

THE SEIZURE OF JEWISH PROPERTY IN FLORENCE 1943-1945

On 11 September 1943, three days after the Armistice and the collapse which followed it, Germans forces entered Florence unopposed. One of the first things they did was to send units to the synagogue and the other buildings of the Jewish community.¹ This move was a sinister sign of the imminent revival of racial policies (fascist racial legislation had been suspended during the few weeks of the Badoglio government); only this time the aims pursued would be much grimmer. With almost 2,500 members, the Jewish community in Florence was one of the largest in Italy; however, here as elsewhere not everyone was quick to see the seriousness of the threat this new turn of events posed. One who did was the Head Rabbi, Nathan Cassuto, who did everything in his power to convince Florentine Jews to abandon their homes and take refuge in more out-of-the-way places; furthermore, to prevent the Jews being caught together collectively, he suspended all religious services at the synagogue at the beginning of October. The most pressing problem he had to face was that posed by the safety of the hundreds of foreign Jews who had taken refuge in Florence after the fall of fascism (together with those new arrivals who had fled the French zone, up to that point occupied by the Italian troops). Using the funds gathered together by Eugenio Artom, Cassuto and a small committee (Giuliano Treves, Matilde Cassin, Saul Campagnano, Raffaele Cantoni and the young Lascar sisters) worked energetically to remove these people from danger. Finally, in mid-October, an agreement was reached with the Florentine Curia (under Cardinal Dalla Costa) and then implemented by a Jewish-Christian committee that involved numerous clerics and, above all, around twenty convents and monasteries and various countryside parishes. It is impossible to give the exact number of those helped – for obvious reasons it would have been imprudent to draw up lists of their names – but it does seem that they totalled around 300-400. What is certain is that in the first weeks of operations, the flow of those helped was such that the offices of the Jewish

¹ The basic source is the record of the trial of Martelloni and another 67 defendants held in Florence in 1950, at the end of a long investigation which began immediately after the war. Other documentary sources are to be found in the Florence City Archives and the Archives of the Jewish Community in Florence. There are, however, no specific studies of the question, only some rapid mentions in books dedicated to the history of the Resistance in Florence. The question of Jewish expropriation in the period 1938-1943 is dealt with amply in *Razza e fascismo. La persecuzione contro gli Ebrei in Toscana (1938-1943)*, 2 vols., Carocci, Roma 1999, and in Enrico Mori's degree thesis, discussed at the "Cesare Alfieri" Faculty of Political Science in Florence in 1994. The trial documents are of extraordinary importance to a study of how the directives regarding sequestration and confiscation were applied in Florence. They include investigatory material and, of course, statements by victims and defendants, including Martelloni himself.

After having left Florence, he would settle with his family at Rovagnate in the Como area, where he was arrested after 25 April 1945. On that occasion (April 30), he would – perhaps to put his position in a better light – claim that in October 1943 he had become a member of the Galluzzo section of the Italian Communist Movement, acting thereafter upon its orders. He would also, falsely, claim that he had been the EGELI commissioner. Given that he was charged with no crime relating to the period he had been in Rovagnate (June 1944-April 1945), he was transferred to the Albate camp which held prisoners who had fought for the RSI. From there he would be freed – due to “an oversight”, the local Police Chief would say – before the arrival of the warrant for his arrest which had been issued in Florence. At that point he disappeared, with many theories and insinuations being advanced to explain his release: during the trial there would even be talk of an intervention by the Allies. Perhaps his ‘escape’ was an accident, the mere result of a bureaucratic mix-up; or perhaps it was due to the fact that many people did not want certain things to come to light. If true, the involvement of the Allies may be explained by the desire to safeguard and regain possession of works of art – a matter which, before the surrender in Italy, American and German representatives in Switzerland had discussed in relation to the granting of immunity to the SS. Whatever the truth, Martelloni was never found again, even if living in Edolo (under false name) and maintaining constant contact with his lawyer, who would forward a defence memo of some sixty pages (no longer among the trial documents). Quite apart from the political aspect of his actions, that document would claim that Martelloni's financial dealings were above reproach. The trial ran from the first days of July 1950 to August 4. It ended with a recognition that Martelloni and all his main collaborators could not be prosecuted due to the granting of an amnesty. Martelloni was also found not guilty of charges of extortion and specific cases of theft – either because the crime was unproven or because he did not commit it. As a result, the warrant for his arrest was rescinded. Eight lesser defendants were found guilty of theft and extortion and sentenced to fines and prison terms of from seven months to four years. However, all the sentence were immediately remitted. Comprising seven files, the trial documents are in the Florence State Archives. The first contains dossiers (called vols.) I (plus enclosed material) and II; in the second are vols. III-XII; in the third vols. XIII-XIX and the prosecution's closing statement at the trial; in the fourth is the enclosed material with pre-trial investigation I; in the fifth that with pre-trial investigation II. All these files are dated 1950. The last two have different dates. The sixth, dated 1951, contains various documents; the seventh, dated 1954, contains ‘*ultime buste*’.

community in Florence became an improvised 'sorting centre', where people were furnished with fake Italian documents and then sent off to less risky places of refuge.

