

Bloodless Torture: The Books of the Roman Ghetto under the Nazi Occupation

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“Bloodless Torture” refers to the fate of two priceless collections of books and manuscripts in the Jewish community of Rome. Having settled in the “Eternal City” before the time of Christ, the Jewish citizenry of Rome constitutes the oldest surviving Jewish presence in the Western world. The “People of the Book” saw their identity intimately tied not only to the sacred Torah but to a long history of writing and commentary. The libraries in Rome contained manuscripts from ancient Rome and the Middle Ages as well as important modern works. With the German occupation of Rome in 1943, those libraries fell into the hands of the Nazis. Contrary to what we may first imagine, these books were not burned; in fact, another—perhaps more perverse—fate awaited them.

From days immemorial books played an important, even vital role in our nation’s life. Rightly we were considered in the Diaspora the people of the book when the book served as a loyal companion of our nation.¹

When I began my research into the fate of the books of the Roman ghetto under the Nazi occupation, I had in mind the line from John Milton’s *Aeropagitica* of 1644: “As good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself.” Or perhaps—as an epigraph for the essay—Heinrich Heine’s thought in 1823 that “Wherever they burn books they will also, in the end, burn human beings.” For the more contemporary-minded, Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* might seem appropriate. Burned into our collective consciousness are the searing images of those Nazi bonfires consuming—with the twin scourges of fire and hatred—the intellectual patrimony of an entire civilization: from the “decadent” liberals to the “diseased” Jews to the “traitorous” Thomas Mann. For historical precedents, I thought of the burning of the ancient library at Alexandria, the sack of Rome by the Vandals, Savonarola’s “bonfire of the vanities” in Renaissance Florence, and even Umberto

Eco's fictional account of the destruction of a magnificent medieval library in his novel *The Name of the Rose*.

In the winter of 1939, Jewish scholars were already aware of what the Nazi war would mean, at least as far as Jewish material culture was concerned. An article had appeared in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* titled "Books, Books, Books," and Chaim Aron Kaplan noted in his diary the ironic similarity between the Germans and the Jews:

We are dealing with a nation of high culture, with a "people of the Book" . . . The Germans have simply gone crazy for one thing—books . . . Germany has become a madhouse for books. Say what you will, I fear such people! Where plunder is based on an ideology, on a world outlook which in essence is spiritual, it cannot be equaled in strength and durability . . . The Nazi has robbed us not only of our material possessions, but also of our good name as "the people of the Book."²

In Turin, a city with a Jewish population of little more than four thousand in 1938, Jewish books *were* burned—by Italian fascists. Before the Nazis ever set foot in occupied Italy, Turinese fascists forced their way into the Jewish Community Library, seized much of the collection, and used the books to feed a great bonfire in the Piazza Carlina.³ Yet the story of the books of the Roman ghetto reveals instead that the two libraries—that of the synagogue and that of the rabbinical college—were *not* burned; another fate awaited them. Their story is part of the crime against Rome's Jewish community that began with the Nazi occupation of Rome in July of 1943, only hours after King Victor Emmanuel III had removed Mussolini from office. The fascist regime had come to power more than two decades earlier, in October 1922, without any trace of official anti-Semitism. Indeed, Italian Jews—as middle-class citizens, not as Jews—supported the regime and were present in the highest echelons of the fascist hierarchy: Guido Jung as Finance Minister; Aldo Finzi as Undersecretary of the Interior. It was not until 1934 that the anti-Semites within fascism were unleashed. In 1938 the regime passed extensive anti-Semitic legislation; most Gentile Italians, to their credit, did their best to circumvent the new laws. In fact, until the Nazi occupation of Italy, not one Italian Jew was transported to the death camps, even though the Nazi leadership was insistent on this point.

In September of 1943, the SS commander in charge of Rome, Herbert Kappler, summoned the leaders of the Jewish community to his office. He demanded a ransom of fifty kilos of gold, to be paid within thirty-six hours, in exchange for the safety of the Jewish community. On the international gold market in 1943, fifty kilos of gold were worth approxi-

mately \$56,000; with 12,000 Jews in Rome, a ransom of \$4.50 per person seemed a small price to pay for the life of a person.⁴ At his trial after the war, Kappler defended his action as preferable to deportation. What he did not reveal was that the order for the deportation of Roman Jews had already been sent and that his “humanitarian gesture” was merely extortion.

