# (Un)commemorated Memory in Italy: Tuscany's Project of *"Treno della Memoria"* in the Entangled International, National and Regional Memory Politics Surrounding January 27

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# Abstract

Since the 1990s, Western European countries have placed Holocaust remembrance at the core of memory politics and begun establishing commemoration days. As such, January 27, the liberation day of the Auschwitz concentration camp, plays an important role. In 2000, Italy designated this date as the Day of Memory, dedicated to both Jewish victims and political deportees. Earlier studies have criticised the limitations of this commemoration day both in the context of national politics and the media. However, considering the post-war Italian narrative, the Day of Memory has the potential to uncover the un-commemorated aspects of history.

With a post-war Italian identity represented on Liberation Day, the myth of the resistance and of the "good Italian" became widely diffused. Meanwhile, the war crimes of the Fascists and any notion of Italian responsibility, including Italian involvement in the Holocaust, were sidelined. Nevertheless, some Italians did collaborate with the Nazis in acts of mass killing and deportations. This thesis questions whether the Day of Memory confronts these un-commemorated, inconvenient sides of the past from an Italian regional perspective.

This study investigates a Tuscan mnemonic and pedagogical event, the Remembrance Train, undertaken alongside the Day of Memory. The physical and emotional experiences of the Remembrance Train participants emerge as the prominent takeaways from the project, at least on the side of the students. Observing their reflections facilitates a deeper understanding of the real impact of the Day of Memory on a local scale. Situating the Remembrance Train within the public sphere and thus entangled with international, national, and regional memory politics, this thesis will examine the potential and limitations of the Day of Memory's navigation of memory, with an especial focus on the impact for younger generations.

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# Introduction

For most people, dates are simply how we organise our lives, hints to remember something that happened "on this day" in the past on the exact day or perhaps to ensure we celebrate an anniversary. Not only do we individually recall these special events, but on a national level, and as an imagined community, we also give specific meanings to certain dates. However, the latter case presents us with an issue, whether there is a national consensus on what should be remembered, when, and in what way; often, this proves impossible[1]. Nonetheless, we continue to celebrate, mourn, and commemorate the historical processes that have come to pass on a certain day.

Pierre Nora suggests that dates are one of the places of memories whose roles are "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (Nora 1989, 19). Accordingly, the civil calendar is a hot topic in Italian history studies. Over the last twenty years, Italian public memory has been redefined through political conflicts and the hybridisation of different commemoration days: January 27, February 10, April 25 (Focardi 2021, 94). As a study of Italian contemporary memory, this thesis focuses on January 27, the Day of Memory (*Il Giorno della Memoria*). It aims to locate the Day of Memory in the entanglement of international, national, and regional memory politics and to analyse one characteristic regional mnemonic practice in Tuscany, the Remembrance Train (*Treno della Memoria*). These three layers of memory politics, the international, national and regional, inevitably come to light when considering this commemoration day. Firstly, the Holocaust memory politics of post-Cold War Europe triggered Italy to establish the Day of Memory. On the national level, this

[1] For example, at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, held annually on August 6 in Japan, the speech of the Mayor of Hiroshima City often contrasts the Japanese diplomatic positionality on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

inspired a fashion to create other memorial days for different victims, which can be regarded as a political interaction. However, commemoration practices cannot be fixed at the national level, and the actual organisation is left to the regions, institutions and the public.

John Foot argues that "Italian memories have often been divided" (Foot 2009, 1). Especially in its memory of WWII, the geographical and political divisions brought about by the armistice on September 8, 1943, had an enormous impact. However, changing its stance in 1943 from the Axis to the Allies allowed the post-war Italian government to avoid mentioning the Fascist past and instead stress the resistance against Nazis and Fascists after the armistice. After the war, antifascists promoted a dominant, victorious narrative, which held Mussolini and the Germans responsible for the battles until 1943 and underestimated the violence perpetrated by Italians more generally (Focardi 2020, 12). However, there remain "the gaps between national narratives and local or individual narratives" and "within individuals" (Foot 2009, 8). Commemoration dates can be accessed by everyone within the public sphere and, therefore, present the opportunity to confront a particular history. Thus, different positionalities and interpretations of the past, which have already existed in individual or limited collective memories, will become visible—sometimes as divided memories—on memorial days.

Just after the war, Liberation Day on April 25 was celebrated in Italy, which encouraged this national identity of "a republic born from the resistance" (Shinsenji 2012, 173-174). The origin of Liberation Day is that the resistance group called for a rebellion in all Italian northern cities on that day in 1945. However, its significance has been constructed out of political need. This means emphasising "liberation" may accompany the omission of the inconvenient violent memories of the fascist regime, which continued for more than twenty years, as well as the neglect of the shameful aggression of the Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, RSI).

While we cannot reflect on the discussion of Liberation Day here amply, two points are worth repeating for this paper. The first is, as Rebecca Clifford argues, "the armed resistance narrative" on Liberation Day prevents former deportees from situating their painful experiences within the supposed heroic narrative of victorious resistance (Clifford 2013, 99). The second point is that, as Filippo Focardi clearly and concisely indicates, the end of the First Republic in the 1990s changed the meaning of Liberation Day and led to the historical interpretation of the war after the armistice as the "civil war," which tries to reconcile between the fascist and anti-fascist camps (Focardi 2021, 92). As for the latter, Sergio Luzzatto warns of "the crisis of the anti-Fascism" (Luzzatto 2004).

In this historiographical context, the Day of Memory was established in 2000. Its "memory" encompasses the acts of persecution and deportation, including the Holocaust, and the violence faced by those who opposed these policies of the Fascist regime and during WWII. Its characteristics can be compared to the post-war Italian identity represented by Liberation Day, April 25, which has underlined the heroic resistance myth since the late 1940s. Moreover, considering the disregard for inconvenient aspects of history, while stressing the resistance memory in post-war Italy and, which Liberation Day repeatedly defines as the origin of the republic, the Day of Memory reveals another side of the Italian national memory of Fascism and WWII. Does it then contribute to unfolding the arguments concerning the responsibility of Fascist Italy and of individual Italians during the war? Or does it settle with mourning Jewish victims and applauding the good Italians who saved them?

Reviewing the existing scholarship, many topics have already been discussed, from the international context of Holocaust memory to the backgrounds and contents of the Day of Memory, which will be examined in the 1st chapter. In the main, they criticise the Italian avoidance of directly mentioning its responsibility. However, this leaves room to investigate

the regional practices associated with the day to understand their potential. Even more so because national irresponsibility is criticised in the existing literature, it is meaningful to observe the regional histories and memory politics, which can be diverse and specific. In addition, as the Italian-as-perpetrator view has been omitted from the post-war Italian concept of the past for several decades, it also considers whether and how the third generation remembers these uncomfortable memories. Indeed, the Day of Memory does not legally stipulate a specific national commemoration ceremony but emphasises the role of the educational field. Thus, this research will focus on the intersection of regional memory politics and pedagogical memory practices, particularly the Remembrance Train, an example of Tuscan memory practices. In this project, the teachers are trained in a Summer School, and eventually, 500 high school students travel from Florence to Auschwitz.

This thesis argues that the Day of Memory has the potential to evoke the inconvenient side of Italian memory on a regional level, but the Remembrance Train also has limitations. It is remarkable that, in the program, not only the Jewish victims but also deportees of a variety of backgrounds are involved. Original interviews with the teachers and the study of the organiser's archival materials bring to light the regional historiography and the desire to depict a multiangled history, including the Italian perpetrator side. We can evaluate this practice as a regional response to the national commemoration day, with its own originality and, consequently, position on the meaning of the Day of Memory. However, when we look into the students' reflectional works, the narrative inclines toward the version of Holocaust memory that is central to Auschwitz. This can limit the capacity of this regional memory practice to condemn and highlight the national responsibility but also can be understood as the participants reproducing the European Holocaust Memory with Auschwitz at its centre. Additionally, the physical and emotional experience is a visible and influential part of the event, which brings us to consider the tension between memory politics and

emotional mobilization. Analysing the participants' - mainly high school students' - outputs will open a question of what 20th-century memory means to the third and the fourth generations removed from its source. They seem to try to maintain a focus on the victims while contemplating the contemporary issues of indifference or discrimination, according to their sense of responsibility.

As a whole, this study will investigate these tensions by considering the Remembrance Train as a point at which the entanglement of the different facets of international, national and regional memory politics are forced into contact in the public sphere. Since there is almost no such study of the Day of Memory focusing on regional memory practices, analysing this regional practice by inquiring about the potential and limits of the work of the Remembrance Train project enriches the arguments found in earlier studies.

The first chapter is dedicated to illustrating the historical context of Holocaust memory politics in the international sphere and to locating the Day of Memory in international and national politics. By doing so, the characteristics of this commemoration day are illustrated. The next chapter introduces the history of deportation in the Tuscan region from 1943 before discussing regional memory politics after the war as a premise for the third chapter. It should be stressed that this is not to narrate a comprehensive history or memory study of post-war Italy, which is outside the scope of this thesis, but to locate Tuscany in the context of national history and memory politics. The last chapter investigates the Remembrance Train as a regional case study linked to the Day of Memory. This first section provides an introduction to this program of study. It makes visible both the unchanged core idea of the mnemonic project and the contemporary ideas which are being taken into account. In the second section, the focus moves to the participants and away from a top-down consideration of historical dissemination. The aim is to consider the meaning of

the Day of Memory and how it confronts memories in which Italy and Italians are figured as perpetrators and how this is dealt with by the third- and fourth-generation participants.

# Chapter 1

# The Day of Memory in International Wave of Holocaust Remembrance

## 1.1 The Surge in the Importance of Holocaust Memory Among the Transnational and International Sphere

The Holocaust is a widely studied and discussed topic in 21st-century historiography and memory politics. Terminologically, it refers to "the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Holocaust," accessed February 21, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust). In a narrower sense, Yad Vashem defines it as the "unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people" (Yad Vashem n.d.). Despite temporal and geographical limitations, the Holocaust became a key topic in transnational memory arguments. Literature and films on this subject have shared awareness alongside imagined experiences of the Holocaust with the public. When politicians make a reference to the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, they often adapt their approach to the current political situation, which can sometimes be described as a political abuse of history. On the other hand, since the 1970s, the denialists, who promote lower estimations of the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust or deny the slaughter by poison gas and so on, have come to the surface (Ayaka Takei 2021, 74). Contrary to denialism, European countries have enacted laws which prohibit and, in some cases, punish Holocaust denial. While this has inspired counter-arguments or concerns regarding freedom

of speech, as Michael Whine introduces, "Holocaust denial is now universally recognized as a specific form of hate" (Whine 2008, 61). Among its cultural and political mnemonics, which underpin the stability of the Holocaust memory, commemoration days become an influential place of memory that enables various ways of locating and interpreting the Holocaust to come to the surface. Furthermore, the fact that it was in the 1990s that the commemoration days began to be established raises questions concerning the meaning and purpose of remembrance for the third, fourth, and further generations, who have no direct connection with what is being remembered.

On January 27, 1945, the Soviet army liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp. Since around the turn of the century, this date has gradually been accepted as a day to commemorate the Holocaust transnationally and internationally. For example, many European countries have established remembrance days regarding the Holocaust on January 27, while some have chosen other specific dates. As for the latter case, France chose July 16, when "the first round-up of Jews took place in Paris in 1942" (Kucia 2016, 110-111). When the Western-dominated international sphere encountered Eastern Europe after the Cold War, issues regarding conflicting memories came to the fore. Beyond that, even on a national level, the political argument surrounding the commemoration date became heated. For instance, Italy designated January 27 as a commemoration day. This decision resulted from discussions around the choice of date and who to commemorate, but even in the aftermath, the arguments raged on, as we will see in the next section. Since when and why has Holocaust memory been considered on a trans- and international scale? How can we interpret and analyse this phenomenon via a specific focus on January 27? As this is an enormous topic of discussion, and there is already a rich scholarly tradition, this section aims to summarise the existing arguments.

Immediately after the war, there was silence on the Holocaust all over Europe, and

there was no standard term to refer to the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis. On the one hand, EU founders put the Holocaust at the core of the blueprint for the new Europe (Dujisin 2015, 557). On the other hand, each European country tended to be reticent to take responsibility for their collaboration with the Nazis and instead applauded the heroic resistance (ibid; Stefan Van der Poel 2019, 271-272). Moreover, along with the resistance myth, amnesties were held in each country for the sake of political and economic reconstruction. For example, 500,000 former registered Nazis completely retrieved their civil rights in Austria in 1948 (Judt 1992, 88). Tony Judt points out that "the decision to blame everything on Germany was one of the few matters on which all sides, within each country and among the Allied powers, could readily agree" (ibid, 87). In addition to the political reasons, communicating and thus reliving Holocaust trauma took a toll on those directly involved, even though there were some attempts at personal, communal and educational levels (Bartolini 2022, 315)[2].

In the 1960s, however, the post-war generation began questioning the elder generations with respect to their responsibility for the war. This movement was observed transnationally in the West and in the Cold War context. It is worth reflecting that the Eichmann trial was conducted in 1961-62 (Littoz-Monnet 2013, 493). Investigating the terminological usage of the Holocaust, Robert S.C. Gordon indicates that the NBC television mini-series titled Holocaust in 1978 contributed to its international diffusion (Gordon 2015, 3). While in the East, there was no great incentive to emphasise Jewish suffering explicitly, and instead, the labouring class's antifascism was underlined (Van der Poel 2019, 273-274).