Unlike other cities in the same situation, Florence in 1943 was relatively calm. True, the fascist apparatus was re-established, with new units of the Militia – now under the title of GNR – being set up. However, though these would include such special-purpose squads as that under Major Carità, there were for the time being no important operations launched against the Jews. On the morning of 6 November that changed when units of the German SD burst into the synagogue and associated buildings. They arrested only one Italian (the custodian) but around two hundred foreign Jews (Germans and Poles, according to what the German consul, Wolf, told Bernard Berenson). During that night and throughout the day of 7 November, the Germans also raided various Jewish homes, arresting the few occupants they found there.

Those seized would make up part of the convoy of people deported to the German camps on 9 November. The German consul, Wolf, protested to his ambassador Rahn that the raids "risked ruining the climate of calm that, in spite of enemy propaganda, had been established thanks to the correct behaviour of our troops and all the efforts we have made." He was possibly then told to keep his nose out of Jewish affairs, which were none of his concern (the advice that, for similar reasons, was given to Moelhausen, the German consul in Rome). Nevertheless, no further such operations were carried out. The scant number of Italian Jews seized in the raids must have led those responsible to think they were pointless against a community which was now scattered and hidden (after that October-November, raids would never again net such tragically large gatherings of the foreign Jews who had arrived here believing that they would be safe).

The attention of the German forces was, in fact, now directed against the Jewish-Christian committee, of whose existence they had more than a mere suspicion. Various convents and monasteries where Jews had been given refuge were identified. And, thanks to the services of an informer, on 26 November they raided a private building in Via Pucci, arresting Cassuto, two refugees (Kalberg and Ziegler) who had been very active in the organisation, Ziegler's interpreter (the informer), the Lascar sisters and a priest (Casini). The following night, German units raided the Franciscan convent in Piazza del Carmine, arresting thirty women and some children; the San Giuseppe recreation centre in Via Cirillo, arresting twenty men; and the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition (Via Gioberti), arresting several more women. This group of people was then transferred to Verona and would be part of those shipped to Auschwitz on 6 December. The one exception was Ziegler, who was released together with his interpreter and unknowingly served as bait to trap Cantoni, Campagnano and Cassuto's wife, who were all arrested by the Germans on 28 November. Finally, when the informer's cover had been blown, Ziegler and his family were seized in the city's Seminario Minore, where however there were no longer any more foreign Jews. The Cassuto and Zeigler families were sent to Milan, and were part of the convoy shipped from there to Auschwitz on 30 January 1944.

The dismembered committee was soon replaced by another, headed by Artom; acting with the co-operation of the Curia, he would show great skill in distributing funds to the numerous Jews scattered throughout the area in difficult circumstances. Then, as the initial phase of German measures against the Jews came to an end, the new fascist units began to play a more active role. The police order of 30 November issued by the RSI Ministry of the Interior made Jews, already declared 'enemies of the Italian Social Republic,' subject to arrest and confinement within concentration camps; it was followed, on 4 January 1944, by the decree in which Mussolini laid down the procedures for the seizure of their property. Hence, although it is clear that any Jews put in concentration camps were effectively handed over to German control, from this moment onwards the 'Jewish problem' in Florence was handled by the authorities of the RSI.

After the issue of the above-mentioned order by the Ministry of the Interior, local authorities set about tackling the problems posed by the two issues of the arrest of Jews and the seizure of their assets. In Florence, these problems were particularly substantial due to the size of the community, the social standing of its members and the extent of their property. Issued by the local Police Chief

on 14 December, the first directives on this matter were contained in a confidential document that also listed those who were exempt from application of the order: some cases of mixed marriages or foreign Jews who were citizens of allied or neutral nations. Obviously, the very size of the Jewish community – together with the limited capacity of prisons and the restricted number of police available – ruled out the simultaneous arrest of all Jews; and thus the process had to be staggered. At the same time, it was clear that some sort of office would have to be set up to handle property seizures and confiscation; so, on 21 December 1943, the Head of Province, Raffaele Manganiello, created the Office for Jewish Affairs within the Florence Prefecture and appointed Giovanni Martelloni as its head.

The first and most important aspect of these tragic days – the arrest of Jews and the consequences thereof – lies outside the scope of the present Report; furthermore, those consequences were not as sizeable in Florence as elsewhere, due both to the prior dispersal of the community and the substantial protection afforded to individual Jews. These circumstances meant that the search for and arrest of Jews were made much more difficult; and though misfortune – or the work of informers – might lead to such arrests, their numbers were comparatively limited.

What does interest this Report is the second aspect of the measures taken: the seizure and confiscation of property. Though less tragic, this was devastating for the lives of numerous Jews, especially as the policy was applied with particular fervour in Florence.

