

# CROSSING INTERGROUP BORDERS

## Forms of Social Brokerage in Italian Occupied Greece (1941-43)

*Cruzando las fronteras entre grupos.  
Formas de intermediación social  
en la Grecia ocupada por Italia (1941-43)*

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**Resumen:** A través de un enfoque basado en la sociología del poder, este artículo investiga las formas de mediación entre las autoridades italianas y la población local en la Grecia ocupada por las potencias de Eje durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Como los italianos no podían contar con grandes comunidades de «parientes étnicos» en Grecia –como, por ejemplo, los alemanes en otros países europeos–, tuvieron que recurrir en gran medida a la población local para gobernar el país tanto a nivel gubernamental como a escala local. Para conceptualizar esta forma de mediación, el artículo analiza en primer lugar los enfoques sociológicos de la ocupación y el colonialismo, esbozando los principales puntos en común y las diferencias entre estos dos escenarios desde el punto de vista de la sociología del poder. A continuación, propone entender las relaciones entre ocupantes y ocupados con la categoría sociológica de mediación, en lugar del término de colaboración, de fuertes connotaciones políticas y morales. Utilizando un amplio abanico de fuentes –entre otras, las actas de los tribunales militares italianos en Grecia que procesaron también a ciudadanos griegos–, el artículo explora a continuación las interacciones cotidianas con un enfoque microanalítico, esbozando los principales patrones de mediación y sus efectos en la estratificación de la sociedad griega.

**Palabras clave:** Segunda Guerra Mundial, Grecia, Ocupación, Mediación social.

**Abstract:** Adopting an approach informed by the sociology of power, this article investigates forms of intermediation between the Italian authorities and the local population in Axis-occupied Greece during the Second

World War. As the Italians could not rely on large communities of “ethnic kin” in Greece –like e. g. the Germans in other European countries–, they had to largely resort to locals to govern the country both at government level and on a local scale. To conceptualize this form of intermediation, the paper first analyses sociological approaches to occupation and colonialism, outlining the main commonalities and differences between these two settings from the point of view of the sociology of power. It then proposes to conceptualize the intermediation between occupiers and occupied with the sociological category of brokerage rather than the politically and morally charged term of collaboration. Using a wide array of sources –among others the records of the Italian military tribunals in Greece that prosecuted also Greek citizens–, the paper then explores everyday interactions with a micro-analytical approach, outlining main patterns of brokerage and its effects on social stratification.

**Key words:** Second World War, Greece, Occupation, Social brokerage.

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September 1941, Livadeia –a town in Central Greece– around midnight. Two Greek gendarmes, by the name of Ragnos Sitiganos and Zulas Nicolaos, and a German officer in a state of extreme drunkenness force the owner of a brothel to open the door under threat of weapons. Once entered the house, the group orders the owner Liliana Deferio, a twenty years old woman from Patras, to follow them to the gendarmerie post. On their way there, the party is stopped by an Italian patrolling squad that orders them to surrender the woman. If we are to believe the report of the Italian Carabinieri, the Greek gendarmes attempt to oppose resistance and menace the Carabinieri in broken Italian: “We Greek gendarmes are in charge and not you Italian Carabinieri”. A fighting ensues, during which the German officer mysteriously vanishes, but the Italian swiftly get the better of the gendarmes and arrest them. They will be prosecuted for aggression against members of the Italian army. It is thanks to the trial records that we are allowed to get a glimpse of this incident<sup>1</sup>.

Several details of the story reveal that, far from being only a fight of drunken men, the real motivation of both parties was a contest of honor and politics. According to witnesses, upon entering the brothel

<sup>1</sup> Archivio Centrale dello Stato (hereafter ACS), Tribunali Militari della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, (hereafter Trib II GM), Tribunale del Comando Superiore FFAA Grecia (Athens), b. 8, f. 2236.

the culprits had screamed to the prostitutes summoned in the middle of the night: “You have given yourself to the Italians and have abandoned us, but be aware that the Germans and not the Italians are the rulers here”. As pointed out by the brothel owner in her interrogation, the gendarmes had wanted to have sexual intercourse with the prostitutes which was refused them by the owner on the grounds of their illness. Much information, though, is missing in the records. Had the gendarmes tried to abuse the women? And were the latter actually ill or was this just an excuse given by the owner to spare her valuable merchandise for her Italian clients, surely much better off and with higher social status. We can only wonder about what the German soldier –whose identity the Italians did not even bother to establish– and the Greeks had told each other before the attempted act of bravado, while drinking heavily in the cafés of the town. Be as it may, the story testifies an attempt to establish control of the female body as a symbolic capital, in reaction to its perceived “alienation to the stranger”. During World War II in all European countries controlling women's bodies became an highly politicized issue, as intimate relations with the enemy –be they consensual or not, commercial or emotional– were perceived by the occupied and the occupiers as a threat to the integrity of the national political body. The widespread practice of shaving the heads of women who engaged in intimate relations with the enemy is revealing of such problems<sup>2</sup>. The same is true of the occupiers who in many areas forbade or just restricted relations with local women to preserve the perceived “racial” integrity of their soldiers<sup>3</sup>. The case of the two Greek gendarmes, thus, might be regarded as just one more instance of this general phenomenon. The story, however, presents an interesting peculiarity in that the Greek gendarmes did not claim their own right to decide over the women but, instead, affirmed that of the German, in their eyes the only ones to deserve a share of that resource. This can be explained with the widespread belief among the Greeks that the Italians were illegitimate occupiers, as they had not achieved the right to occupy Greece by defeating it on the battlefield. In fact, it was only thanks to the German intervention that Greece was forced to capitulate in April 1941. More generally, the case of Livadeia is a fitting example of how occupation politicizes all social interactions bringing the “national”, as a field of negotiation and contention,

<sup>2</sup> Among the vast literature on the subject see Annette Warring, “Intimate and Sexual Relations”, in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini. Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, Anette Warring, 88-128. (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See e. g. Maren Röger, *Kriegsbeziehungen: Intimität, Gewalt und Prostitution im besetzten Polen 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2015).

into the private sphere of every individual<sup>4</sup>. This, as the presence of the “German factor” in our story reveals, was not always a clear-cut opposition between “us” and “them” but could be complicated by the presence of third parties.

Although the concepts of resistance or collaboration have shaped and continue to structure common perceptions of the Second World War, reasoning along these clear cut categories is rather an exercise of historical hindsight and do not mirror how most women and men experienced occupation. Influenced by the development of the history of everyday life and of that field loosely defined as “history of experience”, therefore, from the 1970ies onwards scholarship of the Second World War has begun to revisit some of the basic categories used by scholars up to that moment. The concept of everyday life collaboration, a category that might aptly describe Liliana Lefterio’s behavior, has opened up to historians previously uncharted areas of social life. The same is true for the blurred notion of “civilian resistance”, a concept that has considerably widened current understanding of resistance to encompass not only armed activity but also praxes with no immediate political character such as strikes and any act of defiance to the occupying power’s order<sup>5</sup>. However useful such broadened notions are, they lead rather to an over-politicization of historical agency. Radicalizing former criticism to traditional approaches, therefore, recent scholarship<sup>6</sup> has questioned the usefulness of these notions per se, targeting especially that of collaboration, regarded by many as too morally charged to serve as a lens to understand social agency<sup>7</sup>. Furthering this approach, Tatjana Tönsmeier has recently developed the concept of “occupation society” (*Besatzungsgesellschaft*) to capture the peculiarities of occupation as a specific social setting without prioritizing political stances for or against occupation as a lens through which historians study occupation<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Lenz, “Überlegungen zur Dynamik von nationaler und Geschlechterordnung im Besatzungszustand am Beispiel Norwegens“, in *Besatzung. Funktion und Gestalt militärischer Fremdherrschaft von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Günther Kronenbitter, Markus Pöhlmann, Direk Walter, 147-159. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Sémelin, *Sans armes face à Hitler : la résistance civile en Europe 1939-1943* (Paris: Payot, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Vesna Drapac, Gareth Pritchard, “Beyond Resistance and Collaboration: Towards a Social History of Politics in Hitler’s Empire”, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. XLVIII (2015): 865-891.