The end of the Cold War in 1989 influenced European countries to look back on its historical origins. Western European countries tried to locate the Holocaust memory as a

[2] From an interview with Robert Gordon by Bartolini.

unique historical moment all over Europe. Since the 1990s, as Annabelle Littoz-Monnet suggests, the EU official's policies supported the idea that human rights are enjoyed and the spread of democracy is a result of reflecting on the unique experience of Nazi crime (Littoz-Monnet 2013, 490). The genocide in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s was also a trigger for Europe to look back on the past (Gordon 2015, 16). Considering the idea of Claudio M. Radaelli, Marek Kucia defines "the Europeanization of Holocaust memory" as follows:

> the process of construction, institutionalization, and diffusion of beliefs regarding the Holocaust as well as formal and informal norms and rules regarding Holocaust remembrance and education that have been first defined and consolidated at a European level and then incorporated into the practices of European countries. (Kucia 2016, 98)

At the juncture that East European countries started to join the EU structure, the narrative was influenced by the attempt to compare and equate Nazi crimes with Communist crimes under the condemnation of inhumane violence. The memory politics of the Holocaust after the Cold War should be understood within the consideration of the EU's eastern enlargement, bearing in mind the role of various transnational organisations, such as the European Parliament, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and the Council of Europe (ibid, 99). Given this context, the following paragraphs are dedicated to the initiatives intended to settle the Holocaust commemoration dates necessary to understand the Italian case study, illustrated in the next section.

In 1995, the European Parliament called for "an annual European Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust to be instituted in all the Member States of the Union" and called on them "to organize this day activities which recall the Second World War and the Holocaust and illustrate the dangers of totalitarian and racist ideologies to young people in particular" (European Parliament 1995). Although it had already adopted a resolution on protecting the ex-concentration camp two years before (European Parliament 1993), the

1995 resolution was the first official document referring to the commemoration date. As is pointed out by Kucia, in terms of mentioning Eastern Europe quite directly and firmly, the Resolution on the return of plundered property to Jewish communities adopted in 1996 is remarkable (Kucia 2016, 103-104). Its preambles consider the Central and European countries even though they would not join the EU until 2004/2007; for instance, "F. given the twofold plundering of the property of Jewish communities, first under the regimes of the Nazis and their collaborators and then under the Communist regimes" (European Parliament 1996). Furthermore, in the provisions, it welcomes the Central and Eastern European Countries to recognise its responsibility "for the crimes committed against Jews during the Second World War" and to legislate for the restitution of what was looted from Jewish people (European Parliament 1996). Nevertheless, as Kucia critically points out, it does not mention the responsibility of Western European countries, with the exception of the Nazis in Germany (Kucia 2016, 109).

In January 2000, the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held by the Swedish government, where 42 representatives of governments participated, and the Stockholm Declaration (IHRA n.d.) was passed. This declaration confirmed IHRA's commitment to commemorating the Holocaust victims, promoting education and facilitating archival research. Two months after, the European Parliament encouraged "the Member States and EU institutions to mark Shoah Day (27 January, anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, 1945) and International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism (9 November, anniversary of Kristallnacht, 1938)" in a resolution on countering racism and xenophobia in the European Union (European Parliament 2000). As is also clear in its title, the resolution was espoused against the backdrop of racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia, which was also mentioned in the resolution of 1995. In 2002, the Council of Europe, which a number of Eastern European countries also joined (Council of Europe n.d.), designated January 27 as

Holocaust Remembrance Day. In the resolution, it encourages teachers to develop awareness of the history of the Holocaust. Then, on January 27, 2005, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-semitism and racism. This resolution designates the anniversary as follows:

> whereas 27 January 2005, the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Nazi Germany's death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where a combined total of up to 1.5 million Jews, Roma, Poles, Russians and prisoners of various other nationalities, and homosexuals, were murdered, is not only a major occasion for European citizens to remember and condemn the enormous horror and tragedy of the Holocaust, but also for addressing the disturbing rise in anti-Semitism, and especially anti-semitic incidents, in Europe, and for learning anew the wider lessons about the dangers of victimising people on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion, social classification, politics or sexual orientation. (European Parliament 2005)

Following these European acts, in November 2005, the United Nations also adopted a resolution to nominate January 27 as an annual "International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust" (UN General Assembly 2005).

This Holocaust memorialisation wave was contemporary with the end of the Cold War and the preparatory phase for the EU's expansion. In Eastern Europe, which experienced a drastic political turn, "the level of exclusive attention devoted to the Shoah in the West is considered to be historically unwarranted" (Van der Poel 2019, 274). Nevertheless, some Eastern European countries started to utilise the memory argument on the Holocaust in a way to contribute to their national memory politics. As communist crimes were considered more traumatic for these countries, they contextualised it in comparison and parallel with Nazi crimes under totalitarian government. Zoltán Dujisin argues that the Eastern countries needed to construct their memory institutions; however, there was a vulnerability to domestic political instability in their own countries, so they brought the state-sponsored memory into

the EU's sphere of influence to gain legitimacy (Dujisin 2015, 584-586). In the Western historical conception, treating communist crime as equal to the Holocaust is problematic because the Holocaust is considered unique (Van der Poel 2019, 274). In 2009, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary delegates led the European Parliament to establish the "European Day of Remembrance for Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes" on August 23 (European Parliamentary Research Service 2022). This day aims to remember the Nazi attack and Soviet occupation on the same day under the name of victims of totalitarianism.

Can Holocaust victims be categorised in a broader context as victims of totalitarianism? What do they refer to with the Holocaust in the first place? Concerning the definition of the Holocaust, there is a considerable range in terms of what and who is remembered on the Holocaust memorial days in the international sphere. According to Kucia, it varies among the institutions from the very start: the European Parliament has consistently understood the Holocaust as referring to Jewish victims only, although its resolution of 2005 also mentions other groups; the Council of Europe and the UN recognise the Holocaust in a broad sense, not solely Jewish victims; IHRA had been concerned with only Jewish victims until 2007 when it decided to include the genocide of Roma (Kucia 2016, 108). The European Parliament also increased the scope of commemoration to encompass victims of Roma (European Parliamentary Research Service. 2023). On the occasion of the 2017 resolution on Fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism, it calls on:

> the Member States to commemorate the victims of the Roma Holocaust, to mark 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, and to grant appropriate, immediate restitution to living Holocaust survivors through a simplified procedure, accompanied by an awareness-raising campaign; calls on the Commission and the Member States to include Roma victims in their commemorations held on 27 January each year to mark

> Holocaust Remembrance Day and to organise voluntary training courses for civil servants on the Roma Holocaust. (European Parliament 2017)

This tendency to include multiple subjects in commemorations was to reflect the "a variety of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe" (Kucia 2016, 108).

Despite the mnemonic collision and changes with respect to the EU memory politics discussed above, January 27 is generally regarded as the Holocaust commemoration day. However, two issues complicate the selection of this date. Firstly, January 27 is strongly reminiscent of the Auschwitz concentration camp and omits other arenas of the Holocaust. Interestingly, that the Soviet army liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp on that day is not underlined, unlike the national liberation days in each country. Considering that they chose January 27 amid the collapse of the Soviet Union, this date has ironically lost its original ideological power and absorbed the ideology of the West, in which the Holocaust is represented "neutrally" and ambiguously. In this, it may limit the Holocaust understanding to the Auschwitz concentration camp. While there is widespread awareness of the use of gas chambers to facilitate killings in Auschwitz, this was not the sole method used by the Nazis. As Dan Stone argues, some victims were killed by using exhaust fumes, which will not be represented by the sole use of the image of Auschwitz (Stone 2010, 457). In this regard, to designate January 27 as Holocaust remembrance day will never be a neutral and apolitical act.

Secondly, the public understanding of what caused the Holocaust could become limited and superficial. The initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust often have the pretext of an upsurge of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia and aim to combat them by remembering the past, which brought about the Holocaust. Theoretically, this can be understood as a purpose for the third and fourth generations to remember the past internationally while looking to the future and to avoid repeating history. However, this can

also be interpreted as a simplification of history. Even if antisemitism was a critical notion for the Nazi regime, it absorbed other various motivations, such as personal pressures or financial gain (Stone 2010, 460). Thus, the problem is that some substantial aspects of the Holocaust that cannot be explained by antisemitism are omitted and forgotten. This simplification may connect to the avoidance of national or personal responsibility for the Holocaust. Moreover, the resulting ambiguity may make it easier to connect the Holocaust experience with contemporary issues ambiguously with a specific political significance.

As previously discussed, Holocaust remembrance became an international concern in the 1990s after the Cold War. Placing particular importance on Holocaust memory was initially inclined to the Western interpretation. However, the EU's expansion towards the East made its memory politics more multi-dimensional. At the same time, situating Nazi Crimes and Communist Crimes in parallel has also yielded further disputes. Selecting January 27 can be perceived as an unideological act, even though it was "liberation day" in a sense, owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, it does not mean that January 27 is a neutral and overarching "place of memory" to remember the Holocaust. Rather, there is a possibility that Holocaust memory could become a superficial ritual to articulate the condemnation of antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. In what sense, and in what ways, can the memory of the Holocaust continue to be a lesson to be handed down to future generations, particularly those without direct connections to the experience and testimonies?



## 1.2 The Day of Memory in Italy as a National Commemoration Day

Italy designated January 27 as the Day of Memory, in accordance with the 1990s international trend of establishing Holocaust remembrance days. By July 20, 2000, the Italian law n.211 "Institution of 'the Day of Memory' in remembrance of the extermination

and of the persecutions of the Jewish people and Italian military and political deportees in the Nazi camps" was passed (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2000). As the historical context, it followed EU policy throughout the 1990s and the Stockholm conference in January 2000, but it was prior to the UN adaptation of Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005. The Italian national case has some commonalities with the aforementioned EU policies. Primarily, the international memory trend strongly influenced the election of January 27 for the Day of Memory. Nonetheless, there are also some unique elements, as surveyed in this section. The remark concerning the Day of Memory by Clifford is much to the point:

> On the surface, the commemoration ostensibly focused on the Holocaust; at a deeper level, however, the Holocaust played the role of a narrative trope through which questions concerning responsibility, victimhood, heroism, and the shifting meanings of Fascism and anti-fascism were debated and defined. (Clifford 2013, 231).

In reviewing the earlier studies regarding this Italian commemoration day, we set three agendas here: the socio-political and epistemological transition of the first half of the Italian 20th-century history, the establishment of the Day of Memory and the issues in the legislation content, and finally, the associated memory politics.

With respect to post-war identity construction at domestic and diplomatic levels, the perpetrator side of history has been downplayed in Italy, where, in contrast, celebrating the resistance movement gave legitimacy to the post-war government. Underlining the resistance against Nazis and Fascists after 1943 was a diplomatic strategy "to avoid a punitive peace treaty with the Allies" (Bartolini 2022, 308)[3]. Italian constitution of 1948, which settled the so-called anti-fascist article[4], strongly supports this identity. Liberation

[3] From an interview with Filippo Focardi by Bartolini.

[4] In the"Transitional and final provisions, XII" of the constitution, it says as follows:
"It shall be forbidden to reorganise, under any form whatsoever, the dissolved Fascist party. Notwithstanding Article 48, the law has established, for not more than five years from the implementation of the Constitution, temporary limitations to the right to vote and eligibility for the leaders responsible for

Day, established in 1949, has contributed to maintaining this identity by recalling and reestablishing the memory of the resistance. The myth of "good Italian," which the Fascist regime tried to diffuse, has been prolonged in post-war Italy by the anti-fascist resistance myth (Clifford 2013, 83). This narrative put the fascist regime, which continued for more than 20 years, into the parenthetic in national history continuing from the Risorgimento, and it sank the Italian people's responsibility for the war into oblivion. In addition, in this victorious and celebratory viewpoint, there was no official space for deportees to advocate their suppressed experiences (ibid, 81). Enzo Collotti indicates that Italian historiography has cultivated the image that Italy is innocent of the Holocaust (Collotti 2010, 239). Until the late 1980s, Italian racial laws, which started to be issued in 1938 during the Fascist period, were not appropriately recognised. Even though there were concentration camps in the peninsula and RSI ensured people whom they considered troublesome—"racially" and politically—were sent to the concentration camps, Italian responsibility was thought to be milder as compared to that of Germany.

The historical misconception was challenged when the resistance myth lost its power. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the anti-fascist identity was already in crisis (Focardi 2021, 91). However, a radical paradigm shift in politics was observed in the 1990s, not only in the collapse of communism but also in the explosion of Tangentopoli among the principal politicians. The Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI), which sourced its legitimacy from the history of resistance and "once been the strongest communist party in Western Europe" (Gaudenzi 2023, 378), had to change its direction after the end of communism. Revelations of corruption led the Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana, DC) to dissolution. On the other hand, Forza Italia (FI) was formed in 1993, and the National

the Fascist regime" (Senato della Repubblica n.d.)

Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale, AN) was established from the remnants of the Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI) (Takeshi Ito 2016, 183-189). The positionality of AN at the head of Gianfranco Fini is noteworthy. In 1999, the party recognised the "incommensurable shame" of racial laws through its renewed party constitution (Clifford 2013, 228). Even if the MSI's political origin, tracing back to the Fascist Party, could not be denied, this advocation was all the more necessary to show the party's disapproval of its past. As we see in the following cases, the need to condemn the racial laws was becoming increasingly undeniable.

