



# Jewish Refugees in San Marino (1939-1945)

With documents and stories from the book “La meravigliosa bugia” by D. Bagnaresi-G. Marzi- A. Morri

“Whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.” (Talmund)



# Remarks by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

During his official visit to San Marino in 2013, the then-Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, praised the Republic's efforts during the Second World War.

‘For centuries, this democracy has safeguarded human rights for its citizens and for those who fled persecution and crossed into your territory. Your country was known as La Serenissima Repubblica di San Marino, the Most Serene Republic of San Marino, to signify the peace and harmony that reigned both within its borders and with its neighbours.

I applaud San Marino for having generously opened its gates during the Second World War – when the number of refugees here was up to five times higher than the country's own population.’



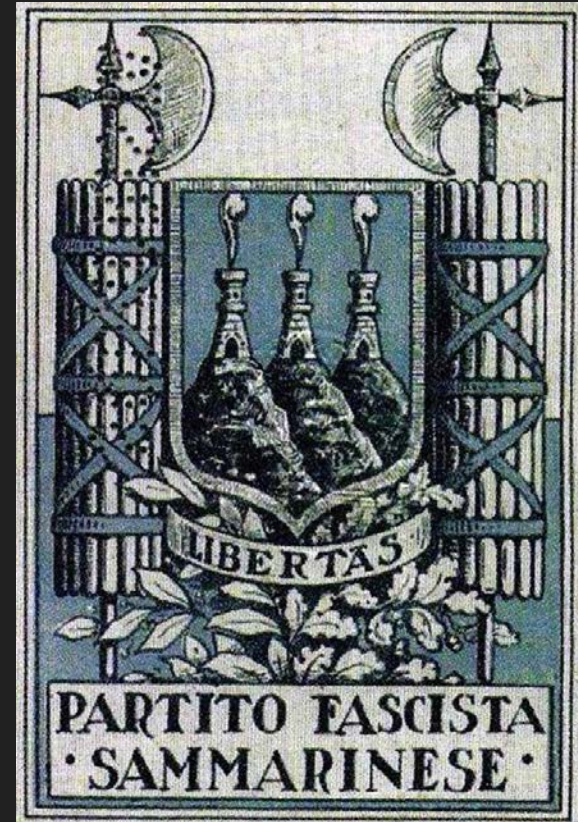
UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

# Fascism in San Marino

From 1922 to 1944, on the heel of what was happening in Italy, the Sammarinese Fascist Party governed the nation, with similar principles to its sister party in Italy.

When Mussolini enacted the racial laws in 1938, multiple requests for residency were sent to the government of San Marino.

From the very beginning, Giuliano Gozi, the de facto leader of San Marino, would not accept these requests, stating that Sammarinese law did not allow for the issuance of residency permits unless there were particular work or family circumstances. The government certainly did not want to create conflict with Mussolini.



# Racial laws in Germany and Italy

- In 1935, in Germany, Hitler passed the Nuremberg Laws, 'in defence of the Aryan race'. Subsequently, numerous Jews started attempting to obtain residence permits and visas to leave Germany, some of whom attempted to do so in San Marino, with the number of requests increasing in 1938
- In 1938 the fascist Italian government promulgated racial laws modelled on the German ones



# Racial laws in San Marino

Italy asked San Marino to harmonise their racial laws, and, after long discussions, the General Council of San Marino (Parliament) enacted a seven article long racial law on the 17 September 1942. The first four of these articles were as follows

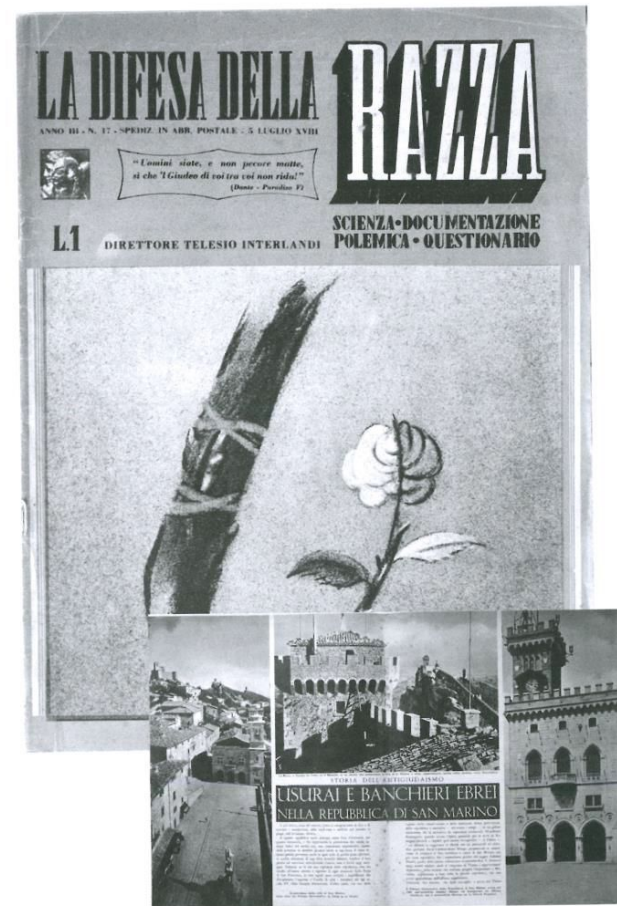


Fig. 4 *La difesa della razza* del 5 luglio 1940 contenente l'articolo dedicato a San Marino.

‘Article 1 - Marriage between Sammarinese citizens belonging to the Aryan race and people belonging to another race is forbidden

Art. 2 - Notwithstanding the restriction in Article 1, the marriage of a Sammarinese citizen with a foreign citizen, or stateless person not born in this country or who has not been resident here for over ten years is subject to the approval of the regency. Transgressors are punished by imprisonment of up to three months or a fine of up to ten thousand lire

Art. 3 - Italian citizens are not to be considered foreign citizens for the application of Article 2

Art. 4 - It is forbidden for Italian citizens to marry in this Republic in violation of the dispositions contained in the Regal Law Decree of the 17 November 1938, n. 1728, containing provisions for the defence of the Italian race



Fig. 15 The pagina de *Il Popolo Sammarinese* che riporta (vedasi riquadro) notizia dell'avvenuta approvazione della Legge in difesa della razza e teria matrimoniale.