<sup>7</sup> Christoph Dieckmann, Babette Quinkert, Tatjana Tönsmeier, ed, *Kooperation und Verbrechen. Formen der Kollaboration“ im östlichen Europa 1939-1945*, ed (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Tatjana Tönsmeier, *Das Dritte Reich und die Slowakei 1939-1945. Politischer Alltag zwischen Kooperation und Eigensinn* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2003), 320-348.

<sup>8</sup> Tatjana Tönsmeier, *Besatzungsgesellschaften. Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Erfahrungsgeschichte des Alltags unter deutscher Besatzung im Zweiten*

Consistent with this trend and drawing on previously unexplored records of the Italian army and of the Italian military tribunals, this article will investigate forms of cooperation between Italian occupation authorities and Greek citizens during the Italian occupation between 1941 and 1943. The aim of this investigation is to conceptualize occupation as a social fact and focus on its salient features. Before turning to this topic, therefore, a short methodological introduction is in order to exemplify the general approach adopted by this article.

## 1. Sociological approaches to occupation

If we leave aside the common definition of “occupation” in international law<sup>9</sup> and, instead, look at this phenomenon with the conceptual tools of the sociology of power, we can consider it a peculiar form of domination in which power in the last instance remains in the hands of a foreign –in cultural/ethnic terms– group<sup>10</sup>. Although inherited forms of domination within the occupied society continue to be at play, they are subsumed by a dominant power center located outside it – both physically/geographically and culturally. There is therefore an ethno-cultural line running through occupied societies that divides them into two intertwined but, at root, differentiated groups, that of the occupiers and that of the occupied<sup>11</sup>. Borrowing from Cornelis Lammers’ sociological exploration of occupation in history, this can be understood as a form of “inter-organizational control”, namely the control established by a dominant organization on a dominated one through a second-degree organization whose specific function is that of linking the two<sup>12</sup>.

This definition of occupation invites comparison with colonialism and imperial rule. Not surprisingly several attempts to conceptualize colonialism bear resemblance to the way we have defined occupation<sup>13</sup>. As argued by Frederick Cooper, for example, colonialism gives rise to a “gatekeeper state”, namely a form of state unable to deeply penetrate its territory and society, that perform its functions only as

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Weltkrieg“, Version: 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 18.12.2015. [http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeyer\\_besatzungsgesellschaften\\_v1\\_de\\_2015](http://docupedia.de/zg/toensmeyer_besatzungsgesellschaften_v1_de_2015) (8.1.2017).

<sup>9</sup> On this see Eyal Benvenisti, *The International Law of Occupation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Eric Carlton, *Occupation. The Policies and Practices of Military Conquerors* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Cornelis J. Lammers, “Levels of Collaboration: a Comparative Study of German Occupation Regimes during the Second World War”, in *Die deutsche Herrschaft in den “germanischen” Ländern 1940-1945*, ed Robert Bohn, 47-70. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Cornelis J. Lammers, “The Interorganizational Control of an Occupied Country”, *Administrative Science Quarterly* XXXIII (1988): 438-457.

<sup>13</sup> Lammers’s definition of occupation does not allow for any distinction between occupation and colonial administration, Lammers, *Levels of collaboration*, 47.

an interface controlling cross-border flows. Similar, but more rooted in Marxist theory of the modes of production, is the concept of “central society” (*Zentralgesellschaft*) developed by Franz-Wilhelm Heimer in a study on decolonization in Angola<sup>14</sup>. Heimer employs this notion to conceptualize the coexistence of different modes of production in the colonies, which he sees as split into a central society and in a peripheral one. The colonial power is thus seen as typically “non-infrastructural”, to borrow from Michael Mann’s notion<sup>15</sup>, a form of domination that subsumes existing forms of social and political power to an overrarching colonial structure.

If the comparison with colonialism is conceptually productive, it also risks obscuring differences, the investigation of which gives insight into the peculiar features of occupation. The first pertains to the ethno-cultural dividing line that in occupation is never as deep and uncrossable as in colonialism. A second –and perhaps more useful to understand our case study– difference is that occupying powers deal with a territory they perceive as being under foreign sovereignty, this being at the very core of the definition of belligerent occupation in modern international law as de facto control of a territory which implies a merely temporary limitation of sovereignty. The very fact that the protection of the international law of occupation was denied to colonized people because these were regarded as lacking entitlement to sovereignty reveals the importance of this difference<sup>16</sup>. Harking back to Michael Mann’s definition, therefore, one might say that the occupying power submits to its oversight political and social structures of a foreign “modern state”<sup>17</sup>, that are infrastructural in their own right. Third, despite the patent will of most occupiers to misuse their entitlement to occupation of foreign territories to dominate them permanently, occupation is in fact inherently transient. Even in the case of prolonged occupation<sup>18</sup>, this remains an unstable and highly volatile phenomenon, which rarely produces rooted structures of power. More than colonia-

<sup>14</sup> Franz-Wilhelm Heimer, *Der Entkolonisierungskonflikt in Angola* (München: Weltforum Verlag, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Mann understands “infrastructural power” as the “the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm”, Michael Mann, “The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results”, *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* XXV (1984): 109–136, here 113.

<sup>16</sup> Yutaka Arai-Takahashi, “Preoccupied with occupation: critical examinations of the historical development of the law of occupation”, *International Review of the Red Cross* XCIV (2012): 51–80.

<sup>17</sup> Inverted commas here aims at de-essentializing the concept of modern state, considering it as a status perceived by actors to be so. Nonetheless the performative effects of such an ascription define their behavior.

<sup>18</sup> Benvenisti, *The international law of occupation*, 203–249.

lism, therefore, occupation is geared towards implementing forms of indirect rule, using many of the local infrastructures and trying to put them to work for its own purposes. This applies even to those instances of occupation that are generally regarded as “colonialism on European soil”, such as the German occupation regimes in Eastern Europe. Even in Poland, indeed, where no national government was formed and much of the local administration was staffed with Ethnic Germans, the occupiers were forced to rely on Polish functionaries for the daily administration<sup>19</sup>. This character of occupation provides therefore large scope for what historians and public memory refer to as collaboration. By the same token, the very national and sovereign character of occupied societies helps explain the moral charge ascribed to the cooperation with the invader.

In order to avoid a term that is still negatively charged in most languages, in the following I will employ the concept of brokerage, which I take to refer to that social activity, which establishes junctures between occupiers and the occupied society<sup>20</sup>. Brokers are typically those social figures that enable communication between otherwise isolated realms of the social by conveying goods, information, opportunities or knowledge flow. The very precondition for the existence of brokers is the need to fill a gap in social structures, in our case that between invaders and occupied. There are arguably many types of brokers, whereby a basic distinction may be made between middlemen –i. e. those brokers who remain in-between otherwise unconnected actors– and “catalyst broker”<sup>21</sup>, namely those whose activity establish new connections between previously non-connected actors. Given the inherently conflicting nature of occupation, its temporariness and the existence of a deep ethnic-cultural boundary between the two groups that need to be connected, brokerage in an occupation setting falls overwhelmingly into the first category, although it cannot be excluded that enduring social bonds may result from it.