Within hours, word of the extortion demand had spread beyond the ghetto. Jews and Gentiles alike presented themselves at the synagogue to contribute whatever they could. The receipts that were issued reveal that most contributions were pathetically small; a ring, bracelet, earring, or some other precious family heirloom. Yet the fifty kilos were collected and deposited at the SS office in via Tasso. The community breathed a collective sigh of relief, confident that the atrocities that were rumored to have taken place on the eastern front and the reports of death camps must be exaggerations. In addition, it was inconceivable that here in the Eternal City the pope would allow “his Jews” to be subject to deportation. The few who quietly suggested that the Germans would not be content only with gold were ignored.

On the morning after the payment of the gold ransom—the eve of Rosh Hashana—officers from Kappler’s office knocked on the door of Ugo Foà, president of the Jewish community. The Germans quickly assured Foà that they were not there to arrest him. Instead, they had orders to search the premises of the synagogue; rumor had it that the synagogue was harboring anti-fascists and collaborating with the enemy. The Germans were thorough in their search: they broke open the alms boxes, entered the oratorio for the Spanish rites, and destroyed the Ark, throwing the two Torahs inside to the ground. More importantly, they carried away thousands of records and documents, including the names and addresses of virtually every Jew in Rome.⁵

The next day, 30 September 1943, the first day of the Jewish new year 5704, two representatives from the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) appeared at the synagogue. The Einsatzstab Rosenberg was a special commando unit established in 1940 by the official theoretician of National Socialism, Alfred Rosenberg, and was an integral part of his plan to refashion German and European culture after the war.⁶ The Einsatzstab Rosenberg was composed of two formal divisions: regional organizations called work groups; and *Sonderstäbe* or special staffs whose responsibility included the fields of art and historical artifacts.⁷ A German historian of the ERR has called it a “commando organization of cultural robbery.”⁸ Its chief function was to confiscate, plunder, and loot objects of art during the war and may have been the philosopher’s most successful endeavor.⁹ Rosenberg already had years of experience in the field of cultural policy. In August of 1927, at the first of the great

Nuremberg rallies, a National Socialist Society for Culture and Learning was established; two months later, Rosenberg was appointed its director. In 1929 it was tellingly renamed the Kampfband für Deutsche Kultur—Combat League for German Culture.¹⁰ The KFDK was Rosenberg's attempt to insinuate himself into the Nazi organizational and bureaucratic hierarchy; as such, he often came into conflict with Joseph Goebbels and the Ministry for Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment. Other, less “enlightened” Nazis could not see the reason for preserving any remnant of Jewish culture. Most were probably of the same mind as the Nazi correspondent who reported on the destruction of the library of the Lublin Yeshiva:

For us it was a matter of special pride to destroy the Talmudic Academy, which was known as the greatest in Poland . . . We threw the huge talmudic library out of the building and carried the books to the marketplace where we set fire to them. The fire lasted twenty hours. The Lublin Jews assembled around and wept bitterly, almost silencing us with their cries. We summoned the military band, and with joyful shouts the soldiers drowned out the sounds of the Jewish cries.¹¹

The ERR devised an efficient and highly coordinated organization for the plunder of art from museums, and books, documents, and manuscripts from libraries, schools, universities, and private citizens. It was placed in the Wehrmacht by an official act of Hitler and had its headquarters in Berlin, with branch offices in Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Belgrade, Riga, Minsk, and Kiev. Each Hauptarbeitsgruppe (regional branch) had sub-regional offices (Arbeitsgruppen) and local centers (Sonderkommandos). In eastern Europe alone there were eleven subregional offices and seven local centers.¹² If a desired object belonged to foreign “Aryans,” the owners were compelled to sell it; if it belonged to Jews, it was simply confiscated. The property of Jews who had fled the Nazi onslaught was declared “ownerless,” and therefore the ERR had the “obligation” to store it in safe places within the Reich.¹³ Rosenberg seems to have been particularly interested in libraries for his pet project, a *Hohe Schule* for the NSADP.¹⁴ This was to be the Central National Socialist University and dedicated to advanced academic study. To this end, several institutes had already been established by 1943: one in Hamburg for the study of colonial research; another in Halle for religion; one in Kiel dedicated to the study of *Lebensraum*; still another in Stuttgart for biology and race; and a center for the “Jewish Question.” This last project was given the appropriately impressive name of the Institut der NSDAP zur Erforschung der Judenfrage and was centered in Frankfurt, where the mayor had already