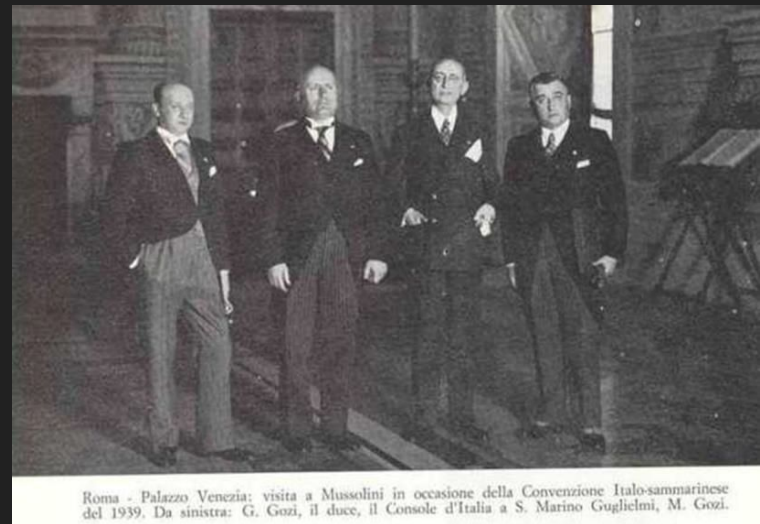
Most likely, the laws were not felt to be necessary in the Republic, but they were a way to avoid worsening the relationship with Italy.

Despite the laws and their close relationship with Italy, the Republic continued to give asylum to Jewish people. The 19 June 1943 the Italian Consulate requested specific information:

“Mr. Secretary of State,

This consulate is informed that in the house of a German citizen domiciled in San Marino, there are meetings of various non-Aryan people, members of the Jewish race [...]

I would be very thankful to you if you could furnish some clarifications in regards, supplying all the information at your disposal, as well as informing me whether you have adopted or will adopt security measures.”



Roma - Palazzo Venezia: visita a Mussolini in occasione della Convenzione Italo-sammarinese del 1939. Da sinistra: G. Gozi, il duce, il Console d'Italia a S. Marino Guglielmi, M. Gozi.

The Sammarinese Government sent a reassuring reply, affirming that only a small number of Jews were in the country for work purposes and that they had continuous strict controls. Indeed, until July 1943 there were not many Jews in the country and their presence did not provoke any tensions between the countries.





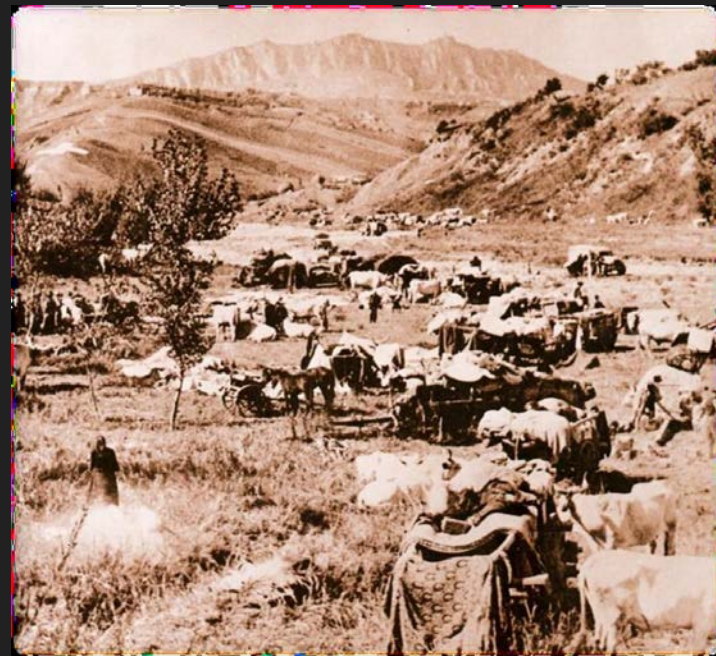
# 1939-45 refuge and safety in San Marino

During the course of the Second World War, particularly during the Italian Campaign of 1943-44, San Marino welcomed and protected tens of thousands of refugees escaping from the bombings that affected various places along the coast of Romagna.

The Sammarinese made houses, stables, graineries, public buildings, and tunnels available for these refugees. These refugees included Jewish families, fleeing to avoid the deportation that they would face in Germany and Italy.



Refugees camping next to the church of Domagnano



Refugees camping in the Sammarinese countryside; in the background you can see Monte Titano, where the main city of San Marino is located

# The fall of fascism

**26 July 1943:** the news of the fall of Mussolini quickly spreads in San Marino. That morning the leaders of the Sammarinese Fascist Party met, and the party was dissolved with the Government resigning.

A group of antifascists quickly created the Committee for Freedom. On the 28 July the Committee created a Council of State composed of 20 citizens, later increased to 30. Francesco Balsimelli was made President.

The 27 July a manifesto signed by the Regency invited the sammarinese people to trust in the decisions of the Italian King Victor Emmanuel III, and the Italian Head of Government, Pietro Badoglio.