## 2. Italians residents in Greece as brokers

Bringing an end to the stalemate that had ensued after the Italian failed assault on Greece in the October 1940, the sweeping German advance forced the Greek army to sought for an armistice in April 1941. The country was subsequently split into three occupation areas.

<sup>19</sup> According to Jan Tomasz Gross 280.000 Poles and Ukrainians were employed in the public service of the Generalgouvernement, Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation - Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 133.

<sup>20</sup> For a review of sociological theories see Katherine Stovel, Lynette Shaw, “Brokerage”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, XXXVIII (2012): 139-158

<sup>21</sup> Stovel, Shaw, *Brokerage*, 145-146.

Italy was assigned nearly half of the country's territory, encompassing most part of central Greece, the Peloponnese, Epirus and many Aegean and Ionian Islands. This area was controlled by the Italian army until September 1943, when, as a consequence of the Italian armistice with the Allies, all of the regions it had occupied up to that moment were seized by the Germans. The German Army occupied Central Macedonia, with the town of Salonika, most of Crete and a number of Aegean Islands. Bulgaria annexed Thrace and Eastern Macedonia turning them into new Bulgarian provinces.

In most European countries under German occupation during the Second World War, Ethnic Germans performed the function of brokers in different ways, with many of them employed in local administrative structures<sup>22</sup>. This was due to their perceived loyalty to the Reich - especially as bonds between Germany and Ethnic Germans living abroad had been cemented by the Reich's policies in the interwar years -, to their ability to master both cultures acting as cultural translators in a wide range of activities and, in many cases, because of previous experience in acting as a middleman minority<sup>23</sup>. No such solution was possible for the administration of Greece. Unlike the Bulgarian regions, where Sofia replaced all Greek officials with national staff, in Italian and German occupied Greece procuring brokers who could establish links with the local society was no easy task. Ethnic Germans were only a tiny minority in Greece<sup>24</sup> and many of them had lost any connection with the German culture<sup>25</sup>. Italians in Greece, in comparison, made up for a much higher number. According to Italian wartime figures, Italian communities in Greece numbered about 15.000 individuals, scattered in the urban centers of the country, with two larger groups of 5.000 individuals each, concentrated in Patras and Athens-Piraeus<sup>26</sup>. During

<sup>22</sup> The most notorious case is that of the Banat Germans, Mirna Zakić, *Ethnic Germans and National Socialism in Yugoslavia in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 79-112.

<sup>23</sup> Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities", *American Sociological Review* XXXVIII (1973): 583-594.

<sup>24</sup> In 1942 the Evangelical Church gave a figure of 1000 ethnic Germans living scattered throughout Greece, Note for the Reichsführer SS, 18 April 1942, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BAB) R69/328.

<sup>25</sup> A group of 144 Ethnic Germans from Alt-Heraklion (12km from Athens), descendants of the court members of the first Bavarian King of Greece, Otto Friedrich Ludwig von Wittelsbach, were repatriated in April-May 1942. German authorities complained about their "oriental racial traits and in single cases even middle-eastern" and they had completely forgotten the German language, Kommission SS-Stubaf. Herold, II 26/28 Ro, Report on the Operation, 5 May 1942, BAB R69/1316.

<sup>26</sup> Sergio Gratico, *Grecia d'oggi* (Milano: Garzanti, 1941), 67. Greek figures provided after the world gave lower numbers. Accordingly Italian in Greece were only 8.173 in 1938, 2.500 of which in Patras e 2.200 in Athens-Piraeus, "Population Italienne en Grèce", United Nations Archives, UNRRA, S-1372-0000-0096.



the Italo-Greek war members of these communities were interned as “enemy aliens” by the Greek government in the camp of Corinth, with many publicly renouncing Italian citizenship and a number being repatriated in March 1941<sup>27</sup>. Reports from most areas of Greece reveal that the Italians felt deep mistrust towards these groups, as their members were considered as fully assimilated to the Greek culture. There was also a certain degree of arbitrariness in identifying these Italian speaking people as actual Italians, since many originated from Levantine communities of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, in most areas of Greece only a few Italians occupied influential positions within local societies, most being petty urban bourgeoisie and proletariat. At the beginning of occupation the Italian Admiral Vittorio Tur gave a vivid description of the Italian community of Patras in a report to Rome:

Except for a group of growers (gardener – greengrocers) good workers and a group of dockers, fishermen and workers, these people live in poor conditions. Since a couple of generations there have been mixed marriages and many have left their families and have founded new ones based on marriages celebrated with the orthodox rite: hence a non irrelevant number of natural and adulterous children. Instances of double nationality are numerous, as numerous are renounces to the Italian nationality occurred in the concentration camps. The arrival of the Navy and the troops, the caring of the Authorities and the assistance that will be provided to our co-nationals will contribute to raise in everybody feelings of patriotism<sup>28</sup>.

As throughout the war Greece experienced a dire famine that peaked in the winter 1941-42, the Italian authorities soon set out to provide material assistance to these communities. Italian consulates proceeded with a certain largesse as they did not exempt from assistance, as it had been explicitly requested from Rome, those who had

<sup>27</sup> In March-July 1941, as a consequence of an agreement between Italy and Greece mediated by the Hungarian government, 1556 Italians were repatriated from Greece, Brunel Ginevra, 2 April 1941, B G3/27-2.

<sup>28</sup> “Ad eccezione di un gruppo di coltivatori (giardinieri - ortolani) ottimi lavoratori e di un gruppo di scaricatori del porto, di pescatori e operai, si tratta di gente che vive poveramente. Da un paio di generazioni sono avvenuti matrimoni misti e si è avuta grande quantità di abbandono di famiglie con costituzione di nuove a base di matrimoni celebrati col rito ortodosso: da ciò un non indifferente numero di figli naturali e adulterini. Numerosi sono i casi di doppia nazionalità, numerose le rinunzie alla nazionalità italiana avvenute nei campi di concentramento. L'arrivo della Marina e delle truppe, l'interessamento delle Autorità e gli aiuti che verranno dati ai nostri connazionali contribuiranno ad elevare in tutti i sentimenti di patriottismo”, “Missione nel Peloponneso (Morea), 11 maggio-18 giugno 1941”, Archivio Storico della Marina Militare, S16 Scacchieri esteri, Marimorea, f. 15.

renounced their Italian citizenship during the 1940-41 war<sup>29</sup>. If we are to judge by the consular reports, relief provided both in kind and money was never sufficient to considerably enhance the economic status of the Italians. However, belonging to the Italian community did give to many of them additional chances of survival that in the same period were precluded to most Greeks. This of course reawakened a sense of national belonging that many had lost over the previous decades, when intermixing had actually produced a strong integration with the local society. One of the way many rediscovered their Italianity was to enlist into the Italian army<sup>30</sup>. The Italian authorities were particularly keen in drafting members of the Italian communities as they had much needed know-how and could function as interpreters. Becoming member of the Italian Army raised one's position within the local society not only because it provided a steady income and material benefits but also because it endowed those who enlisted with social power they did not possess before. This is revealed by a trial held at the Italian military court in Corfu in January 1943<sup>31</sup>. Maria Unzoglu was accused of offending Michele Esposito, an Italian soldier native of Corfu, because the latter had slapped her 17-year-old cousin who had not complied with the soldier's advance. Interrogated by the Italian authorities Unzoglu admitted to have uttered to Esposito the phrase "you were barefoot and worked in a leather factory: now you have worn the uniform and you believe to be a personality". While Unzoglu's offences may have questioned Esposito's recently achieved social uplifting, it fell to the Italian authorities to reaffirm his prerogatives, which they duly did by condemning the girl to three-months detention.