Obviously, the starting-point for the actions of the Office for Jewish Affairs would have to be the listing of Jews and the identification of their residences, of any real estate they owned and any businesses they controlled. And equally obviously, after five years of racial policy and concomitant censuses (starting with the first census of the Jewish community in Florence in 1938), such data was readily available in the Florentine Prefecture. Furthermore, Florence – like various other cities – had in 1942 seen the establishment of a “Centre for the Study of the Jewish Problem”, a body inspired by clearly racist motives which acted as a collection-point for documentation; the Centre, in fact, had all the information required for this new phase, and its director, Aldo Vannini, became an active collaborator of Martelloni’s. The attempts made by some administrative or council offices to hide lists of Jews did little to slow down this collection of information, and the Office for Jewish Affairs soon had all the data it needed: complete lists of the 2,487 Florentine “Jews of Jewish parents”, of the 472 born within mixed marriages, and of the 987 “Jewish families of Italian nationality resident in Florence”, each complete with address. Another list at its disposal was that compiled in 1939 by the Provincial Council of Corporations to identify businesses belonging to Italian citizens of Jewish race which did not fall within categories A and B (that is, those which were neither of ‘national importance’ nor contained a Jewish shareholding that exceeded the allowed limits); the 1939 figure for such business concerns had been 194, but there can be no doubt that by 1944 this had dropped considerably. And, finally, the Local Tax Office provided the lists of assets which Jews had been obliged to submit in late 1938/early 1939 so that respect of the imposed quotas of property-ownership could be assessed.

The completeness of these lists meant that the Office for Jewish Affairs could bypass protracted collection of data and proceed rapidly to the actual seizure of Jewish property. Whilst the owners themselves might have put themselves out of harm’s way, their property remained well-known and could thus be seized readily; the only difficulties were those posed by the bureaucratic procedures of confiscation.

But here one encounters the anomalous feature of property seizures in Florence, which was the result of a precise decision not to proceed to the wholesale confiscation of each single Jew’s property (thence to be handed over to the EGELI or the body to which it delegated authority; in the case of Tuscany this was the Land Bank of the Monte dei Paschi). Instead, the policy followed was one of specific seizure/sequestration of individual parts of assets, ordered directly by the Commissioner of the Office for Jewish Affairs. The ‘police order’ of 30 November had envisaged immediate sequestration to be followed by formal confiscation; the procedures to be applied were laid down in the decree of 4 January 1944. However, the interpretation of these orders in Florence

was deliberately 'extensive'. Martelloni, in fact, argued that there was an impelling need to act rapidly without being hindered by the long process of confiscation; the authorities should thus exploit the official procedure of sequestration, which by definition was immediately executive. As the city's Police Chief would comment, when writing to individual police stations in order to raise flagging zeal, such sequestrations were also in keeping with "the ethical and social aims behind the racial measures." Obviously, the entire process would ultimately result in confiscation – if only to strip the Jewish proprietor of formal ownership – but in the immediate short-term what was important was the seizure of certain specific assets: real estate not being used by the owners; commercial businesses; bank deposits and shares; private homes and their contents (especially where these latter were jewels, precious objects or works of art).

The policy thus followed in Florence was, in effect, the greatest anomaly in the whole process of expropriation with the territory of the RSI. It may have been followed elsewhere, but Florence was the only city with a sizeable Jewish population to see this policy applied so systematically and drastically. The entire operation was in the hands of the Commissioner of the Office for Jewish Affairs: not only did he issue around 700 sequestration orders, but he also took over the management of the assets seized.

This concentration of decision-making and executive power in one figure and his few associates would make the process of property seizures one of the most ruthless in Italy. And this ruthlessness was compounded by the association of that power with the unit headed by Major Carità, who rapidly became the very embodiment of a brutal violence which did not balk at torture. In Florence, one sees not only the harsh application of a political directive, but also a very personal involvement therein inspired by radical anti-Jewish feeling. The result was an operation which, viewed from the outside, seems to reveal personal bigotry very quickly being put at the service of personal interest.

