisation: as was the case with the press, censorship was imposed and programmes were expected to be consistent with the moral defence policy.

Radio Monteceneri programmes contributed to relieving the sense of isolation felt by the refugees and enabled them to receive news from Italy. Moreover, they constituted a precious source of information and support for the population and for those antifascists who remained in Italy.

Fascism and antifascism

As a consequence of the strong ties between canton Ticino and Italy, the rise of fascism provoked reactions also in Italian-speaking Switzerland. In the course of the 1930s, the questions of

Italy and of totalitarian regimes were subjects of political debate in the canton. Italian antifascists found support mostly among representatives of the Ticino Socialist Party and the liberal-radical Democratic Party. In contrast, Ticino's Fascist Federation gained very little support.

Before the war, refugees passing through the city could seek help in several places having links to *Soccorso Rosso*, the assistance organisation for communist refugees. Among them were the house of Luigi Morenzoni and the Osteria Cantonale, known also as "Becco Giallo" hotel.

Ticino's fascists had their meeting points in Palazzo Riva in Castagnola, where the first informal meeting of the founders of local fascist group took place, and in the villa of Nino Rezzonico in Porza, where the first thirty Ticino fascists met on 1 November 1933. The Federation's paper was called *Il Fascista Svizzero*, the publisher of which was located, together with the movement's headquarters, in a villa on Via Cantonale.

Participants of the Porza meeting were recruited in the Argentino bar, already then known as the fascists' bar. Elvezio Grassi, the barman, prepared them a hall, which became a real den of Lugano fascists.

After the fall of Mussolini, the initial impact of the new political situation of Italy was felt as early as 26 July 1943, when Ticino antifascists, overcome by euphoria, also caused widespread disorder.

War's end in Europe

On the 7 May 1945, bells of rejoicing signalled the end of the war in Europe. As had already happened following the fall of Mussolini, on 8 May 1945 the town witnessed episodes of purges directed against fascists and their supporters. In order to stem uncontrolled purges, a commission was set up with a task of expelling certain Italian citizens. Nevertheless, on 8 May the official celebrations of the war's end in Europe commenced and, the following day, the people of Lugano gathered in the Cathedral for a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated by the Bishop. The mobilisation had its epilogue on 24 May at Piazza Riforma, with a flag-lowering ceremony for the disbanding of the 94th Battalion.

II.

REFUGEE LUGANO

Following the announcement of the Italian armistice on 8 September 1943, thousands of civilian and military refugees who had escaped the advancing Nazi occupation of central and northern Italy fled towards Switzerland's southern border. Decidedly the most affected by this influx was the canton Ticino, which was thrown into a state of emergency; organisation of the internment system was slow. Once received, the refugees were sent to collection centres, generally located in public buildings situated near the border, where they remained for several days until they passed medical inspections or while administrative procedures were completed. Military refugees were transported to central Switzerland on a continuous basis, while civilian ones were transferred to quarantine camps set up mostly in Bellinzona and Lugano. Under strict military control, and isolated from the external world, they remained there for approximately three weeks before being lodged in so-called "reception camps" ("campi di accoglienza") where they awaited a decision regarding their final destination.

The Camps

Following the announcement of the Italian armistice, la Casa d'Italia became a place of detainment for numerous civilian refugees; the camp turned out to be a relatively comfortable lodgings by the standards of the time, thanks in part to its commandant, who was able to enforce rules of discipline whilst showing sensitivity towards those with a traumatic recent past. Hotel Majestic, which stood in the middle of the vast space of Tassino park, functioned as a quarantine camp, hosting on average 300 refugees. Pregnant women and the aged had beds at their disposal, while the others slept on straw in rooms subdivided with improvised screens. Material conditions were good and the atmosphere among the internees was generally peaceful. After the end of the war, the Majestic was the reception destination for Jewish refugees awaiting expatriation to other states.

The military authorities had to deal with a number of political refugees from Catholic and royal circles, persons to whom respect was certainly due, but whose cases were ambiguous due to their previous complicity with the fascist regime. Therefore a separate, sufficiently isolated place to receive these inconvenient guests was prepared; the Convento dei Frati Cappuccini di S. Trinità was chosen, situated along the Salita dei Frati.