A major source from which to draw brokers were the Dodecanese Islands. These were under Italian rule since the Italo-Turkish war of 1911-12 and had acquired a semi-colonial status in 1926. Since 1936, with the passing of the governorship from Mario Lago to Cesare Maria de Vecchi, policies of Italianization of the islanders were radicalized<sup>32</sup>. Though not endowed with full Italian citizenship, inhabitants of the Possedimento had the possibility to perform military duty in the Italian Army and therefore during the occupation of Greece many acted as brokers. This applies also to civilians from the Dodecanese that lived in or moved to Greece during occupation attracted by the

<sup>29</sup> See Console italiano di Patrasso, «Assistenza a collettività italiana nel Peloponneso», 13 aprile 1942, Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, DIE 24-36, f. 33.

<sup>30</sup> There are no reliable figures on the number of men enlisted. The draft applied to the cohorts 1910-1922, Consolato Patrasso, Rapporto, 13 maggio 1942, ASMAE DIE 24-36, f. 33.

<sup>31</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare di Corfù, f. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Alexis Rappas, "Greeks under European colonial rule: national allegiance and imperial loyalty", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* XXXIV (2010): 201-218.

possibility of an employment for the Italian army. Women originating from the Dodecanese, e. g., can be found among the managers of the army brothels established by the Italians<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, members of the Greek communities of Southern Albania worked as interpreters for the Italian authorities in Greece. An interesting instance is that of Aristide Vongli, a member of the Greek speaking community of Queparo, a small village of the predominantly grecophone area of Himara, in South-Western Albania. Born in 1921, Vongli, having previously worked as a cattle and wheat trader, joined in 1939 the Italian Carabinieri and was posted in Athens after the invasion of Greece. In the capital Vongli worked as an interpreter for the command, although, as a report written by his superior pointed out, he was far from fluent in Italian. As revealed by the records of the military tribunal, Vongli abused his position to rob and ransom the Greek employee Angelos Venizelos who had been accused of hiding weapons in his Athenian flat. During Venizelos' detention, Vongli, together with a fellow Greek native of Corfu who had occasionally served as a confidant for the Italians, went to his flat trying to extort from his partner food and cigarettes alleging that they would be brought to Venizelos<sup>34</sup>.

Strikingly, the Italian authorities do not seem to have felt more trust towards the Dodecanesinians than towards the Italians of Greece. In fact, in many documents both groups are associated with a stigma of hybridity, encapsulated in the pejorative notion of "Levantine", a negative stereotype according to which such people are considered as cunning and dishonest<sup>35</sup>. A significant example of such views is the case of Mercurio Arfarà, a native of the Dodecanese serving in the Italian occupying forces in Crete, who was trialed in January 1943 for insubordination. Before this incident Arfarà's language and cultural skills had served the Italian forces in many ways, not least when it had come to find a suitable establishment to set up an army brothel in the small town of Neapolis. His insubordination, though, gave to his superior officers the chance to voice their racist contempt towards such hybrids. In a report of one of his superiors, Arfarà's undisciplined behavior was ascribed to his "lacking Italianity for the manifest tendency to have more intimate relations with the Greeks, with the gendarmes of the school and those of the local police"<sup>36</sup>. A similar instance is

<sup>33</sup> See Paolo Fonzi, *Fame di guerra. L'occupazione italiana della Grecia, 1941-43* (Roma: Carocci, 2019), 136-142.

<sup>34</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Comando Superiore FFAA. Grecia, f. 34, sf. 3809.

<sup>35</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im osmanischen Reich im «langen 19. Jahrhundert»* (München: Oldenburg Verlag, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> 265mo Rgt Fanteria, 3 Compagnia, "Reato del soldato Arfarà Mercurio", 19 ottobre 1941, ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Creta-Samos, secondo versamento, f. 1, sf. 71.

that of Umberto Ferlazzo and Pantelis Salustro, Italians who resided in Greece since before the war and, along with their compatriots, had been interned by the Greek authorities during the 1940-41 war. Ferlazzo and Sallustro were tasked by the Italian occupation authorities with establishing a chain of shops to provide the Italians of Athens with foodstuffs at privileged prices. In an internal enquiry both figures were described as “dangerous Levantines”<sup>37</sup>, responsible for the spreading of corruption within the Italian army. Umberto’s son who served in the army and worked as an interpreter for the Italian Command in Athens was even accused of helping resistance leader Napoleon Zervas by passing him secret information that had made him avoid Italian arrest<sup>38</sup>.

Although there are similarities with the employment of Ethnic Germans by the German occupation authorities in other areas of Europe –unsurprisingly ethnic Italians and Germans shared a similar fate after the war, both being expelled by the respective postwar governments– differences largely prevail. While in both cases, ethnic kin could not cover the entire demand of manpower in the occupied country, in the Italian case it turned out to be impossible, both because of their size and of their tenuous cultural bonds with Rome from the period before the war, to employ a significant number of Italians in the local administration. While this points to a major difference between Italian and German empire building during the Second world war, it also raises the question of how the Italian drafted reliable personnel to run the administration of Greece.

### 3. Ethnic minorities

Though no comprehensive plans were ever drafted by the Italian authorities about how to rule Greece after the invasion, one of the basic ideas in April 1941 was that no national government should be formed in Athens. As the government and the king that had ruled the country up to the invasion fled to Crete and then to Cairo, Rome was rather inclined to impose direct rule. In internal conversations with the Germans, Italian representatives proposed to turn the country into a creature akin to the Polish Generalgouvernement. Consistent with this line of thoughts, a secret memo drafted by the Army General Staff foresaw the establishment of an Italian Military Cabinet and a Secretariat for Civilian Affairs in Athens to run the central administration<sup>39</sup>. If neither of these plans eventually materialized, it was primarily due

<sup>37</sup> “Particolari aspetti della situazione interna del territorio greco occupato dalle forze armate italiane”, 27 April 1943, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell’Esercito, Rome (hereafter USSME), H5-34.

<sup>38</sup> Interrogations of Gen. Donato Tripiccone, 6 May 1943, USSME H5-34.

<sup>39</sup> Fonzi, *Fame di guerra*, 30-31.

to the German intervention. Since the Reich authorities had tried to avoid a military campaign in the Balkans in the first place, they now strove to reduce to the minimum the employment of Axis, especially German, personnel in Greece. Hence, the Reich authorities foiled any attempt of the Italians to impose their conditions and instead requested the creation of a Greek government led by General Georgios Tsolakoglou, who had commanded the Greek Army in the war against the Italians in 1940-41. This provoked much disappointment in the Italians. As Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano's confided to his diary, a "government with all the trimmings"<sup>40</sup> run strongly against Italian interest.