Only relatively late, in May, would the Head of Province issue twelve actual decrees of confiscation. And this was almost certainly a result of a pressing call from the Ministry of Finance (19 May), urging the Florence Prefecture to solicit the transfer to the EGELI of "sequestered or confiscated" Jewish assets. On 31 May, when the sequestrations were completed and the allies had already launched their offensive against Rome, Martelloni wrote to the EGELI at San Pellegrino Terme, trying to shift responsibility and expressing surprise that "having since 4 March issued a good 78 confiscation decrees against assets of no negligible value, we have still not enjoyed the privilege of establishing official contact with your local representatives for the consignment of said assets [...] Nor can we understand why your office should have solicited the Ministry of Finance to issue a reprimand to this Prefecture, which since December 1943 has been working indefatigably on this and is proud to consider itself as being irreproachable in all that it has done: not only have we sequestered the assets, we have also administered them (constrained to the latter by the failure of your representative to receive that which this office has, since March, been ready consign)." The numbers given do not match with those of the EGELI; and the justification given is specious because it does not explain the need for the Office for Jewish Affairs to take over direct administration immediately after sequestration whilst awaiting official confiscation and the transference of assets to the EGELI. Nor does the letter explain the decision to proceed with the sequestration of specifically chosen assets which then passed under the Office's supervision. Furthermore, whilst reiterating the difficulties it faced due to the absence of complete and updated information on Jewish assets, the Florence Tax Office had as early as 20 April urged the Prefecture to forward to it around 800 confiscation decrees regarding real estate alone, also pointing out that it had received nothing regarding moveable assets and commercial or industrial businesses. For his part, Martelloni would, on 9 May, write to the Head of Province, Manganiello, complaining about the EGELI's attitude and saying that should the procedures requested be followed in full, "the work would take at least a year to complete."

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Thus the entire sequestration of Jewish assets was carried out by the Office for Jewish Affairs, which was made up of some twenty-five people: the Commissioner, Martelloni; his deputy, the

lawyer Ugo Gaudiosi; the head of the legal office, Enzo Zimatore; the head of the real-estate section, Bruno Frullini, the head of the sequestration and assessment department, Capt. Cipriano Passetti, who was also Martelloni's brother-in-law; the secretary of the real-estate office, Elmo Simoni; and some nineteen other employees, mainly in clerical capacities. Alongside this small nucleus, however, worked the special GNR unit commanded by Major Carità.

Even within the procedural 'short cut' of sequestration, specific rules and regulations had to be followed. Attention was focussed upon assets that were readily accessible, tending to ignore those which were not so. This latter group not only included property in the countryside, but also bank accounts and stocks and shares, given the difficulties in enforcing sequestration upon banks. The brunt of the operation was felt by: Jewish businesses; property owned by Jews but used by others; and private homes. Given that Martelloni subsequently destroyed the more compromising material of the Office for Jewish Affairs, we have no specific documentation regarding the sequestration orders. However, we do know that they concerned 284 buildings, 114 businesses and 303 private homes.

The buildings were listed in a two-volume ledger, complete with location, owner and, sometimes, administrator. Each building was then entrusted to a supervisory commissioner, who answered directly to the specific real-estate section of the Office for Jewish Affairs. All in all, the commissioners totalled a few dozen and included some heads of department within the office itself. The management of these assets does not seem to have presented any serious problems and within a few months had generated an income of 865,844.70 lire. However, expenses and outgoings amounted to 868,268.90 lire, thus there was an overall deficit of 2,423.50 lire. It is obvious that this is the resource upon which the Office for Jewish affairs drew most heavily.

With regard to the 114 commercial businesses sequestered (the difference in number must reflect a similar drop in the 194 listed in 1938 ITS 1939 BEFORE), the preliminary order of closure was followed by the appointment of a supervisory commissioner who had first of all to ascertain whether the business was truly under Jewish ownership and then file a full report, including location and stock. These commissioners totalled 27, most appointed to supervise more than one business (some supervising many). They included some four senior figures from the Office for Jewish Affairs, who were responsible for supervising a total of 41 businesses. However, unlike the real estate, the administration of the businesses posed problems – either because in some the Jewish share of the ownership was declared partial or minority, or because in others (particularly textile businesses) there were sizeable quantities of stock.

With regard to most of the businesses there were no specific instructions. The procedures followed were coldly bureaucratic – partly because the real owners were absent and partly because the supervisory commissioners realised that their appointment was temporary and thus tended to make their enquiries drag out. In effect, these commissioners did not submit reports regarding numerous businesses (particularly the smaller ones), probably because these had suspended trading some time before and had no sizeable remaining stock. Only two of the business were reported as having ceased all activity; supervision of ten was lifted after they were recognised as being of entirely non-Jewish ownership; and though it was decided to cede five others, this was a late decision and there is no evidence that it was actually put into effect. For one business (a haberdasher's – 'Maglieria Aurora' – owned by Giorgina Servi), the proposal was to "sell off the small remaining stock to avoid further costs," and "a letter was written to the EGELI asking for instructions"; whilst the stock of the business owned by Gian Sornaga (née Mariani) was to be sold off *en bloc* for 7,905 lire. Their Jewish ownership having been ascertained, a further nine businesses were to be sold off entirely. For some of these we know the sums received and then deposited in individual accounts at the Banco di Napoli: the business of Clara Galletti fetched L. 43,256 lire, that of the Sartoria Calò L. 95,528.50 (saving book No. 731), that of Cesare Melli L. 63,615.69 (savings book No.724), that of Elio Melli L. 5,195, that of A and C. Cividalli L. 140,000 (savings book 373) and that of Ersilia Calò L. 47,027.20. We do not know the sums for the other three businesses: Fucile Tomasso e Treves, Sara Irma Amato (née Orvieto) and 'Calzabella'), perhaps because there was not time to