confiscated the Jewish books from that city's municipal library. The Judaica Collection in Frankfurt had been a gift from the Rothschilds family in 1928. The Institut would be critical in "teaching the spiritual basis and tactics of our ideological adversary." Jewish scholars from the liquidated ghetto at Vilna were employed at the Frankfurt center, which eventually collected—in a perverse twist of irony—over six million works.¹⁵

At the Roman synagogue that September day in 1943, approximately twenty officials searched the premises, paying particular attention—according to the diary of an office worker—to the two libraries: the Biblioteca Comunale and Biblioteca del Collegio Rabbinico.¹⁶ The libraries of the Roman ghetto—like those of other ghettos in Europe—were centers for both the spiritual and secular life of the community. The next day, 1 October, two men from the ERR returned to the synagogue and introduced themselves to Foà as Orientalists; one, in the dress of a captain and identified as a specialist in Hebrew from Berlin,¹⁷ asked permission to examine the community's libraries. The American historian Robert Katz has given us a vivid description of the library:

The Biblioteca Comunale had a magnificent collection, one of the richest in Europe, not only for the study of Judaica, but also of early Christianity. A heritage of 2,000 years of Jewish presence in Rome, the library contained vast treasures that had not yet been catalogued. . . . Among the known material were the only copies of books and manuscripts dating from before the birth of Christ, from the time of the Caesars, the emperors, and the early popes. There were engravings from the Middle Ages, books from the earliest printers, and papers and documents handed down through the ages.¹⁸

Beginning before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish community of Rome had accumulated these materials, with significant additions during the medieval period. The collection was substantially enlarged in 1492 with the influx of Jews expelled from Spain and Sicily. By the twentieth century the collections in both the Collegio Rabbinico and the Comunità were still being catalogued according to the date of acquisition, making research difficult.

The Jews of Rome have been caught between the "benevolence and betrayal" of their city.¹⁹ There was the humiliation of being ordered to march under the Triumphal Arch of Titus which depicted the destruction of Jerusalem, kissing the ground where the pope's foot had trod, and forced to listen to sermons demanding their conversion to Christianity. In 1322, on orders of Pope John XXII, copies of the Talmud were destroyed in bonfires,²⁰ neither the first nor the last time such an event occurred in Rome.

The “golden age” of the Hebrew book in Italy was the sixteenth century, when—notwithstanding the censorship of Papal and civil authorities—Hebrew publishers crafted beautiful and influential texts. Rome was a center of this trade, with Isaac Immanuel de Lattes who established a press in the Eternal City in 1546. A relative, Bonet de Lattes, was private physician to Pope Leo X, who allowed a Hebrew press to be established in the house of Giacomo Fagiot da Montecchio in the Piazza Montanara. In 1518 this press printed the *Sefer Haharkabah*, the first Hebrew book printed in Rome. The liberal Leo X was succeeded by Clement VII and then Paul III, who first decreed the establishment of the ghettos in 1556. The Counter-Reformation and the workings of the Roman Inquisition effectively blocked publication of new works in Hebrew, and until 1810 no Hebrew book was published in Rome.²¹ None other than Pier Luigi Farnese, illegitimate son of Pope Paul III, petitioned his father for the privilege of establishing a Hebrew press in Rome; his father denied the request.²² The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed more bonfires of Hebrew books, including one in the Piazza of Saint Peter’s itself.²³ The rationalism of the Enlightenment put an end to this practice; now books were merely confiscated rather than burned. In April 1753 Papal authorities entered the ghetto after the gates had been closed for the night and proceeded to fill thirty-eight carts with about 650 books.²⁴