Some rich refugees benefited initially from special treatment: by paying a special charge, they could spend their quarantine in certain of Lugano's luxury hotels. Among these were hotels Ritschard and De La Paix, both hosting an average of 70 to 80 refugees. Yet it was later decided to close the paid camps to avoid differences in the treatment of refugees. In summer 1944, the De La Paix was reopened and hosted until the beginning of 1946 around 200 refugees of Jewish origin.

In Autumn 1943 the hotel Casa Coray in Muzzano was commandeered for hosting around a hundred Jewish women along with their children; they were lodged on the ground floor and slept on beds with mattresses and pillows; rooms on upper floors were reserved for laundries, kitchen, living-rooms etc. as well as for dormitories of Swiss military officials.

From the end of 1943 until November 1945, the hotel-clinic Monte Brè in Ruvigliana received sick and physically handicapped refugees not requiring hospitalisation in town clinics; later on, until spring 1948, it lodged Jewish families who were waiting to return to their countries of origin, or for expatriation to Palestine.

Situated on the hill of Moncucco, the Lugano Clinica di Moncucco hosted those refugees of the upper echelons of the Italian political and cultural world who needed medical help. Among them were the family of the publisher Mondadori, and liberal activist Tommaso Gallarati Scotti. Also, the neighbouring San Rocco nursing home and Ospedale Italiano in Viganello were places for well-off refugees. In Autumn 1944, some of the Italian refugees at the latter founded CIAS (Italian Medical Assistance Centre) with the aim, once the war was over, of ensuring a rational distribution of medical assistance to the northern regions of Italy.

Finally, the Opera Charitas di Sonvico nursing home, under the supervision of the nuns of S. Croce di Menzingen, received various important persons from the ecclesiastical world.

From late-spring 1944 on, some of the Lugano hotels were sequestered in order to organise permanent internment camps in them, generally inhabited by refugee groups of a homogenous nature: *Homes* for families or for single women with small children or the old, sick or handicapped. Near the Lugano train station, hotel Berna & Bellavista served for the internment of around 100 refugees who contributed to the organising of the camp; from autumn 1945, it was transformed into a recovery camp for aged refugees. Also, the Flora and Posta Sempione boarding houses lodged around 150 civilian refugees, mostly Jewish. Hotel Palmiers up until 1946 hosted several dozen Jewish refugees, who were employed in simple jobs such as tailors, shoemakers and ironing for the benefit of other refugees. Finally, hotels Diana and Rheingold-Eldorado for some years after the end of the war hosted aged Jewish refugees, the majority of whom were awaiting expatriation to the United States or Australia.

In the first years of the World War II, the Castello di Trevano played an important role in military and civilian mobilisation of canton Ticino. It hosted some units of the army and SCF (Women's Civil Service). In May 1944 it was used as a study-camp for about 150 Italian high-school refugees, mostly of Jewish origin. The typical day was divided into two parts: the morning was devoted to agricultural work while the afternoon was reserved for study, following a programme organised according to the education rules of the time, as practiced in Italian high schools. From the autumn of 1942, a school camp for young Jewish refugees was located in a big villa in Davesco; the daily routine was similar to that in Castello di Trevano: manual and agricultural work in the morning and intellectual activity (lessons, lectures, musical or theatrical shows etc.) in the afternoon.

Over the winter of 1941-1942, about 50 Polish soldiers were lodged in some houses in Massagno, in Gerso; they performed mostly land-reclamation work in woodland in a place known as Crespera. This small group belonged to a contingent of about 1.000 Polish refugees who had entered Switzerland, crossing the French-Swiss border in June 1944 following the collapse of France, and who spent the war years in Ticino.

Humanitarian and refugee-support institutions

Following the announcement of the Italian armistice on 8 September 1943, many persons and institutions of various types in canton Ticino demonstrated considerable humanitarian initiative. The Ticino section of CSSO (Swiss Committee for Workers Assistance), which had its headquarters in the house of State Councillor, the socialist Canevascini, ran numerous assistance activities, such as the collecting of garments, books and entertainment materials, as well as providing modest financial help to indigent refugees, and also monitoring the material and moral situation in Ticino internment camps.

Also, Ticino Catholics made their presence felt with the assistance offered to victims of persecution. In spring 1941, the Bishop of Lugano, Angelo Jelmini, put at the disposal of “Pro Internati Polacchi” some rooms of the Palazzo della Curia for the repair and ironing of the laundry of Polish internees. In January 1942, he decided to establish Caritas; besides helping Ticino inhabitants who were in need, this unit provided some assistance to refugees. At his residence was also located the secretariat of the “Comitato Ticinese per l’Assistenza ai Rifugiati” (refugee-assistance committee).