complete the sale, given that the reports were not submitted until the end of May/beginning of June. With regard to another four businesses, confiscation was decided. In the case of 'Corcos e Alberti', this involved one third of the ownership (following the revocation of a previous deed of gift); in the case of the Industria Serica Nazionale, a limited company, it involved twenty shares owned by Augusto Treves and 150 owned by Guido Paggi, to be sold to Aryan shareholders. What little stock remained in the business of Mario Millul was confiscated and re-sold (the resultant 45,679 lire being deposited in account 730 at the Banco di Napoli); from Ugo Cassuto's firm some 60,203.20 lire in bank accounts was confiscated; and from Vittore Melli's premises, which housed various businesses, shelving and furnishings to the value of 34,260 lire were confiscated (along with bank deposits of 6,311.25 lire).

Obviously in the early days of June all of these procedures were interrupted; however, an even greater urgency can be seen in the moves to seize and sell off the stock found in shops (particularly textiles shops). The Office for Jewish Affairs would order its supervisory commissioners to proceed immediately with such sales. If these commissioners were themselves members of the Office, naturally there was no problem. But there were two cases in which they resisted these instructions – and Major Carità had to intervene. Such sales included the stock of the shops belonging to Adolfo Camerini, Maurizio Calò, Gabriella Lusena, Leone Camerino's Società ICMA, the Ditta Orefici and the firm owned by Moise Cohen; and on each occasion, the sale was by 'private treaty', with direct payment of the sums agreed.

Finally, there were also some 49 Persian carpets removed from the premises of the Società SAIMA.

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The seizure of private homes and their contents was an even more dramatic event; the owner-occupiers or tenants may well have been absent by this time, but the action still meant a violent eruption into the personal and private sphere of their lives.

The first raids and seizures of property within private homes came in November and December, motivated by the Germans' search for the Jews who were registered as resident. Systematic sequestration by the Italians would get underway in January 1944. These operations continued uninterrupted and took a certain amount of time, given that even applying the system of sequestrations not all the formal procedures could be carried out quickly. In fact, each raid upon a home had to involve the local police office and the city council's War Services Office; a functionary from the latter had to be present to draw up an inventory and then make provisions for the transfer and storage of the furnishings seized.

By the time these operations came to an end, 303 homes had been sequestered. Whilst it is certain that they got underway on 6 January, we do not know exactly when they ended; they had definitely stopped by mid-May, so at most they continued for some 120 days.

At the beginning, things must have been quite hectic: on 11 February Commissioner Martelloni wrote to the Head of Province, Manganiello, complaining about the Germans' indiscriminate seizures of furnishings from the synagogue which was being used to store the material taken from homes that had been sequestered. There was even one case – in a home in Via Lorenzo il Magnifico – of the functionaries responsible refusing to proceed with the drawing-up of the inventory because a non-commissioned officer and a handful of troops from the German forces had already begun removing furnishings without any explanation or official receipt. Declining his responsibility for such losses, Martelloni proposed to the Head of Province that the furnishings should be removed using all available vehicles – and the greatest possible speed – for storage in the cellars of the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani.

Finally, to clarify their respective obligations and also to "define the question of the requisitions of the apartments, furniture and utensils belonging to citizens of Jewish race," a meeting was held on 9 March between Martelloni, Danilo Mori (Director of the Assistance Office of the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani) and Aldo D'Elia (Head of the City Council's War Services Office). This established that the Office for Jewish Affairs had to draw up a list of the apartments to be sequestered and supply it to each of the police offices responsible for the area concerned, which

would then dispatch a functionary to proceed with the opening of the apartment and the drawing-up of a report (to be written “together with the representative of the City Council”); that all objects apart from those strictly necessary for daily life were, if possible, to be locked away in a sealed room; that the furniture which, for reasons of space, could not be stored in the rooms of the apartment itself was to be removed to the storage space created within the synagogue (from further documentation it emerges that such on-site storage of furnishings could only take place within apartments where the Jews were owner-occupiers, not in those where they were merely tenants); that all objects of value (gold, silver and other precious metals) had to be gathered together by the functionary of the State police, who would draw up a list thereof and immediately deposit the material with the Banca d’Italia; that paintings, carpets and objects held to be of artistic value were to be handed over to the Superintendence for Fine Arts, which would issue a regular receipt for them; that books had to be removed by the Biblioteca Nazionale; that personal linen and clothing that might be of immediate use was to be sent to the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani, for distribution to refugees and the homeless; that once the inventory was completed, the keys had to be handed over to the representative of the City Council, prior to the re-assignment of the apartment; that this re-assignment would be decided by the Federazione; that requests for furnishings and other objects which arrived from the German forces in the city would be met by the City Council, drawing upon the furnishings that had been removed to storage, “this procedure being adopted to avoid the regrettable incidents and abuses of the past”; that “inventories of the material in the storage facilities at the Synagogue and within the Federazione building would be drawn up again from scratch, in order to clarify the situation after the well-known seizure of material by the Germans”; that the City Council’s Office of War Services would have a ‘purely executive’ role, limiting itself to the provision of a representative to assist in the drawing-up of the inventory by the police functionary carrying out the requisition order issued by the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs; and that it was the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani which would decide upon the redistribution of furnishings to the refugees and homeless who were re-assigned the apartments.

