MUSSOLINI'S GREEK ISLAND

Fascism and the Italian Occupation of Syros in World War II

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SHEILA LECOEUR
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ABBREVIATIONS

ACS
Rome Central State Archive

AC
Public Assistance,

ASMAE
Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Historic Archive

CS FF.AA
Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (Italian)

CCC
Cyclades Civil Commission

CMC
Cyclades Military Command

DAE
Ermoupolis Municipal Archive 1821-1949

DDI
Italian Diplomatic Documents

DSM
Regimental Historic Diary

EAM
National Liberation Front (Greek Resistance)

Superegeo
Supreme Command of the Italian forces in the Aegean
FO
Foreign Office (Britain)

GABAP
Cabinet Foundation for Armistice-Peace (Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry)

GAK-AND
General Archives of the State - Archives of the Prefecture of the Dodecanese

GAK-ANK
General Archives of the State - Archives of the Prefecture of the Cyclades

IAK
Archives of the Italian Occupation Authorities in the Cyclades (1941-1943)

INSMLI
National Institute for the history of the liberation movement in Italy

IDD
Italian Administration of the Dodecanese

PEAE A
Greek post-war resistance organization for EAM

SME (AUSSME)
Italian Military High Command: Historical Archive

MFA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Italy)

WO
War Office (Britain)
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I have dedicated this research to the late Greek resistance fighter Yiorgos Iovanis whom I interviewed in Athens shortly before his death in 1997, aged eighty-two. After participating in the resistance he was imprisoned in an island camp and, because he refused to renege on his beliefs, was not released until 1974. In spite of great suffering he was a positive man with faith in the future. His greatest regret was that there was little interest in his story at a time when most people wanted to forget the past. Although it has not been possible to recount his experiences here, this is, nevertheless, a tribute to all those who suffered as a result of the Second World War in Greece and whose stories were never told.
Fig. 1 Maps of Greece and the Cyclades
Fig. 2 Map of Syros
INTRODUCTION

Most of occupied Europe had already experienced the shock of defeat and occupation before the Axis armies poured into Greece in the spring of 1941. Reactions to the new regime in Europe varied according to the severity of the occupying authorities but coincided in one respect: everyone was forced to adapt to life under occupation and retain a semblance of normality; the only possible antidote to the fear and insecurity that threatened everyday life. In Paris, for example, the population panicked at the news of the German invasion and many fled their homes only to straggle back again shortly afterwards as they realised that there was no escape and, for most people, nowhere else to go. Somehow life had to go on.

Much has been written about the way the occupied countries were run from a central point of view with a focus on quisling governments and Axis strategies. More recently research has engaged with the impact of occupation on society and detailed studies have emerged of life in the communities subjected to the often disintegrating impact of misrule. Looking at life under occupation from a local perspective has greatly enhanced our understanding of how occupations functioned and surprising, even counter-intuitive details of relations between occupiers and occupied have emerged.¹ Most importantly this perspective provides a magnified view of occupier/occupied power relations. Foucault proposed an ‘ascending analysis’ of power starting from its ‘infinitesimal mechanisms’ in order to try to understand how forms of political subjugation such as fascism, sought to function.²

So far there is little locally focused research for the Axis occupation of Greece, although there are several important
studies from a central perspective. These works examine the mechanisms of occupation or the impact on society from above but, as elsewhere, a different story emerges locally; such a methodology is particularly appropriate in the case of Greece which came close to disintegrating into a series of disparate localities when the quisling government lost control of the nation’s economy and vital services such as food distribution.

The focus of this book is the island of Syros, a small but important island of the Cyclades, in the west of the Aegean. As well as being the capital of the archipelago and the centre for the Italian occupation of the region, the island has a very specific identity due to its economic importance in the recent past and its social and confessional composition. The choice of Syros for an in-depth study of occupation was therefore motivated by a number of factors related to its particular historical and cultural identity. The island’s social and religious diversity contributed to a complex variety of responses to occupation while its economic characteristics exacerbated the consequences. These factors make Syros a fascinating subject for an analysis of the impact of occupation on society. Important issues affecting all occupied countries, such as collaboration, resistance, and occupier/occupied relations come to life in vivid detail in the dramatic and, at times, catastrophic events of the occupation of Syros. As historians have noted the question of collaboration, for example, took on different significance in diverse cultural, social and political circumstances. The story of Syros sheds light on occupation generally and, by comparison, helps understanding of the complex impact of occupation on communities with diverse identities.