The end of the Cold War opened up Italy's more inconvenient histories to scrutiny, especially regarding national responsibility for the persecution of Jewish people during the Fascist regime and wartime. According to Gaudenzi, the US's attempt to connect democracy with neoliberalism influenced the restitution of Jewish people's possessions from Italy in the 1990s (Gaudenzi 2023, 378). Additionally, the cultural restitution process was one of "the first substantial changes in the political and public awareness of Italy's anti-Jewish persecutions", and thus, it raised questions concerning Italian responsibility in the persecution and deportation of Jewish people (ibid). In 1994, during the preparatory research for the Priebke trial, a "cabinet of shame" was discovered (Clifford 2013, 225). The 695 files detailing Nazi war crimes were intentionally forgotten during the Cold War for the sake of protecting the political interest in West Germany and hiding the Italian assistance in the massacre of people in small Italian villages (ibid). In 1998, the Anselmi Commission was established to examine Jewish persecution in Italy. Even though it was under time and financial restraint, a 540-page report was published, including the RSI's confiscation of Jewish possessions (Gaudenzi 2023, 379). Thus, the 1990s brought Italy to unearth its perpetration of violence during the fascist regime and WWII, which had been taboo during the hegemony of the resistance myth and throughout the Cold War. However, in 1997, the

first parliamentary attempt to establish a commemoration day similar to the later Day of Memory failed (Clifford 2013, 222).

The Italian Parliament realised the legislation of the Day of Memory in 2000 under national and international pressure to take responsibility and accept the perpetrator side of memory. The motion raised by Furio Colombo, who belonged to Democrats of the Left (*Democratici di Sinistra*, DS), one of the post-communist parties, passed without issue. The recognition of the brutality of the racial laws advocated by AN made it possible for both the left and the right to reach a consensus on it. Gabriele Turi assesses the Day of Memory as the first occasion when the myth of "good Italians" was crushed (Turi 2011, 158). However, this may not necessarily be true, considering the subsequent arguments regarding the law's contents.

Firstly, the choice of January 27, rather than other possible dates that would remind the Italian people of their responsibility, has been criticised. Michele Sarfatti explains several other options in the drafting process (Sarfatti 2017, 118-120). These included November 17, when one of the first so-called racial laws was published in 1938; October 16, which symbolised the rounding up of the Jewish people in Rome in 1943; and November 30, referring to the RSI's instruction to arrest the Jewish people in 1943. It is worth highlighting that all of these dates are rooted in Italian historical occurrences, which have different natures from January 27. Additionally, May 5 was another possible date, reflecting when the Mauthausen concentration camp, where Italian political deportees were mainly imprisoned, was liberated in 1945. Sarfatti concludes that as a result, January 27 was selected because this date can include not only Jewish victims but also political prisoners (ibid, 120). However, Guri Schwarz critically points out that the actual commemoration practices tend to focus on Jewish victims rather than political deportees and military internees (Schwarz 2021, 103). Given the international consciousness of January 27, the decision to

commemorate that day contributes to locating the Holocaust in the constellation of European identity (Latella 2011, 323). At the same time, it provides an inter-institutional and political dimension to the mourning of the victims (ibid).

The issue of choosing the date is relevant to what to remember. The law comprises the following two articles:

> Article 1.
> The Italian Republic recognises the day of January 27, the date of the pulling down of the gates of Auschwitz, as the 'Day of Memory' to remember the Shoah (extermination of the Jewish people), the racial laws, Italy's persecution of the Jewish citizens, Italians who underwent deportation, imprisonment and death, as well as those, with differing positions and allegiances, who opposed the extermination project and, risking their own lives, saved others and protected the persecuted.
>
> Article 2.
> On the occasion of the 'Day of Memory' (for which see art. 1), there will be organised ceremonies, initiatives, meetings and shared moments of recounting of events and reflection, particularly in schools of all categories and levels, on what befell the Jewish people and the Italian military and political deportees in the Nazi camps, to preserve for the future of Italy a memory of a tragic, dark period in the history of our country and Europe, in order that nothing similar might ever happen again.[5]

As we can see in Article 1, there are many objects to be remembered, so the Day of Memory is not merely a Holocaust remembrance day. As previously noted, the choice of January 27 aimed to be as inclusive as possible, unlike the 1997 draft bill (Clifford 2013, 229). According to David Bidussa, this multiplicity has come into dispute over time, especially between the memory of Jewish deportations and political deportations (Bidussa 2014, 440). It is a distinguishing feature, considering the West European narrative was eager to avoid the comparison of the Holocaust with other experiences at that time.

However, despite its ample contents, the law does not directly mention Italian responsibility but instead reiterates the victimhood of the Italian people (Gordon 2006, 170).

[5] The translation followed (Gordon 2006, 170) with adding minor changes by the author.

This tendency is clear from the law title "Institution of 'the Day of Memory' in remembrance of the extermination and of the persecutions of the Jewish people and Italian military and political deportees in the Nazi camps." Italy is designated a victim, there is no mention of Fascists or Fascism, and the responsibility is almost exclusively put on Nazis, who are explicitly mentioned (Latella 2011, 324; Sarfatti 2017, 123). Nevertheless, the phrase "with differing positions and allegiances" in Article 1 implies that "Holocaust resisters came from both Fascist and anti-Fascist sides" (Gordon 2006, 171). They are exemplified by "Righteous Among the Nations," the title given by Yad Vashem for those who saved Jewish people during the war (Clifford 2013, 246). Considering Article 2, on the pedagogical side of memorialisation, Gordon notes that a comparison might be made between the "good" people who served the Jewish community and the "evil" people who supported the Holocaust (Gordon 2006, 171). This pedagogical point will be addressed in greater detail under the topic of memory practices.

As a whole, the law mentions what is to be remembered but does not specify how. In other words, no official commemoration ceremony is defined by the law. From this perspective, there is a certain degree of reservation in recognising national responsibility and a limitation for the process of national politics to commemorate this inconvenient side of memory. Guri Schwartz examines this lack of national subjectivity and the results of similar initiatives as rich but chaotic (Schwarz 2021, 104). Moreover, while this loose regulation lets some indifferent governments and institutions disregard the Day of Memory, it draws margins within civil society (ibid). Indeed, while numerous events are held nationwide, their organisation is uneven. The initiatives are often (co-)organised by Jewish communities, victim groups such as ANED and pedagogical institutions, including schools, libraries and Resistance organisations (Clifford 2013, 231). Additionally, large cities or regions with a more robust historical inclination toward resistance or anti-fascism are generally more eager

to implement the initiative (Clifford 2013, 231).

Despite the lack of national political centrality on commemoration day, the Day of Memory brought into fashion the act of establishing commemoration dates, which can be recognised as having an enormous impact on Italian memory politics (Sarfatti 2017, 114; Turi 2011, 160). However, it is only on the condition that Italian people are considered victims, not perpetrators. For example, the attempt in 2006 to institute a day to commemorate African victims under the Italian colonial occupation failed(Focardi 2021, 93; Turi 2011, 160). The most frequent compared is the Day of Remembrance (*Il Giorno del Ricordo*), which was established in 2005. February 10 was designated to remember the Italian victims who were killed and were often thrown into the *foibe*, the regional geographical craves, by Yugoslav partisans in 1943. Clifford analyses this political reaction as "a narrative of victimhood against one of guilt and responsibility" and a battle of "the crimes of anti-fascist and Communist partisans against Nazi and Fascist ones" (Clifford 2013, 244). Together with the fact that the right-wing politicians supported the Day of Remembrance, this countermovement mirrors the East European tendency we observed in the previous section.

Then, what takes place on the Day of Memory on a practical level? Although not enforced by law, the commemoration ceremony is held at Quirinale annually. According to Schwartz, the successive presidents Ciampi (1999-2006), Napolitano (2006-2013, 2013-2015) and Mattarella (2015-) try to reconcile the Holocaust memory and the national foundational myth of anti-fascism and resistance (Schwarz 2021, 106). The involvement of presidents in memory politics is well examined, for example, in the behaviours of Ciampi on the occasion of Liberation Day. According to Focardi, there are three prominent tenets of Ciampi's historical policy: "the idea of 'spread Resistance,' the idea of bonds between Resistance and construction of Europe and the idea of building a 'whole memory'" (Focardi 2020, 104). In other cases, besides the political performance of AN condemning racial laws,

those in different political stands respectively use the occasion of the Day of Memory to advocate for their policy. Schwartz illustrates this as appropriation of memory: on the left side, the day is often connected to the anti-war movement during the Second Iraq War or anti-racism in front of the influx of immigration; and on the right side, it is connected to anti-totalitarianism, anti-communism and the justification of the fight against alleged Islamic terrorism and military intervention in Iraq (Schwarz 2021, 120). For example, Silvio Berlusconi, the then-prime minister, spoke through the Rai channels to ambiguously approve his diplomatic policy on the Day of Memory in 2003 (Garofalo 2016, 151-153).

The mass media has a substantial role in publicizing commemoration day. Damiano Garofalo shows that Italian TV stations attempted to make some programs in connection with the commemoration day but ended up focusing on heroic Italians who saved the persecuted Jewish people, such as Giorgio Perlasca (Garofalo 2016, 149-151). Schwarz suggests that Italian TV tends to see its role as depicting the heroes who saved the Jewish people, which is another reason why it is a popular theme besides the fact that many Italian people are given the title "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem (Schwarz 2021, 117). Moreover, this kind of story is acceptable both for the left and the right (Clifford 2013, 249). Indeed, reflecting those "good" people makes it possible to indicate people's actionability. However, considering that the comfortable and plausible story predominantly appears without criticism or analysis, we can see that the "good Italian" myth is not entirely over and favouring the admirable story is a compromise with the perpetrator side of history.

Other contemporary topics are brought to the argument in the Day of Memory during TV debates (Garofalo 2016, 154-159). Since memory is a dynamic process reflecting the past from the contemporary position, contemplating the connection and disconnection between the past and the present should not always be prohibited without judgment. However, as Garofalo argues, invoking the Holocaust in response to another contested issue

can serve as a strong but simplistic condemnation of the opposite side (Garofalo 2016, 158). Here, Schwarz's observation that the fascist and nazis persecution becomes the litmus paper of all intolerance is appropriate (Schwarz 2021, 114).

Then, does the Day of Memory help Italy to face the inconvenient side of memory, which was difficult under the myth of resistance and the "good Italian" symbolised on April 25? The limitations are clear when we observe the politicians' use of history and the media. However, there should still be an opportunity for regional and collective memory politics to accept the commemoration day otherwise. Schwartz mentions the Milan political gathering from 2001 to 2009 (Schwarz 2021, 104-106), which ended in 2009 though (Sarfatti 2017, 132), and Latella introduces multiple initiatives held in 2011 (Latella 2011, 326-330). Nevertheless, there is no attempt to examine the regional practices that incorporates the role of education mentioned in the ambiguous law n.211/2000. Therefore, this paper will examine Tuscany's regional practice as a case study in the following two chapters to see the potential of the public sphere—the potential to go beyond the limit of national politics, to overcome the superficial mnemonic routines in the mass media and to refer the complex historical background of the Holocaust.

# Chapter 2

## Contested History and Memories in Italy and in Tuscany

### 2.1 Deportations from the Tuscany region in the Italian Historical Context

This study aims to examine one of the regional memory practices of the Day of Memory in Tuscany, Italy. It considers the context of international and national Holocaust memory tendencies since the 1990s, which we observed in the first chapter. This study's fundamental question starts from whether and how an Italian-as-perpetrator view is included or excluded on that commemoration day in the regional situation, especially due to the lack of national consensus on it. This section will be dedicated to explaining the historical background of deportations in Tuscany and locating it in the Italian context. Here, we use the term deportation/deportees, bearing in mind that on the Day of Memory, the Tuscany region focuses on the broad meaning of this historical phase, including the Holocaust. This viewpoint also contributes to the following two discussion points.

Firstly, it will clarify the multiplicity of subjects considered on the Day of Memory. As we examined in the first chapter, the Day of Memory was founded with the idea of including as many categories of deportees as possible. It was established alongside the transnational and international stream of creating memorial days and commemorating the Holocaust. Even though what the term Holocaust signifies is debatable, and no matter how strongly the term of Holocaust evokes the image of Jewish victims, the Day of Memory, in essence, does not only refer to the Jewish persecution, deportation and extermination. It also indicates the need to remember the other categories of people who were recognised as asocial, inconvenient or politically dangerous and were marginalised by the authority at that

time. Thus, the term deportation will highlight that the history commemorated on the Day of Memory is fundamentally not only that of the Jewish people but also of others who were deemed inconvenient.

Focusing on the deportation phase will allow us to see the Fascist involvement and Italian responsibility more directly. Indeed, the concentration camps outside of Italy were generally organised by the Nazi regime. However, antisemitic social conditions were prevalent in Italy long before the Nazi occupation, such as the racial laws from 1938 and the use of the national census, which was crucial for gaining the information necessary to carry out arrests. Moreover, arrests were also performed and assisted by the Fascists, police, carabinieri and paramilitary groups in Italy. Political deportation was often connected to the antifascist resistance movement. Nevertheless, the history of political deportation has often been omitted in the Italian national post-war narrative because it does not fit with the celebratory tone of the resistance myth. Questioning this tension can shed light on the neglected history of Italian Fascist responsibility for deportation or, more generally, for the Holocaust.

To consider the history of deportation in Italy and specifically the Tuscan context, it is necessary to understand the Italian peninsula's geographically and politically divided situation since 1943. On September 8, 1943, Italy publicly declared an “armistice.” This decision had an enormous impact following, as it did, the turning point of Benito Mussolini's dismissal and arrest on July 25. Furthermore, the Italian government ultimately changed its position in the war, “betraying” the Axis alliance by joining the Allies. On October 13, the Badoglio government declared war against Germany. At that time, the Allies were landing in the southern part of Italy and eventually began to assist in the liberation of cities from nazi and fascist control; this included Naples in September 1943, Rome in June 1944, with Florence liberated in August 1944.

Conversely, on September 12, 1943, with the help of the German army, Mussolini escaped to Vienna before travelling to Munich to meet Hitler (Archivio Storico Luce 2018). At the end of the month, he established the RSI in northern Italy. Simultaneously, immediately after the Italian armistice declaration, the nazi army started occupying defenceless Italian cities from the north. The Italian peninsula was thus distinctly divided into two parts, with the border of conflict gradually moving to the south: from the Gothic line to the Gustaf line. RSI, nazis and fascists controlled the northern part, while the Allies gradually liberated the southern part of Italy.