Quite apart from the precision of the procedures laid down, it is clear that the *podestà* in Florence (Giotto Dainelli) and the War Service Office were determined not to take on any direct responsibility for what was happening. This – plus the general turn of events in the requisition of homes and the seizure of furnishings – is clear from a report that Office sent to the *podestà* on 22 July 1944, when the Allied front was approaching the city, the Germans were still there and the Director of the War Services Office had left for the north. The entire aim of the document is to demonstrate that, with regard to the furnishings seized from Jewish homes, it was impossible to make the register of material received in deposit match with that of material loaded on site.

The report prefaces its comments by saying that the inventories had been of two kinds, covering either the furnishings left for the new occupants of furnished apartments (families of refugees and the homeless, soldiers of the RSI, public officials and German forces; in most cases, a regular document of consignment had been signed) or material sent to the various storage spaces (first the synagogue, then the building of the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani and the Saloncino Goldoni in Via Santa Caterina). It then points out that the keeping of regular accounts of the furnishings received by the City Council had begun after 8 March, with the completion of registers listing deposits and withdrawals from the various ‘warehouses’. However, for the period 6 January-8 March no register of deliveries had been kept. The loading of the furniture at the apartments was recorded in the individual inventories drawn up there, but there was no record of that material’s delivery. In fact, a whole series of improprieties had taken place: a) rooms had been opened up and inventories compiled “in the harassing presence of those to whom the accommodation had been re-assigned [...], who often occupied the area before the inventories had been completed;” b) means of transport had either been lacking or inadequate; c) German officers and non-commissioned officers had removed furnishings from the council warehouses – or even from the original premises, before the inventory had been drawn up – and no sort of receipt had been provided; d) furnishings had also been removed from the premises which had been occupied by the German forces; e) objects had

been lost, mislaid or broken; f) furnishings and objects stored in the synagogue had been destroyed by people who had broken into the building; g) furnishings and objects had been removed from the storage facility at the Federazione dei Fasci Repubblicani.

Reiterating, therefore, that the list of furnishings received in consignment did not coincide with the contents of the three lists of furnishings ceded to the German forces, to private individuals or at that moment stored in the City Council's warehouses, it concluded that all the other listed furnishings and objects were to be considered as having been illegally removed by the German forces, lost or broken. Furthermore, it was by then impossible to establish the provenance of what had been conserved, because "the furnishings requisitioned and regularly handed over to the City Council were stored in various warehouses or subsequently ceded for use without any record being kept of the provenance of each object. Therefore it is impossible to trace the furniture which was in any one particular home, unless it has remained there."

In fact, the non-correspondence between the inventories of material removed and materials actually delivered for storage was not the only problem. There was also that of the exactitude of the original sequestration inventories. Those regarding the property of Guido Orvieto, Cino Vitta, Gustavo Padoa and Ugo Castelnuovo Tedesco are short of certain objects of value. And in the case of the homes of Baronessa Levi Landfau and Margherita Levi Philipson there two problems: furnishings were sold off directly to third parties and the objects of value found in the walled-up apartment alongside were removed by Martelloni. Similarly, the inventory regarding the apartment of Giorgio Forti is short furniture and objects.

Realising that the collapse of the regime was imminent, the Office for Jewish Affairs would in June 1944 order the public auction of the objects taken from the requisitioned homes. Organised by the Materazzi auction house, this involved some pieces of furniture but primarily ornaments, paintings, lamps, linen and everyday objects and utensils – all of which were thus dispersed and lost. Advertised through posters, press announcements and 600 invitations, the auction was held in two parts. The first, promoted by the Office for Jewish Affairs, involved the materials held in storage within that Office's premises in Via Ginori; it was held on the 12, 13, 14, 16 and 17 June. The second, imposed by Major Carità, involved material taken from the Accademia and was held on the 1, 2 and 3 July. In all there were 683 lots acquired by hundreds of buyers, many of whom gave false names; hence, after the arrival of the Allies it was only possible to identify forty-one of them. What is certain is that, alongside the small-scale purchasers, there were those who bought up a number of objects (some times as many as forty) hoping to realise a profit on them. The sequestrators themselves bought things; and there was even one case of an Aryan relative of Jews bidding to recover some family objects. Overall, the auction raised L. 2,071,547. Having subtracted the percentage due to the auctioneers, the first days raised L. 1,309,350.25, the latter days L. 610,000. One million of the former sum was taken by Martelloni (the rest being deposited in an account made out in the name of the Prefecture); the whole of the second sum was taken by Carità.

