

The Italian Executioners: The Genocide of the Jews of Italy

Simon Levis Sullam

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Early in *The Italian Executioners*, Simon Levis Sullam points out that Italy's role in the Holocaust is often ignored, thanks both to the worse actions of its Axis counterpart and to revisionist attempts to absolve the country of guilt. That's led to a relative dearth of material about Italian crimes of the era, and Sullam's short and well-researched book is an important piece of that puzzle.

The book focuses heavily on the era of the Republic of Salò, the German-backed fascist state that existed in Italy from 1943 until the Allies and Italian partisans toppled it in 1945, though official anti-Semitism was earlier codified in the country's 1938 racial laws. These laws banned Jews from certain professions and, as Sullam notes, included a racial census that the fascists relied upon when persecuting Italian Jews in the final years of the war. While Italy didn't exterminate as large a percentage of its Jewish population as did some other European countries, Sullam details how involved Italian officials were in arresting, deporting, and executing many innocent people.

Part of what makes Sullam's research so effective is his relaying of specific anecdotes. Survivors of concentration camps tell of paying Italian guides to help them flee to Switzerland, only to have the guides pocket the money and turn them in to the fascists. Other stories detail Italian officials searching for children in order to send the entire family to a camp, or opportunistic citizens turning in their neighbors in order to take their jobs or property.

These stories are thoroughly sourced and written engagingly, with the myriad anecdotes combining to paint an important picture of Italian complicity in the Nazi-led genocide. *The Italian Executioners* is a valuable addition to the literature on the Holocaust and a crucial reminder that fascist Italy was no safe haven.

JEFF FLEISCHER (University Press 2018)

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