This study is located where the wartime histories of Italy and Greece intersect. Greece was drawn into the Second World War in response to an attack launched by Italy on 28 October 1940. The unexpected success of Greece’s resistance to the Italian invasion brought hope to the Allies in one of the bleakest periods of the war. But the Italian debacle was followed, in April 1941, by the German invasion of Greece and the subsequent Axis occupation of the whole country. According to the armistice agreement of 23 April 1941, Italy occupied approximately two thirds of Greek territory, including the Cyclades.
Although it has been argued that Italy entered the Second World War without specific strategic aims, this is belied by her historic foreign policy objectives and by Mussolini’s long-standing vision of a ‘new Roman Empire’ in the Mediterranean. Since the 1880s Italy had sought to establish colonies in Africa and Mussolini reawakened Italian colonial ambitions in the 1920s when he promoted the idea of a Mediterranean mare nostrum with the North African coastline as Italy’s ‘fourth shore’. These ambitions went much further than previous foreign policy in their geographical range and would engage Italy on two fronts at once: in North Africa and the Balkans. In reaction to the spread of German hegemony across Europe and the Balkans, Mussolini sought to carve out his own area of influence in Albania and Greece. It soon emerged that Italy wished to join her allies, Germany and Bulgaria, in the dismembering of the Greek state in order to gain territory for the projected Italian empire.

While there is a considerable amount of scholarly investigation into Italian colonization policies in Africa, little attention has been paid to the Italian occupation of Greece. My interest in Greece was aroused by accounts of the terrible famine which devastated many areas of the country, particularly the urban centres, in the critical winter of 1941-2. Why the island of Syros stands out as the only island to be devastated by famine on an equivalent scale to that of the cities, is a question which has yet to be answered. Conflicting stories regarding the behaviour of the occupiers also raise intriguing questions. General opinion handed down in Greek collective memory seems to suggest that, in spite of notable exceptions, the Italian occupiers had been ‘less barbaric’ than their German or Bulgarian counterparts. The stereotype of the good-hearted Italian occupier has been reinforced by films such as Mediterraneo and by the popular novel and film Captain Corelli’s Mandolin. But assumptions made in that book caused considerable controversy: serious historians and supporters of the Greek Resistance objected to the distortion of historical events and the author’s one-sided view of the political struggles which led to civil war. For their part, Italian soldiers took exception to the stereotype reducing them to ‘womanizing mandolin players’ rather than serious soldiers.
The author appears to have hit a nerve (no doubt unwittingly) by touching on a whole series of taboos. The fact that the political issues raised in the book were barely alluded to in the film suggests that they remain too hot to handle. As elsewhere, the scars of civil war have been slow to heal.

In Syros too, controversy about the occupiers’ behaviour still lingers and it is clear that the topic is more complex than some observers have described. Davide Rodogno’s comprehensive study of fascist occupation policy and its enforcement in the Balkans, places much emphasis on fascist racial policy, particularly towards the Jews, in order to argue that the Italians were not lenient on this issue, as others have claimed. The focus is on the allegiance to Mussolini of much of the military and administrative occupation hierarchy and the ‘brutality’ of some of the occupation forces, although the evidence for this is somewhat limited as far as Greece is concerned. In fact, the behaviour of the Italian forces was not uniform in Greece and partly depended on the area under occupation and whether counter-insurgency occurred. This book will argue that there is a need for a differentiated view of soldiers’ behaviour and that of officers lower down the chain of command. In the case of Syros, the details of occupation government should also reveal whether civil administrators were subservient to Rome’s decrees or, on the contrary, would be forced to adapt fascist policies to local realities.

The fact that the Italian occupiers were Catholics and that a substantial Catholic minority existed on the island, clearly influenced controversial attitudes to the Italian occupation. Covert social and religious tensions remained alive after the war suggesting that the occupation had reopened old wounds and had left a legacy of unanswered questions and suppressed anger. This study will attempt to answer some of these questions and explore the apparent injustices which still trouble those who can never forget this period of their history.

From the Italian occupiers’ point of view, Syros was to become the target for an experiment in fascist imperial expansion. Ambitious designs focused on existing infrastructures which they hoped would allow intensive economic and industrial development, reinforced by the island’s strategic location in the west of the Aegean. Italy would thus dominate the mare
nostrum from west to east with her colony in the Dodecanese as its focal point.