The auction was to have included the 49 oriental carpets (value: around 12 million lire) that had been seized from the SAIMA company premises. At the last minute, these were withdrawn from the auction, perhaps because it was decided such costly items would not fetch their real value when purchasers were clearly trying to buy without revealing their real identity. However, the withdrawal from auction may also have been due to the recent orders that all works of art, jewellery and other objects of value should be shipped northwards.

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The works of artistic value seized from the sequestered homes were to be handed over to the Superintendence of Art Galleries, which as early as 1 December 1943 was appointed to oversee the sequestration of works of art. In fact, however, this directive was only partially respected, because the requisitions occurred "chaotically, and most of the time we were not informed beforehand or only at the last minute," the Superintendence would later write; from which it seems that those behind the sequestrations were concerned to have a police functionary and a council representative present for the opening of sequestered apartments and the drawing-up of inventories, but reserved to

themselves the right to involve a representative of the Superintendence only when it turned out to be necessary.

In fact, the latter body would write that it had only been possible for it to be present at the requisition of the Synagogue, of the crates “of the so-called Jewish treasure” and of eleven private homes (Biagiavi Dal Mar, Alessandro Levi, Barone Levi, Montecorboli, Mortara, Orvieto, Padoa, Sadun, Salmon, Supino and Vita), as well as being represented various times at the Saloncino Goldoni. This reference to the Saloncino clearly indicates that the Superintendence often took steps to remove art objects from there (this was one of the places where objects and furnishings from the sequestered homes were stored).

But though the Superintendence was not regularly involved in the actual sequestrations, it did manage to gather together a sizeable collection of works and *objets d'art* at the premises of the Accademia in Via Ricasoli. One need only mention that, even after the removal of material forced upon it by Major Carità in June 1944, the Superintendence still housed property that belonged to Basevi, Benzinbras, Biagiavi Dal Mar, Calabresi, Cammeo, Camerini, Finzi, Franchetti, Franco, Alessandro Levi, G. E. Levi, Baronessa Levi-Landau, Baronessa Levi, Montecorboli, Mortara, Olivetti, Adolfo Orvieto, Guido Orvieto, Padoa, Purik Nathan, Salmon, Supino, Tajar, Vita and Vitta. All of this was subsequently restored to its rightful owners.

Furthermore, the 1,602 ancient coins found in the home of Bettino Errara were handed over to the Superintendence for Antiquities in Etruria; and various pianos and harmoniums went to the Istituto Musicale Cherubini (one Schiedamayer piano, the property of A. Bonaventura, was taken from his private use by the consul Francesco Vitaletti). Finally, there were also some minor objects seized by Major Carità which, complete with inventory, were handed over to the Materazzi auction house for auction.

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With the liberation of Rome, it was clear that the Allies would soon reach Florence and that the German defensive line would fall back to the Apennines. At this point the entire fascist apparatus began to fall apart; as plans were made to retreat northwards, the daily fighting between fascists and armed members of the Resistance intensified and the death-toll increased. Obviously, the measures against the Jews ceased, with the exception of the hurried seizure of possible resources, the enforced sale of shops and the public auction of sequestered goods. When orders arrived that all cash, shares, jewellery and works of art were to be transferred north, as much as possible was withdrawn from banks and the vetting of the objects to be transferred began.

In fact, there was not much to withdraw from the Banco di Napoli, the bank which had been used for the day-to-day administration of sequestered resources. Various accounts there had been opened since January, with June withdrawals from one being L. 116,905.20 and from another L. 111,993. There were no withdrawals from a prefecture account with L. 500,000 registered in the passbook, nor from the four other accounts held in the name of the Office for Jewish Affairs; similarly, the accounts into which had been paid the sums raised from the liquidation of various commercial businesses were left untouched.

Much more sizeable was the million lire that Martelloni took from the proceeds of the first part of the Materazzi auction, plus the unknown amount raised in cash by the enforced ‘private treaty’ sale of stock from some businesses. A letter of late 1944 from Capt. Passetti addressed to Martelloni (then in the north) confirmed the scant amount left in bank deposits but at the same time spoke of several million in cash. Martelloni would later claim that upon leaving Florence he had handed over that sum to the Head of Province, Manganiello, who had since been killed in the Novara area by partisans. In fact, all trace of most of this money was lost, with the one exception of just over one million lire (presumably the money from the auction) that Martelloni would deposit at the Banca d'Italia in Milan.

There is, however, very precise information regarding what Martelloni took from the Banca d'Italia in Florence and what Carità took from the Accademia.