In 1893 the books of one synagogue were destroyed by fire. Spurred by the losses incurred by the fire, the community acted to preserve a priceless legacy. In 1895 Angelo Di Capua (Mordekhai Yaakov Yosef) compiled an inventory of the *Talmud Torah* confraternity which held the rarest and most important texts.²⁵ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the various collections of the so-called “Five Schools” were assembled to form the Biblioteca della Comunità Israelitica.²⁶

In 1934 a Jewish scholar, Isaia Sonne, had spent eight days examining the contents of the Biblioteca della Comunità Israelitica. Sonne had divided his labors between five groups of texts: (1) manuscripts; (2) incunabula; (3) works of the famous Soncino publishing house, which beginning around 1500 was a prodigious publisher within the Pontifical State; (4) oriental texts from the sixteenth century (primarily from Constantinople and Salonika); (5) miscellaneous and peculiar works that fit into no particular category. Sonne’s eighty-five page catalogue is preserved today by the Jewish community in Rome and allows us some insight into what the officers of the ERR were looking at.²⁷

The manuscripts were from the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries and represented monuments of the literary and intellectual life of Rome. They reveal Jewish participation in the Spanish philosophical movement of the 1400s as well as the spiritual crisis of the sixteenth cen-

ture in which the Kabala came to replace philosophy. Also included were works of the rabbi and medical doctor Moses Rieti, manuscripts spirited out of Spain and Sicily during the Jewish expulsion in 1492, a Portuguese incunabulum of 1494, a mathematics text of Elia Mizrahi, and an extremely rare edition of a Hebrew-Italian-Arabic vocabulary published in Naples in 1488. Also included were twenty-one Talmudic tracts, published by Soncino, which had been prohibited by Pope Julius II. Included in this collection was a rare eight-volume edition of the *Talmud* by the famous sixteenth-century Venetian printer Daniel Bomberg.

The ERR officers informed Foà that in the interest of their studies, the catalogues of the libraries were to be handed over to them. A few days later, another officer, this time a lieutenant who claimed to be a paleographer and a specialist in Semitic philology, examined the libraries. As his men rifled through the libraries, an eyewitness noticed the Nazi intellectual:

the officer, with artful and meticulous hands like fine embroidery, touched softly, caressed, fondled the papyrus and incunabula; he turned the pages of manuscripts and rare editions and leafed through membranaceous codices and palimpsests. The varying attention of his touch, the differing artfulness of his gestures were at once proportionate to the volume's worth. Those works, for the most part, were written in obscure alphabets. But in opening their pages, the officer's eyes would fix on them, widening and brightening, in the same way that some readers who are particularly familiar with a subject know where to find the desired part, the revealing passage. In those elegant hands, as if under keen and bloodless torture, a kind of very subtle sadism, the ancient books had spoken.²⁸

In the presence of the synagogue's secretary, Rosina Sorani (whose diary is preserved at the YIVO Institute in New York), the officer telephoned an international shipping company and made arrangements for the books to be transported out of Rome. Her entry for 11 October 1943 reveals that

they turned to me and told me that they had seen very well how many books there were in the libraries, and in what order; they declared the libraries under sequester, that within a few days they would come to get the books and that all was to be as they left it; if not, I would have to pay with my life.²⁹

Sorani informed Foà, who contacted Dante Almansì, president of the Union of Jewish Communities. Together they drafted a letter³⁰ and sent

four copies to various offices within the fascist regime: the library division of the Ministry of Education, the Directorate General of Religions, the Directorate General of Public Security, and the Directorate General of Civil Administration. Perhaps they should not have been surprised that no fascist official offered to intercede, especially since the last three offices were under the direction of the notorious war criminal and rabid anti-Semite, Guido Buffarini-Guidi, who was at that very moment preparing anti-Semitic legislation far more severe than that passed by the regime in 1938.³¹