Much to the Germans' dismay, the three Greek governments that ruled Greece proved extremely ineffective<sup>41</sup>. Declared constitutionally illegitimate by the same members of the Administrative Supreme Court (Συμβούλιο της Επικρατείας)<sup>42</sup> and widely regarded as a mere puppet of the occupiers, the executive tried to gain footing among the population by presenting itself as a guarantor of Greece's territorial integrity<sup>43</sup>. Especially in the early stage of occupation the Greek officer corps seemed the only elite inclined to collaborate with the occupier and enjoyed the moral status needed to rule the country. This was due to the political void opened both by the years of personal rule of the dictator Ioannis Metaxas, but also to the political stance of "attentism" held by most Greek politicians after April 1941. Indeed, though supporting the formation of the Tsolakoglou government, most of them preferred to stay off the political stage<sup>44</sup>. No surprise, then, that many of the ministries of the first government and the premier himself were military. Similarly, the administration at all levels was largely staffed with military. The new government immediately set out to purge the state administration of those who had showed particular loyalty to Metaxas who had ruled the country until his death in January 1941. While the commission established to screen the personnel was not as

<sup>40</sup> R. De Felice (ed.), Galeazzo Ciano. Diario 1937-1943, Rizzoli, Milano, 1980, entry 28 April 1941, p. 399.

<sup>41</sup> The first government led by G. Tsolakoglou was replaced in November 1942 by an executive led by Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, which in turn was substituted by Ioannis Rallis in April 1943. This government was to rule the country until liberation.

<sup>42</sup> Βάσος Μαθιόπουλος, "Το νομικό καθεστώς των κυβερνήσεων της Κατοχής", in Η Ελλάδα 1936-44. Δικτατορία - Κατοχή - Αντίσταση, ed X. Φλάισερ - Ν. Σβορώνος, 248-257 (Athens: Μορφωτικό Ινστιτούτο ΑΤΕ, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Κώστας Φραδέλλος, "Κατοχικές Κυβερνήσεις και έθνος. Άξονες και μεταβολές του κυβερνητικού λόγου κατά τη διάρκεια της Κατοχής", in Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ου αιώνα, v. 3/2, ed X. Χατζηιωσήφ, 153-179 (Athens: Βιβλιόραμα, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Σπύρος Γ. Γασπαρινάτος, Οι ελληνικές κατοχικές κυβερνήσεις. Δίκες κατοχικών δοσιλόγων και εγκληματιών πολέμου (Athens: Βιβλιοπωλείον της Εστίας, 2015).

effective as it purported to be, it did replace a number of state officials with fresh recruits from the officer corps<sup>45</sup>.

However effective this may have been, the occupying forces lamented repeatedly the ill functioning of the Greek administrative structure. While this was attributed by the Germans to the strong centralization of the Greek state machinery<sup>46</sup>, the Italian commander Carlo Geloso in his yearly report pointed to the fact that the most influential political figures did not want to be involved in politics. Because of this, he remarked, local functionaries performed their duty with “merely formal spirit of collaboration, listlessness and indifference towards the public good”<sup>47</sup>. This helps explain the long list of replacements –8 prefects, 25 mayors, 4 magistrates– that the Italians enacted between mid 1941 and mid 1942. Complaints about lacking cooperation of local functionaries were expressed especially by the units posted in the northern regions, where local Italian garrison accused prefects, mayors or, more often, gendarmerie officers to oppose passive resistance to the occupier forces. As these areas were inhabited by consistent groups of non-Greek minorities –Muslim-Albanians in Epirus; Vlachs in Thessaly and Western Macedonia; Slavophones in Western Macedonia– several local Italian commands became soon vocal in requesting the appointment of these minorities to key posts in the local administration. In September 1941, e. g., Licurgo Zanini, commander of the Division Pinerolo stationed in Thessaly and Western Macedonia, wrote a personal letter to the head of the Italian intelligence service in Athens arguing that Italy should put Vlachs and, though in lower number, Slavophones in charge of local posts in the administration, as the Greek authorities undermined the functioning of the state administration as a form of passive resistance. Zanini was especially concerned about the Greek gendarmerie which did not perform its duties in the searching and confiscation of weapons. Therefore he proposed to replace all Greek gendarmes with Vlachs, a measure that in the same period was strongly advocated by the leader of the Vlach political movement, Alkibiades Diamantis<sup>48</sup>. Although such pro-

<sup>45</sup> Νίκος Παπαναστασίου, “Δωσίλογοι εναντίον μεταξικών «δωσιλόγων και καταχραστών». Η θεσμική ασυνεχεία της κατοχικής κυβέρνησης Τσολάκογλου”, in «Έχθρος» έντος των Τειχών. Όψεις του Δωσιλογισμού στην Ελλάδα της Κατοχής, ed. Ιάκωβος Μιχαηλίδης, Ηλίας Νικολακόπουλος, Χάγκεν Φλάισερ, 107-122 (Athens: Ελληνικά Γράμματα: 2006); Δημήτριος Λύτος, Η πολιτική κατοχή των κατοχικών κυβερνήσεων στην Ελλάδα (1941-1944), Tmima Archeologias-Koinonikis Anthropologias, Volos, Panepistimio Thessalias. 2016.

<sup>46</sup> See for example Theodor Parisius, «Die griechische Staats- und Selbstverwaltung und die deutsche Militärverwaltung in Griechenland», *Reichsverwaltungsblatt* LXIII (1942): 61-64.

<sup>47</sup> Comando Superiore FFAA Grecia, “Rapporto primo anno occupazione. Parte II”, ACS T821-354.

<sup>48</sup> Letter by Licurgo Zanini to Angelo Scattini, 15 September 1941, USSME N1-11-461.

posals were certainly appealing to Geloso –the general in one of his reports described the Vlachs as “the only ethnic group of the Balkan peninsula which sincerely and voluntarily wishes to be politically annexed to our country”– the Italian command’s official line was to refuse such offers of collaboration<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, the Italians did not employ Vlachs –until the rise of the partisan insurgency questioned their control of the territory in 1943– to run the administration or the police. This, however, is not to say that Vlachs were not useful to the Italians as brokers. Many Vlach figures, for example, were posted as village heads or served as informants and guides in mopping up operations. In the area of Grevena (Western Macedonia), where a sizeable Vlach community lived, the network of informers of the Italians was pivoted on a teacher at the local Romanian gymnasium, by the name of Sotiris Araia<sup>50</sup>, a Vlach that “from the inception of occupation has offered his collaboration to the Italian Authorities; for his moral qualities and his balanced character he is esteemed even by the Greeks”<sup>51</sup>. Vlachs turned out useful also in organizing the collection of local produce for the Italians, such as milk and wool. In a Greek document Alkibiades Diamantis was reported as being in control of the production of cheese to supply the Italian army in the region of Trikkala<sup>52</sup>. This multifarious activities endowed the Vlachs with considerable power, revealed in particular by local sources. Witnesses interrogated during the trials against Vlach collaborators after the war, described “legionaries” as a sort of local tyrants, who helped the Italians requisition foodstuffs in the countryside. Significantly in the Fall of 1942, when the resistance started spreading in the region, Vlach collaborators were the first to be expelled or killed by the partisans<sup>53</sup>.

It can be concluded that, though only to a limited extent and without a clear strategy, the Italians relied on the Vlachs as brokers to access different resources. Information provided by them on the

<sup>49</sup> On this see Paolo Fonzi, “Heirs of the Roman Empire? Aromanians and the Fascist Occupation of Greece, 1941-1943”, in *Local Dimensions of The Second World War in Southeastern Europe*, ed Xavier Bougarel, Maria Vulesica, Hannes Grandits (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 27-49; Paolo Fonzi, *Fame di guerra. L'occupazione italiana della Grecia, 1941-43* (Roma: Carocci, 2019), 90-94.