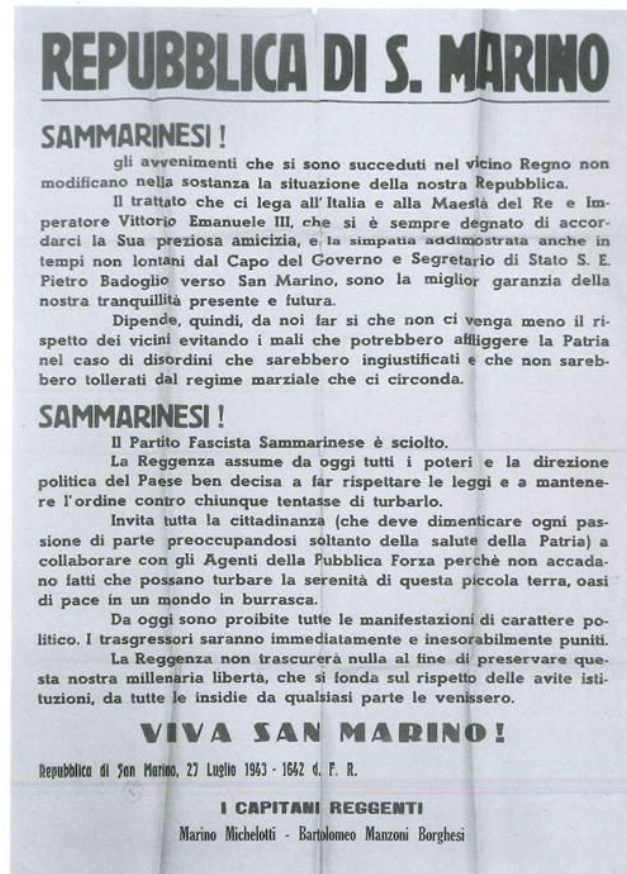


Fig. 28 Manifesto dei Capitani Reggenti che informò i sammarinesi dell'avvenuto scioglimento del Partito fascista. Repubblica di San Marino, Archivio di Stato.

The provisions were ratified on 10 August 1943 and new elections were scheduled for 5 September.

After the Germans freed Mussolini and the birth of the Italian Social Republic, the Sammarinese fascists felt stronger again.

In the summer of 1943 the Germans entered San Marino numerous times, requisitioning cars and weapons without the government being able to do anything.

The 28 October a new Council of State took office. The Council decided to involve some politicians from the former fascist party to be able to best deal with the situation in Italy.

Ezio Balducci, a doctor from Serravalle, was nominated as minister plenipotentiary and special envoy of the Republic to the belligerent states. He was considered to be an expert politician, and in his first public appearance he announced that at the German command there was a rumor that the Republic was a dangerous den of English prisoners who had escaped from prison camps, as well as a depot of weapons. He then communicated this in talks with Mussolini and Rommel. In the month of November the Allied bombings of the Italian coast started, and the Republic began to welcome in the displaced people.



# The “wonderful lie”

The Germans and Italians demanded strict controls over the people entering San Marino, threatening serious consequences if these were not carried out. Despite this many Jews entered the country and recieved protection.

Traces of these people’s presence can be found in various municipalities, including Serravalle and the City of San Marino.

Balducci was a key figure to maintaining good relations with the Germany, but still managed to protect the persecuted refugees.

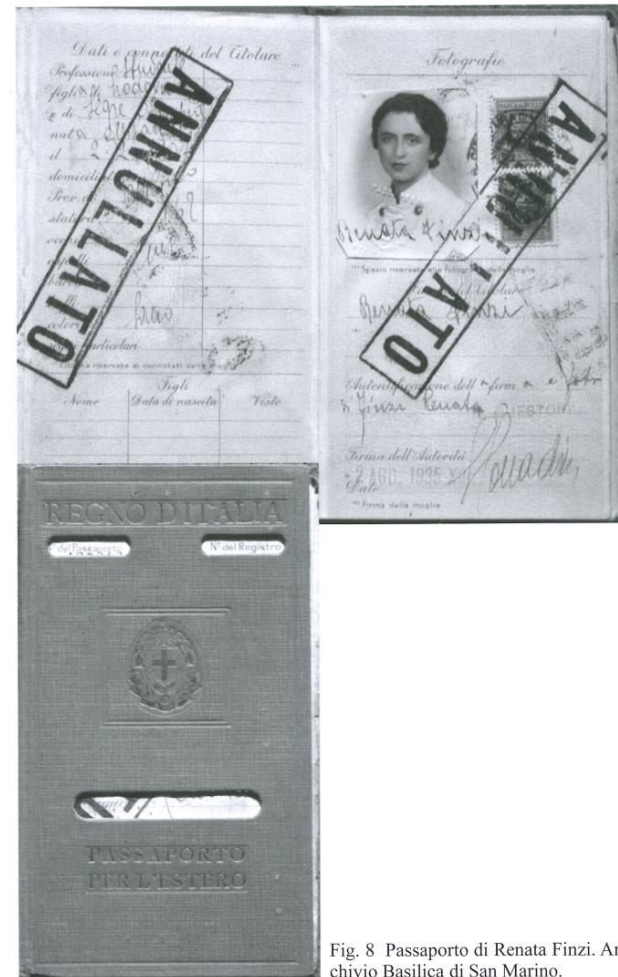


Fig. 8 Passaporto di Renata Finzi. Archivio Basilica di San Marino.

On 12 November 1943, Balducci was summoned to Rimini by the Wermacht, who explicitly forbid him from offering refuge to “member of the Jewish race”, considered to be enemies of the nation by the Italian Social Republic.

Balducci, however, affirmed that there were no Jews in San Marino (the wonderful lie).

This position was reaffirmed successively, as shown in various letters, and as such they were able to avoid being subject to further German and Italian inspections.

The events that transpired during Balducci's visit to Rimini were never heard by the Sammarinesi. They were kept in the dark about the meeting which essentially made them indirect protagonists of the moment. They resisted until the end of the conflict, demonstrating how a small community was able to oppose the crimes that the Nazis were committing.

In San Marino there was never a real organisation to save Jews, but the mechanism was run by the hospitality of the people, their silence, and the diplomatic abilities of the Republic's representatives.

*Permesso di Soggiorno*  
 N. 245 breve 1942  
 Valore fino al 30/9/1944

REPUBBLICA DI SAN MARINO  
 SEGRETERIA DI STATO PER GLI AFFARI ESTERI  
 ISPETTORATO POLITICO

*Permesso di Soggiorno*  
 N. 245 breve 1942  
 Valore fino al 30/9/1944

N. B. - I figli minorenni entro tre mesi dal raggiungimento della maggiore età, debbono chiedere ed ottenere permesso di soggiorno a loro intestato.