An important reason for choosing this island for a monograph was the discovery of a large collection of little-researched, Italian records in Syros pertaining to the social administration of the island. This rich source of documentary material provides a rare opportunity to examine the details of social interaction between occupiers and occupied and gives insight into the impact of occupation on the lives of the islanders. Another surprising discovery was the Italian inscription: *Assistenza Civile* (Public Assistance) which was still visible above the entrance to the building which houses these archives. Why had this particular Italian inscription been left intact? Did it imply an intention to differentiate between memories of the grim period of famine on the one hand and, on the other, recognition of the Italian occupiers’ attempts to alleviate suffering? Everything seemed to point to the need for an investigation of this crucial example of life under occupation not least because some islanders are still haunted by memories. Recalling the state of panic of those facing starvation, an elderly lawyer repeated: ‘Drama! Drama! Drama!’ (In the Greek sense of ‘tragedy’ or ‘disaster’.)

The focus of this book is, therefore, the social and economic impact of occupation in a local context and how its outcome measured up to Italy’s foreign policy objectives. Like Nazism, fascism claimed to bring a New Order to Europe, sweeping away the political and economic structures of liberal capitalism and promising a different and harmonious form of civilization – but under the aegis of Italy – not her powerful Axis partner.

As elsewhere in Europe, occupations were often imposed with little understanding of the occupied populations but it is nevertheless essential to evaluate the successes as well as limitations of Italian occupation policy. This study will therefore seek to deconstruct the occupiers’ projected vision of the New Order by exploring the discrepancy between words and action, as well as its impact on the protagonists. Thus the focus is on those involved: the occupied population as well as the occupiers, and how this episode was experienced by its historical agents.
The neglect of the occupation period by historians is sometimes attributed to the lack of available sources but, as mentioned above, this is not the case as far as Syros is concerned. Unlike the German occupiers who took control of the Cyclades after the Italian Armistice on 8 September 1943, and who destroyed or removed most of their records when they left a year later, the Archives of the Italian Occupation Forces in the Cyclades have remained on Syros. Whether they were left deliberately or simply forgotten in the sudden collapse of the Italian administration is not clear. These records were hidden away and only came to light many years after the war and were catalogued and opened to the public in the 1990s. The collection consists of some 52,000 documents in Italian, Greek and French, and although incomplete, they provide an abundance of insights into life under occupation. The findings from archives in Athens, Rome, Syros and Rhodes are supplemented by the unpublished report of the Greek, honorary French consul, Marin Rigoutsos. His account of the struggle to survive the famine is a personal but acute view on Italian policies, local politics and corruption.  

While archives reveal important aspects of life under occupation, there remains a gap which can only be filled by diaries and witnesses’ accounts. This too can be problematic because, even today, taboos surround the awkward questions of collaboration, corruption and prostitution. Indeed it is not surprising that traumatic memories have been repressed or remain too difficult to address. Feelings of shame are still alive for relatives of women, and surviving women themselves, who were forced to resort to sex with Italian soldiers in order to survive. As a consequence, the issues surrounding gender difference and prejudice have yet to be explored. As for collective memory, which has been shaped by received opinion as well as fact, it is necessary to excavate below the edifice of emotive reactions to the past. Oral research in the Dodecanese has shown that patriotic opinion can be an obstacle to uncovering what happened. In methodological terms, oral evidence has often proved to be an effective way to deconstruct the myths surrounding such controversial issues. In order to investigate the hidden history of the occupation oral testimonies have been collected from witnesses of different
ages and social backgrounds, both Orthodox and Catholic.

Syros presents a rare perspective compared to many other parts of Greece where the trauma of resistance and civil war supersedes that of the occupation. Although the island was spared direct involvement in the civil war, occupation and crisis brought many changes and, as elsewhere, some survivors were able to integrate entirely new experiences into their lives. One of the rewards of oral research has been the discovery of the remarkable degree of courage and stoicism shown by many islanders in the face of harrowing experiences; this fortitude has remained with them as a source of pride and even humour.