After September 1943, the Società Israelitica di Soccorso was also involved with numerous requests for help on behalf of Jewish refugees: besides financial and spiritual support, it was involved in various activities, as well as internment procedures and preparations for expatriation to Palestine.

The Ticino auxiliary section of the International Red Cross, thanks to support from public and private bodies, organised various events aimed at fund-raising of various types. The Lugano section of the Swiss Red Cross, aside from activities in support of the army and the civilian population of Switzerland, after 8 September 1943 did all they could to help refugees interned in camps in Lugano and the surrounding area. From autumn 1942, the rooms on Via Pretorio hosted also the Comitato Ticinese del Soccorso ai Fanciulli Vittime della Guerra, organising temporary stays in the region for Serbian, French and Italian children affected by the war.

Life of the “liberati”: hotels, private lodgings and places of entertainment

After 8 September 1943, the city of Lugano and its surroundings were a privileged destination for hundreds of civilian refugees who were freed (liberati) from military control and therefore able to live in private lodgings under the surveillance of the Ticino police. In hotel Villa Edelweiss were lodged numerous refugees, among which were the cellist Umberto Rossi and designer Giuliana Camerino, better known under her artistic pseudonym Roberta Di Camerino, who in Lugano began her long career. Hotel Adler, situated a little above the San Lorenzo cathedral, hosted Luigi Ansbacher (1878-1956), advocate and Professor of Commercial Law at Milan Bocconi University. At the hotel Croce Bianca lived the publisher Arnoldo Mondadori and his family, who later on moved to an apartment on Via Giuseppe Cattori 8; in Lugano, Mondadori continued his publishing activity: through the Hélicon society, with its headquarters in Melisa bookshop, where he made contact with the principal London and American publishers in order to check their ability to grant Italian-translation rights with regard to numerous authors.

In the boarding house run by the Trezzini family lived numerous refugees, among which the advocate and *Partito d'Azione* representative Giovan Battista Boeri, and the then barely 20-year-old Guido Majno – after the war an outstanding professor of medicine, also the film director Luciano Emmer; the hospitable pension Wyss-Pozzi had as its guests Guido Carlo Visconti di Modrone – musician and politician, and also Andrea Beltramini – ex-socialist deputy, a former political prisoner. At Via Loreto 10 lived for some time the publisher Alberto Vigevani with his family; during his exile in Lugano he did occasional light work, among which was selling books in the Burnstein shop. On Via Trevano 55, on the site of the present Villa Carmine, lived the Milanese novelist and humorist Luigi Santucci, recognised by critics as one of most important Lombard authors of the second half of the twentieth century. In a small villa on via Gaggini da Bissone 5, lived Fabio Carpi, after the war an acknowledged playwright, director and poet. In an apartment at Piazza Dante 1 lived the family of Milanese refugee Ezio Vigorelli, socialist lawyer; later, his sons Adolfo and Bruno both died in Ossola as partisans.

Near the Ricordone quarter rose Villa Coenobium, formerly the property of exiled Garibaldi-follower Enrico Bignami; after 8 September 1943, it hosted the Bignami sisters who escaped to Switzerland, together with their families. Maria Simonetta, daughter of Maria Bignami and Giulio De Benedetti, post-war publisher of “La Stampa”, obtained permission to serve an apprenticeship in the photography studio of Vincenzo Vicari.

Piero Malvestiti, the well-known Catholic economist and politician, was initially hosted in the home of Francesco Masina in Massagno, among the most active collaborators of the newspaper “Libertà!”. After participating in the brief partisan experiment of the Republic of Ossola, he was lodged at the home of Alice De Sequeira, widow of Banca dello Stato director Giacomo Casella.

The liberated refugees had to submit to numerous limitations imposed by the police, including a 10pm curfew and the requirement to obtain authorisation regarding their place of residence. For those with no political or cultural obligations to fulfil, the days of exile – due to the prohibition of money-making activities – were often long and difficult to pass.