On the morning of 13 October, two full-sized freight cars from the German national railroad, which had been placed on Rome's trolley lines, pulled up in front of the synagogue by the Tiber River. Foà and Almansi were now frantic. Concerned about the priceless gold and silver religious articles, they hit upon an ingenious solution: the mikva baths were emptied of their water, and an artisan began the laborious process of hiding the religious articles within the walls of the baths. Some of the most important works found refuge in a nearby municipal library, the Biblioteca Vallicelliana. At precisely 8:30 A.M. the next day, 14 October (the first day of the festival of Succoth), officials of the ERR returned with workers from the transport company. They spent the entire day collecting the contents of the two libraries and loading them onto the railroad cars. As they were emptying both libraries, the artisan involved in the mikva deception arrived unnoticed by the Germans and proceeded to complete his work, thereby saving many of the most precious religious articles. Later, pieces were hidden in gardens and homes all over Rome.³² After the two railroad cars had been loaded to capacity, they departed. Witnesses noted that the cars had come from Munich.³³ Two months later, on 22 December, the Germans returned to carry away the last remaining books and manuscripts from the rabbinical college.³⁴ Perhaps they took special pleasure in the fact that it was the first day of Hanukkah. In all, the Nazis confiscated some ten thousand volumes from the Jewish community in Rome.

For the next several days, the Jews of Rome debated among themselves the significance of this latest development. Some insisted that this was the beginning of greater persecution; others noted that a crime against books was not a crime against people.³⁵ Panic began to seep into the community. A foreign journalist noted at the time that

the population is half crazy; young men and families look desperately for hiding places, get them, then look for better ones . . . convents and seminaries have become the most sought after hideouts. Another famous one is the Lunatic asylum: scores of people have

entered and have filled it to the bursting point. Rome never had so many madmen.³⁶

But the fate of the Jews of Rome was much more severe than that in store for the precious books. After the war some of the books were to be returned from Frankfurt after delicate diplomatic negotiations. Most of Rome's Jews who were deported were not to return to the Eternal City. By the fall of 1943, much of the diplomatic corps, military officers, and the Vatican, including Pius XII, were aware that the Germans were preparing to deport the Jews. The German consul in Rome, Eitel Friederich Möllhausen, had sent a telegram to Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop on 6 October, marked "*very, very urgent!*" in which he repeated that Kappler "had received orders from Berlin to seize the eight thousand Jews resident in Rome and transport them to Northern Italy, where they are to be liquidated" [*wo sie liquidiert werden sollen*].³⁷ As far as I know, this is the only Nazi document that makes a direct reference to "liquidating" the Jews; rather than the more traditionally used phrase *Sonderbehandlung*, or "special handling."

In fact, it was only two days after the confiscation of the libraries that the deportations began. In the early morning hours of the Sabbath (16 October 1943), Kappler's men carried out a highly organized search of the ghetto and seized over a thousand Roman Jews. They were held over the weekend at the Collegio Militare, a mere hundred yards from the pope's residence in the Vatican; Pius XII decided not to intervene on behalf of "his Jews." During the night Marcella Di Tivoli Perugia, captured with her two children, gave birth in the courtyard after the Germans refused to permit her release to the hospital. On Monday morning the Jews were herded into railroad cars and began their nightmare voyage to Auschwitz. The Germans expended far more consideration for the safety of the books than the Jews. Of the 1,041 Jews deported that day, only 15 returned to Rome after the war.³⁸

The books, though, had a different fate. With the Allied bombings of Frankfurt, the vast holdings of the ERR in the Institut der NSDAP für Erforschung der Judenfrage were moved to six repositories in the small village of Hungen. After the war the Rothschild Library in Frankfurt served to house the vast collections. In October of that year, a young officer in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section of the Allied Military Government was assigned to make a survey of the collections in order to expedite restitution and recommended that operations be moved to larger quarters at Offenbach.³⁹ Ironically located in the abandoned I. G. Farben plant, the United States Archival Depot under the direction of Major Seymour J. Pomeranze (a former archivist at the National