All over occupied Europe the compromises and adjustments forced upon occupied populations were, to some extent, universal. Generally the Axis occupation represented a ‘massive and brutal intrusion’ into the familiar workings of society and imposed obedience to authorities with no regard for traditions or consensus. While this appears to be the case for most occupied countries, it remains to be seen whether a differentiated assessment can be made of the Italian occupation of the Aegean islands. This book will seek to place the occupation of Syros within the wider context of occupied Europe.
In the aftermath of Axis occupation, the island of Syros was destitute, part of the port lay in ruins and the shipyards and most factories had closed down. For the inhabitants the war was an immeasurable catastrophe: more than a quarter of the island’s population had died of starvation or related illnesses, and the fabric of society seemed irreparably damaged. The islanders’ impression of having been neglected by central government before the war was reinforced by the Greek state’s apparent indifference to the plight of Syros during the occupation. After the war, the once highly sophisticated, administrative capital of the Cyclades seemed to have become a backwater, in the eyes of the state.

Could the island’s loss of status be blamed entirely on the consequences of war and occupation? This is how some local observers feel, an understandable reaction to the devastation caused by Axis rule, but it fails to take into account the longer-term relationship between the island and the Greek state. It ignores the fluctuating political and economic fortunes of the island in the nineteenth century and its gradual exclusion from the centre of power. The breakdown which occurred during the war has its roots in this longer-run evolution.

The Italian occupiers made a thorough analysis of the island’s history and economic development in order to estimate the region’s potential for exploitation as part of the fascist empire they planned to install. They were also concerned to understand the nature and origins of the religious tensions which confronted them when the Catholic
clergy appealed to them for protection. This chapter focuses, therefore, on the evolution of Syros’s relationship with the Greek state before 1941. It discusses how Syros was affected by the process by which Greece disengaged from the Ottoman empire and became established as a modern nation-state. Another problematic aspect concerns the emergence of a bi-confessional (Catholic and Orthodox) society and the ensuing tension between the two communities. After the Second World War many islanders were convinced that the fact that the Italians were Catholics exacerbated religious tensions; moreover, perceptions of religious identity also influenced the way the occupation would be judged and remembered. It is therefore important to trace the origins of assumptions laid down during the evolution of society in Syros.

The characteristics of the society which developed on the island reflected the influence of a series of different rulers or occupiers. From the thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century Syros was mainly subject to Venetian control and Roman Catholicism was adopted by early settlers. A measure of self-government was instituted when the Aegean islands came under Ottoman rule after 1579. Most importantly, the security of the Catholic population was assured by an agreement with France and reinforced by a trade agreement between the French and the Porte. French religious and cultural influence lasted well into the twentieth century. There was also an Italian community and a Capuchin monastery which linked Syros with Rome; young people were sent to Italian universities to study. These cosmopolitan influences shaped the character of the island and would later evoke a complex range of reactions to the Italian presence during the occupation.

As the endemic problem of piracy in the Aegean became less of a threat, Syros was incorporated in Levant trading networks. Observers such as the botanist commissioned by Louis XIV, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, remarked in 1700 on the hard-working population of the island and its mainly rural economy. Hard work would be a characteristic of rural life in Syros, especially since the island’s fertility of ancient times, alluded to by Homer and confirmed in the eighteenth century by the religious leader or ‘Vicar-General’ for Syros, Abbot della Rocca, decreased by the end of the century.
The privileges granted by the Ottomans fostered traditions of self-government and, according to Abbot della Rocca, the islands were like ‘little republics’ who nominated their own magistrates. A form of direct self-representation of the male population lasted until the nineteenth century, influencing autonomous tendencies during the war for Greek independence.

Under Ottoman rule religious tension was accentuated as Catholic supremacy declined and the Orthodox clergy of the Aegean recovered its authority. This shift strained relations between the two religious communities in the Cyclades and Catholic refugees from other islands moved to Syros for protection. The population which was around four hundred in the first half of the sixteenth century, rose rapidly to about three thousand by the 1560s.

Tensions reached a critical level in the 1820s when the mainly Catholic population of Syros chose not to participate in the war for Greek independence. The Catholics, or Frankosyriani, were reluctant to support the Greek state because they were afraid of losing their status within the Ottoman system. Their lack of enthusiasm was to be considered ‘unpatriotic’ by latter-day patriots. Thus, when the 1821 revolt against Turkish rule began in the Peloponnese, the Catholics wrote to the Porte complaining that independence would force them to leave Syros or give up their faith. To the Orthodox leaders of the revolt this ‘betrayal’ seemed worse in Syros where the Frankosyriani were accused of spying for the Turks.

After 1821, however, a more ecumenical spirit was promoted both by Rome and the revolutionaries themselves. Ioannis Kapodistrias, Greece’s first governor, told the new state representatives in Syros to be prudent in their treatment of the Catholics.