Piazza della Riforma – as well as the Lungolago and, also in the historical centre of Lugano, the Piazza Dante and Piazza Cioccaro – were regularly frequented by refugees; around Piazza Riforma, the numerous public locales were often crowded. The Gambrinus beer-restaurant, one of historic locales of the city, hosted in these months clients mostly from Ticino or, more generally, Switzerland. On the ground floor of Palazzo Civico, on the corner of Piazza Manzoni, there was Caffè Olimpia which, along with the neighbouring Caffè Federale, was the favourite meeting-place for the numerous colony of the antifascist and Jewish refugees. The Caffè Argentino, was, on the contrary, notoriously a meeting-place of the fascist community. Other premises particularly frequented by refugees were the Pestalozzi hotel-restaurant (51) at Piazza Indipendenza, and the nearby Bar Élite. Attracted by the appetising pastries displayed in the shop-window of Pasticceria Vanini and Ristorante Huguenin, not a few wealthy refugees indulged culinary desires that had up to that time remained unsatisfied.

III.

LUGANO REFUGEE - POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Among the many refugees who obtained asylum in Switzerland following the 8 September 1943 armistice were numerous figures in Italy's political and cultural world. Many antifascists who had returned from exile or escaped from prison or internment were under real threat due to their discussions or official statements. As a result, their lives were endangered when the Germans and neo-fascists took power in central and northern Italy. For those located close to the Swiss frontier, Switzerland represented the ideal escape route and hope for salvation.

Once they had been accepted and had obtained exile, most of these refugees, primarily thanks to prior acquaintances, the intervention of support agencies or political assistance, found a guarantor who assumed the burden of their maintenance for the duration of their sojourn in Switzerland. As a result, they were able to pass through military and police checkpoints and live relatively freely in private lodgings.

Relative to refugees of other nationalities, they also had other privileges, both due to the fact of having arrived in Switzerland at a time when a resolution to the war in the Allies' favour seemed certain, and in consequence of the tradition of interchanges of hospitality and culture between Italian-speaking Switzerland and Italy.

The preferred city was Lugano, both for reasons of cultural proximity and the Ticino climate, and due to the fact that relative to other towns it offered a greater number of services, including cinemas, libraries, meeting places. The city became an important centre for interchange, fruitful both for the Ticino cultural world – opened to novel and modern experiences – and also for the refugees, who enjoyed here an opportunity to return to the practice of political pluralism and a thoroughly democratic way of life.

Chains of relationship

In order to initiate propaganda activity or contacts with the Allies in Switzerland, it was first necessary to find meeting points both recognised and discreet, since Swiss law prohibited refugees from carrying on political activity and providing information to foreign powers. Ticino, on the other hand, had since the time of the *Risorgimento* been a place for Italian political emigrants, and close links between the Ticino antifascists and those of Italy had always been maintained. The representatives of various Italian groupings – both for Ticino-based parties and those of the Italian *fuorusciti* – were happy to make use of such meeting-places. Many private residences gave hospitality to refugees and their secret activities; these included the house of socialist Councillor of State Guglielmo Canevascini, who during the war was a contact person for Italian refugees and also had for many years been known for his antifascist activity and support for exiles.

Also located in Besso, the Frischknecht bakery was a meeting-place for refugees.

In centre of Lugano there was another Italian-refugee rendezvous point, known already prior to the armistice: the grocery belonging to Odoardo Masini, an exile who had settled in Lugano in 1929 and was continuously active in helping compatriots in need. In 1936 Masini had been among the

founders of *Nuove Edizioni di Capolago* (NEC), a publishing enterprise based on *Risorgimento* traditions. NEC, which was based in the Masini shop's back room, had published numerous literary, philosophical and historical works, and after several years of silence restarted activity following the arrival of Italian refugees.

In the historic centre of Lugano, certain hotels and boarding houses, selected as lodgings for liberated refugees as their financial status permitted, were also meeting-places for various political groups and in certain cases provided support to those in need of it. Other hotels hosted occasional meetings of a political nature.

The Lugano home of Edoardo Clerici, one of the principal Christian Democrat exponents in Switzerland was, together with Casa del Popolo, a contact point for Catholic refugees. After their first months of exile, the Milanese democrat group met here in order to plan their own activities.