In particular, the occupation of RSI was prolonged in the middle part of Italy, where it was geographically difficult to battle against the partisans. Additionally, especially since August 1943, when the battle was confined to the Tirrenian belt and the Tuscan hinterland both because the Allies decided to recall some divisions with a view to landing in Southern France and because the Nazis had managed to commit substantial forces to "aggressive evacuation" (Cavarocchi 2015, 78). The long duration of the occupation and the struggle against it created an extraordinary situation for citizens in their daily lives. The people were defined by their positionality: the choices of joining the resistance, acting as partisans, or living as collaborators to Nazis and Fascists and so on. Tuscany was one of the most contested parts of Italy due to its geographical location (see fig.1). In the Nazi aggressive evacuation, the Tuscan civilians experienced a great deal of violence, even including massacres (ibid.). As such, in terms of the death toll, Tuscany was the most attacked region in Italy (Brunelli 2014, 81).

Figure 1 Italian map coloured on Tuscany region.
Created by the author with mapchat.net.

Compared to cases in other countries, deportation in Italy deportation started later, in 1943. This is one of the reasons the number of Italian Jewish victims in the concentration camps was comparatively lower than that of other nations. However, this does not mean that "Italian fascism is safe from the accusation of genocide; it is out of the shadow of the Holocaust", as Renzo De Felice argues (Giuliano Ferrara, Corrierre della Sera, December 27, 1987). Examining deportations in the case of Tuscany reveals that a considerable number of the deportations would not have been possible without the Italian Racial Laws, the orders of the Italian administrator, the Fascist collaborators or the informants, that is, direct involvement of the Italian people. Bringing together two large categories of deportees, Collotti explains that deportation in Italy:

> Racial deportation began after the armistice, when Italy was included in the "final solution", the plan for the destruction of European Jewry. Political deportation was part of German reaction to the Resistance against the occupiers and their allies of RSI

> [*Repubblica sociale italiana*, i.e. Italian Social Republic]. In both forms of deportation, the collaborators of the RSI played a role that was by no means merely secondary or subordinate. (Collotti 2019, 24)

Prior to discussing these two categories of deportation, it is important to recall that other groups were also persecuted at that time, such as the Roma, Sinti, those with disabilities, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and so on. However, considering that this section intends to illustrate only a facet of Italy's deportation histories during the Fascist period and WWII, with the Tuscany case serving as an example, and due to the limited scope of this thesis, the focus is on Jewish and political deportations in Italy.

**Racial deportations**

The deportation of Jewish people began in 1943, although the fascist regime had already commenced with their scheme of persecution before WWII. Recent studies reveal that racism was "an essential element of Italian Fascism" (Bernhard 2016, 66). As Sarfatti indicates in the Anselmi report, Italian authorities conducted a census of Jewish citizens and Jewish immigrants from 1937 (Sarfatti n.d.)[6]. In July 1938, "scientists" published a troubling statement about the race. They argued that while Italian blood was unchanging for millions of years, the Jewish people would never be assimilated into Italy because their "racial elements" were not European. Most of these pronouncements were reflected in changes to the law, including the Declaration for the Defense of the Italian Race, published on November 17 (Gazzetta Ufficiale 1938). This is one of the so-called racial laws. It declared the ostensible definition of the "Jewish race" and some specific disadvantages imposed upon them. At the same time, there were some exceptions, called "those discriminated": for

[6] Although it is not signed in the Anselmi report, the same report is contained in Sarfatti's article archives with his name on the website, which is cited here.

instance, the bereaved families of those who were killed in the Libia War, WWI, the Ethiopian War, and the Spanish War and those who were celebrated for their contributions to the Italian military achievements. Considering these exceptions, those who contributed to Italy or the Fascist regime were treated favourably, at least at that point. From 1938, the racial laws were published, which gradually limited the opportunity for those of "the Jewish race" to study, work, and possess property. Among them, Gianluca Gabrielli points out that in the Italian initial stage of persecution, the exclusion of Jews from the public schools and the expulsion from the country were harsher than the legislation in Nazi Germany (Gabrielli 2005, 470). While both foreign and Italian Jews were not deported to the Nazi concentration camps at that point, foreign Jewish people were ordered to leave the country. The laws and regulations regarding persecution would eventually contribute to deportation initiatives. For example, in investigating the foreign Jewish microhistories, Valeria Galimi demonstrates that information collected by the Italian authority on foreign Jews in 1940 under state-sanctioned xenophobia and antisemitism and archived in the local police prefectures was used during the Nazi occupation on occasion to arrest them (Galimi 2024, 214).

As Sarfatti evaluates, from 1938 to 43, Jewish people were deprived of the right to work or to marry; after 1943, they were deprived of the right to live (Sarfatti 1988, 13-18). It is crucial to consider that there were two additional phases after 1943 regarding Jewish deportation in Italy, with a watershed on November 30, 1943. Immediately after the announcement of the armistice on September 8, the Nazi army began to occupy the northern part of the peninsula. For example, in Tuscany, the Nazi army arrived on September 11. As for deportation, the most notorious case in the national narrative may have been that of the round-up in Rome on October 16, 1943[7]. This was conducted by a Nazi operational

[7] As this was the largest-scale Jewish deportation in Italy, the date October 16 has been marked "a deep symbolic significance" (Clifford 2013, 77).

detachment led by Theodor Dannecker and resulted in 1,022 people's deportation to Auschwitz, only 16 of whom survived (Clifford 2013, 78).

After the roundup at Rome on October 16, the same unit arrived in Tuscany on November 5. Unlike the Roman case, the absence of a Jewish district in Florence meant that the unit was forced to search for Jewish people in the Synagogue and other buildings belonging to the Jewish community (Liliana Picciotto 2001, 248). At that time, Florence was an attractive city to refugees (Cavarocchi 2014, 72). Fortunately, many foreign refugees in the city were under the protection of the Jewish-Christian commission and thus assisted by the intervention of Rabbi Nathan Cassuto[8], Raffaele Cantoni and other coworkers (Picciotto 2001, 248). However, on November 6, the nazi army, accompanied by Italian Fascists, arrested those people in the synagogue and vandalised Jewish sacred accessories (Galimi 2014, 87). Noting that the exact number of people cannot be determined, Galimi estimates it to be more than 100 and possibly between 200 and 300 (ibid). The detailed examination in Picciotto's work reveals that one of the members, who turned out to be a spy motivated by material interest, betrayed the committee members who had harboured the Jews, and thus, the committee members were eventually arrested, tortured and deported to Auschwitz (Picciotto 2001, 254-258). It was Squad Carità (*Banda Carità)*[9] that aided the German army in executing this programme (Galimi 2014, 87).

On November 30, 1943, the Department of the Interior of the RSI made an order to arrest the Jewish people and to intern them in the appropriate concentration camps. It was announced by telegram to the head of the provinces “on the evening of 30 November by



[8] There is a stumbling stone in the city centre of Florence, near the Duomo, dedicated to Cassuto. It tells that he was arrested at that place, deported to Auschwitz and assassinated in January 1945.

[9] The special service department (*Reparto servizi speciali*, Rss) of the 92nd Legion of Republican National Guard (*Guardia Nazionale Repubblicana*, GNR), led by Mario Carità, actively repressed the anti-partisans (Galimi 2014, 87). It was initially born after the armistice as an autonomous police unit independent of the Fascist Army, regardless of its collaboration with the police headquarters and the prefectural governor (Iozzelli 2020, 42).

telephone and sent by telegram the following day" (I campi fascisti. n.d.). Unlike in 1938, "those discriminated" were also included as targets to be persecuted in this order. Ultimately, the directive was aimed at all Jewish people in Italy, regardless of their nationalities. Most importantly, from this juncture, RSI started to take the initiative to arrest the Jewish people. More specifically, GNR, the Black Brigades (*Brigate Nere*) and the Italian units of the SS were in charge (Clifford 2013, 78). As Galimi mentions, "the German authorities delegated the task of arresting the Jews on the territory of RSI to Italian police and civilian officials, while the German occupiers took custody only at points of transit and on the transportation out of Italy" (Galimi 2024, 230). In Florence, the Squad Carità was actively and ferociously committed to arresting the Jews and plundering their possessions, with this activity strongly connected to the Jewish Affairs Office in the city (Galimi 2014, 87; Iozzelli 2020, 41-42). Taking into account the number of Jewish deportees from Tuscany whose identity has been ascertained, in other words, without taking into consideration foreign Jews, 675 people were deported (Baiardi 2019, 27).

**Political deportations**

The Italian post-war narrative has been based on the resistance myth, which tends not to welcome the deportation experience. However, political deportation was also inarguably connected to resistance or anti-fascism. Paradoxically, the northern part of Italy, where the resistance took an active part in liberation as it approached and where the resistance memory is predominant, was, additionally, the area where the nazis and the fascist authority maintained a prolonged hold on power. That is to say, the northern and central parts of Italy were the divided areas where some Italians opposed the Nazis and Fascist authorities while others collaborated with them. In Tuscany, the Squad Carità created a network connecting itself with the Italian and German armies alongside various political authorities,

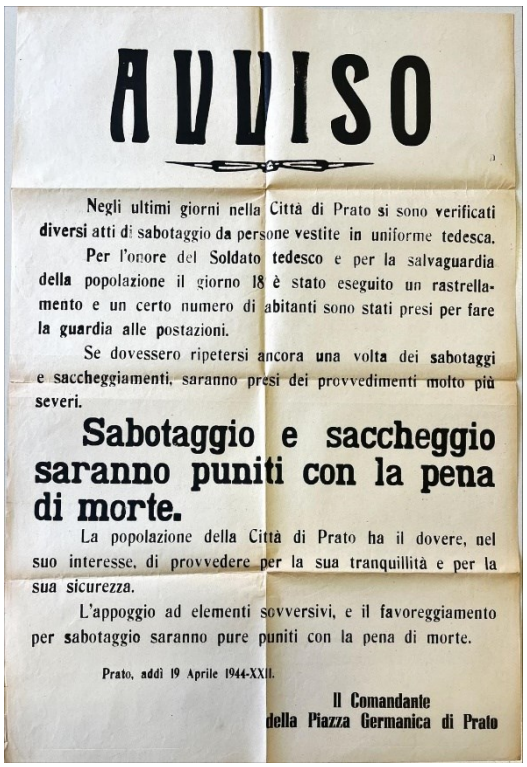
allowing it to function as a notorious institution in the repression of the resistance movement and Jewish persecution (Iozzelli 2020, 41-42). This is an example of ex-Fascist district clubs (*Circoli rionali fascisti*) which, before 1943, transformed themselves and undertook the task of the repression of the resistance movement in the RSI institution (ibid, 48-49). In Prato, the centre of GNR was located in the Imperator Castle (*Castello dell'imperatore*), and though this was already a synonym for suffering during fascism, it also became one of the most violent wings of RSI: detention, torture and, in some cases, forceable moves to prisons or concentration camps (ibid, 109). As for approximately 90% of the political arrests in Tuscany, the GNR was the administrator (Brunelli 2014, 83). In many cases, the arrestees were deported, while some were killed on the spot (Cavarocchi 2014, 74).

There were three main categories of political deportees: genuine partisans, suspected supporters of partisans, and conscription renegades (Brunelli 2014, 81). There were also Italian military internees (*Internati Militali Italiani,* IMI) under the Wehrmacht and those who were interned in the forced labour camps which were often controlled by private companies (ibid). IMI was among one of the most significant numbers of Italian citizens coerced into being transported to Germany(Collotti 2019, 24). In November 1943, conscription targeted those born 1922-25, and if a person attempted to evade the draft, the family was detained (Cavarocchi 2014, 71-72). In successive months, GNR rounded up these draft evaders, which worked as the incentive for the general public and remaining dissenters to join the RSI army (ibid).

One of the most prominent political deportations in Tuscany was that following the general strike in Italy's northern and central parts, which was called by the National Liberation Committee (*Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*, CLN) in March 1944. This strike movement was one of Europe's most distinctive unarmed resistance events (Brunelli 2019a, 30). In Tuscany, the most industrialised cities, such as Florence, Prato, and Empoli, were the

epicentres of strike activity and subsequent arrests (Brunelli 2014, 81). Not only were those who participated in the strike arrested, but additionally any nearby civilians. After the strike, on March 8, 338 civilians were arrested and deported to Mauthausen concentration camp (ibid, 81). This had the dual effect of creating a deterrent against possible fighting or civilian resistance and of utilising a mass workforce of unpaid labour to bolster the Third Reich economy (ibid, 83). For example, a poster published by the German commander at Prato on April 19, 1944, shows that sabotage will be punishable with the death penalty (see fig.2).

To return to the matter at hand, the strike started on March 4. On that day, the prefectural commissioner (*Commissario Prefettizio*) of Prato, Tommaso Fracassini, urgently reported to



AVVISO

Negli ultimi giorni nella Città di Prato si sono verificati diversi atti di sabotaggio da persone vestite in uniforme tedesca.

Per l'onore del Soldato tedesco e per la salvaguardia della popolazione il giorno 18 è stato eseguito un rastrellamento e un certo numero di abitanti sono stati presi per fare la guardia alle postazioni.

Se dovessero ripetersi ancora una volta dei sabotaggi e saccheggiamenti, saranno presi dei provvedimenti molto più severi.

**Sabotaggio e saccheggio saranno puniti con la pena di morte.**

La popolazione della Città di Prato ha il dovere, nel suo interesse, di provvedere per la sua tranquillità e per la sua sicurezza.