The Greek war of independence dramatically transformed the confessional power balance on the island. Due to the protection of the French and Austrian fleets, Orthodox Greeks escaping from Ottoman forces sought refuge in Syros. After 1821 there was a sharp rise in the inhabitants of a new town which developed around the port: the incomplete census of 1828 recorded 13,800 townspeople with a further 1,100 living in the original Catholic settlement above the town, known as ‘Ano Syros’. The ratio of Orthodox to Catholics was quickly
reversed especially in the new town; according to an observer in 1827:

This island only had four thousand inhabitants in the past, all Catholics; they once inhabited the coast but were always insecure due to pillage by the Greek islands, and took refuge on the top of a steep hill from which they could easily defend themselves. It is still there that the town of Syros is located. The inhabitants had only kept a few market stalls and shops in the port; but since the insurrection, a mass of thirty thousand refugees from all over Greece in rebellion, came to settle on the island, taking over all the properties round the port. A new town, a hospital and building construction sites, have replaced the gardens and fields of the old owners. Too weak to resist, the Catholics have been treated like enemies, relegated to the upper town.\(^16\)

In order to keep the hostile communities apart the Catholic bishop drew a boundary between the Orthodox settlements and the traditional Catholic stronghold of Ano Syros on the hill above the town.\(^17\) While the newcomers settled on the coast, the existing community of Ano Syros and the entire agricultural hinterland of the island remained the domain of the Catholics. The Catholic community of Ano Syros still exists and its position bears witness in spatial terms, to the atmosphere of uneasy co-existence of the nineteenth century.\(^18\) Foreign travellers to Syros noted the build-up of social tensions. According to the American Protestant missionary, Rufus Anderson, who visited the island in 1829:

The inhabitants of this town regard the refugees at the harbour as intruders, come in and remaining without their consent. The difference of religion increases the animosity which formerly rose even to occasional acts of violence. Indeed the Greek Catholics are said to have very little fellow-feeling with their brethren of the Greek Church.\(^19\)

In 1854, the Earl of Carlisle recorded that ‘reciprocal aversion’ between the communities was so strong that they tried to live
'as separately as possible'. Social change came as a shock to conservative residents: complaints appeared in the local press about the cafés down at the port which were: ‘poisonous dens of vice and corruption ... ruffians and blackguards of all hues consort there’. There were apparently, forty cafés and sixty hashish dens by the end of the century. From the 1830s the development of the port brought prostitution and a rapid increase in those admitted to hospital for sexually transmitted diseases. By 1835 Ermoupolis was already a thriving town but, as the French consul noted, the Catholics remained aloof:

They never take part in any form of commerce, living off the land where they grow barley, vines and figs whose product is worth 135,000 francs.

He compared the Catholics’ agricultural income with the hundreds of thousands of francs’ worth of goods imported to Ermoupolis from France and Britain alone. The Catholics remained dependent on farming thus maintaining control of the supply of the island’s produce, an advantage which would take on great significance during the Axis occupation. Gradually social integration increased although the veto on inter-marriage imposed by the Orthodox and Catholic churches was observed by most people until after the Second World War. Underlying tensions would re-emerge following the Italian invasion of Greece in October 1940 when members of the Italian community living in Syros were arrested and interned and suspicions were extended to the Catholics as a whole.

**Growth and trade after Independence**

Immigration stimulated the economic and social transformation of the island in the nineteenth century. Refugees from Asia Minor were followed by a huge influx escaping from massacre on the island of Chios. The educated Chiot merchant class brought radical changes to the economy of Syros. Subsequent immigrants from other islands and the Peloponnese increased the size of this educated middle-class. The census of 1889 recorded a population of 22,000 in the
main town with 31,573 for the whole island. The newcomers provided the work-force, commercial skills and investment for Syros’s economic growth after 1830.

In May 1823 Syros was included in the Aegean administrative division by the Greek authorities of liberated Greece. The islanders tried to hold on to their independence for several years, an attitude which was symptomatic of the troubled relations between the state and the island. However, the national cause gradually won the islanders’ support and state investment in new infrastructures also helped. Although there was vociferous opposition to some of the autocratic policies of the new government, the local tradition of political activism encouraged participation in central and local government.