Publishing locations

For those who had escaped from Italy for reasons of their own convictions, arrival in the city meant above all a return to freedom of expression and of opinion. In Swiss libraries one could find books that in Italy had been banned, politics was discussed in bars, the newspapers published debates between opposing parties, and censorship – while present – was not comparable to that of totalitarian regimes. The first step taken by refugee intellectuals was to take advantage of the freedom that they enjoyed: reading, studies, broadening of their knowledge of subjects that had been neglected for years, writing articles for publication once they returned to Italy. Later, they were given the possibility of holding conferences, and newspaper editors became open to collaboration, albeit anonymous and under pseudonyms. Contemporaneously, an at least partly clandestine activity took place in the recruitment of young interns to join individual political parties: committees were organised, representatives were sent to the refugee camps and publications were distributed. The advent of the end of the war and the ever-decreasing menace from the Axis powers finally persuaded Swiss authorities to ease the restrictions. Moreover, certain influential Ticino figures supported the cause of the refugees and proposed initiatives which went beyond pure material assistance. This development, from studies to conferences to publications to political debates and educational initiatives, is borne witness to by numerous places in Lugano, which contained the single cantonal library, meeting places, printing houses, newspaper-publishing houses and refugee camps.

At the Cantonal Library, thanks to the cooperative attitude of its Director, Adriana Ramelli, Italian refugees began important courses of study, which resulted in their stays in Ticino being fruitful. Among other things, the Director allowed the refugees to meet for discussions, giving them the opportunity to confront each other's ideas and opinions.

In November 1943, the “Lezioni di Diritto ed Economia” lectures in law and economics began, assembling refugees in the high-school *Aula Magna* until June 1944. This initiative represented a significant relaxation in restrictions placed on refugees, even though the district police monitored the meetings, since behind the overall label of law and economics were hidden political arguments.

The Oratorio was placed at disposal of the Christian-Social Union for a series of conferences held by Italian refugees who were Catholics.

The *Camera del Lavoro*, headquarters of the free Italian grouping, made available some of its facilities to enable political refugees to spread and discuss their ideas. These involved meetings for young people, held above all by representatives of the *Partito d'Azione*. The *Camera del Lavoro*, which in 1932 had given rise to the “Liberi e Svizzeri” antifascist movement, had for years been an important contact point for Italian exiles and Ticino antifascists.

While the communist party was the most active and organised in recruiting among the young in the camps, the most effective organisation in the spreading of ideas through publications and debates with other parties was the *Movimento Federalista Europeo* (MFE) set up in August 1943, represented in Ticino primarily by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi.

The openness displayed by newspaper publishers to collaboration with Italian activists, both the well-known and the inexperienced, represented an opportunity for interchange and mutual enrichment between Italians and those native to Ticino: some publishing houses became the *de facto* meeting points for intellectuals, artists and critics, political and cultural campaigners. “Corriere del Ticino” had already in Autumn 1940 established a “literary page” open to collaboration with well-known writers from Lombardy. With the arrival of the refugees, this was extended to other writers and intellectuals.

The socialist publication “Libera Stampa”, during the fascist period when there were strong links with the movement in exile, was one of the first newspapers to be censored in Italy and quickly became the only Italian-language antifascist journal. In January 1944, the “Emigrazione Italiana” page – full of news about Italy, comments and political analysis – was set up, gathering numerous poets and writers of the new generation. As a result it became the most widely distributed daily newspaper in the internment and work camps. In 1946, in order to maintain the important contacts between the intellectuals having been established as a result of the arrival of the refugees, the “Libera Stampa” literary prize was also established.

“Gazzetta Ticinese”, the publication of the Radical Liberal Party of Ticino, established a supplement “L'Italia e il Secondo Risorgimento”, entirely supervised by refugees and distributed in camps located in Switzerland. The supplement gathered together numerous liberals and published articles written by well-known Party activists. It was printed at a printing house still active in the city today.

“Illustrazione Ticinese” was in the 1940s a widely distributed weekly. After the armistice, the refugees Arturo Lanocita and Indro Montanelli contributed to it.

“Azione”, the weekly publication of the Ticino Work Cooperative Society, following the Italian armistice gave space to articles primarily by *Partito d'Azione* activists and also to ones contributed by European federalists. In fact the editorial house hosted both representatives of the *Partito d'Azione* and the Lugano committee of the European federalist movement.

Lugano also gave refugees the opportunity of printing pamphlets and entire volumes of work, an opportunity taken up both by writers and by politicians. *Nuove Edizioni di Capolago*, for example, were printed at a printing house in the city centre.