Archives) at Offenbach eventually processed millions of books. According to Poste, the collection of the Collegio Rabbinico of Rome was returned in March 1947. This was accomplished through the assistance of Captain Carlo Rupnik, the Italian officer in charge of the restitution effort. A total of 26,568 items was returned by two railroad cars. Of this number, 159 crates (6,579 books) belonged to the Collegio Rabbinico, 57 crates (6,112 books) and 6 crates of archives belonged to the Istituto Austriaco di studi storici in Rome, and 24 crates (4,585 books) and 15 crates of archives were returned to the Istituto Italiano di Speleologia-Postumia.⁴⁰

Not all of the rare volumes were lost in 1943. A volume of 1485, the *Nebi'im ri'sonim 'im peruš* with commentary by David Kimhi was saved; as was Kimhi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (*Il libro delle radici* [*The Book of Roots*]), published two decades earlier. In addition, there survived an extremely rare *Mishnah* with commentary by Moses Maimonides published in Naples in 1492. Several sixteenth-century volumes of *Peruh 'al ha-Torah* (commentaries on the Pentateuch) remained hidden within the synagogue, as well as Isaac Alfasi's *Sefer ha-Halakhot* (compendium of the Talmud) published by the Venetian Bomberg in 1521–22. A ritual prayer book for holy days of the “Roman” rite published by the Soncino firm circa 1500 was saved. In addition, one can today find a 1488 edition of Mose Ben Jacob's *Sefer miswot gadol* (*Il libro grande dei precetti* [*The Great Book of Obligations*]) and Moses Ben Mayimon's *Mishnah Torah* of the late fifteenth century.⁴¹

What might we conclude from this all-too-brief study of a small episode buried within the immensity of the Holocaust? The true student and scholar must be prepared to abandon previously held conceptions. I had begun this study assuming that the books of the Roman ghetto had “merely” been sacrificed in a burnt offering to racial hatred; a holocaust enveloped in the Holocaust. But the real fate of the books proved to be in many ways even more disturbing: pseudoscience and corrupted scholarship at the service of a deviant and diabolical ideology. Here is but one small—yet bitterly ironic—example of the immense perversity of the Nazi project: a people whose entire existence was bound and symbolized in the Book were systematically destroyed, while their precious works were given lavish and even loving attention from the very people who sought their destruction.

Notes

This paper was first presented at an international conference, “The Holocaust and the Book” at Drew University (Madison, NJ) in November 1996. I wish to thank the director of the conference, Professor Jonathan Rose of Drew University for his support; in addition, this paper profited from the suggestions of Leonidas E. Hill, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of British Columbia and

Dr. Seth C. Sutter, Bibliographer for Modern Literatures at the University of Chicago. The essay also benefited from the suggestions of two anonymous reviewers who saved me from several embarrassing errors. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the work of Professor James T. Mellone of the Axinn Library at Hofstra University for his assistance in tracking down some of the sources and the kindness of Dottoressa Simona Foà, archivist of the Jewish Community of Rome who graciously permitted me to examine the documents which made this essay possible.

1. The librarian—unnamed—of the Sholem Aleichem Library in Radomsko, Poland; quoted in David Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word: Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Europe* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 1997), 12. On the mythical power of the book, see Marc Drogin, *Biblioclasm: The Mythical Origin, Magical Power and Perishability of the Written Word* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Littlefield, 1989).

2. Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word*, 48.

3. Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987; reprint Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 156.

4. Robert Katz, *Black Sabbath: A Journey Through a Crime Against Humanity* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 68.

5. *Ibid.*, 107–8.

6. For the activities of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, see the essay by Donald E. Collins and Herbert P. Rothfelder, "The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg and the Looting of Jewish and Masonic Libraries During the Second World War," *Journal of Library History* 18/1 (Winter 1983): 21–36. See also Jacqueline Borin, "Embers of the Soul: The Destruction of Jewish Books and Libraries in Poland During World War II," *Libraries & Culture* 28:4 (Fall 1993): 445–60; Alan Noel Latimer, "Libraries Under the Nazi Occupation," *The Library*, [5th Series] (1 June 1946): 45–6.