The town’s mercantile identity was established in 1826 when it was named, by common consent, after the god of commerce and profit, Hermes. In 1834, under the new system of administration of Greece set up by the Regency, Ermoupolis became the capital of the Prefecture of the Cyclades. The new town became a separate ‘commune’ from that of Ano Syros – an acknowledgement of the apparently irreconcilable cultural differences between the two communities. There was also some mutual hostility among the different groups of refugees; in spatial terms the town was divided into distinct neighbourhoods, depending on the origins and occupation of the refugees.

**Economic, social and cultural expansion**

As an important port of call for sailing ships bound for the Levant, Syros had a crucial function for Mediterranean shipping routes on the axis from Egypt to the Black Sea. Ermoupolis became a focus for international commerce, and the conjuncture of ‘capital, enterprise and an extensive market’ led to a local economic boom. Increased trade brought in capital from abroad and the establishment of a banking and credit system. The port soon came to handle more than half of the traffic for the whole of Greece. The major trading partner was Britain; Herman Melville observed in 1857 that British goods dominated the market, making use of the port of Syros to transfer cheap goods to the East.
This link was broken when the Crimean war (1853-6) and the British blockade on Greek ports, including Ermoupolis, put an end to good relations with Britain.

The influential merchants from Chios who dominated municipal affairs in Ermoupolis, preferred to engage in local rather than national government. Their fortunes were founded on investments outside Greece and affected by circumstances beyond the realm of national politics. As mayors and as members of the town council they had considerable influence over other powerful institutions like the Chamber of Commerce. This was resented by the anti-Chiotes and led to vociferous disputes and appeals to the national government to help resolve the conflict. Yet, as a ruling class they were heavily involved in the local community, investing in its institutions, elegant mansions and a theatre designed by an Italian architect. They initiated the construction of impressive public buildings such as the Town Hall (fig. 3) which still stand as reminders of their power. Philanthropists supported co-education for the under-privileged as well as the rich and 1,400 pupils were attending school by 1835. The island’s prestigious educational institutions attracted scholars from all over Greece.

Philanthropic traditions, which the Italian occupiers would later seek to exploit, encouraged islanders to contribute towards funding public welfare institutions. The great wealth of some islanders helped buffer local society in periods of crisis in the absence of state funds; indeed, this may have encouraged the state to believe that Syros could fend for itself.

Another important characteristic of Syros society was its expanding urban middle class and cultural life. Travellers to Syros, such as Gérard de Nerval, claimed that its cultural sophistication, particularly of its theatre, put Syros ahead of much of the rest of Greece. The passion for music and theatre in Ermoupolis in the nineteenth century still inspires novelists today. A flourishing publishing industry testified to the sophistication of a society whose wealthy families adopted a westernized life-style rarely seen in the Greek provinces. The island’s international reputation was enhanced by travellers passing through the Syros quarantine station; the enforced stay inspired many celebrated visitors to make observations in their
journals about the lively scene in the port and the contrast with the impoverished Catholic citadel, including the tensions between the religious communities. In his journal for 1857 Herman Melville wrote of the shops in the port crammed with ‘fez caps, swords, tobacco, shawls, pistols and orient finery’. Visitors also noted the wealth and life-style of the town’s leading citizens; extravagant fashions were matched by balls and musical activities held in their neo-classical houses and palaces, designed by foreign architects. The lavish manners of the nouveaux riches of Syros were elegantly satirized by Syros’s best-known writer, Emmanuel Roidis.

But the opulence of the professional classes was in flagrant contrast to the poverty and vulnerability of the industrial proletariat, living in the area adjacent to the port. Limited medical facilities and unhealthy conditions accentuated the disparity in life expectancy between rich and poor. While very low pay was widespread in the country’s nascent industrial sector, the island workforce was particularly vulnerable due to dependence on local private investment.

The fluctuations of the Syros economy and her strained
relations with the Greek state have exercised historians; indeed some aspects of this debate remain unresolved. There was no attempt by the government to pre-empt economic recessions in Syros or to protect local industries. Indeed it would have been unrealistic to expect effective intervention from a state undermined by international bankruptcy and political instability (between 1864-80 there were nine general elections and 31 distinct administrations, and 12 general elections and 39 administrations between 1881-1910). It has been argued that the state was not particularly interested or concerned with the island’s early economic development which, in some sectors, preceded that of the mainland.

