

Abstracts

Tullio Omezzoli

Partisan Justice. Recent Research Findings

The partisans who, between September 1943 and April 1945, waged a merciless guerrilla war against the neo-fascist Italian Social Republic and the German armed forces used formal or (most often) informal courts to issue judgments on members of partisan groups, as well as against militants of the Republic and the general population. Justice exercised against partisan fighters was intended to maintain internal discipline, especially among young and recalcitrant men, and to enhance their fighting spirit. The civilian population was sanctioned for refusing to submit to partisan impositions, for showing sympathy to fascists or the occupying Germans and for passing on information to them about partisan groups. Fascists were judged according to the sole reason of being fascist; they were not charged with particular offenses. By joining a fascist formation, they were considered to have delivered a kind of “self-judgment” that eliminated the need for the process of trials and led inexorably to a death sentence, which could be performed by anyone, but preferably by a gang of partisan “executioners”.

Christopher Theel

Italian Soldiers before SS and Police Courts: Examples from Greece and Italy

After Italy's formal exit from the Second World War in September 1943, German troops occupied large parts of the Apennine peninsula and the Italian-occupied zones in the Balkans and Greece. Alongside the redeployment of German troop units, military and Waffen-SS courts were established in Italy and Greece. This article looks at the organisational and personnel foundations of these courts, paying particular attention to the treatment of Italian soldiers before SS and police courts. Owing to the fragmentary nature of the surviving documentary material in German archives, it is only possible to sketch out a few specific examples of punishments handed down. Nevertheless, it becomes clear how the means used by SS and police courts provided an important instrument of occupation policy; the courts played a strategic role in securing Italy as part of Germany's overall war policy.

Samuele Tieghi

The deserters from Salò: The phenomenon of desertion from the Italian Social Republic as evidenced in the documents of military courts

Already at the moment of its initial establishment, the army of the Italian Social Republic experienced a huge number of desertions and the phenomenon reached serious proportions over the course of time. Notwithstanding the difficulty in quantifying the phenomenon due to the fragmentary nature of the available data, the article analyses the problem of “missing conscripts” and random absentees, examining the reasons that pushed so many young men into deserting, especially in Lombardy, thereby provoking a severe response on the part of the military authorities.

The latter responded by issuing harsh regulations, among them the Graziani declaration, which extended the death penalty to those who opposed or failed to answer the call to arms. However, as the practice followed by the regional military court in Milan demonstrates, the number of death sentences was small compared to the quantity of desertion cases, despite the fascist authorities’ request to intervene decisively and to punish severely those considered culpable of such offences.

Kerstin von Lingen

Bozen Special Court: “Military Courts of the Occupying Judicial System”, as applied against South Tyroleans, 1943–1945

This article discusses the Nazi special tribunals in Southern Tyrol, with a particular focus on the *Sondergericht* (Special Court) at Bozen. By analysing newly declassified material pertaining to legal grounds, court cases and verdicts, and comparing them to other special tribunals, the author argues that these courts can be seen as a tool of Nazi occupation policy within the war. At the same time, they highlighted the key role accorded to Southern Tyrol within the framework of the “new world order” that Nazi Germany was seeking to establish. The special courts thus had the task of preparing the ground for the future Reich and diminishing potential threats to it by delivering harsh verdicts against minorities and “unwelcome” population groups, with deadly consequences.

Carlo Maria Zampi

The Special Court for Public Security in Trieste

During the German occupation of Italy following the 8th September armistice, two “Operation Zones” – the “Pre-Alps” and “Adriatic Littoral” – were instituted in the north-eastern territories. A Special Court for Public Security was established in each of these zones, with the remit of judging every kind of offence deemed likely to cause harm to German interests. The article aims to examine the characteristic features of the Special Court operating in Trieste, given that studies of the Operation Zone Adriatic Littoral have paid little attention to it hitherto. The author considers the Court’s personal composition, its concrete functioning and the cases brought before it for judgement, seeking to put into context its particular aspects and critical features.

Ilenia Rossini

The Allied Military Courts: the Allies and war justice in Italy. Preliminary notes for further research

During the Allied occupation of Italy, the administration set up the Allied Military Courts (AM Courts or AMG Courts). These courts were tasked with putting on trial Italian civilians accused of war crimes against allied forces according to Allied proclamation number 2, infractions against norms contained in Allied ordinances, or – in some cases – violations of rules laid down by Italian laws. The sentences passed by these courts were intended to have a deterrent effect on the population, so as to maintain good public order and to ensure the pacification of the lines behind the Allied armies. Minimum estimates suggest that around 85,000 trials were conducted between the summer of 1943 and May 1945. The majority of cases related to minor offences, such as theft and illicit possession of Allied goods, but death sentences were also imposed in cases of sabotage and spying.

Alessio Fornasin

Infantry and Alpine troops: Fallen soldiers from the provinces of Belluno and Udine in the First World War

This article deals with some aspects of the death of soldiers from the provinces of Belluno and Udine during the First World War. The goal of the study is to investigate the differing influence of the classification of soldiers in the various army corps on the number of war dead. The main source of this work is the Albo d’oro, a roll of honour of the fallen of the war, which lists the names of 18,000 dead soldiers from these provinces. The analysis shows that the highest

mortality levels were recorded among the infantry, both with regard to death in combat and death due to illness. The author also considers soldiers' deaths in enemy prison camps. Owing to the invasion of these territories by the Austro-Hungarian army, the two provinces of Belluno and Udine provided a larger share of prisoners than any other Italian region and the number of deaths in prison camps was proportionally greater, too.

Wolfgang Strobl

Mussolini in Nero's Clothing. Subversive Material and Censorship in the Art of a Border Region in Fascist Italy (On Hans Piffraeder's Frieze for the Fascist House/ Casa del Fascio in Bozen/Bolzano)

The South Tyrolean painter and sculptor, Hans Piffraeder (1888–1950), who was well established in public art projects in Fascist Italy, continued to receive work commissioned by the state after the outbreak of World War Two. He created a monumental relief frieze for the Fascist party building in Bozen/Bolzano and designed a life-size sculpture of the Roman conqueror of the Alps, Drusus. However, a detailed consideration and analysis of these designs suggests that the Tyrolean artist externally went along with Fascist ideology for opportunistic reasons, but in reality held a highly critical view of the totalitarian regime and sought to express this position in cryptic form in his artistic works.