Cognome GRINBERG  
 Nome Regina  
 Padre fu Gregorio  
 Madre Pinkert Anna  
 Nato il 24/XII/1907  
 a Varese  
 Stato Civile in Brambilla  
 Nazionalità Italiana  
 Professione Agiata  
 Residenza Città presso Amati Raffaele

Il presente permesso vale anche per la Moglie  
 (cognome - nome - paternità - luogo di nascita - anni)  
 e i figli minorenni  
 (nome - anni)  
 Edoardo di anni 5

REPUBBLICA DI SAN MARINO  
 SEGRETERIA DI STATO PER GLI AFFARI ESTERI  
 MARCA DA BULLO

Fig. 51 Permesso di Soggiorno di Regina Grynberg. Per gentile concessione di Edoardo Brambilla Grynberg.

# The bombing of the riviera

From November 1943 San Marino found itself tackling new emergencies because many people escaping the Allied bombings were seeking refuge. Rimini was bombed multiple times in a year, until September 1944, and the city was almost completely destroyed. Among the refugees there were also partisans, antifascists, and deserters.

The people of San Marino shared food and shelter with them, healing the injured and wounded in their hospital, and churches and convents hosted people. These events therefore constitute one of the most noble chapters in Sammarinese history.



Rimini during the bombings



# Mixed marriages in San Marino

Studies dedicated to Jewish families around Rimini have shown that in the church of Serravalle, between 1938 and 1940, there were multiple marriages between people belonging to the 'Jewish race' and 'Aryan' citizens (Giorgio Matrai, Jewish, married Maria Col there in 38). Even in the basilica in the historic centre there were some of these marriages.



Fig. 79 Immagini del matrimonio fra Hans Wetzlar e Adriana Renzi celebrato presso la Chiesa Parrocchiale di Serravalle. Per gentile concessione di Orsetta Fabris.

DENUNCIA N. 60 (MOD. C.)

REPUBBLICA DI SAN MARINO  
PARROCCHIA DI Serravalle

ATTO DI MATRIMONIO

il giorno 30 del mese di Luglio anno 1938  
nella Chiesa di Serravalle hanno contratto matrimonio  
fra di loro secondo il disposto delle vigenti Leggi gli individui qui sotto notati, relativamente a  
cui sono state date le seguenti indicazioni:

se abbiano avute dispense e quali Sì una patteggiatura  
cognome e nome dello sposo Hans Wetzlar  
paternità dello sposo Dr. Renzani  
mestiere e condizione di esso Commerciante  
sua età e luogo di nascita 28. giugno 1902 a Berlino del. Frau. P. P. P.  
celibe, o vedovo di chi celibe  
dimora dello sposo P. P. P.  
cognome, nome e paternità della madre Dr. Anna P. P. P.

cognome e nome della sposa Renzi Adriana  
mestiere e condizione di essa Commerciante  
età e luogo di nascita della medesima 27. 3. 1910 a Capana del. Frau. P. P. P.  
nubile o vedova di chi nubile  
nome del padre della sposa Dr. Lorenzo  
cognome nome e paternità della madre Dr. P. P. P.  
cognome e nome del testimone P. P. P. - Bon. Amadeo  
dimora comune degli sposi P. P. P.  
San Marino, il 30 luglio 1938

IL DENUNCIANTE IL PARROCO  
P. P. P. P. P. P.

Fig. 78 Atto di matrimonio fra Hans Wetzlar e Adriana Renzi. Archivio Chiesa Parrocchiale di Serravalle.

# Stories of salvation

The first refugees to enter San Marino were a mother and daughter, Jewish Germans, who were forced to escape after the Kristallnacht.

Charlotte Neuendorf and her daughter Edith Reuter lived in Berlin. Their escape began in March 1939, and they soon reached South Tirol where they received help from a doctor.

It is important to note that people leaving Germany lost their citizenship and became stateless. The two


x 400  
 Transcritto  
 1935 (1949)  
 1939  
  
 REPUBBLICA DI SAN MARINO  
 SOGGIORNO DEGLI STRANIERI  
 (Art. 1 Regolamento 4 Agosto 1927 N. 23)  
 Da stampare  
 dal dichiarante  
 Il Signore (o la Signora) *Neumondy Charlotte*  
 figli *di Federico di Monte Ma* nato a *Reichio*  
 il *10.7.1895* di nazionalità *Germana* di condizione *single*.  
 DICHIARA  
 - di trovarsi nella Repubblica di San Marino dal *1.11.1939*  
 proveniente da *München Via aerea Paris SV.*  
 - *Admiration* *pero Maria Johis* con la moglie e 5 figli minori degli  
 anni 21 retro apostrofi: *Elta presso casa di Reichio*  
*Villaggio Lusa.*  
 - di essere venuto in Repubblica a scopo di  
 - di essere in possesso a titolo di  
*Paraporto N° 1213 - 102315 - 31-8-1939 - 1-11-1940*  
 dei seguenti beni immobili, rustici e urbani:  
*Palas pojpinio in Valtin N° 211, vilaccolo Lantura a*  
*München in data 5-9-1939.*  
 atti nella Repubblica a *Ferdino Parkus -*  
 - di esercitare in questa territorio la seguente professione, industria o commercio (sia in nome  
 proprio, in società con altri o per conto altrui) *Casa di Reichio N° 11.*  
*Milano via riproprio al fratello Professore*  
 CHIEDE  
 il permesso di soggiorno per *tre mesi rinnovabile fino 1-11-1940*  
 San Marino, li *1.11.1939*  
 IL DICHIARANTE: *D. Aug.*

Fig. 36 Repubblica di San Marino, Archivio Gendarmeria.

[illegible]

Fig. 37 Censimento del 1947 che riporta la presenza a San Marino delle ex apolidi Edith Reuter e Charlotte Neuendorf.

Giuseppina Tamagnini, a Sammarinese woman, recalls the two women, stating ‘Everybody called her “the German” [...] the daughter was very pretty, she had long blonde hair...’

Maria Natalini Felici, who lived in the same building on a lower floor, remembers them, ‘Edith was a very private girl, sometimes she spent multiple days in a row at home... her mother went out more often, sometimes she stopped to talk with my mother and they became friends...’

The two remained in San Marino until 1948. That year the film *The Prince of Wolves* was filmed, and the young girl fell in love with one of the camera operators. Once filming was over they left for Rome and married in 1949. In the sixties Edith returned to San Marino and wanted to go see her old house, but it had been demolished to make space for a garden. They went to find Virginio Reffi and met his son Paolo.