In some respects, the economy of Ermoupolis was no longer in tune with the geopolitical objectives of national development by the end of the nineteenth century. The drive to extend the borders of the Greek state and modernize the country’s economy eliminated factors which had contributed to the economic development of Ermoupolis up to the 1860s. The expansion of steam-powered shipping led to navigation routes being diverted from Syros to Piraeus, which became Greece’s main port, with half of Greek shipping and 40 per cent of steam ships by 1913. Although Syros was in second place with 79 steamers, the use of 300 sail-powered vessels (best suited to the transport of grain to the Black Sea) continued until Balkan and eastern markets were no longer accessible. The reliance on a large number of sailing ships right up until 1930, testified to the ‘subsistence of archaic forms of insular commerce’.

Another blow came with the opening of the Corinth Canal in 1893 when the development of the Piraeus-Patras shipping route led to the concentration of economic activity in the capital and further loss of status for Ermoupolis. In Syros, the recession and heavier taxation brought mounting unemployment and the transfer of companies to Piraeus. The crisis of the occupation period was foreshadowed when poverty among the unemployed was so extreme that many could not afford their staple diet of bread.

The development of textile industries in the 1880s provided a temporary solution to the crisis. The island became known as the ‘Greek Manchester’ where forty factories processed high-quality textiles mainly for the home market. There was
also a partial recovery in the shipyards which were converted to a coaling and servicing station for international steam ships.\(^{54}\) Industrial initiatives kept sectors of the local economy going until the inter-war period and even to the start of the Italian occupation in May 1941. On arrival the occupiers recorded the presence of thirteen textile factories, five tanneries and twenty-two manufacturing companies which they hoped would form the basis of Italy’s economic wealth in the region.\(^{55}\) They also monitored employment levels and noted that vulnerability to poverty and famine was aggravated by short term employment.

An analysis of the labour market based on the 1870 population census indicates that over half of the active population was employed in the tertiary sector, particularly in commerce and transport, linked to the port. About a quarter of the population, including those not included in the census, were engaged in seafaring activities, mainly in the merchant navy. An analysis of the island’s industries of 1874-6, indicated that lack of mechanization was compensated by an abundance of cheap labour and ‘archaic’ forms of craftsmanship.\(^{56}\) Ship repairs and maintenance remained the island’s speciality, a sector which depended upon the traditional skills of its craftsmen. At its highest point Syros was the biggest producer in Greece for the tanning of hides and the production of glass, china and dyes and was second to Piraeus for machinery, textiles and flour milling. In addition to craftsmen in these sectors there was a large casual labour force usually employed on a daily basis; they were thus vulnerable to recessions particularly in the 1930s. The census of 1928 recorded a fall in the male workforce due to the recruitment of men during the wars from 1912-22, the absence of merchant marines and emigration to Athens. As the Italian occupiers would note, the textile industries mainly employed women and children.

In contrast to precarious and poorly paid employment among the working class, the professional classes enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. At the acme of the island’s prosperity their needs were serviced by forty-two jewellers and 1,406 domestic servants for approximately five hundred households. But these sectors were the first to decline in times of penury. Young girls without dowries or family support had
little alternative but domestic service and were already among the most vulnerable to unemployment before the occupation. Social opprobrium of widespread ‘prostitution’ during the famine would take little account of the fact that a large group of vulnerable women had no other means of survival.

**The inter-war crisis**

The island’s earlier economic expansion was predicated on its position as a port between East and West. This advantage was lost when the Balkan wars, the Great War and particularly the Asia Minor crisis in 1922 cut off her sources of cheap raw materials and her outlets in Smyrna, Constantinople and Odessa. The only alternative for the entrepreneurs of Syros was to concentrate on the home market or transfer companies to the mainland to avoid crippling taxation on imports.

Many Greek commentators in the 1930s noted that the government’s promotion of economic activity in the capital had been detrimental to provincial business. The onerous cost of transport to Athens and handling fees in the port of Syros made the market price of the island’s goods 7-10 per cent higher than that of mainland competitors. Central government appears to have ignored appeals from the island’s Chamber of Commerce to reduce taxes so as to bring the price of goods down to those of the mainland. The state was also slow to help Syros modernize its port and failed to lower import taxes on raw materials in time to save some of the tanning industries. It also refused to give Ermoupolis free port status. The granting of a floating dock would have secured business in ship refurbishment, but requests were turned down in favour of Piraeus. In the early thirties, unemployment rose in Syros as some businesses began to close, notably those in shipyard maintenance such as the Gallas Company, which reduced its staff to 500 men (originally the shipyards had employed over 2000). This had ramifications for workers involved in the supplying of raw materials and the sale of finished products.