On 14 June the former went to the Florence branch of the bank with a written order from the Head of Province and had the staff hand over to him the assets that had been deposited there after seizures from sequestered home. All in all there were eleven crates. The first contained a deposit of L. 3,246,408.66, together with bank passbooks and a high number of public annuities and treasury or other bonds (all with indication of ownership). The contents of the second were similar, whilst in the third there was silverware and various objects; the fourth contained envelopes and bags with objects of value seized from individual homes; in the fifth and sixth were more silverware and objects; in the seventh and eight administrative documents from the Office for Jewish Affairs; and in the others, files and papers. Martelloni immediately took all this material to Milan, together with the carpets seized from the Società SAIMA. On 17 June he would deposit the crates at the Banca d'Italia in Milan, also paying in the sum of L. 1,125.879.90. He could not leave the carpets because the bank refused to accept them; thus they were left with a private individual, who would later claim that he no longer had them because they had been stolen. In the months thereafter, the Ministry of Finance would oblige Martelloni to hand over all the crates to the EGELI. Consequently, they were transferred to the Monte dei Pegni [Pawn Bank] of the Cassa di Risparmio della Province Lombarde, which in this region was the EGELI's delegated bank. Martelloni was allowed to withdraw 435,567 from the account, thus leaving 690,312.90 lire.

Events surrounding the property seized from the Accademia on 27 June by Major Carità were much more dramatic. On that day, he burst into the premises and personally chose the works of art which he then ordered should be handed over to him. These included the eighteen crates of 'Jewish treasure' whose two hiding-places – in Fiesole and Prato – Martelloni had happened to discover the previous February (a precise inventory of their contents had then been drawn up). Carità also took a further seventeen crates with paintings and art objects, all with clear indications of ownership (most of them belonged either to Gustavo Padoa or to Barone Enrico Levi).

All of this material Carità had taken to the Po delta area and then to Longa di Schiavon in the Vicenza region. In spite of pressure from the EGELI to hand it over, he tried to insist that it be kept at his unit's headquarters. The hand-over should finally have taken place in December 1944; but in March 1945 the Head of Province in Como, Celio, had – upon urging from the Minister of the Interior, Zerbino – to order Martelloni to Padua to oversee the consignment of the material to the EGELI. However, by then the collapse of the RSI was imminent and difficulties in travel made it impossible for Martelloni to comply. Thus all the crates were still in Carità's headquarters when the end came. Fortunately it was saved, even if it was not returned to Florence for three years: the partisan unit that had recovered the material and then stored it in the Bishop's Palace at Vicenza had obtained a temporary sequestration order from that city's courts whilst they brought an, ultimately unsuccessful, suit for the 5% reward envisaged by Art. 930 of the Civil Code.

But Martelloni and Carità were not the only ones responsible for the enforced removal of cash and valuables. On 14 July an armed unit of the German SD went to the Credito Italiano and forced the bank to hand over a total of L. 4,349,648.65 from accounts and deposits held by Jews.

This was the last act in a drama that had lasted some six months. Quite apart from the horror of the arrests and the deportations, the measures taken affected the lives of some thousand or so Jewish families which had long been a part of the city's social fabric and made such an important contribution to its cultural and economic development.

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After the Allied front pushed north, many Jews returned to their homes and businesses. Then, after the war, those who had taken refuge abroad, perhaps in Switzerland, also returned. All found the same thing: homes stripped desolately bare. The city council's warehouses still contained large numbers of furnishings, but it was all stock-piled at random, without any indication of provenance or original owner. Obviously, the owners themselves could recognise their property, but the special council office set up to bring about this restitution would be at work for years to come. Furthermore, paintings, books, ornaments, tableware, linen and everyday utensils – all these had

been lost. And in the case of shops and businesses, the damage suffered was dissimilar but nevertheless sizeable; whilst for the real estate owned but not used by Jews, the Office for Jewish Affairs had not been able to go beyond the confiscation of income and rents. Paradoxically, works of art and objects of value fared much better, both because some of them were left in Florence (in the Accademia) and, primarily, because the material taken to the north was not subsequently split up. The person hardest hit was Giorgio Forti, because many of his objects of value ended up in the afore-mentioned auctions (including a very valuable painting – *The Cumaean Sybil* – which was sold off at a derisory sum).

The problem of restitution was posed immediately and the process was undertaken with great resolution by the Sequestrations Committee of the Tuscan National Liberation Committee. First came the homes, then the businesses and the works of art and objects of value. At this point the fact that the Office for Jewish Affairs had pursued a policy of sequestration rather than confiscation was an advantage: it meant there had not been any actual transfer of legal ownership, so the restoration of original property rights did not encounter formal difficulties or delays. Everyone – that is, everyone who had managed to escape arrest and deportation – recovered their homes and trading premises; could start up their businesses again.

The money raised from the sale of home contents, of seized stock and auctioned property was another problem altogether. It is not known if – or to what extent – consideration of these sums was taken into account within the payment of post-war damages.

As for the sums in bank accounts, the works of art and the other objects of value, those which had remained in Florence were immediately restored to their owners; those which had been moved to Milan or the Vicenza area were restored upon their return to the city (for the former, this occurred in 1946; for the latter, it took place some time later).