L'appoggio ad elementi sovversivi, e il favoreggiamento per sabotaggio saranno pure puniti con la pena di morte.

Prato, addì 19 Aprile 1944-XXII.

Il Comandante
della Piazza Germanica di Prato

Figure 2 The poster of notice, published on April 19, 1944 (Archivio storico, Comune di Prato). Author's photo, March 20, 2024.

the head of the province Florence (*Capo della Provincia Firenze*), Raffaele Manganiello, that "the local Fascio, the authority of P.S. [public security (*pubblica sicurezza*)] and the GNR, as well as the German commander, are widely informed of all this in order to be ready

in case of their necessary intervention"[10]. Subsequently, the strike ended on March 6 with the German SS's intermediation. The arrest of the "subversive elements" was ordered per the instruction by Manganiello and started on March 7[11]. This was carried out by the police officers and GNR, including the carabinieri (Iozzelli 2020, 110). They targeted the men who appeared to have sufficient strength to work for the Nazis (ibid). One hundred and thirty-two arrestees were hence first detained in the Imperator Castle, where the presence of Fracassini, the state police commander and the head of carabinieri would later testify after the war (ibid, 109-111). The arrestees amounted to 338, and they were deported from the first platform of the Santa Maria Novella Station in Florence to Mauthausen on March 8. The majority of them, 221 people, were transported to Ebensee, one of the 49 sub-camps of the Mauthausen[12]; among the 338 deportees, 278 people died (Brunelli 2014, 82).

Considering only these two exemplary deportation histories in Tuscany, it is clear that the deportations were carried out in collaboration with German occupation troops and the RSI, which had often taken over the fascist institution and network established before 1943. However, as Enrico Iozzelli's investigative work (Iozzelli 2020) shows that while the persecutors' acts were regarded as collaborationism, their crimes of arrest, torture and deportation were forgiven in the post-war trials.



[10] A letter from Fracassini to Manganiello, March 4, 1944. (Archivio Storico, Comune di Prato). The author's translation. Unless otherwise specified, as in the rest of the thesis for the Italian documents and materials.

[11] A telegram from Fracassini to Manganiello, March 6, 1944. (Archivio storico, Comune di Prato). On March 7, there was an air raid by the Allies, most probably because the civilians worked for the German industries (Brunelli 2012, 316).

[12] Even though the Mauthausen concentration camp was different from the extinction camp, it was categorised as "the third level", and the prisoners were imposed heavy punishment (Brunelli 2012, 320).

## 2.2 Where is the Italian Perpetrator Side of Memory?

> They were considered guilty of military collaborationism, but they were nevertheless given the general extenuating circumstances […] considered the fact that they acted out of political conviction, at a time of significant moral and social change, and above all considering of the orders or at least instructions they had received from persons to whom they were subordinate. (Iozzelli 2020, 102)

In this section, we investigate the memory and oblivion regarding the deportation experience, with a focus on the Fascist responsibility. As we saw in the first chapter, despite the characteristic attempt of the Day of Memory to include the multiple persecutions and to commemorate, the memory practice still tends to focus merely on Jewish persecution as a tragedy. However, several deportations were triggered by acts of anti-fascist resistance, which led to the recognition of the resistance as a real political danger by the Nazi and fascist authorities. Moreover, as we discussed in the previous sections, given the deportation procedure, it was undeniably Italian collaborations with the Nazis that ensured the suppression and the deportation of people in Italy. Although the deportees, in general, are one of the component subjects of the Day of Memory, they have often been omitted in memory practices. Therefore, remembering and considering the Italian deportation in detail can mean questioning the Fascist responsibility for it. Then, how have deportation histories and Italian responsibility been underestimated, for it could not be concealed by the "good Italian people" myth alone? Considering the earlier studies, there are many interrelated, contributing factors. Among them, two grave factors can be underlined here: the Cold War context and whom to condemn for the deportation and death in the first place.

The cabinet of shame (*l'armadio della vergogna*) represents how post-war Italy ignored Italian responsibility in the Cold War context. It was the cabinet which contained reports on unpursued war crimes in Italy committed by the Nazis and fascists and was

forgotten for decades. The stored documents are research reports in which the Allies elaborated on the massacres committed during the Nazi occupation. Even though these documents were sent to the Italian authority on December 5, 1946, they have been intentionally ignored and concealed within this cabinet whose door faces the wall since 1960. Regarding the reason why the post-war Italian authorities did not investigate these crimes, Clifford points out two potential reasons by studying comments in the press: to prove the innocence of the Wehrmacht and to support the rearmament; to protect Italy from being condemned for its crimes in the Balkans or in other occupied territories by avoiding mention of Nazi crimes (Clifford 2013, 225-226). The cabinet was found in 1994 in the Palazzo Cesi, where the general military prosecution service was located, following the research by Antonino Intelisano for the trial of Erich Pribke (Giustolisi 2003, 207-208). Tuscany was compelled to deal with the cabinet of shame in 1999, as a quarter of the documents referred to the cases in Tuscany (Clifford 2013, 225, note 11).

As with the case of transitional justice, Italy struggled with locating blame for civilian deaths. Joshua Arthurs indicates how the Fascist Party was rooted in people's daily lives, depicting the vandalism and punishment against the regime at the time of Mussolini's downfall on July 25, 1943:

> Party membership had long been mandatory for public employees and many professionals, and millions more were enrolled the regime's various organizations […] Only a minority of Italians, in other words, could claim to have had no institutional connection to the regime. (Joshua Arthurs 2017, 219)

Although this citation focuses on the temporal difference between the fall of Mussolini and the liberation from Nazi Fascism, it nevertheless shows the banality of fascism during the Fascist period and wartime Italian society. For example, Antonella Meniconi's study shows that judges were by no means an exception: they joined the Fascist party, and after the war,

they could not be replaced (Meniconi 2021, 219-220).

As detailed in the opening quote of this section, borrowed from Iozzelli's study on the post-war or post-liberation trials, many fascists who collaborated with the Nazi occupational army ultimately received much lighter penalties than was proportionate to their deeds, or were even entirely forgiven. These results were primarily due to the so-called Togliatti amnesty issued by the Minister for Justice Palmiro Togliatti and promulgated on June 22, 1946 (Gazzetta Ufficiale 1946). At first, fascists requested amnesty for their crimes during the electoral campaign as an attempt to barter for votes (Saporito 2018, 300). Ultimately, the amnesty was published "to create a basis for peaceful collaboration between politically opposed parts of Italian society" (ibid.). Although the original idea was to "pardon minor, as well as political, crimes committed by Fascists during the years of the regime, or after 8 September 1943", it eventually encompassed the majority of the Fascist crimes (ibid).

Because of the ambiguous wording in the declaration, discretion was primarily left to the judiciary, where, as previously detailed, fascist elements remained. For instance, the term "particularly brutal", which is used in the Togliatti amnesty in the context of excluding a case from the pardon, does not show the border between the brutal and particularly brutal, so it was left to the judges to decide (Saporito 2018, 302). Additionally, although Togliatti intended to forgive the partisan crimes committed after the war, the judges tended to treat them as ordinary cases (Saporito 2018, 301) Thus, the Togliatti amnesty yielded a contradictory situation: while partisan retaliation tended to be condemned, Fascist crimes were mostly pardoned. The closer the crime to an act of collaborationism, the more likely it was to be pardoned.

In addition to the Togliatti amnesty, the rehabilitation of politics postponed the judgement of Fascist crimes:

> 1947 Italy was very different from that just after the war: while the Constituent Assembly worked and the entire regime at Portella della Ginestra was being shot at the crowd, and as for the international level, the contrasts between the Soviet bloc and Western blocs became radical, and the peninsula, De Gasperi was preparing to create the first government without the input of the Communist Party. Fascist crimes had faded into the background." (Iozzelli 2020, 91)

The fascist representation was also sometimes mild in testimonies. Indeed, some of the Jewish deportees testified that their lives in Italy were relatively good compared to the subsequent harsh months or years at concentration camps in East Europe (Galimi 2024, 229). For example, Gertrude Goetz narrates in the interview as a testimony:

> The Italian sympathy had never been with the Germans. Even though they had acclaimed Mussolini as their leader, but they always criticized him. […] Mussolini and his fascist government, even though rhetorically it was very vehement about anti-racial laws and majors and so on, much of it was not really followed through. (Goetz 1984)

While that interpretation and experience cannot be said to be untrue and unquestionably tell us about her experience at that time, it becomes an issue when it becomes the predominantly disseminated narrative and cancels other—exceptionally inconvenient—memories.

Thus, conversely, reaching a national consensus on wartime memory is rather difficult due to the multiple recollections and perspectives available. Beyond the individual scale but on a smaller scale than that of the nation-state, regional memory politics often deals with memories neglected in the more superficial national context, and this gives us multiple perspectives on the past. Tuscany is one of the regions working actively with wartime memory. The rest of this section will be dedicated to introducing the Deportation Museum at Prato in Tuscany as a case study.

The Museum and Documentation Centre of Deportation and Resistance, located at Figline di Prato, was established in 2002. It became a foundation and was designated a memorial site in Tuscany in 2008. This museum shows regional history through two lenses:

deportation and resistance.

The museum exhibition focuses on the history of deportation, primarily that of Prato. Ex-deportees eagerly promoted the idea of the establishment of the museum. Roberto Castellani was one of the most prolific contributors. He joined the general strike in March 1944 and was deported to the Mauthausen-Ebensee concentration camp and was subjected to forced labour as a political prisoner (Nocentini 2019, 86). Despite the rejection of the Austrian people to confront the concentration camp's past, since the 1950s, the survivors and bereaved families have visited the Ebensee concentration camp every year on May 6, when the Ebensee concentration camp had been liberated (Brunelli 2012, 325). Additionally, they enthusiastically tried to have conversations with the Austrian people, which led to the twin city affiliation between Prato and Ebensee in 1987. To conserve the testimony objects that the ex-deportees managed to salvage before the destruction of the Ebensee concentration camp (Iozzelli 2023), the construction of a museum dedicated to their experience has been long requested. Initially, the museum was exclusively concerned with the history of deportation at Prato, especially that which took place after the strike in March 1944. However, it started to depict a more general history of deportation, and the documentation centre began to conserve documents sourced not only from deportees but also those pertaining to the resistance (Iozzelli 2023).

Furthermore, the museum is situated very close to the site of the resistance massacre committed by the Nazi occupation army, for which it has received the name 29 martyrs square (see fig.3 and fig.4).

Figure 3 The monument at the 29 martyrs square (Piazza XXIX Martiri).
At the bottom, the ropes used for the hanging are exhibited. The monument has 29 lines blocked in the middle, and one line goes beyond the block, which means 29 victims (Pietre della memoria 2015). Iozzelli told me on September 28, that one line means one survivor from this massacre. Author's photo, September 28, 2023.

Figure 4 The monument at the 29 martyrs square.
Author's photo, September 28, 2023.

This massacre is one of those sequestered inside the Cabinet of Shame, so the pursuit of its perpetrators was suspended until 2003. On the night between 5 and 6 September 1943, the young partisan group *Bogardo Buricchi* came into the valley to take part in the liberation of Prato. However, they ended up encountering the Nazi occupation army, and 29 of them were killed by hanging. The investigation and subsequent reports on the massacre by the Allies,

which were conducted from October 1944 to 1945, were sent to Italian authorities on December 5, 1946 (Brunelli 2019b, 56-57). Along with another 694 files documenting the massacres carried out by Nazi-Fascists, the document on the slaughter at Figline was closed in the Cabinet of Shame in 1960. Despite the fact that the file was discovered in 1994 and that further research on the persecutors was undertaken at Prato, it was not possible to persecute those in charge of the massacre due to their presumed death by 2005 (Brunelli 2019b, 57).

Based on these two regional historical backgrounds, symbolically representing the diverse Italian experiences of the war, the Deportation Museum functions as a place of memory of the Tuscany region. It should be underlined that the museum aims to illustrate the multiple categories of deportees, not only Jewish victims, and as such, it notes the Fascist responsibility, in parallel with that of Nazis (Iozzelli 2023). Since 2009, the museum has developed the study of memory practice significantly, and on the occasion of the Day of Memory, it collaborates with the Tuscan regional government. In the following chapter, this study will investigate the Remembrance Train, considering international and national entanglements and the dilemmas of Holocaust memory and Tuscan regional experiences during the war. Italy's northern and central parts are eager to host commemoration events due to their deep connection to the resistance and anti-fascist tradition (Clifford 2013, 232). Given these characteristics, this study investigates how the memory of the fascist perpetrator is discussed and how responsibility is questioned, especially by the third or the fourth generation. Dovral Vennini, who has also significantly contributed to Prato's memory culture, and who passed away in 1988, remarked that the museum would "prove useful 'for the day when we are no longer here, to bear witness to the evil of which man has been capable'" (Foundation Museum and Documentation Center of Deportation and Resistance Memorial Sites in Tuscany 2019, 10-11).

# Chapter 3

# Case Study of the Practices on the Day of Memory: the Remembrance Train

## 3.1 The Outline of the Program, the Remembrance Train in Tuscany

Florence Santa Maria Novella station, the city's central train station, has two memorial plates regarding the deportation history. On platform 16, there is a monument established in 2013 by an art major student, Nicola Rossini (Fig.5). It is dedicated to the Jewish people who were deported from this platform on November 9, 1943. Another plaque is hung on the wall on platform 6 and commemorates the political deportees who were sent to Nazi concentration camps on March 8, 1944 (Fig.6[13]).


Figure 5 The monument at SMN station, platform 16.