<sup>50</sup> Sotirios Araia was a teacher at the local Romanian secondary school, just like his father, another prominent figure of the Vlach community in Grevena. As for other Vlachs of Grevena who collaborated with the Italians see Χρήστος Βήτος, *Τα Γρεβενά στην κατοχή και στο αντάρτικο. Ιστορική μελέτη δεκαετίας 1940/1950* (Thessaloniki: selfpublishing, 2000), 108 and ff.

<sup>51</sup> Comando della Divisione di Fanteria “Pinerolo” 24, Ufficio del Capo di SM-Se. I, “Operazioni di rastrellamento”, 18 March 1942, USSME N1-11-660.

<sup>52</sup> Πληροφορία, 18 May 1942, Historical Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens 1942.3.2.

<sup>53</sup> Στάυρος Παπαγιάννης, *Τα παιδιά της λύκαινας. Οι επίγονοι της 5ης ρωμαϊκής λεγεώνας κατά τη διάρκεια της κατοχής 1941-1944* (Athens: Σοκόλη, 1999), 140-162.

local society was key, as this was otherwise largely inaccessible to the Italians. The cooperation of the Vlachs, especially in their position as village heads, proved particularly useful in helping collecting foodstuffs from the peasants, as peasant resistance to mandatory crops collection was one of the major challenge to the Italian governance. More lukewarm was the Italian attitude towards other minorities such as the Chams of Thesprotia and the Slavohpones in Western Macedonia.

#### 4. Greeks as brokers

Italians were, therefore, much more dependent on Greeks to procure brokers than they had wanted. Selecting trustful officials was, for the reasons already mentioned, no easy task. This is revealed by the case of the prefect of Kastoria Gherasimos Voulieris and the sub-prefect of Grevena, Christos Ascharidis, both in Northern Macedonia. When in April-May 1942 the Italians replaced many Greek officials in these region these two political figures were not only ousted but also interned in Italy, which clearly signal that major conflicts with the Italians had occurred<sup>54</sup>. In the case of Ascharidis it seems that the reason for his internment had to do with the hostility of the Vlach community towards him. As for Voulieris his removal was probably due to the fact that he had strongly protested for the mistreatment of civilians during Italian searching operations in January-March 1942. In both cases, however, these reasons seem rather to have accelerated the decision, as the Italians had disliked them both since the very beginning of occupation, considering them corrupt especially in managing food resources. If the removal of Voulieris came so late this was certainly due to the fact that he had connections with the General Administrators of Macedonia<sup>55</sup>. Both examples, however, point to a general problem. In ethnically mixed regions, local Greek authorities had their own political agenda, which mostly aimed at repressing the autonomist movements of the ethnic minorities, be they Slavohpones, Vlachs or Chams. While the Italians, as noted, never co-opted Vlachs into the local administration, their ambiguous position towards them did not really pay off. Exploiting intestine conflicts required a clear knowledge of the local societies, which was utterly lacking among the Italian personnel. Mistrust was, therefore, only a patent revelation of the insecurity of the Italian rule, that proved unable to establish solid alliances in local societies. Significantly, collaboration with local elites seems to have worked much more smoothly in regions such as the

<sup>54</sup> Comando XXVI CdA, "Relazione politico amministrativa", 24 May 1942, USSME N1-11-713.

<sup>55</sup> Σοφία Ηλιάδου-Τάχου. *Τα χρώματα της βίας στη Δυτική Μακεδονία 1941-1944* (Athens: Epikentro: 2017), 120 and ff.



Peloponnese, homogeneous from an ethnical point of view and traditionally more law abiding<sup>56</sup>.

An easy but highly resource consuming means to overcome such difficulties was the granting of economic privileges. By stimulating social word division within the Greek society through control of key economic resources, especially foodstuffs, the Italians created a stratum of privileged willing to cooperate with them. This applied to all levels of society, even the highest ones. Sotirios Gotsamanis, a prominent politician who acted as minister in the first two governments and was much discussed for his pro-Italian attitude, e. g., was put early on Italy's pay book. In April 1941 Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano opened an account on his behalf at the Italian National Bank<sup>57</sup>, used by the former Minister in August 1943 to acquire share holding in Italy, where he sought refuge from retaliations after the retreat in 1944.

Economic privileges proved extremely useful in recruiting informers. The Italians had a large network of informants, especially concentrated in small and middle towns, where it was easier for them to act in anonymity. Italian army and civilian authorities were very sparsely scattered in remote, especially in mountainous, areas such as e. g. central Greece. During a reconnaissance operation of September 1942, e. g., the inhabitants of the impervious area of Agrafa (Evrítania) saw Italian soldiers for their first time, as they had never visited that area before<sup>58</sup>. Gathering information in these areas was very hard. A report of August 1942 remarked:

The working of an informant network needs a non-indifferent amount of time to look for suitable informers on the spot and confidants in the various localities scattered on vast areas, for the gathering and screening of information, for interrogations. This work cannot be performed but by remaining some time in the area. The units must get acquainted, the commands must prepare and establish relations with trustworthy elements, only then will they be able to act reasonably and with concrete chances<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Παντέλης Μουτούλας, Πελοπόννησος. Η περιπετεία της επιβίωσης του διχασμού και της απελευθέρωσης (Athens: Bibliorama, 2004), 46; Mavrogordatos, Stillborn Republic, 154-179, 273-302.

<sup>57</sup> Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Dir. Gen. A. C., Appunto per l'Eccellenza il Ministro, 10 agosto 1943, ASMAE, DGAC, Grecia 1943.

<sup>58</sup> 12 Rgt Fanteria, 11/a Compagnia Casale, "Ricognizione dal 3 al 18 settembre 1942", USSME N1-11-972.

<sup>59</sup> "Il funzionamento della rete informativa richiede tempo non indifferente per la ricerca degli informatori adatti sul posto e confidenti nelle varie località sparse su vasta zona, per la raccolta, il vaglio delle informazioni, per gli interrogatori. Questo lavoro non si può compiere se non permanendo qualche tempo in zona. I reparti debbono ambientarsi, i comandi devono preparare e imbastire relazioni con elementi che diano affidamento,

As noted, informants were mostly rewarded with food rations from the stores of the Italian army. Usually these were either equal to the rations of the Italian soldiers or were set at 200 bread per day<sup>60</sup>. Upon completion of special operations in remote areas special rewards were granted such as e. g. “10.000 and 25 kg of flour” to an informer who had provided “detailed information” and “followed the units during the operation”<sup>61</sup>.

Useful as it may have been, the granting of privileges in exchange for brokerage harbored risks. The most common was that of spreading corruption that ran contrary to the Italian governance. A telling instance of this is the case of Demetrio Gheorghiadis, an informers of the Italians from Athens who denounced a compatriot to the Italians for collaborating with the British intelligence in exchange for a share of the property to be confiscated to the woman upon her arrest. Gheorghiadis had obtained the information passed to the Italians from a third person, with which he had agreed to split the proceeds. Yet, the plan did not work out, as during the searching nothing was found in the victim’s house. Thus, to have the woman accused, the two plotters hid a ciphered message in a fountain pen. Uncovered, Gheorghiadis was convicted to two years and eight months detention<sup>62</sup>.