7. Fritz Nova, *Alfred Rosenberg: Nazi Theorist of the Holocaust* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986), 204; on the Einsatzstab, see also Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: The Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Revised edition; New York: Holocaust Library, 1979), 67–72, 81–2; on Rosenberg, see Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (New York: Dodd & Mead, 1972).

8. Reinhard Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschafts-system* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt. Studien zur Zeitgeschichte, 1970), 145.

9. Nova, *Alfred Rosenberg*, 204.

10. Cecil, *Myth of the Master Race*, 56, 109.

11. Quoted in Shavit, *Hunger for the Printed Word*, 48–9.

12. Leslie I. Poste, "Books go Home From the Wars," *Library Journal* 73 (1 December 1948): 1699. The story had caught the attention of popular and academic writers in the days immediately after the war. See, for example, G. N. Kefauver and C. M. White, "Library Situation in Europe," *Library Journal* 70 (1 May 1945): 385–9; (15 May 1945): 473–6; E. Greenaway, "Librarian Looks at Central Europe," *Library Journal* 73 (15 February 1948): 277–80; (1 March 1948): 366–7; (15 March 1948): 437–41; K. R. Shaffer, "Conquest of Books," *Library Journal* 71 (15 January 1946): 82–6. Other accounts appeared by J. S. Evans, "Rosenberg's Den of Thieves Holds Key to Looted Art of Europe," *Newsweek* 25 (28 May 1945): 86+; J. Flanner, "Annals of Crime," *New Yorker* 23 (22 February 1947): 31–6; (1 March 1947): 33–8; (8 March 1947): 38–42; James S. Plaut,

"Hitler's Capital: Loot for the Master Race," *Atlantic Monthly* 178 (October 1946): 73–8; (September 1948): 57–63.

13. Joseph E. Persico, *Nuremberg: Infamy on Trial* (New York: Viking, 1994), 210, 242.

14. Nova, *Alfred Rosenberg*, 204.

15. Katz, *Black Sabbath*, 119 and note.

16. Diary of Rosina Sorani, partially reproduced in *Ottobre 1943: cronaca di un'infamia* (Rome: Comunità Israelitica di Roma, 1961), 36.

17. See the report of Ugo Foà in *Ottobre 1943*, 20.

18. Katz, *Black Sabbath*, 120. A brief synopsis of these events are given in Meir Michaelis, "Rome," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Israel Gutman, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 1300–2.

19. I borrow the phrase from Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families Under Fascism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

20. William Popper, *The Censorship of Hebrew Books* (New York: Ktav Publishing, n.d.), 17.

21. David Werner Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy* (Philadelphia: Julius H. Greenstone, 1909), 240, 244.

22. *Ibid.*, 248.

23. Popper, *Censorship of Hebrew Books*, 97.

24. *Ibid.*, 121.

25. The hand-written manuscript (*Elenco deo libri della Biblioteca del Tamud-Torà secondo l'ordine col quale sono contenuti nei vari armadi*) is now held in the Archives of the Comunità Israelitica, Armadio V, pacchetto #1.

26. The Five Schools were comprised of the Scola Tempio and Scola Nova of the Italian rite; the Scola Catalana-Aragonese and the Scola Castigliana of the Spanish rite; and the Scola Siciliana which lost its books in the 1893 blaze. On the schools and confraternities, see Attilio Milano, "Le confraternite pie del ghetto di Roma," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* XXIV (1958): 107–20.

27. Isaia Sonne, *Relazione sulla Biblioteca della Comunità Israelitica di Roma* (Rome: n.p. 1934). For a catalogue of works present in the collections three decades later, see *Catalogo della Mostra Permanente della Comunità Israelitica di Roma* (Rome: Comunità Israelitica, 1963).

28. Giacomo Debenedetti, "16 ottobre 1943." *Mercurio* (Rome, December 1944): 81; quoted in Katz, *Black Sabbath*, 123.

29. Sorani in *Ottobre 1943*, 37.

30. Following is the text of the letter written by Almansi and Foà, dated 11 October 1943:

This morning a German official of the SS attached to the local German Embassy presented himself at the offices of the Hebrew Community of Rome located in the synagogue on Lungotever Cenci; he was accompanied by another German in civilian dress, an expert in library matters. The official, after having visited the Library of the Community and that of the Collegio Rabbinico . . . declared to a worker present that all of the books of the two libraries were to be considered under sequester, that they could not be removed, threatening that if anything were removed, the worker would suffer severe physical punishment; he let it be known that the books would be removed within a few days by the German authorities.