On the plate, it is written that "From this platform, in sealed train cars, hundreds of Jewish men, women, elderly people, and children left for the gas chambers or crematoriums in Auschwitz. A monument will not bring back their innocent lives, but it will help us to not forget, in hopes that this will never happen again. 9 November 1943 11 Cheshvan 5704. 9 November 2013 6 Kislev 5774." Author's photo, October 8, 2023.

[13] As for the caption for fig.6, the author asked about the plaque to Lorenzo Tombelli, the president of the Florence section of National Association of ex-Deportees in the Nazi Camps (*Associazione Nazionale ex Deportati nei Campi Nazisti,* ANED), on March 23, 2024, and confirmed the information.


Figure 6 The plaque at SMN station, platform 6.

Although the deportees had departed from platform 1, which is located away from the station, this plaque was instituted at the centre of the station, platform 6, for this very reason. The plaque was settled in 1991 on the 47th anniversary of the deportation and then renovated in 2011.
It says that from this station, hundreds of different people arrested in the city and the province by nazi-fascists were deported on March 8, 1944, and that the station was their last vision of Florence before the Holocaust. Author's photo, March 14, 2024.

The region of Tuscany is wholeheartedly involved with the contested memory of the 1940s, as we saw in the second chapter regarding the historical background of the Deportation Museum. For the Day of Memory, multiple local events are held in the Tuscany region, mainly by municipalities (*comuni*), universities, libraries, and theatres[14]. Above all, the Remembrance Train can be evaluated as one of the most significant events in terms of the scale, the region's intervention, and its impact on other areas in Italy. In fact, similar programs were started in other regions subsequent to and inspired by the Tuscan initiative (Regione Toscana 2019a).

[14] For example, all events held in the region in 2019 are listed in (Regione Toscana 2019b).

The Remembrance Train is a regional event born as a regional response to the Day of Memory. Around January 27, the train brings more than 500 Tuscan high-school students from Santa Maria Novella station to Oświęcim in Poland, probably more famous as Auschwitz. This project started in 2002, two years after the Day of Memory was established. From 2002 to 2005, it was held every year, and since 2005, it has alternated with another large-scale regional event[15] every two years. Thus, since 2005, the Remembrance Train has been held in every odd-numbered year. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic suspended this event, the last Remembrance Train was in 2019 (as of June 2024). Thus, the trains usually take the selected students to the Auschwitz concentration camp site, except for the Remembrance Train 2004, which was destined for Majdanek, the site of the Lublin concentration camp. In 2005, the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, two trains left for Auschwitz, which included about twice as many students as usual, departing within 11-minute intervals of each other (Fortini 2015a). Since 2009, the Deportation Museum at Prato has been the coordinator, collaborating with the Tuscany region.

Looking back on the deportation history in the Tuscany region, the political deportees constituted a considerable part of the total number of Italian victims in the Nazi concentration camps. Deliberating on this regional history, the memory practice of going to Auschwitz, where the majority of the victims were Jewish, seems to accept the international and national intention to stress the importance of Auschwitz. However, perhaps we can hold the Remembrance Train higher in our estimation. This is an example of a typical but unique regional memory politics stimulated by a national commemoration day.

The original idea of the Remembrance Train came from Ugo Caffaz (1946-, the

[15] The other pair event is a large meeting, where thousands of Tuscan students are invited to listen to the testimonies and discuss the memory.

counsellor of the memory politics in the Tuscany region), who conceived of the provincial visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1982 with Primo Levi[16] (1919-1987, the Italian

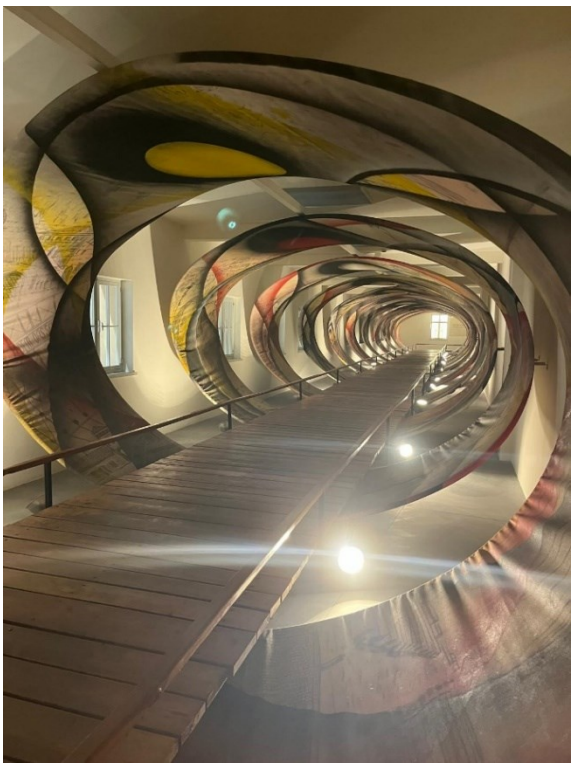


Figure 7 The Memorial in Honor of Italians Murdered in Nazi Camps.
In the monument, yellow means Jews, red means resistance, black means Fascism, and white means Christianity. The middle wood road represents the railway on which the people were deported to Nazi camps. Author's photo, April 14, 2024.

author, chemist and the survivor from the Auschwitz concentration camp), with whom he was privately acquainted. In 1980, when Caffaz became a councillor, the province of Florence organised a trip to Mauthausen and Dachau by bus. This experience brought him to propose another trip to Auschwitz (Toscana Notizie 2015)[17]. Caffaz imagined that Levi would reject his offer due to his cruel treatment there; however, Levi accepted the invitation because he wanted to see the monument dedicated to all of the Italian victims, upon whose creation he also collaborated, in Block 21 (ANED 2016). This Italian monument also

[16] One of his masterpieces "Se questo è un uomo (If this is a man)" illustrates his experience at the Auschwitz concentration camp.
[17] This article was published in a free e-book, "La memoria tutto l'anno," in 2013 and was reinserted in a series of reports on Treno della Memoria 2015.

observes the connection between Auschwitz and the Tuscany region. The memorial was inaugurated in 1980 and has been displayed for 20 years in Block 21, one of the national exhibition areas in the Auschwitz concentration camp, designated for Italy. However, in 2011, the Auschwitz Museum closed the exhibition because they recognised that the memorial was more an artistic work than a historical interpretation and that it was unsuitable for the new guidelines (ANED 2016). Faced with this advice to demolish the work, the Tuscany region chose to receive and restore it, and it is now exhibited in a full-size copy of Block 21 in the Deportation Memorial in Florence (see fig.7)[18]. The official announcement of the transportation of the monument took place at the commemoration ceremony in the 2015 Remembrance Train.

To resume the principal argument, the idea of letting the students in all provinces in Tuscany was not realised until 2002, two years after the establishment of the Day of Memory. Thus, the Remembrance Train was born as a regional response to the national commemoration day even though the groundwork for the practice had already been in place since the 1980s (Toscana Notizie 2015). President Rossi replied at interview, the audience including a Polish TV company, that the trip is recommended: "to anyone who runs away with light-hearted words about what it was, to those who say 'I am not racist, for ...', to those who do not see the difference between the Nazis and those who fought them" (Walter Fortini 2013d). This comment can be read as a challenge to the "reconciliation" tendency amongst the national dispute on the memory of the war and fascist regime.

In Remembrance Train, the travel lasts for five days in total, around January 27, and the outlined schedule rarely changes. Typically, the group departs from Santa Maria Novella



[18] The memorial is not only to restore and conserve the monument on the second floor but also to tell the history of the deportation on the first floor. Each pamphlet has a different number on it as if it were a prisoner number allocated to those held at Auschwitz.

station on the morning of the first day and arrives at Oświęcim in Poland on the morning of the second day. On their departure, the organiser gives them a backpack containing some books to read during the train trip. Since the 2015 Remembrance Train, the transfer time has also been a moment when the students can encounter the testimonies and the joining associations, which we will see in-depth in the following section. On the second day, they visit the Birkenau concentration camp site and take part in a commemorational ceremony called "one name, one history, one memory (*un nome, una storia, una memoria*)." On the third day, there is a visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp site and museum. After the guided tour of the museum, a ceremony is held in front of the death wall, against which the prisoners were shot, between blocks 10 and 11. When they return to Krakow, they have a testimony session with delegates from the concerned associations. On the fourth day, they take the train to return to Italy, which arrives on the fifth day. The transfer duration is at least 19 hours for each way. The cost of the trip is about 600 euros per student (Fortini 2013a). For the 2017 Remembrance Train, the Tuscany government provided funding of 660,000 euros (Regione Toscana 2016-2017). In the press conference for the 2013 Remembrance Train, Cristina Scaletti, the regional councillor for culture, stated that despite the economic crisis, the regional government had decided not to cut this budget because of the need to prevent the rise of the authoritarian movement all the more for the crisis in Italy and Europe (Rossi 2012). This Tuscan positionality has also been repeatedly underlined by Enrico Rossi (1958-, ex-President of Tuscany 2010-2020) as president.

The main protagonists of this event are the around 500 high school students from all 10 Tuscan provinces who are part of the program. However, the breakdown of the participating schools depends on the year[19] (table 1). Additionally, about 50 university

[19] Except for the 2005 Remembrance Train, which involved twice as many students as usual.

students from the three universities and institutions associated with Florence, Pisa, and Siena collaborate in the project.

| Province | School | Students | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arezzo | 2 | 42 | 6 |
| Firenze | 10 | 58 | 10 |
| Grosseto | 5 | 30 | 5 |
| Livorno | 11 | 44 | 11 |
| Lucca | 8 | 48 | 8 |
| Massa Carrara | 7 | 56 | 7 |
| Pisa | 14 | 60 | 11 |
| Pistoia | 9 | 63 | 9 |
| Prato | 7 | 42 | 7 |
| Siena | 9 | 63 | 9 |
| Total | 82 | 506 | 83 |

Table 1 The number of schools, students and teachers from each province in Tuscany who joined the Remembrance Train in 2013.
Created by the author from information provided by (Fortini 2013b).

The students and teachers encounter deportation testimonies throughout the trip. The testimonies consist of the survivors from the Nazi concentration camps, IMI, and their families. Many of them repeatedly joined the program: Andra and Tatiana Bucci (the sole Italian juvenile Jewish survivors from Auschwitz), Marcello Martini (the ex-partisan who was deported to Mauthausen), and Antonio Ceseri (the ex-IMI, who refused to serve for the Third Reich and RSI). As for the Bucci sisters, for a considerable period, the trauma of their past meant they were unable to accompany the students inside the Auschwitz Museum, but they eagerly continued to collaborate with the program, including meeting and talking with groups during the train trip. Martini was one of the members who testified to the memory of the political deportees, but he passed away in August 2019. Ceseri contributed to the program but passed away in December 2017. Due to this contemporary decrease in the number of living testimonies available that can be physically presented, recorded videos are also used in the meetings. For example, due to health issues, Ceseri joined the Remembrance Train through online calls and recorded videos on several occasions. For another example, Shlomo Venezia, the *Sonderkommando* of the Auschwitz concentration camp, who died in 2012,

guaranteed that his memory lived on by leaving videos for the following generation. His video has been repeatedly screened at the Remembrance Train event, too.

Some contributors joined from relatively recent projects. In the 2013 Remembrance Train, as the trip's theme was "*Scelta e rivolta* (Selection and revolution)," Marian Marzynski, the survivor from the Warsaw Ghetto and a director of the film titled "*Non Dimenticare di Mentire* (Do Not Forget to Lie)" became involved in the project. On the second day of the programme, the students watched the film, which narrates Marsynzki's childhood experience of being saved from deportation. In the 2015 and the 2019 Remembrance Train, Vera Vigevani Jarach contributed to telling the young people two family stories. The first spoke of the deportation of her grandfather, who was betrayed by someone who was supposed to transport him to Switzerland, and the second was about her daughter, who was kidnapped, tortured and killed in the Death Flight of the Videla regime in 1976 in Argentina. According to her, these two stories are always together because they show that what happened once can happen again (Fortini 2015b). In 2015, Enrico Fink, the Florentine musician, joined the Remembrance Train to make and create a performance about his grandfather, who arrived at Ferrara from Russia but, in the end, was deported to Auschwitz to die (Fortini 2019b).

In addition to these testimonies, related organisations such as ANED, National Association of Italy's Partisans (*Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia*, ANPI), and local Jewish, Roma, and Sinti communities alongside LGBT associations also attend the Remembrance Train. They reflect the various historical deportation experiences found across the Tuscany region, Italy, and Europe, which were not only of Jewish people. In addition, some representatives of the local assembly board the train. For instance, Enrico Rossi often joined the Remembrance Train, talked with participants, and gave speeches. From the 2015 edition, the workshops to cultivate knowledge are held during travel time in both directions.

The restaurant car is converted into a classroom, and all the students can join one of the five sessions of 45-50 minutes, 80 students each, to listen to testimonies or the representatives of the various affiliated organisations. In 2019, the theme of neofascism was joined to the traditional four sections: Jewish communities, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, and political prisoners (Fortini 2019a).

Observing the articles on Toscana Notizie and the speeches by Caffaz and Rossi during the ceremony and press interview, there is a clear sense of both the central notion of the program and a sense of contemporary. As to the former, the organisers recognise the Remembrance Train as "a vaccination against intolerance", which needs to be prescribed regularly. This enables the programs to go beyond discussing only the past but also reflect contemporary social issues and violence. In this, they often do not directly say a "comparison", probably because it would clash with the interpretation of the Holocaust as a unique experience which cannot be compared with any other massacres. One of the official tour guides at the Auschwitz Museum, Takeshi Nakatani, says that he does not "compare" but "introduces" the Japanese context in his explanation as an example way of transmitting history (Nakatani 2007, chapter 2).