# Mandelli Family

Edith and Zita Grunfeld, daughters of a wealthy Austrian family of Jews, lived in Bologna and were married to Giuseppe Mandelli and Mario Guizzardi, respectively.

The memories of Maria José Mandelli (nicknamed 'Baby' by her Sammarinese friends) recount the story of another example of the Sammarinese hospitality given to Jews.

Pietro Mandelli and Mario Guizzardi purchased two houses in San Marino; Mandelli purchased a residence that belonged to Manlio Gozi, secretary of the Fascist Party. Maria Josè recalls that arriving in the Republic was a true miracle.

ANNO 1944 CARTELLA D'AMMISSIONE N. 89  
CONGREGAZIONE DI CARITÀ - REPUBBLICA DI SAN MARINO  
OSPEDALE DELLA MISERICORDIA  
GENERALITÀ DEL MALATO  
GRUNFELD  
Cognome e Nome EDITH GRUNFELD Stato Civile Vedova di Zita Grunfeld  
Patronimico Zita Grunfeld Luogo di Nascita Italia - Roma  
Maternità Bettina Grunfeld Domicilio Italia - Via S. Rocco  
Data di nascita 28.7.1905 Condizione Paziente  
Cittadinanza Italiana  
San Marino  
Il sottoscritto dichiara di rendersi garante solidale presso l'Amministrazione della Congregazione di Carità di tutte le spese che il suddetto malato avrà ad incontrare a norma del Regolamento fino alla sua dimissione.  
San Marino, IL GARANTE  
Cognome - Nome - Residenza  
E' ammesso di cui sopra è affetto da  
San Marino, IL DIRETTORE  
Fatto per l'ammissione  
Conferimento al Mandato d'incasso N. 2  
una data esente in deposito Lire  
San Marino, IL CASSIERE  
Entrata il giorno 2 del mese di febbraio  
alle ore 24.30 Reparto Ginecologia  
Sezione Letto N. 3  
L'ammesso vi è uniformato al Regolamento e può essere ammesso all'Ospedale come  
San Marino, IL PRESIDENTE  
Pietro Mandelli M. Gozi

Fig. 45 Frontespizio della cartella clinica dell'Ospedale della Misericordia che attesta l'avvenuto ricovero per parto di Edith Grunfeld.



'It seemed like Heaven on Earth to me, in Bologna you couldn't get food except for on the black market, while in San Marino everything was free. My father was ecstatic: pork, chicken, desserts, etc. it was paradise.' The girl was able to attend school and enjoy time with her friends (Giovanni Michelotti, and Gina and Giorgio Zani). The father continued to conduct business, and evidence suggests that it was him who bought Michelotti some machines to allow him to produce wafers. Thus the 'La Serenissima' ('The Most Serene', the start of the full name of San Marino) factory was born, a business that to this day produces cakes in San Marino.

After 8 September 1943, the presence of German and Italian soldiers on Mount Titano instilled a lot of fear into their families. 'the fear was highest in the evening, I was very attentive from the villa next to ours, looking out of the basement window to see if I saw some boots that were Germans'

The girl also bore witness to the bombings of the 26 June 1944. That morning the family took refuge in the Montale train tunnel and while there ran into their grandparents who they hadn't seen for months, and who had secretly arrived in San Marino - for security reasons they had not been informed. In the tunnel life was very hard, and Mandelli showed his generosity by producing multiple cakes to distribute to the refugees at his own expense, and donating 12.000 lire to a fundraiser for the refugees. In 1945 they returned to Bologna



Fig. 40 Giuseppe Mandelli e Edith Grünfeld.



Fig. 41 Zita Grünfeld e Mario Guizzardi.



Fig. 42 Maria José (Baby) Mandelli. Per gentile concessione di Antonio Zani.

In 2012, now living in Reggio Calabria, Maria José Mandelli gave an interview to Bagnaresi e Marzi (the authors of the book, La Meravigliosa Bugia), thanking the Sammarinese people:

‘I wish to say thank you. A thank you with my whole heart, because in San Marino I lived wonderfully and so did my family... We loved staying in San Marino... We had a wonderful time there, and for this, on behalf of my family, I thank all the Sammarinese people, especially the Captains Regent, to whom I give a loving greeting, with the utmost respect.’ -Maria José Mandelli



Refugees in the tunnels

# Regina Grynberg

Regina, a Polish Jew, born in Warsaw (1907), decided to move to Milan to live with her uncles when she was 20. Her uncle, Edoardo Morotti, was an industrialist and the consul of San Marino in Milan. She married Carlo Brambilla, a businessman who imported fabrics from the East. In 1939 their son Edoardo was born, and in 1942 he and Regina arrived in San Marino. Carlo instead was imprisoned in India by the British Army.

There are various stories about her stay in the Republic, as well as some photographs.



Fig. 53 Regina Grynberg con Edoardo nei pressi della torre campanaria della Guaita. Per gentile concessione di Edoardo Brambilla Grynberg.

One striking fact is that Edoardo was dressed like a girl, as was his hair. This was to protect him from any potential roundups. Francesco Balsimelli, elected as one of the Captains Regent, worked to protect Regina and her family.

On the 26 June 1944 he was one of the first people to check on them to ensure that they had not been affected by the bombings, shortly after which they took refuge in the tunnels.

Their name is among those listed as having donated to the fundraiser for refugees.



[illegible][illegible]

# Camillo Castiglioni

Camillo was born in Trieste in 1879, where his father was head rabbi. He had three wives and three children. In the 20s he was considered to be one of the richest men in Europe.

His personal battle against the racial laws started in the thirties, when he started selling all the shares in German companies that he owned. In Austria his assets were taken by the government, including a large villa on Grundlsee lake, which Hitler made into part of the world's largest library.

