

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Zone di guerra, geografie di sangue. L'atlante delle stragi naziste e fasciste in Italia (1943-1945)**, edited by G. Fulveti and P. Pezzino, Bologna, il Mulino, 2016, 616 pp., €36,00, ISBN 978-88-15-26788-7

This book is the final stage of a three-year research project funded by the Fondo italo-tedesco per il futuro (Italian-German Fund for the Future) and it is the result of lengthy investigative work carried out by a team of historians. Even though the subject is not original and finding new information would therefore seem to be quite difficult, it must be said that their approach to the issue of hostilities against civilians in Italy during the Second World War with both a micro and macro analysis, is positive and successful.

The book is, in fact, a significant milestone in the field. Studies on these issues started relatively late, with a conference held in Arezzo in 1987 (Tognarini 1990), during which a number of historians, such as Enzo Collotti, Lutz Klinkhammer, Nicola Labanca and many others dealt with several of the questions studied in this book, but in the last 30 years many monographs and papers on these topics have been published. From a historiographical perspective, this volume is a beneficial tool for gaining new insights and, consequently, asking new questions.

The book is divided into four sections. The first two set out the interpretative framework (Paolo Pezzino, Gianluca Fulveti, Chiara Dogliotti, Carlo Gentile, Toni Rovatti and Luca Baldissara), whilst in the third and the fourth parts a group of talented historians offer an appropriate reconstruction of the context, using a very interesting approach involving different case studies. Special attention should be given to the valuable timeframe reconstructed by Chiara Dogliotti (pp. 95-126).

The editors, Gianluca Fulveti and Paolo Pezzino, inter alia, stress their aim to address the question of war against civilians while considering the slaughter perpetrated both by the German and the Italian Social Republic forces. Although scholars have already pursued this particular avenue of thought, it must be noted that the Italian public sphere and public discourse often entirely overlook Italian culpability during the Second World War. For this reason, pointing out and reiterating such concepts is vital in a volume such as this: *Zone di Guerra* could be deemed as a sort of handbook, in its noblest sense, for all those who want to approach these topics.

The essay by Carlo Gentile, 'I tedeschi e la guerra ai civili in Italia' ('Germans and the War against Civilians in Italy', pp. 129-145) is based on the hypothesis of his important and valuable monograph *Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Partisanenkrieg*, 2012. The author proves that this kind of war was not simply a reaction to the Italian Resistance: he shows how it followed the different phases of the 'Italian Campaign', with the level of violence against civilians being determined by the situation in the military conflict. Most of the violent acts occurred at the front and were generally perpetrated by front-line troops. Although all kinds of military units were deeply involved, the main theatres of indiscriminate atrocities were the operational areas of Nazi elite units, such as the Hermann Göring Panzerdivision and the 16th SS-Panzergrenadier Division 'Reichsführer-SS'.

Toni Rovatti, in her essay 'La violenza dei fascisti repubblicani. Fra collaborazionismo e guerra civile' ('The Violence of the Republican Fascists. Between Collaborationism and

Civil War', pp. 145-168), analyses the political violence and the violent practices operated by the collaborating Fascist government. She observes that this kind of action – even involving civilians – was aimed at striking the 'enemy within': partisans and everyone connected directly or indirectly to the various Resistance movements.

The core of Luca Baldissara's chapter ('Il massacro come strategia di guerra, la violenza come forma di dominio dello spazio' ('Massacre as a War Strategy, Violence as a Form of Space Dominance', pp. 169-195) is a deep reflection on 'the instrumental rationality, at a military level, of the extensive use of massacre by German troops in Italy' (p. 168). According to the author, 'the need for political and military control of territory, the urgency to activate effective counter-guerrilla tactics, a specific military culture, converge in the period 1943-1945 to define a warlike behaviour which resorts systematically to the politics of the massacre' (pp. 168-169).

These three different perspectives have a common denominator: we must consider this kind of violence not only as an ideological category, but as a form of extreme strategy. Extreme strategies such as this were 'morally justified' in different ways, varying widely between the perspective of total war and the perspective of a war against the Jews, or between the perspective of war against evil or the perspective of the logic of the lesser evil.

## References

Tognarini, I., ed. 1990. *Guerra di sterminio e resistenza. La provincia di Arezzo (1943–1944)*. Naples: Edizione Scientifiche Italiane.

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**Storia della storiografia italiana. Un profilo**, by Giuseppe Galasso, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 2017, 250 pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-581-2770-4

The first part of Giuseppe Galasso's book outlines the development of historical science in Italy between the fourth century and the early 20th century (pp. 5–12). It was published by the *Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana* in Appendix VIII of its encyclopedia *Il contributo italiano alla storia del pensiero*. The chapter does not merely focus on individual historians but also on the ways in which the political, social and economic contexts influenced the work of professional historians; on the scientific evolution of the discipline and its shift in interest; and finally on the transmission of historical knowledge throughout Italy and Europe. Following this initial approach, the analysis travels back to the medieval and modern eras, when the relationship between Italy and Europe was particularly important for Italian historians. The professionalisation of Italian historians in this period was thus strictly linked to different intellectual networks. Therefore, this section of the book focuses on changes in the historical field, but also on how history became codified and legitimated in Italy through rigorous scientific research. Within this very broad context, Galasso concentrates his attention on the creation of a common culture amongst Italian historians throughout the centuries, which played a crucial part in building an idea of Italy as a nation. In order to develop all