The authors of articles for Toscana Notizie mention and interviewed testimonies about the Charlie Hebdo shooting, which happened a few weeks before the Remembrance Train: January 9 2015 (Fortini 2015b; 2015c). In another case, in 2017, Caffaz asserted that the past often recalls contemporary issues such as the refugees facing the dangerous Mediterranean Sea crossing or the war in ex-Jugoslavia (Fortini 2017a). This approach to memory is clearly reflected in the participating students' reflectional works. However, at the same time, this emotionally appealing to contemporary issues can be a pitfall in terms of them finding un-nuanced conclusions without contextualising the past and the Holocaust as a specific historical moment while also making connections to contemporary issues. To

develop this point, we will observe the students' reflections after the trip in the next section. We will assess the Remembrance Train as an educational project and as a regional memory of politics.

Considering the memory role in improving the contemporary, Sarah Gensburger and Sandrine Lefranc state that memory politics, with the leitmotiv of "never again," are useless in educating citizens to be tolerant and stand up against violence (Gensburger and Lefranc 2020). However, our approach to memory by examining the existence of the Italy-as-perpetrator view can re-question the potential of memory: it might raise awareness of the possibility that "we" were and might be perpetrators in the past and in the present/future.

## 3.2 The Practice of the Remembrance Train: the Physical Experience and the Role of Memory for the Third/Fourth Generations

The Remembrance Train is a regional symbolic memory politics and educational initiative part of the Giovanisì[20] project since 2017.[21] This aims to give young people opportunities to study and work. The Remembrance Train begins with a Summer School for interested teachers half a year before the train departs. The announcements of the Summer School are disseminated to all schools, and those interested can apply to undergo the selection procedure. After the Summer School, the teachers bring their knowledge back to their school, and some teachers organise and run special after-school classes. Although



[20] "Giovanisì was born in 2011 with the main objective of encouraging the transition process of young people towards autonomy through opportunities (calls and initiatives) linked to the right to study and training, entry into the world of work, support for entrepreneurship, to the promotion of initiatives and calls for participation and active citizenship" (Giovanisì n.d.).

[21] The author asked by call to the office of Giovanisì about the year when the Remembrance Train was included in Giovanisì, and the data was confirmed. May 9, 2024.

teachers are often unpaid for their extra work,[22] the project relies on their independent teaching at their respective schools. For the next step, the students who join the Remembrance Train next winter are decided.

The interviews completed by this author with the five teachers individually indicate that they hold the Summer School in high esteem overall. For example, Maria Cristina Viglianisi[23] noted that it is "never be repetitive, but there is always added an extra little piece" and that it is "an important training I would not have had the time but neither would I have had the competence to prepare in such a short time on such important topics" (Viglianisi 2024). Viglianisi organises two courses for students after Summer School; one is for all students, and the other is for those participating in the Remembrance Train[24]. For the former, the topics are rather broad – the historical framework, the difference between concentration camps and extermination, the stages of deportation and internment, the installations of memorial places such as platforms in Santa Maria Novella station or stumbling stones, and the testimonies of those who also contributed to the Remembrance Train (ibid). In this case, the Remembrance Train project has the potential to allow other students who are unable to take the train to access a small part of the experience. For the latter, those students who will take the Remembrance Train, the focus is on the details of the camps, the living situations there, and anything required to prepare for the trip mentally and physically (ibid). The Summer School is also an opportunity for teachers to gain historical



[22] Odetta Barani, a teacher of religion at Isis Carducci Volta Pacinotti Piombino, who joined the Remembrance Train in 2009, 2011, 2015, 2017 and 2019, says that the teachers of history in her school do not adhere because even though it is demanding, there has been no additional payment as a school policy, until 2023 (Barani, 2024).

[23] Maria Cristina Viglianisi is a teacher of Italian and history, who participated in the Remembrance Train in 2011, 2013, and 2017 from Isis Valdarno di San Giovanni v.no (but now works for IIS B. Varchi di Montevarchi).

[24] In this case, students were chosen through the lottery because there were too many students with strong motivation. The participating students shared their learning through chats and Facebook during the trip.

knowledge from experts and socialise with other teachers who have participated in the Remembrance Train or been involved in similar memory practices (Bruscino 2024)[25].

The criteria for selecting the participating students depends on the school. For each teacher, a maximum of eight posts for students are assigned. The criteria for choosing the participants depends on the respective schools and teachers, it can include academically gifted students, those with a specific interest in the journey, and those whom teachers believe the experience will be important for their personal development – for example, students in whom they notice racist tendencies–, and, finally, sometimes they are selected via a lottery. Mariassunta Pirillo[26] explained that a preparatory course was open to every student, organised in collaboration with the Historical Institute of the Resistance in Tuscany (Istituto Storico toscano della Resistenza) and had a motivation test, and then, if necessary, they had a draw as a final filter last tool (Pirillo 2024). In another case, Andrea Bruscino stated that at I.T.T. "Ferraris-Brunelleschi" di Empoli, they have three requirements for choosing the participants: participation in the extracurricular lectures with an absence rate of not more than 20%, drafting a motivational letter and compiling a personal research paper on 20th-century history with a focus on one of the various topics covered in relevant lectures (Bruscino 2024). These two examples show that at least some participants are motivated to learn about this topic beforehand. In teaching this theme, which can be transnational history, the teachers consider the Italian or individual responsibility, for example, the application of the racial laws from 1938 in Italy, and the regional history, such as the massacre at Sant'Anna di Stazzema.



[25] Bruscino is a teacher of Italian and history who participated in the 2019 Remembrance Train and contributed to the selection process in the school for the 2015, 2017 and 2019 Remembrance Train from I.T.T. "Ferraris-Brunelleschi."

[26] Pirillo is a teacher of Italian and history who participated in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 Remembrance Train from Istituto Agrario Firenze.

**Examining the physical and emotional experience**

How do the participants accept this memory practice? To answer this question, we observe the materials the participating students must elaborate on to share their experiences after the trip. The Deportation Museum at Prato does not set a specific format but allows the students to decide the most preferable method for them. Thus, the students' reflectional works use a variety of media platforms and formats: some take the form of edited diaries, and others are presentations preserved as booklets or DVDs. Each school sends the works to the Deportation Museum at Prato. While the museum has collected and uploaded these works on its website, most of them are not accessible as of April 2024 due to technical issues during the transition to the new website. Although many works are conserved as physical objects in the museum, since around 2015, the museum has not often received the students' works in hard copy as the exchange of materials has been completed increasingly online. Despite these issues, the author has surveyed 10 examples of written material submitted between 2011 and 2019, through which we can see the students found the experience physically and emotionally powerful. The amount of material is limited, and, naturally, the students may not express perfectly their responses in their work, which we need to recognise critically in using these as materials. However, they allow us to observe some examples of the students' direct impressions and investigate the Remembrance Train's educational role with the supplemental information from the original interview with the high school teachers and the reportage provided by Toscana Notizie. Consequently, four general impressions can be observed: the intensity of the evocation process, the anger or sadness when faced with the exhibition, the sense of responsibility – both concrete and ambiguous – after the trip, and the comparison with contemporary social issues. The author separated "emotions" into two parts: the former is the emotional structure constructed by the Remembrance Train organisers, and the latter is by the Auschwitz Museum. In both cases, we can adopt

Gensburger and Lefranc's observation that emotion is a key element in a memory policy to reach engagement from the targets (Gensburger and Lefranc 2020, chapter 1).

Firstly, a long train ride to a distant place they have never been to, apart from their family and with students who do not know each other well, is a new experience for many students. The trip is a physical experience for the students in which they have "a small role play" and experience vicariously, if not the same, the situation of the deportees (Bruscino 2024). For many students, "frost (*gelo*)" – describing the extreme cold in Poland – tends to trigger recalling the environment where the deportees had been placed (Liceo Copernico 2015). In a travel video, a student who made a speech while crying is recorded (Istituto Tecnico Industriale Statale "Galileo Ferraris" 2011). Throughout one of the groups of the students' diaries, it is clear that, in the beginning, many of them felt uncomfortable and isolated, with a participant named Luca describing that "… there are four of us in a compartment of 6, and a thought comes to mind 'the journey how dramatic it must have been for the deportees'! We are uncomfortable in this situation, can't imagine them" (Istituto Superiore Carducci Volta Pacinotti Piombino 2019, 14)[27]. However, by the last day of the trip, having spent all their time on the train, in general, they appreciate the journey experience, including the friendships they have enriched in a short time. In this sense, the Remembrance Train is a rich educational opportunity to learn history and build human relationships. Considering the workshops available during the travel time, as we saw in the previous section, travel by train plays a significant role in this practice[28].

During their stay in Poland, one of the most emotional experiences that emerged

[27] "*… siamo in quattro in uno scompartimento da 6 e mi viene in mente un pensiero 'il viaggio come doveva essere drammatico per i deportati'! Noi stiamo scomodi in questa situazione, non posso immaginare loro*."

[28] Additionally, Toscana Notizie indicates another evocative aspect by introducing that a teacher remembered the massacre in 1984 when the train passed Vernio, which caused the students to talk about the mafia, gangs, and terrorism (Fortini, 2013c).

from the materials was the commemoration ceremony titled "One name, one history, one memory", which the Deportation Museum at Prato has led since 2009. This ceremony is held at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp during their visit and students make a queue in front of a microphone where they call one deportee's name and the age of death one by one. After this, they pray in Rom, Hebrew and Catholic and sing a national song. The name of the deportee is allocated beforehand by the Deportation Museum at Prato, and the students are required to know that person as a preparatory study. Thus, each student "takes care of (*custodire*)" and "brings" that person throughout the trip. The museum has three criteria for choosing the deportees' names: those who were deported to Auschwitz or captured in Italy, including both the deceased and the survivors, mainly Jewish people but also Italian political deportees and Rom arrested in other places; those who were young at that time (born around 1910-1944); and in case of Jewish victims, as much as possible, those who were born or arrested in the province where the school of the concerned students is located, or at least in Tuscany (Brunelli, 2019c)[29]. The intention of the museum for this event is to motivate the students to have questions and to foster the sense that the deportees were just the same as themselves and that the deportees might be betrayed or captured by Italians or neighbours (Brunelli 2011). The students from Istituto Istruzione Superiore 'A. Meucci', who joined the 2013 Remembrance Train, sympathised with the idea of this ceremony and completed their reflectional work reconstructing a fictional story composed with the designated deportees in an intersecting way (Istituto Istruzione Superiore "A. Meucci," Massa 2013).

The second aspect observed in the student responses is the emotion of anger and sadness or undescribed emotions[30] when they are before the museum exhibition or standing

[29] From the 2011 version, the document has some small changes. For example, in the 2011 document, the Italian political deportees and Rom victims were not clearly mentioned.

[30] A group of students participating in the 2013 Remembrance Train says, "But it was only when I saw the faces of the deportees, families and children in the photos; when I walked through the camp during the ceremony knowing that that same road had been walked by thousands of people; it was only then

in situ at Auschwitz. A pile of collected hair was incredibly impactful, as it was repeatedly mentioned in multiple students' reactions. A student named Martina writes, "… that mass of hair: there were so many of them, as soon as I saw them, a lot of melancholy and anger came over me. I realised that the Nazis had no mercy on anyone, and to me, they could only be described as beasts."[31] (Istituto Istruzione Superiore "Giuglielmo Marconi" – ITC Severi 2013) Here, only the Nazis are recalled as inhuman perpetrators, without any recollection of fascist collaboration. It might not be surprising that in Auschwitz, where the perpetrator's historical context is largely absent and the museum functions to show the victims' (not) surviving condition, the focus is on the victims rather than the perpetrators. However, this might risk locating all blame for the Holocaust with the Nazis and forgetting the network of collaborators that made it possible to happen, including the Fascist collaboration and the individual responsibility for victims' persecution and deportations.

As the third thing, the sense of responsibility to testify can be recognised in students' reflectional works, sharing their experiences with their classmates, other school students, or even the local community:

> "a duty to all the victims... a need to prevent, at least as far as we are able, that everything we have seen may one day be repeated..... because emotion brings tears, but these alone do not prevent tragedies..... we must act, awaken consciences, alert them to a danger that creeps into societies little by little and that in the end leads you to accept as 'normal' what is not normal at all."[32] (Istituto Istruzione Superiore "Guglielmo Marconi." 2011)

that emotions rose. Emotions that, I'm sorry, but I cannot describe it. (*Ma è solo quando ho visto nelle foto i volti dei deportati, delle famiglie e dei bambini; quando ho attraversato il campo durante la cerimonia sapendo che quella stessa strada era stata percorsa da migliaia di persone; è solo allora che sono salite le emozioni. Emozioni che, mi scuso, ma non riesco a descrivere.*)" (Liceo Statale "Alessandro Volta," Siena 2013)

[31] "*... quella massa di capelli: erano tantissimi, appena li ho visto mi è salita addosso tanta malinconia e moltissima rabbia. Ho capito che i nazisti non hanno avuto pietà di nessuno e per me si possono solamente definire delle bestie*."

[32] "*un dovere verso tutte le vittime… un bisogno per eviare almeno per quello che è nelle nostre possibilità, che tutto quell oche abbiamo visto possa un giorno ripetersi..... perché l'emozione porta le lacrime ma queste da sole non evitano le tragedie….. bisogna agire, risvegliare le coscenze, allertarle di fronte ad un pericolo che si insinua nelle società piano piano e che alla fine ti porta ad accettrare come 'normale' ciò che no lo è affatto*."

On the other hand, this sense of responsibility tends to be superficial. The Italian guide at the Auschwitz Museum made a critical comment: "I fear that visiting this place will become an excuse to salve one's conscience" (Fortini 2017b). She questioned the sincerity of comments like "now I am aware. I understand": "But what did a person understand?" (Fortini 2017b). In the Remembrance Train, the occasion in which the students have to share their experience with those who did not participate obligatorily makes the ambiguous nature of "understanding" more concrete. A group of students says that they wanted to make their DVD more than the record (Liceo Statale "E. Fermi" 2013). Additionally, Viglianisi remembers that after their trip, the participating students raised their voices against a colleague who was known to be openly racist (Viglianisi 2024).