Consisting of very valuable archival material (manuscripts, incunabula, Soncino texts, publications of the sixteenth century, extremely interesting examples of Hebrew books, etc.), that were catalogued a few years ago by

an expert [Sonne, 1934; n.a.], and which constitute a complex of notable cultural importance, their removal by German authorities who intend to transport them to Germany would leave Italy bereft of an important cultural patrimony.

The undersigned, respectively in their capacity as President of the Union of the Collegio Rabbinico and the president of the Hebrew Community of Rome—unable to oppose the request of the German Authorities—feel the obligation to inform the Honorable Minister so that he may take whatever he feels are the necessary measures. (Quoted in *Ottobre 1943: cronaca di un'infamia* [Rome: Comunità Israelitica di Roma, 1961], 22–3.)

31. Katz, *Black Sabbath*, 125, 148, note.

32. *Ibid.*, 149, note.

33. Foà in *Ottobre 1943*, 23.

34. Sorani diary, entry for 22 December 1943, in *Ottobre 1943*, 40.

35. Debenedetti, “16 ottobre 1943,” 82.

36. M. de Wyss, *Rome Under the Terror* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1945), 144.

37. The telegram from Möllhausen to von Ribbentrop, dated 6 October 1943, is in the Documents of the German Foreign Ministry 1920–1945, in the National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Microcopy T-120, Roll 4668; it is quoted in full in Katz, *Black Sabbath*, 136.

38. Katz, *Black Sabbath*, Appendix I, II, 331–41.

39. Poste, “Books go Home From the Wars,” 1700; see also F. J. Hoogewoud, “The Nazi Looting of Books and Its American ‘Antithesis’: Selected Pictures from the Offenbach Archival Depot’s Photographic History and Its Supplement,” *Studia Rosenthalia* 26/1–2 (1992): 158–92. On 10 May 1933, one hundred thousand people marched in New York City to protest the burning of books in Nazi Germany; see Guy Stern, *Nazi Book Burning and the American Response* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1990).

40. Leslie I. Poste, “The Development of U.S. Protection of Libraries and Archives in Europe During World War II,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1958, 380.

41. Other volumes included Yosef Albo, *Sefer ha-'iqqarim* (Pesaro: Soncino, 1485); two editions of Bahya Ben ' Asher, *Perush 'al ha-Torah* (Commentary on the Pentateuch) (Pesaro: Soncino, 1517 and Rimini: Soncino, 1526); the *Ketubim 'im perushim* (Venice: Bomberg, 1525); Moses Ben Nahman, *Perush 'al ha-Torah* (Pesaro: Soncino, 1514); Mahzor Bene Roma, *'im perush Kimha de-'abishonà* (Bologna: n.p. 1540); Natan Ben Yehiel, *Sefer ha-'aruk* (Pesaro: Soncino, 1517); Yishaq Alfasi, *Sefer Rab Alfas* (Venice: Bomberg, 1521–1522). For a list of those works that managed to escape being confiscated by the ERR, see Ariel Toaff, “Stampe rare della Biblioteca della Comunità Israelitica di Roma scampate al saccheggio nazista,” *La Bibliofilia* LXXX (1978): 139–49. Some rescued volumes from eastern Europe even found their way to the United States. The 10 January 1997 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that an anonymous eastern European Jew who had survived the Holocaust had donated a small collection of works to Baltimore Hebrew University. Inside the front covers were a stamped swastika and imperial eagle encircled by the words “Library of the New Germany.” The donation included volumes from the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries in Hebrew, Yiddish, Latin, Aramaic, Hungarian, Polish, French, and German. Among the volumes was a four-volume edition of the *Mishnah Torah* by Maimonides and an encyclopedia of Jewish law printed in Amsterdam in 1708.