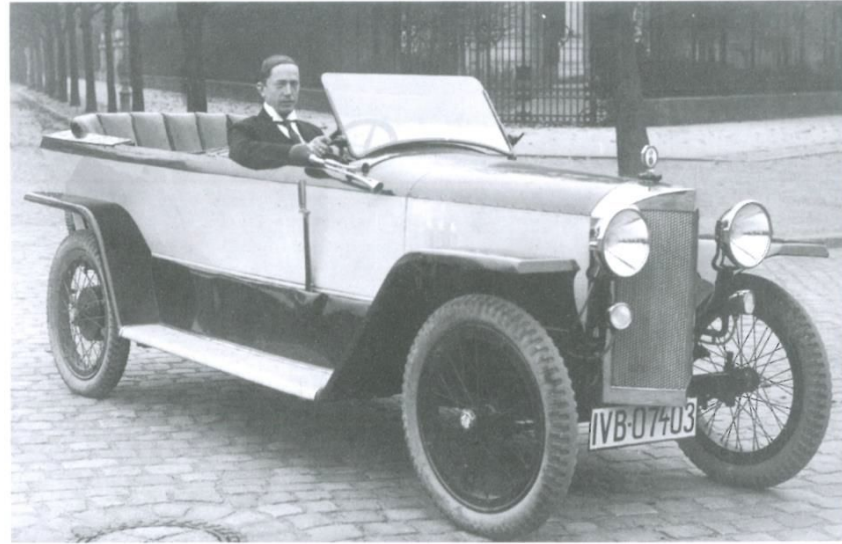


Fig. 65 Camillo Castiglioni alla guida della sua auto. Copyright BMW Group Archives, per gentile concessione.

In 1938 after the Italian Racial Laws were enacted he wrote a letter from Milan to Mussolini, reminding him of what he had done for the Fascist Party, and requesting that he waive the application (the law allowed for the Minister of the Interior to do so) of certain property related rules for him and his son Arthur, daughter of his Jewish first-wife.

He did not obtain what he was hoping for and was forced to flee Italy. On the 20 November 1943 he presented himself at the Sammarinese political directorate to request a residency permit. He gave them a fake ID Card which identified him as Giuseppe Cialenti, a Franciscan monk, and said that his address would be the monastery of San Francesco, San Marino.

His presence did not go unnoticed: some people noticed the strange behaviour of the monk who wore elegant silk and smoked from a golden cigarette holder. The name Cialenti appeared frequently in the convent's accounts. Thanks to his donations they were able to carry out maintenance work and purchase various essential items.

Alvaro Casali, a dentist, had Camillo as one of his patients, and the two became such good friends that he revealed his secrets.

The friendship between the two continued after the war and it was Casali, after the liberation, who accompanied him to Rome.

In one of his texts from 1973 Casali talks about Castiglioni's time in San Marino.

CAMILLO CASTIGLIONI

Viareggio, 27 agosto 1952  
Hotel Regina

Mio caro Alvaro,

Ho avuto la tua lettera del 22 corrente, messa alla posta il 25, dunque ieri!altro e ti rispondo subito, dovendo recarmi domani per alcuni giorni a Trieste e non volendo lasciarti sino alla settimana prossima senza risposta. Però se mi scrivi, continua a farlo all'indirizzo di qui, perchè conto rimanere a Viareggio almeno ancora 2 o 3 mesi.

Ho preso nota con molto interesse di quanto mi scrivi ed ho studiato attentamente ed in profondità la tua lettera. Penso seriamente alle tue proposte, ma purtroppo non ti nascondo che Voi, non essendo affatto comunisti, Vi lasciate -non solo senza protestare, ma anzi con un certo orgoglio -incensare come comunisti o al minimo come socialcomunisti, ed è più che naturale che banchieri, finanzieri e capitalisti, anche se nutrono una grande simpatia per Voi, hanno paura di perdere i loro soldi, come avviene sempre con i veri comunisti. Tu devi capire che questa gente non ha la fiducia necessaria. . .

Quando ho avuto il primo colloquio con Tito, promettendogli di recarmi a Washington, dove gli procurai in tre settimane i primi 40 milioni di dollari, seguiti in questi tre anni da più di un miliardo, mi feci dare senza il minimo riguardo la sua parola d'onore di mantenere strettamente gli accordi presi fra noi, altrimenti non avrei mai rischiato il viaggio agli Stati Uniti. Vi ripeto che sono sicuro, più che sicuro, di poter regolare tutte le Vostre questioni, con l'Inghilterra, rispettivamente personalmente con Churchill e con Eden, con l'Italia, con l'O.N.U., ecc. ecc. e non cederei a nessun premo riguardo alla questione del Casinò, che devono permettervi, CHE DEVONO ASSOLUTAMENTE PERMETTERVI. Il modo, in cui Vi siete lasciati trattare, anzi non solo MALTRATTARE, ma prendere in giro, è scandaloso e mai ciò sarebbe avvenuto se Vi foste decisi ad accettare i miei consigli e da darmi la Vostra fiducia e la Vostra rappresentanza già 2 o 3 anni fa, quando Ve lo avevo proposto. Non Vi sarebbe costato nemmeno un soldo, perchè non solo tu sapevi, ma anche Giacomini ne era informatissimo, che io avrei potuto domandare forse un modestissimo compenso, quando tutto quello che desideravate e quello che era necessario per Voi fosse completamente a posto, ripeto: tutto. E sapevate anche benissimo chi sono, cosa ho spuntato e cosa ho costruito in vita mia ed avete il dovere, IL DOVERE ASSOLUTO, di non confondermi con quelle nullità e nemmeno quelle persone - chiamiamole NORMALI COLLABORATORI - che Vi rappresentano e che si occupano regolarmente dei Vostri affari. Tu sai che io non ho grazie al Cielo bisogno nè di orgoglio, nè di onori, ne ho avuti già troppi nella mia vita. L'imperatore di Germania mi ha dato personalmente la Croce di ferro, quello d'Austria la Commenda di

Fig. 71 Lettera di Camillo Castiglioni ad Alvaro Casali. Per gentile concessione famiglia Casali.

‘Among these people, mixed with the thousands of displaced people, was someone who the Gestapo were particularly interested in, having placed a large bounty on his head. He was a very well-known figure, the Jewish banker Camillo Castiglioni [...] he had become a power in the financial and industrial field of Central Europe [...] he was very compromised by his courageous aversion to the Hitler regime [...] In the hospitable territory, despite the daily alarms, he found help, assistance, thanks above all to the solicitude of a worthy and fearless friar of the Minorites of which he was provincial head, the San Marino Father Alfredo Cesari who hid him in the convent, dressing him as a friar, where he remained until the liberation that took place in the second half of September 1944’

Castiglioni returned to San Marino multiple times and went to see his old friends.



