



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Decoded Radio Messages between Ernst Kaltenbrunner (Berlin) and Herbert Kappler (Rome)
(October 11, 1943)

Until 1943, Italy's approximately 51,000 Jews were relatively safe. Although the Fascist regime under dictator Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) had passed a number of discriminatory laws at Hitler's urging, the Italian government had refused to deliver its Jewish population to the German machinery of destruction. After the July 1943 landing of Allied troops in Sicily, the collapse of the Mussolini regime, and the subsequent German invasion of northern and central Italy, the Jewish population lost its previous state protection. The following radio communication between Ernst Kaltenbrunner (1903-1946), Reinhard Heydrich's successor as head of the Reich Security Main Office, and Herbert Kappler (1907-1978), Commander of the Security Police and the Security Service (SD) in Rome, reveals the Nazi regime's obsession with the complete annihilation of Europe's Jews. A few days later, on October 16, 1943, Kappler began the Italian "evacuation action." By the end of the war, the Nazis had succeeded in deporting around 10,000 Italian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where most of them were murdered.

BERLIN to ROME
11/10/43

To KAPPLER. It is precisely the immediate and thorough eradication of the Jews in ITALY which is the special interest of the present internal political situation and the general security in ITALY. To postpone the expulsion of the Jews until the CARABINIERI and the Italian army officers have been removed can no more be considered than the idea mentioned of calling up the Jews in ITALY for what would probably be very unproductive labour under responsible direction by Italian authorities. The longer the delay, the more the Jews who are doubtless reckoning on evacuation measures have an opportunity by moving to the houses of pro-Jewish Italians of disappearing completely [18 corrupt] [sic] ITALY [has been] [sic] instructed in executing the RFSS orders to proceed with the evacuation of the Jews without further delay.

KALTENBRUNNER. Ogr.

BERLIN to ROME
11/10/43

Your W/T message no. 58 of 8/10/43. Entire Kommando SKORZENY is at present on special leave. Settlement will be made immediately on SKORZENY's return. Please pass to Hauptmann SCHACHT.

BERLIN to ROME
11/10/43

Those BOZEN people newly posted to your end who are no longer required for impending tasks should be despatched by rail to GOEBEL, FLORENCE, HOTEL MINERVA. 2) With regard to the impending evacuation of the Italian Ministry it should be borne in mind that the Ministry's documents have not been published since 1863, Italy being the only great European power to have followed this course, and that it is therefore a matter of great political and historical interest to ensure their preservation and immediate examination by German historians.
Dr. HARSTER.

Source: Decoded Radio Messages between Ernst Kaltenbrunner (Berlin) and Herbert Kappler (Rome) (October 11, 1943), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 226, Entry 112, Misc. X-2 Files, Box 1, Folder 5, Italian Decodes.