The sense of responsibility often turns their gaze toward the current society to look for similarities with the Holocaust past. In this process, they consider the role of memory for them. After recognising the difficulty of narrating themselves what they saw and felt during the Remembrance Train, a group of students concluded: "However, we know that memory is not just remembering, it is also sharing. And this is what we have learnt"[33], and they decided to write (Istituto Tecnico Statale "F. Forti" Monsummano. Terme 2013, 7). Given their reflection, this sense of responsibility to "testify" was indeed inspired by their experience to see with their own eyes and to listen to the victims (ibid, 6-7). In another case, a group of students decided to compare the Holocaust past with contemporary immigration of refugees, citing the words of Vera Vigevani Jarach and Pieto Terracina, a survivor from Auschwitz, that "the biggest enemy of humans is the indifference to what is happening to others" and that "the memory is not a remembering but the thread that binds the past to the

[33] "*Tuttavia sappiamo che la memoria non è solo un ricordo, è anche condivisione. Ed è questo che abbiamo imparato*."

present and conditions the future" (Istituto Statale di Istruzione Superiore "Valdarno." – ITE "F. Servi" 2015). The student intended to ask whether the history may have already repeated itself (Istituto Statale di Istruzione Superiore "Valdarno." – ITE "F. Servi." 2015). For example, they saw a parallel in the photo of a wagon used for deportations in the past with that of a boat used for refugees in the 21st century and the photo of a crematorium with a photo of the sea as a place of death, and they tried to find points of comparison. In the end, they condemned the contemporary issue as the violence against human dignity and the indifference to it as comparable to the Holocaust past.

As anticipated in the previous section, this gaze on the political contemporary can also be seen in Caffaz's or Tuscan President Rossi's remarks. However, the relationship between commemoration and shedding light on contemporary issues sometimes produces friction among the participants or between the organisers and the participants. In the 2019 Remembrance Train, an assembly of "The Dialogue with the Citizens for the Future of Europe" was held at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, and Enrico Rossi and Frans Timmermans, the vice president of the EU Commission, were invited. The aim was to discuss contemporary European political responses to the migration crisis, and there were also questions regarding the risks of Brexit from students. Probably, the intention of the organisers or politicians was to call "not to be indifferent" to migrants as if the people were indifferent to the discrimination and deportation of "others" in the past. However, some students, like Matteo, felt uncomfortable because "I found it a bit inappropriate to talk politics in a situation like this where the victims of an extermination were being remembered" (Istituto Superiore Carducci Volta Pacinotti Piombino 2019, 23).[34] Barani, who led this group of students, says that generally, students tend to think that memory should

[34] "*ho trovato un po' inappropriato parlare di politica in una situazione come quella dove venivano ricordate le vittime di uno sterminio*"

be apolitical (Barani 2024). The organisers' intention for the Remembrance Train was “not creating rhetorical commemoration” but to make the students more conscious of the surrounding society (Toscana Notizie 2015). They try to make the contents “both scientific and emotional”. However, some students refuse to engage in political arguments at the Remembrance Train. Considering that other students compare the past with contemporary political issues such as migration, this tension is not only between the organisers and the participants but also among the participants. The mechanics of this sense of discomfort have the scope to be analysed in greater detail. However, the lack of awareness of the high school students concerning the nuances of regional politics in the Remembrance Train and European political values behind the approach to Holocaust memory could be one of the factors.

Here, let us return to the central question of the thesis: What is the role of the memory of deportation and the Holocaust as represented by the Remembrance Train for students at three or four generations removed from the original events? Is there an Italy-as-perpetrator view of memory represented or not? Considering this point, we need to return to the refrain of the role of Auschwitz in the conception of January 27 and the Auschwitz centrality in Holocaust memory, particularly as the Remembrance Train is usually destined for Auschwitz. In the context of the decreasing number of survivors, the importance of the place in recognising that the Holocaust actually happened must be stressed. Nevertheless, the Auschwitz Museum alone does not provide a rich, all-encompassing explanation, so how much knowledge is imparted could be taken heavily depends on the guides, teachers and visitors.

The Remembrance Train has the potential to track historical contexts that are not inclined to the centrality of Auschwitz by collaborating with the Deportation Museum at Prato and by inviting multiple associations on the train. The museum places great importance

on the various backgrounds of those who were deported, which are not only Jewish but also those of dissent political intentions, Jehovah's Witnesses, marginalised sexual orientations and disabilities. Iozzelli considers that the temporal distance from the memory makes it possible for the third or the fourth generations to confront of the idea of Italian responsibility, including the war crimes perhaps committed by grandfather or great-grandfather (Iozzelli 2023). However, as the analysis in this section shows, the Remembrance Train significantly impacts students in terms of the physical and emotional experience of visiting Auschwitz. Although there are multiple historical backgrounds provided for the testimonies and a variety of associations that contribute to the Remembrance Train, alongside the visit to Auschwitz, a deeply moving place of memory for the victims, there is not a detailed examination of the perpetrators, except for the Nazis. While the Summer School provides the "360-degree angle" (Paoli 2024; Viglianisi 2024) of the deportation and the Holocaust historical context, at least in the students' reflectional works, the physical and emotional experience of visiting Auschwitz is so strong that it has the potential to overwrite the multifaceted and complex history of deportation, which is not only about Auschwitz. Yet, the feeling of responsibility and the necessity to share the experience requires the students to take note of contemporary political issues, intolerance, and indifference in their own lives. In light of the discomfort with political talk about the memory of January 27, we find the complex entanglement of emotions and politics. The two facets of the Remembrance Train, regional historiography versus the centrality of the international Auschwitz destination, make this public sphere inseparable from the memory politics that proliferate around January 27 in the international, national and regional spheres.

# Conclusion

Examining the possibility of the public sphere dealing with the inconvenient side of memory was the first motivation for the author to deal with this topic. Although the Holocaust has become the shared dark history in Europe, the narrative often fails to mention the countries' responsibility, with the exception of Germany. The focus tends to be on the victims, especially Jewish victims, without mentioning the responsibility of the perpetrators. Then, what can we conclude after examining the Day of Memory in international, national, and regional memory politics, specifically the Remembrance Train project in Tuscany?

The Remembrance Train is an eager regional response to the Day of Memory. Considering that this commemoration day was established in line with the approach of European memory politics to the Holocaust, the Remembrance Train has both a national and international context. Yet, there is also the unique nature of the local situation and the opportunity to deal with the contested memory of the Fascist regime and WWII.

The 1st chapter discussed the Holocaust memory politics in Europe. In this, the scope of the term Holocaust was often found to be ambiguous. It indeed signifies the Nazi extermination project directed specifically at "Jewish" people, but it can also include the deported, interned and murdered individuals who were regarded as unnecessary or inconvenient to society. Particularly after the 1990s, the memory of the Holocaust began to conform to the Western European transnational conception as the common and unique historical experience from which Europe decided to be union. Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union caused European countries to look back at their own history. The memory politics of the Holocaust became a touchstone for Eastern European countries to join the EU, yielding a new dispute on the comparability of Nazi crimes with Communist crimes.

However, since 1995, European institutions and individual European countries have started to designate January 27 as the generally accepted commemoration day. In this process, the centrality of Auschwitz is foregrounded because January 27 was the date when the Soviet army liberated the camp in 1945.

In 2000, Italy also established a commemoration day on January 27 as the Day of Memory linked up with this stream of European memory politics. Characteristically, the choice of the date, January 27, aimed to include both Jewish victims and political deportees. As one of the main questions of this thesis, we asked whether this commemoration day has the potential to confront the Italian perpetrator side of history, bearing in mind the disparate narrative of Liberation Day on April 25. The latter has been the basis of the post-war Italian identity and of "the republic born from the resistance". Additionally, the myth of "good Italian" re-promoted by the immediate post-war historiography of wartime Italy prevented widescale discussion of the perpetrator view in deportation histories. The secondary literature, which analyses the Day of Memory, shows its limitations because of its lack of national centrality and politicians' (ab)uses of the memory. For example, politicians and Italian mass media's commemorations tend to focus on Jewish persecution and "Righteous Among the Nations" without highlighting the Fascists' responsibility.

However, as a matter of fact, Italian people were involved in the persecution and the deportation during the Fascist regime and WWII, as perpetrators and as victims. The second chapter traced racial and political deportation in Italy, especially highlighting the regional experience of Tuscany. Italian Racial Law from 1938 created the social climate for the persecution of the Jewish people in Italy. After the armistice, RSI collaborated with the Nazi army to arrest the "troublesome" individuals for them. The proportion of political deportees was substantial in the Tuscany case. At the round-up after the general strike in March 1944, Fascists and Nazis captured not only the labourers who participated in the strike

but also random civilians. The majority were sent to the Mauthausen-Ebensee concentration camp, which demonstrates one local aspect of deportation history.

On a national level, post-war Italy did not launch any inquiries concerning responsibility for the crimes committed by Fascists and Nazis. It was deemed necessary to reconcile between the Fascists and anti-Fascists in post-war society, an inclination which was intensified due to the diplomatic relations during the Cold War. As a result, in the postwar trials, some of the Italian Fascists who had committed war crimes were granted pardons for collaboration. Moreover, the Minister of Justice gave amnesty to the majority of the war criminals in the end. In the meantime, the documents on the massacres committed during the Nazi occupation were hidden in the cabinet of shame, which was not revealed until 1994.

In addition to the lack of Fascist responsibility in the courts, the Italian positionality made the memory divisive and controversial: Italy had a Fascist government for more than 20 years, and it was divided into two after the armistice of September 1943, thus ending the war on the side of the Allies. Therefore, it has been substantially challenging to reach a national critical consensus on wartime memory and the Fascist past in Italy.

Meanwhile, regional memory is rather more established, sometimes questioning national responsibility and investigating inconvenient memories that are in tension with national identity. As one of the remarkable places of memory, we dealt with the Deportation Museum at Prato, observing its two historical backgrounds. The location of the museum is in front of the massacre site where the Nazi occupation army hanged the partisans just before the liberation; this provides the first historical background. For the other, the institution is dedicated to conserving and narrating the memory of deportation during the war. At its inception, the survivors who were deported to the Ebensee concentration camp desired the establishment of the museum to conserve their memory and the materials, especially for

future generations. Now, the museum attempts to deal with multiple categories of deportees alongside the Italian responsibility for the persecution and the deportation. As its contribution to regional memory politics, the Remembrance Train is notable.

The Tuscan region and the Deportation Museum collaborated to organise the Remembrance Train every two years until 2019. While the central part of the event is a five-day trip from Florence to Oświęcim during the week of January 27, it is a year-long pedagogical event, opening with the teacher training in a Summer School and ending with the students' reflectional works.

The organisers aim to arrange the event not as a superficial commemoration but as a scientifically and emotionally effective way for students to be conscious of the topic. As examined throughout the third chapter, the Remembrance Train covers multiple deportation histories by inviting surviving testimonies and related associations. For the participating students, the long train trip, the coldness of Poland, and actually being at Auschwitz inevitably reflect the desperate situations that the deportees were subjected to. Besides, the commemoration ceremony at Birkenau, a name, a history and a memory, allows them to get a personal picture of the Holocaust past. This physical and emotional experience evokes a sense of responsibility and a sense that they need to testify what they saw and learned. As Ugo Caffaz and Enrico Rossi also encourage, some of the students connect the historical events to contemporary issues, such as immigrants who died in the Mediterranean Sea and more local incidents of racism. In this, we can find a similar idea to that of European memory politics, which prompts Holocaust remembrance to battle the surge in racism and xenophobia. However, there is a delicate balance between politics, emotions, and commemorations.

Concerning the sense of responsibility in the students' reflectional works, it slightly differs from the initial questions of this thesis and the expected perceptions of the Day of

Memory. The students did not so much investigate the Italian perpetrator's side of the event or assign any blame for the deportation or the Holocaust beyond the references to specifically Nazi perpetrators. Instead, the participants committed themselves to not repeating history and had a more abstract response to the Remembrance Train experience, intending to work against racism, xenophobia, indifference and intolerance.

Then, has the Remembrance Train failed to face up to the less palatable side of memory for Italy and its national identity? To begin with, it is impressive that the Remembrance Train began as a regional response to establishing the Day of Memory. It is an example of a national commemoration day that indirectly creates a space for the public to deal with the contested history. Given that the topics of persecution, deportation, and the Holocaust are what April 25 has omitted from the historical narrative, the Remembrance Train allows the participants to realise a multifaceted version of the past. Moreover, as the Remembrance Train is destined for Auschwitz, it also reflects the spiritual destination of European memory politics, which puts a high value on Auschwitz when discussing the Holocaust in its fight against intolerance. In this, we criticised that the experience shrinks into the general "Holocaust" narrative without the reflection of Italian collaborationism. Yet, starting from the Summer School, the Remembrance Train provides a regional perspective on the war history and memory, reinforcing that the "Holocaust" is not only of the Jewish people. In the testimonies imparted or the individual histories encountered, the Fascist responsibility becomes inevitably outstanding, which reflects the omissions and difficulties of national politics regarding the Day of Memory.

Despite the limitations of the Remembrance Train we saw in this research, it has the potential to avoid falling into the narrow victimisation narrative by holding a regional specificity and revealing the un-commemorated past there. This regional attempt was opened by imperfect Italian memory politics, and it provides multifaceted histories and memories,

sharing the aim of European memory politics to combat intolerance and indifference from Auschwitz.

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