Cultural interchange

In the literary and artistic fields, interchanges between Italian refugees and the local population were indisputably intense and resulted in a notable contribution to the hermetic culture of the canton, opening new horizons and raising awareness of new trends in Italian poetry and prose. In private houses, cultural centres and newspaper publishers, both critics, writers and artists exchanged ideas, experiences and knowledge, to their mutual enrichment. These meetings also gave rise to publishing initiatives, enabling the publication of works by Italian refugees and writers, who in their homeland were unable to publish for reasons of politics or race. Advantage of this was taken primarily by certain young Ticino artists, who had previously been isolated from the principal currents of the twentieth century due to lack of schools, structures, opportunities for meetings and also the market. Numerous concerts, organised often for reasons of solidarity, featured not only outstanding artists hosted by Switzerland but also new talents, among which were refugees who were thereby given their first opportunity to perform in public.

With the end of the war, the refugees returned to Italy but both sides were unwilling to allow the fertile relations that had arisen during those extraordinary twenty months of cultural proximity to lapse. The uninterrupted collaboration with Ticino newspapers by some Italians, the “Libera Stampa” literary prize, the international film festival, all demonstrate that the ties between the two communities were not extinguished along with the end of the war.

In the 1940s the encounter between the literary worlds of Italy and Italian-speaking Switzerland reached its peak with the publication of certain works, remembered even today, and the birth of literary imprints. First to take the initiative was Pino Bernasconi, taking advantage of the presence in Ticino of so many young writers and in 1941 founding “Collana di Lugano”, in which were published works by Ticino and Italian writers. Pino Bernasconi’s house was a meeting place for artists and writers.

Another Lugano house – that of the painter Pietro Salati – was a meeting and reception point for literary refugees. Even though very young, Salati was during the war one of the reference points of Ticino culture and a promoter of cultural activity.

In one of the *Palazzi Gergantini*, from 1941 the location of the Italian Literary Circle, periodic lecture-conferences were organised. Despite being nominally independent of the Italian Consulate, the Circle was notoriously an initiative of the fascist government, which hoped to turn it into an instrument for the infiltration of Ticino by fascist culture. Thanks to activity of this cultural entity, poets already known in Italy but virtually unknown here, became recognised. Through the initiative of the Literary Circle was established the Lugano Literary Prize with the intention of giving a boost to Italian-language Swiss literature. The Prize, which was awarded by a prestigious Italian-Swiss jury, was given twice during the war, in 1942 and 1943, to two young Ticino writers.

At the end of 1944, the third literary initiative of that period was established by the *Ghilda del Libro*, an association which in addition to its role as a publishing house acted as a cultural circle for the distribution of literary culture. The Ticino body was the third to be established in Switzerland, following those of the German and French language, and its organisation took the form of a cooperative including writers, printers, publishers and readers. In November 1944, the Ticino *Ghilda del Libro* opened its own offices in the *Palazzo Gargantini* in via Marconi 2. Alongside its publishing activities, the *Ghilda* organised at its Lugano headquarters conferences and exhibitions by Ticino artists in order to provide a Swiss alternative to the nearby Literary Circle.

Not far away from the above mentioned *Palazzo Gargantini* was situated one of the Lugano cinemas, the Super. Together with the Kursaal it was the cinema-hall that hosted, from 1941 on, the Italian Film Review, set up with the intention of allowing the more intensive and profitable commercial exchanges between Switzerland and Italy. The Review was a precursor to the International Film Festival, subsequently successfully revived in Locarno.

Aside from film reviews, the Super hosted certain demonstrations that allowed either the collection of funds for various refugee-support activities or else to provide Ticino and Italian refugees with commentaries by specialists from nearby Italy.

The Café Riviera, the premises of which had also earlier been used as exhibition space, hosted between late-1944 and the beginning of 1945 an art exhibition, gathering together works of ten Ticino artists and some well-known Italians. The organisers intended to help counter the provincialism of arts and artistic taste in Ticino, so promoting new directions and introducing the public to the most recent artistic trends. The initiative included a literary element and in connection with the exhibition *Almanacco delle arti 1945* was published, also filling the role of exhibition catalogue.

IV.

LUGANO: ESPIONAGE, INTELLIGENCE SERVICES, SECRET MEETINGS

During World War II, the fighting forces created units whose task was to search for and obtain information about the enemy, mislead enemy agents and carry out acts of sabotage. Collecting secret information was necessary also for Switzerland for which purpose it set up its military intelligence service. Switzerland was ideal terrain for the other states' secret services; their own agents operated mostly under the cover of diplomatic posts.

