

Italy- Internment and deportation

However, with Italy's entry into war, the situation gradually worsened. **On September 11, 1940, all the Prefectures in the Kingdom of Italy were ordered to round up Gypsies and hold them in appropriate locations. The entry of foreign Sinti and Roma into Italian territory was strictly forbidden.**

In addition to “**criminal reasons**” (“The Gypsies are habitual criminals and repeat offenders”), there was also the **political** question (overshadowing the danger that they might carry out “anti-national” activities), accompanied by the **racist issue** (i.e. their belonging to a dangerous race).

The repercussions on the outlying administrations were immediate: arrests of Gypsies began, hindered only in part by the delay with which orders were given regarding their internment.

Those arrested were detained in **provincial camps set up by the Ministry of the Interior in Bolzano, Berra, Boiano (Campobasso), Agnone (Campobasso), Tossicà (Teramo), Ferramonti di Tarsia (Cosenza), Vinchiaturo (Campobasso) and on the islands, including Sardinia, Sicily and the Tremiti Islands,** in the case of the latter, under a regime of free internment, where they were disbanded and left without any means of support. In many of these places, the Roma and Sinti found themselves living with Jews, the stateless and foreigners.

After the circular of 27 April 1941, the Ministry issued a final order targeted at the internment of the Italian gypsies, whose separation from society was solved by the **creation of places created exclusively for their families,** to which an additional fifty sites destined for civil internment were added.

Following the **German, Italian and Hungarian occupation of the territories of Yugoslavia**, the situation for all Sinti and Roma communities became dramatic. The **Croatian nationalism of Ante Pavelić** and his **Ustaše movement**, supported by Mussolini, marked a radicalization of the general picture. Countless gypsies sought refuge in Italy where they were interned in the existing camps in the peninsula. Among other things, the persecution of the Roma and Sinti in Croatia had already been happening since July 1941, beginning with the profiling of families by the Communes, the local police and the Prefectures, continuing first with the transports to separate places and, finally, ending with mass deportation to internment camps. The most heinous crimes took place in the **Jasenovac Lager**, the largest of the assembly and labour camps in Croatia, under whose jurisdiction five sub-camps fell, including that of Stara Gradisca. Both of them were places destined for the liquidation of Jews, Serbs, anti-Fascist Croatians but also Gypsies. Between 600,000 and 800,000 prisoners died in them. In Serbia, the Occupying Authority, that is the German army, proved to be no less brutal in their eradication of Gypsy communities.

In Italy, civil internment involved an existence of poverty and misery, but one which was indubitably preferable to the mass murders taking place beyond the border. Nonetheless civil internment was characterized by almost unendurable deprivations, above all in terms of food and hygiene. After **September 8 1943**, following German occupation of that part of Italy not yet freed by the Anglo-American forces, the closure of the internment camps in Southern Italy enabled many of those imprisoned to escape. Conversely, in the part of the peninsula controlled by the Wehrmacht and the **Italian Social Republic Militia**, Gypsies were **captured and deported, being sent to holding camps like Gries in Bolzano**, a halfway house on the journey towards annihilation.

Lack of documentation prevents us from accurately quantifying the extent of the tragedy that took place throughout Italy. What makes this even more shocking is the fact that the persecutions and deportations, contrary to what happened to the Jews, was distinguished by the irregularity of administrative orders, the absence of a unified law and the acute degree of discretion allowed to Fascist and German functionaries.

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