# The philosopher and the promising young footballer

Oscar Billig, a mixed-race Jew, was forced to flee Germany together with his wife Magdalenee and their son Enrich.

After seeking refuge in Italy, the family entered the Republic in November 1943.

The Billigs remained in the Republic until the first half of 1946. Enrich was often seen playing as a goalkeeper in football matches with young San Marino players.

Oscar founded a study center (Centro Studi Minerva-San Marino) and among other things he wrote poems in verse dedicated to San Marino; his lyrics express his intimate need to express admiration and thanks to a '... small [country], but capable of solving a gigantic task'.



Fig. 90 Oscar Billig in una foto del dopoguerra.

In August 1944 Billigs wrote a letter to Balducci, minister plenipotentiary, (the sender's address was via GB Belluzzi) in which he expressed all his esteem to the minister himself: 'as a guest of this country I feel the need to express you, in the certainty of interpret also the unanimous sentiment of all those who today enjoy the generous and traditional hospitality of the Republic, to what a high degree your very energetic work for the defense of the vital rights of the Republic of San Marino arouses the admiration and recognition of all those who have turned to this country...'

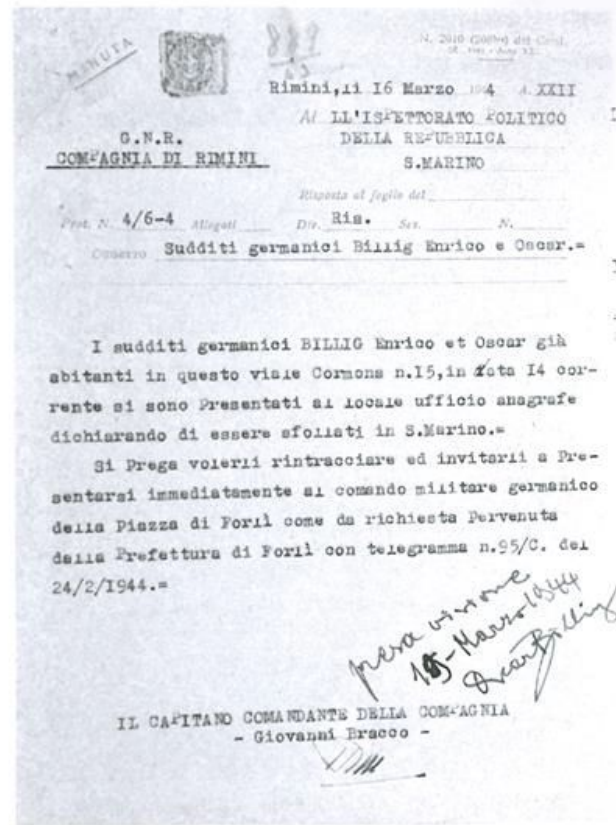


Fig. 91 Comunicazione della Guardia nazionale repubblicana all'Ispettorato politico con «presa visione» di Oscar Billig. Repubblica di San Marino, Archivio Gendarmeria.

# The widow of the bombings

Sadly, not all the stories about the refugees have a happy ending. This is one of those that did not.

Malvina Kohn and Erna Hendl were born in Vienna in 1870 and 1894 respectively, and were a mother and daughter of Jewish origin. In 1937 Malvina's husband died; in 1939 Malvina and Erna presented themselves at the town hall of Merano, where they resided, declaring their belonging to the 'Jewish race'.

The two women and their daughter's husband, Lo Monaco, then moved to Bologna.

In December 1943, the couple and their maid presented themselves at the San Marino Political Inspectorate. They informed the gendarmerie officers that they had entered the Republic to escape the bombings and that they had found a home with Giuseppe Moscioni, in the locality of Fondi del Voltone.

There was no trace of her Malvina, the woman had found refuge in the Rimini hinterland and only entered San Marino in the summer of 1944, however providing false details: she declared her name was Maria Kohn. Her home was that of Giuseppe Forcellini, in via G.B. Belluzzi.

On 26 June at 11.30, Erna's husband, Franco Lo Monaco, was the victim of the bombing in Fondi del Voltone. The death certificate drawn up in San Marino reported "multiple injuries from shrapnel bombs" as the cause of death.

After the liberation of Bologna, the two women returned to their home but lived in poor economic conditions for their whole life. Erna died on September 29, 1981, leaving precise instructions: to be buried in San Marino in the cemetery of Montalbo, next to her husband.

# The people's optician

Mario Castelbolognesi (1879-1948) was born in Bologna and was an esteemed ophthalmologist. In 1907 he opened a doctor's office in Rimini. With him was his wife, Anna Foà. His practice was very famous and advertised in local newspapers.

He was there during the First World War and in the following years in his study he offered his treatments free of charge to those who could not afford them.

He was a member of the Jewish community of Ferrara and in 1938, recognized as belonging to the Jewish race, he was expelled from the fascist party of which he was a member. In a short time he was prevented from working and was disbarred from the medical order. In 1944 the government ordered that his house be seized, but the two no longer resided in the building because it had suffered damage following the bombings.

They had taken up residence in San Marino. There is no precise evidence or documentation of their stay; the first to talk about it was the Rimini historian Montemaggi in 1984 (San Marino nella bufera, p. 25).

In 1946, during a trial, Anna Foà declared that during their stay in San Marino they rarely went out, only in the evening, despite their presence being "widely known". After the liberation, in October 1944, the doctor and his wife immediately returned to Rimini and he immediately went to work to help the many in need. He held important positions as a member of the municipal council and died in 1948.



# Refugees in Montegiardino

The small castle (the name given to counties within San Marino) of Montegiardino also hosted refugees. Various people testify to this. The castle, being in a peripheral position, was the victim of several raids by German troops who installed cannons, artillery and a radio station.

During the liberation, cannon shots killed evacuees and Sammarinese citizens; on 20 September a bomb killed the border guards Pietro and Giuseppe Casadei and the Regent Sanzio Valentini was injured. That was where the battle of Monte Pulito took place.