The turning point for Lugano coincided with the Italian armistice on 8 September 1943: from this moment, the city became an important centre for secret-service activities. The organisation of resistance in Italy, together with the presence of German and neo-fascist forces made it necessary for the Swiss army to have more information on this front, while the *Resistenza* sought support, ways of escape and also contacts with the Allied Forces. Also, the enemy forces were interested in all events occurring in Switzerland and, towards the end of the war, Germans and fascists attempted to obtain more favourable surrender terms and avoid the being listed as war criminals.

The Swiss Army Intelligence Service

Lugano became an important strategic centre only after 8 September 1943 but the intelligence office of the Swiss Army, responsible for the border zone stretching from Sempione to Lago di Como, was active already from the beginning of the war. It was directed by Captain Guido Bustelli. Until 1944, Captain Bustelli and his collaborators received information by interrogating persons who had the opportunity of regularly crossing the border. After the Italian armistice, a number of alliances and agreements were created between different intelligence services, which brought Bustelli's office (cryptonym "Nell") into collaboration with the Italian *Resistenza* as well with the American Office of Secret Services (OSS) and British Intelligence.

On the basis of an agreement between Bustelli and the Italian *Resistenza*, from 1944 on the border authorities, briefed by "Nell", allowed *Resistenza* couriers to pass the border when necessary, on the condition that they pass all the information in their possession to the Swiss before passing it on to any other service.

Resistenza, secret activities and information services

The position of canton Ticino encouraged Italian politicians exiled after 8 September 1943 to establish the Lugano Delegation of the Committee of Liberation of the Upper Italy (CLNAI) and to profit as much as possible from the situation in order to receive from the Allies support, material aid and possibly also recognition, which for the *Resistenza* was fundamental. Yet it was only after the *Resistenza* made an agreement with the intelligence service of the Swiss army that the couriers of CLNAI could pass the border in relative security and that the flow through the border became intense.

Recognised by the Bonomi government, the Delegation settled in ex Casa d'Italia in Lugano, which hosted also the Italian Consulate and the transit camp for the refugees. After the armistice was signed, the Italian diplomatic corps in Switzerland declared their loyalty to the new Badoglio

government. Yet the suspicion that this decision was caused rather by opportunism than conviction pushed the community of Italian refugees to ask for the corps' replacement. On the other hand, among the consular corps there were secret agents of Italian counter-espionage and it seems that even after the armistice in Lugano there were persons continuing this activity.

After the armistice, Villa Nathan-Berra or Villa De Nobili played a double role: on one hand it hosted some esteemed refugees, on the other hand it was a place for meetings between members of Italian *Resistenza*, British and American agents as well as a place of transit for CLNAI couriers. Some refugees have referred to the fact that at the time of the *Risorgimento* the house hosted Giuseppe Mazzini; however, this results from a confusing of Villa Nathan in Certenago with Villa Tanzina in Lugano, bought by Sarah Nathan in 1865, where Mazzini was in fact a regular guest from that year on.

In the city, other places too hosted couriers and agents passing through.

Allied secret services

For the Allies, Canton Ticino gained strategic importance from the moment the Nazis took the power along their southern border and remained so at least until the liberation of France. The British, who had their vice-consulate in the middle of the city, installed there a person of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a secret unit created for establishing contacts and organising resistance in the territory occupied by the Nazis, carrying out espionage and sabotage operations. The Americans, lacking the tradition of the British, did not have a consular representative in Ticino. Anyway, Allen Dulles, head of the American secret service in Switzerland, immediately understood Ticino's importance and sent one of his men soon after the Italian armistice. The Americans and British, allied in the struggle against the Nazis, were still rivals and their policies towards the *Resistenza* were not always identical.

After the Italian armistice, the British consulate was a meeting-place of a political and strategic nature. The two representatives of the SOE who worked there also negotiated a favourable agreement with the Lugano office of the intelligence service of the Swiss army, allowing British prisoners escaped from concentration camps to enter Switzerland.

Everywhere in Switzerland, as throughout Europe, the big hotels were often a theatre of espionage operations. Lugano was not free from this tendency. Hotel Eden was selected for his visits by John Birckbeck, the British representative, who regularly found himself in the city in order to meet agents and representatives of the Italian *Resistenza* on behalf of the SOE; Donald Jones, an OSS agent delegated by Dulles after 8 September 1943, stayed at Grand Hotel Splendide prior to the opening of the consulate on Via San Salvatore in Paradiso.