Such relatively petty crimes were, though, not the worse unintended consequence of the way Italians procured information. The tyrannical behavior of an informer of the Italians gave rise to one of the first petty revolts against the occupier that occurred in the Southern Peloponnese, before unrest generalized in the Summer of 1943 under the effect of the rooting of the partisan movement in the region. In Messenia a tax collector who worked as an interpreter for the Italians blackmailed the inhabitants, threatening to denounce them to the Italians if they had not given him foodstuffs<sup>63</sup>. Inhabitants of the small village of Kalliroi killed him and then attacked with weapons the Italians forces sent to the village by the local garrison to enquire into the murder. After the events the Italian command responsible for the Peloponnese commented that the “perhaps too numerous and poorly controlled category” of confidants “once acquired our trust for the work performed in our service and established a threatening personal hegemony on

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poi potranno agire a ragion veduta e con probabilità concrete”, Comando III CdA, “Operazioni di rastrellamento e polizia militare in zona Lamia”, 21 August 1942. N1-11-879.

<sup>60</sup> Comando Superiore FFAA Italiane in Grecia, „Relazione sull’opera svolta dal Comando Superiore FFAA Grecia nel campo politico economico durante il primo anno di occupazione, maggio 1941-maggio 1942”, USSME, L15-22.

<sup>61</sup> Comando XXVI CdA, “Relazione su operazione di rastrellamento nella zona di Stenema”, 7 October 1942, USSME N1-11-972.

<sup>62</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare del Comando FFAA Grecia, f. 15, sf. 3065.

<sup>63</sup> The events of Kalliroi are narrated by Μουτούλας, Πελοπόννησος, 277, who draws exclusively on local recollections. Italian reports on the incident are in USSME N1-11-1193.

the inhabitants, often indulge in serious abuses for personal gain”<sup>64</sup>. No surprise then that instructions given to the Italian Carabinieri, responsible for the intelligence in occupied territories, mandated a very cautious code of conduct in this matter. Informants were divided into two categories, “regular” and occasional ones. While the latter were to be preferred, regular informants were to be employed only in exceptional cases so as to avoid abuses of power. Generally speaking, a report noted, confidants were to be regarded “as a necessary evil: they must be exploited without giving them trust. They must be rewarded for what they yield, never with a fix income. They cannot be put in danger with manifest contacts, but one has to be careful to avoid that they exploit our name to commit abuses: in this case denounce them mercilessly”<sup>65</sup>.

Apart from providing economic privileges to confidants, Italians exploited internal conflicts to glean information about the local society. I have already pointed to their lukewarm attempts to exploit ethnic fractures to their advantage. In a more straightforward manner, conflicts among different groups of Greeks were leveraged to elicit compliance. Instructions issued by the III Army Corps, garrisoning different regions of Central-Western Greece, stressed that the local command had to employ “the contribution of occasional informers who may have reasons to harbor resentment against local elements”<sup>66</sup>. In July 1942 e. g. inhabitants of Neapolis, Eastern Crete, accused Basilio Malatacis of being in possession of military items, such as blankets, purchased or stolen from the Italian stores. This practice was not uncommon, as shortages of basic everyday goods made Italian military items such as shoes or blankets very much sought for. The case of Malatacis is interesting in that the accused was a journalist who had cooperated with Italian local newspaper “La vedetta”, issued by the Italian command in Neapolis. The inquiry by the Carabinieri shows that he was clearly resented by the population of the small town for his social status and the fact that he usually sold Italian military items to locals. Significantly, trying to exculpate himself, Malatacis affirmed at the court hearing “If I had wanted a blanket, I would have asked directly Mister General who gave me also the shoes”. Malatacis’s disrepute was aggravated by the fact that he was alleged to be a pederast, a fact mirrored by a detail in the accusation filed by the Italian informer, according to which the blanket had been brought to him by a 9-10 year old boy<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Comando VIII CdA, “Normalizzazione dell’azione di polizia militare”, 12 August 1942, USSME N1-11-1193.

<sup>65</sup> Allegato al F. 3962/OP. del 22.7.1942-XX, N1-11-771.

<sup>66</sup> Comando III CdA, “Tutela territorio occupato”, 1 November 1941, USSME N1-11-457.

<sup>67</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare di Guerra di Rodi-Creta, f. 233, subfile 174.

A society under occupation can therefore be thought of as a pyramid, at whose vertex are the occupiers and, immediately below them, those who broker between them and the local society. These groups were able to position themselves in key knots of the new social network and exploit their position for personal benefit. Such figures were stigmatized after the war as *dosilogoi* –the Greek term denoting collaborator, as the person who was called to account for (*logodotò*) his activity during the war– or already during the war as *italo-roufiani*. Trials held at the Italian Military Tribunal for “influence peddling” give interesting insights into this social world. The defendants were often persons who, thanks to their connections with the Italians, had achieved power in local societies and abused their influence to get personal benefits. The records of a trial against three Greeks accused of extorting money to obtain the release of seven people from Thebes incarcerated for communist activity show a startling chain of people who had alleged influential connections. Among them was an Athenian lawyer who had requested 10.000 drachmas to use his influence on the Italians to obtain the release of the convicts and many others who had actually done nothing but to simply address a formal request that had led to the actual release of the seven<sup>68</sup>. An interesting instance is that of an interpreter of the Italian Command in Almyros, a small Thessalian village. In January 1942 Dimitrios Arghiropoulos had extorted 25.000 drachmas from his fellow citizen Basilios Nastos, alleging that he could obtain from the Italian authorities the return of a relevant amount of confiscated grain. Nastos originated from a Vlach village in Thessaly and was rumored of black marketeering. In exchange for the money Arghiropoulos had also promised not to report on the allegations circulating on him<sup>69</sup>. Tellingly, Arghiropoulos seems to have used his influence to broker not only between the Italians and the local community, but also between Nastos and the villagers of Almyros, who harbored animosity towards him. While in this case Arghiropoulos had exploited for his own benefit a position actually acquired through his activity as informant, a waiter from Athens, Miltiades Pangureli, had managed to extort 20.000 drachmas to a fellow citizen alleging to have enough connections to obtain from the Italians a permit to open a commercial activity<sup>70</sup>.

While brokerage was a means to procure social power and economic advantages, working for the occupiers was the most commonly used surviving strategy. As we have seen in most of the cases analyzed so far, the occupation authorities used to reward collaborators in kind.

<sup>68</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare di Guerra di Rodi-Creta, f. 233, sf. 3777.

<sup>69</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare del Comando FFAA Grecia, f. 15, sf. 431.

<sup>70</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare del Comando FFAA Grecia, f. 15, sf. 3308.

Hyperinflation and food scarcity made money little attractive as it lost quickly its value and could not grant accession to food. Therefore, workers employed in the factories producing for the occupiers used to be paid in kind. Thus, as of May 1942 throughout the country 30.000 Greeks received food rations from the Italian authorities. These included different categories such as “workers employed in road and airfield construction, miners, railway workers, dockers etc. informants and various employees”<sup>71</sup>. Significantly in June 1942 four female workers employed in a small Athenian factory that produced for the Italian army went on strike because they had not received the daily bread ration. One of them, Vasiliki Skokou, a 20 year old woman from Kalamata (Peloponnese), explained in her affidavit: “I receive a daily salary in drachmas that is insufficient to live and work almost exclusively to receive the daily extra bread ration (120 grams per day)”<sup>72</sup>.