Refugees included the Costas, a family originally from Milan, and the Coens. Marino Valentini in an interview recalls that his father had rented a room to the Coens.

Even the teacher Alceste Ferri testified to the presence of Jews in Montegiardino: 'they were here, I assure you [...] I had their daughter at school [...] There were the Coens, and the Finzi, they were very respectful people [...]

Of the Finzi family, mentioned by the teacher, no documentary traces have been found.

ELIO FERRARI Elio, a Jew and a partisan, resided with his wife Iole and their children Laura and Elio, in Montegiardino from January 1944.

In the book, 'The wonderful lie' there are the stories of people of whom we only have smaller fragments of knowledge. Regardless, these are precious stories, that could one day be even further enriched by new studies and new research.

<p>Cognome <i>Montrella</i>          Nome <i>Giulio</i>          Padre <i>Agostino</i>          Madre <i>Mabelli Maria</i>          nato il <i>14.11.1910</i>          a <i>Bari</i>          Stato civile <i>coniugato</i>          Nazionalità <i>Italiano</i>          Professione (dichi.) <i>Commerciante</i>          Residenza <i>Milano</i>          Via <i>Fel. Casati 112</i>          CONNOTATI E CONTRASSEGNI SALIENTI          Statura <i>170</i>          Corporatura <i>regolare</i>          Capelli <i>brunati</i>          Occhi <i>celisti</i>          Contrassegni salienti //</p>	<p>          FIRMA DEL TITOLARE  <i>Giulio Montrella</i>          Milano, li <i>16 NOV</i>          Impronta del dito indice sinistro          IL PODESTA'  </p>
<p>Cognome <i>Benini</i>          Nome <i>Valeria</i>          Padre <i>Giuseppe</i>          Madre <i>La Rocca Giovanna</i>          nato il <i>12 aprile 1923</i>          a <i>Bari</i>          Stato civile <i>ca</i>          Nazionalità <i>italiana</i>          Professione (dichi.) <i>casalinga</i>          Residenza <i>Milano</i>          Via <i>F. Casati 112</i>          CONNOTATI E CONTRASSEGNI SALIENTI          Statura <i>160</i>          Corporatura <i>regolare</i>          Capelli <i>brunati</i>          Occhi <i>azzurri</i>          Contrassegni salienti //</p>	<p>          FIRMA DEL TITOLARE  <i>Valeria Benini in Montrella</i>          Milano, li <i>16 NOV</i>          Impronta del dito indice sinistro          IL PODESTA'  </p>

Fig. 74 Documenti attestanti false identità di Giulio Stucovitz e Valeria Bonfiglioli. Per gentile concessione di Paolo Stucovitz.

# The Azzali family

Giuseppe Azzali was displaced to the Piagge area with his wife and daughter who recounted: 'I made friends with many girls from San Marino. We played despite watching the bombing of Rimini [...]'

A few years after the war, the family returned to San Marino, where they opened an ice cream shop, and Marina married the lawyer Giorgio Micheloni.



# The Donati Family

Salvatore Donati, a man well known for having held leading roles in important banking institutions, arrived in San Marino in 1943 with his large family: wife and five children. He obtained permission to stay thanks also to his acquaintances in the Republic. One of these was Gino Giacomini; His son Remycosì stated in an interview: 'We have had Jews staying here and we have saved them [...]. I remember a friend of my father, a certain Mr Donati, who was a very rich person [...]



Fig. 103 in alto a sinistra Giuseppe Azzali (per gentile concessione di Marina Azzali), in alto a destra Salvatore Donati, in basso a sinistra Gustav Jellinek (immagine tratta da [www.archiviomaggiolimazzoni.it](http://www.archiviomaggiolimazzoni.it)), in basso a destra Ermia Levi.

# Faenza Family

They fled from Lombardy and after a short period in Rimini, crossed the state border and found refuge in Borgo Maggiore with the Martelli family.

Rosolino Martelli, a child at the time, remembers sharing moments of play with their son Alfonsino.

The Faenza family left for Rimini in June 1945.

They left some assets in the house of the Martellis with whom they maintained good relations even in the following years.

N 1673. Anno 1944.

REPUBLICA DI SAN MARINO

**SOGGIORNO DEGLI STRANIERI**  
(Art. 1 Regolamento 4 Agosto 1927 N. 23)

Da riempirsi dal dichiarante

Il Signore (o la Signora) Salvatore Luigi  
figli di fu Alfonsino e di Luigia Annunziata nato a Bologna  
il 30-4-1898 di nazionalità Italiana di condizione Libero

**DICHIARA**

— di trovarsi nella Repubblica di San Marino dal 28-6-1944  
proveniente da Parma, Permetto San Marino a Bologna, Reggio Emilia 149  
— di dimorare in Acquedotto presso Montecchia, San Marino  
Luigi Luigi, Carlo, Maria, etc.  
— di essere venuto in Repubblica a scopo di affidamento da Permetto

Permetto, Bologna di anni 29, moglie  
Luigia, Alfonsino di anni 4, figlio  
Penelope, Giulia, etc.

Ha i materiali della partita

11.5.945: 11.5.945: 11.5.945

**CHIEDE**

il permesso di soggiorno per 30-11-44 11-12-44 11.5.945  
San Marino, li 22-4- 1944

IL DICHIARANTE  
Mr. Permetto

Il Questore lo deve aver visto sia fatto da chi risale o lungo istruttoria di educazione, di religione, di vita, della espi di comunità religiose, e da apposito incaricato, anzitutto rappresentando il motivo e soggiungendo a per il dichiarante e per il questore.

Fig. 105 Repubblica di San Marino, Archivio Gendarmeria.



# Final thoughts

The precious testimonies collected by the authors of the book 'The wonderful lie' have made a significant contribution to the knowledge of events in the history of San Marino in the twentieth century, and above all they have offered to many the opportunity to know and remember the great generosity and solidarity which people and an entire community are capable of, bringing humanity into such a dramatic and barbaric moment in world history. These facts are certainly a source of pride and reflection on the values that have characterized the history of this small free land that was capable of such greatness.