In March 1944, an American vice-consulate was established, to which Jones transferred his activities: contacts and support for the *Resistenza* and collaboration with the intelligence service of the Swiss army. Many complained about Donald Jones' rashness. Ignoring the most basic rules of security created great difficulties to many of those who were returning to Italy in order to continue their activities.

Agents of OSS, couriers and wounded partisans could find harbour also in Villa Wesphal. The French consulate also was connected with the activities of the British and Americans.

Nazi centres and their activities

Already before the war, the German espionage service against Switzerland was well organised and created a dense web, spread over the whole of the country. *Abwehr* security-service agents were operating from German diplomatic posts and consulates. Every consulate, such as the one in Lugano, was connected with the centres in Berne and Davos – the latter being called “little Berlin” due to the presence of Germans and agents of the *Reich*. The fascist penetration in Ticino was not so successful however and occurred in stages.

Fascist espionage and counter-espionage in Ticino was reorganised and reinforced after the Italian armistice, particularly in order to counterbalance the activity and contacts between the Allies and the *Resistenza*, and to collect useful information regarding the latter. Also, *Resistenza* agents operating in Italy failed to appreciate, given the presence of these espionage services, the dangers resulting from the ease with which political refugees, particularly those connected with CLNAI, discussed secret topics.

Towards the end of the war, German officers appeared at the German consulate, attempting to negotiate individual agreements with the Allies in order to secure their immunity or at least reduce their prospective punishments resulting from the terms of surrender. Such attempts – arising from clashes of individual, frequently opposed interests – intensified during the last months of the war but were hardly ever successful. They reveal though, that the Germans were aware of the results of their disastrous war actions, while the Allies were ready to establish contacts in order to bring about a separate surrender on the Italian front, but with no conditions attached.

Operation “Sunrise”

The series of negotiations – undertaken as part of the operation code-named by the Americans “Sunrise” and by the British “Crosswords”, which brought the German forces fighting on the Italian front to surrender – took place mostly in Switzerland, and Lugano figures in the main points of the story. “Sunrise” constitutes a part of the negotiations undertaken in order to bring the war to an earlier end and to counter the German scorched-earth policy. The determination of the main figures involved brought the operation to a successful end, although it is possible that contemporary events in Berlin had a fundamental impact on the result of “Sunrise”. On the other hand, the interplay of different personal and national interests at stake, often contradictory and inconsistent, make it difficult to assess the course of events on which the historians have not given a unanimous judgement.

The preliminary meeting between Germans and Americans in the course of the operation “Sunrise” took place in the restaurant Biaggi. It was there, on 3 March 1945, that at one table met Baron Luigi Parrilli, initiator of the enterprise, Lieutenant Guido Zimmer of the German *Sicherheitsdienst*, liaison officer SS-Colonel Eugen Dollmann, Professor Max Husmann and Lieutenant Rothpletz, Swiss mediators. Later they were joined by OSS agent Paul Blum, sent by Allen Dulles. During this meeting, in which the two German officers represented General Karl

Wolff, there was also a request made for the release of Ferruccio Parri, vice-commander of the Liberation Volunteers Corps and Antonio Usmiani, head of an information network created at Dulles' suggestion.

Among the locations in the town hosting the main protagonists of "Sunrise" was Grand Hotel Palace, which was often visited by Baron Luigi Parrilli on the occasion of his visits to Lugano. After the meeting in restaurant Biaggi, SS *Obergruppenführer* and *Waffen SS* General Karl Wolff released Parri and Usmiani. In the light of these developments, Dulles decided to inform General Alexander of the Allies and, a few days later, informed the Kremlin as well. During preparations for the Ascona meeting, perhaps the crucial one, Parrilli passed through Lugano, staying overnight at the Palace.

"Sunrise" had to face numerous obstacles before its task was complete. The British and American refusal to allow one or two Soviet representatives to be present at the Ascona meeting and also the arrest in Germany of Wolff's family put the operation's success into question. And so on 2 April, instead of Wolff, Parrilli arrived in Ascona.

The month of April 1945, crucial for operation "Sunrise" (the surrender of the German forces in Italy was signed in Caserta on 29 April 1945), was full of obstacles which were solved partly in Ticino, through the Lugano office of the intelligence service of the Swiss army. Some of the meetings were most probably held in Villa Wesphal but the last episode connected with the city took place in Hotel Bristol.