Besides such official forms of cooperation, being in some way connected to the occupiers and acting as a broker between them and the local society could reveal highly profitable. An inquiry into the spread of corruption within the Italian Army conducted in May 1943 revealed the existence of a large parallel society, which thanks to this position had access to standard of living enviable for most Greeks. The attention of the investigating authorities focused on a group of women, who had personal connections with the higher ranks of the Italian command in Athens. One of them, Elena Kikkidou, who worked as a spiritualist, seems to have had intimate relations with the General Commander of the Italian Army Carlo Geloso. During the direst period of the famine in Athens Kikkidou invested her money purchasing large amounts of durable goods such “rugs or jewels” from the wealthy members of the Athenian bourgeoisie, forced by poverty and famine to auction off their property. One of Kikkidou’s acquaintances recounted of a dinner organized by her in the first months of 1942 where she offered “Italian sandwiches, cakes of two or three kinds, and other items that were impossible to find in Athens at that time”. Another witness recounted of “noodles, meat, good wine, cakes” adding: “We were about ten people at that dinner and were obviously astonished at that abundance in a period when nothing could be found in Athens”. Thanks to her connections, Kikkidou conducted “a luxurious life, flaunting dresses, shoes etc. I have seen her wearing a large cross encrusted with diamonds, which she herself told was a present, without specifying from whom, but everyone understood who could have made her such a pre-

<sup>71</sup> Comando Superiore FFAA Italiane in Grecia, “Relazione sull’opera svolta dal Comando Superiore FF.AA Grecia nel campo politico economico durante il primo anno di occupazione, maggio 1941-maggio 1942”, USSME L15-22.

<sup>72</sup> ACS, Trib II GM, Tribunale Militare del Comando FFAA Grecia, f. 1

sent and, indeed, many openly remarked that it was incomprehensible how a personality of so high social status could like such a woman”<sup>73</sup>.

### 5. Conclusion. Liminality and the impact of brokerage on occupied societies

While brokerage is a pivotal function of social life in general, as noted in the introduction, it is key to consolidating power in occupied societies. The question arises, therefore, whether the extent to which the Italians used brokerage and their reliance on economic privileges was a peculiarity of their rule and to what extent it proved productive in consolidating their Italian governance in Greece. As for the first question, there is still too little research on this aspect of the German occupation of Greece –not speak of the Bulgarian one which is both peculiar and still very much under-researched– to allow for a comparative view. While, therefore, a thorough comparison is impossible, personal accounts and the memory of occupation suggests that the Italians resorted to the granting of economic benefits to a much larger extent than the Germans. As for the second question, reports signal that in the spring-summer of 1942 the Italians enjoyed a certain degree of support within the Greek society. Especially in small towns and the capital, the widespread concession of benefits seems to have produced various forms of accommodation that stabilized, however temporary this may have been, the Italian rule. “One notes a more and more widespread tendency”, wrote the III Army Corps in July 1942, “to consider the military authorities the only one who can be capable of directing and organizing the country. Despite the changes occurred within the Hellenic government, there remains a certain mistrust of the population towards their own leaders, accused of weakness, of not being assertive in taking decisions that may improve the present critical situation as for food supply and in the general economic field, or to curb the numerous forms of the above said black market”<sup>74</sup>. “One notes”, a report from the Peloponnese wrote in the same period, “an increasing leaning of the public opinion towards our occupying powers, from which they expect the solution of the most pressing problems in order to achieve a recovery of the Hellenic nation”<sup>75</sup>. As most reports of this period

<sup>73</sup> Comando Carabinieri Reali dell’11 Armata, “Interrogatorio della sig. ra Papanellopylo Nichi”, 29 May 1943, USSME H5-34.

<sup>74</sup> III CdA, “Relazione politico-amministrativa”, 13 July 1942, USSME N1-11-789. On the pro-italian attitude among the Greek in 1942 see Hagen Fleischer, “Kollaboration und deutsche Politik im besetzten Griechenland” in *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938-1945)*, supplementary volume 1, ed Werner Röhr, 377-396 (Berlin/Heidelberg: Hüthig, 1993), 384.

<sup>75</sup> Il battaglione CCRR mobilitato Genova, «Relazione mensile riservatissima sulla Grecia», 30 agosto 1942, USSME N1-11-1193.

openly acknowledged, there were only weak signs of pro-Fascist or, in whatever form, political pro-Italian feelings in the country. As noted in the above-mentioned report, at that time the Greeks focused on solving their economic problems. In this respect the Italians seemed to be more promising than the Germans, who ruined the Greek economy by imposing enormous occupation costs. The attitude of the Italians towards using economic benefits to get consent strongly contributed to raise this type of pro-Italian leaning among the population. In the summer of 1942 Greece was, in relative terms a pacified country, especially if one considers that in other occupied territories the Italian rule was far from consolidated. This was certainly not the case in former Yugoslavia, where large insurgencies had spread since the first months of occupation, and in Albania, where the Italians at that time had a only weak control of the Southern areas. Paradoxically, however, the summer of 1942 was also the moment in which the very expectation that Greece was a rather peaceful country started to be disproved by a growing guerrilla movement that took root in the ungarrisoned areas of central Greece. In the Fall of 1942, after a number of attacks on Italian garrisons, the first large counterinsurgency operations were launched by the Italian army. One can therefore conclude that, though partially successful, the Italian governance produced only short-term benefits.

As for the local society, the formation of a stratum of brokers impacted on the social stratification. Yet, while positioning himself in the “liminal” void produced by the occupational power structure was bound to deliver privileges to brokers, it also entailed not irrelevant dangers. The opening story of Liliana Deferio is a telling example of the dangers brokers may incur. In most areas of Greece since the summer of 1942 informants were largely targeted by the partisan movement. Systematic terror against all forms of cooperation was noted by most Italian reports. Significantly, informants were targeted much more violently than the occupiers themselves. Captured Italian soldiers were mostly freed in this period, although sometimes after a period of captivity, whereas the underworld on the informers was hit by brutal violence. What happened in the village of Aitolikon (Aetolia-Acarmania) on 26 May 1943, where a female confidant of the Italian was killed by the resistance “in presence of her sisters, after being forced to dig her own grave”<sup>76</sup>, is just a telling example of a large phenomenon perceived with great worries by the Italians. In most reports of the Summer-Fall 1942 the Italian intelligence signaled a growing difficulty in recruiting confidants and gather information. Social sanctions, though, may have acted in more subtle ways than open violence. In the Cyclades an Italian sanitary

<sup>76</sup> Comando Divisione Casale, “Stralcio del notiziario settimanale 1-8 giugno”, USSME N1/11/1324.

officer tasked with supervising the local hospital critically reported that prostitutes working in the military brothels were systematically denied health care. One of the women was rejected by the hospital director on specious grounds and was forced to give birth in the brothel, whereby the baby died a few days after<sup>77</sup>. While sanctions came mostly from the local society, working for the Italians exposed people to increased risks also from the other side. The above mentioned case of the four workers who went on strike in June 1942 for not receiving their bread rations show this quite adamantly. Despite being aware that the workers had not stopped work to protest against the Italian occupation, the very fact that they were employed in a firm producing for them was sufficient to put them under the purview of the Italian military authorities. This was, indeed, the reason for their indictment by an Italian military court, which, however, eventually discharged them.

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<sup>77</sup> Ospedale di Campo 1560 to Comando Militare delle Cicladi, "Relazione sull'andamento dell'Ospedale Civile in generale ed in modo spciale della sezione Dermoceltica femminile" (P.M. 162 20.6.1942), GAK-Kykladon, Αρχείο Ιταλικών Αρχών Κατοχής Κυκλάδων, f. 208.



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