The subsistence conditions of underpaid or unemployed workers in the port and factories foreshadowed the food crisis of the occupation. In the pre-war recession, soup-kitchens, laid on by the municipality, were already providing care for more than a thousand people. Often improvised solutions had to be
found locally in the absence of state intervention.\textsuperscript{64} Although modest measures of social reform had been instituted by the Venizelos government in 1911, paternalistic practices prevailed. Low expectations and the absence of effective official controls enabled employers to pay very low wages in spite of strike action by militant dockers from 1879 onwards.\textsuperscript{65} After the international slump of 1929, many factory owners resorted to managing their factories from Athens, leaving the matter to local agents.\textsuperscript{66}

Re-elected for a third term of office in 1928, Venizelos had claimed he would work to produce a modern state and introduce social reforms. In the event, the pressing need to attract private capital for Greek industry took precedence and low wages were seen as an important incentive. In any case, an attempt to regulate labour relations on the part of the state would have been seen by employers as an encroachment on their traditional privileges. The prevailing opinion among many Greek politicians and industrialists at this time was that western European models of state-planned, economic reform were not suitable for Greece. In spite of increasing centralization, the state and its representatives were too fragile to risk the opposition of such powerful vested interests.\textsuperscript{67}

In the first decades of the twentieth century, low wages and social unrest in Syros, drove the poor and the underpaid to seek a living elsewhere. A remarkable description of life at the poorest end of society is given in the autobiography of the internationally famous rembetika singer from Ano Syros, Markos Vamvakaris, who began work in the mills at the age of seven. His description of his early working life shows the harsh conditions of the children of the poor, but also of the contrasting existence of the professional classes.\textsuperscript{68} In 1913 he joined the throng of emigrants and refugees heading for the mainland port of Piraeus where he resorted to working in the slaughter houses. He was driven to develop his musical ability as an escape (although the lowlife and hashish dens of the port were to remain his source of inspiration throughout his life). Vamvakaris was soon joined by his family, following the trend of destitute islanders fleeing unsustainable poverty in Syros: the population decreased sharply after 1889 and fell by 11.6 per cent in 1928-40.\textsuperscript{69}
The last influx of immigrants to Syros occurred in 1922 after Greece’s ill-fated campaign in Asia Minor. Significantly, only about a third of the 8000 refugees who came to Syros chose to stay as the low wages paid in the factories was a major disincentive for them. Women are said to have been insulted by a derisory hourly wage for casual labour. Among those who stayed, a large number of the refugees were orphaned children who had no choice in the matter.

Foreshadowing the demands of famine during the coming occupation, the generosity of Syros’s citizens was tested by the post-Smyrna refugee crisis. The American Near East Relief built and financed a huge orphanage for 5000 children, promptly after the disaster, but funding was not supplemented by the state, causing terrible hardship and despair among needy refugees. The local authorities did what they could to compensate for the state’s deficiencies at a time when central government had taken control of most of their economic and political prerogatives. The possibility of social disruption and the dangers to local health and sanitation were the principal concern of the authorities who sought to protect the children and young women whose ‘reputation’ might be threatened. The moral values of the immigrants who had come from a less conservative society, gave rise to suspicions that they would to resort to prostitution, and indeed, this would be a survival strategy for many starving women during the occupation.

Another pattern soon to be repeated during the occupation was the reliance on local initiative to control rising unemployment: a series of public works were launched with the help of individual contributions. In 1939, the building of a hospital and a school for poor children was initiated and plans were drawn up for a sanatorium and a mental hospital. In the mounting crisis of 1939-40 local newspapers put out frequent appeals for donations to fund the charities and the syssitia (soup-kitchens) listing names of benefactors and amounts of money or goods donated. The traditional recourse to the charity of the citizens to supplement the inadequate local authority funds was becoming an increasingly unpopular option. In early 1941 after the fall of Greece, the municipality levied a tax on local traders calculated in proportion to their wealth and property. The imposition of this tax suggests that
the prevailing political climate might have already affected the islanders’ once spontaneous commitment to public welfare. In fact, the occupiers would soon condemn wealthy citizens for their lack of charity towards the starving and would exert great pressure to extract funds for public assistance.

The inter-war recession was aggravated by the departure of many of Syros’s leading citizens. The increasing importance of Athens attracted the educated middle-classes and foreign residents who gradually abandoned the island for the capital. Without its cosmopolitan and independent-thinking bourgeoisie, cultural life suffered. The emigration of the professional classes to Athens had long been a concern; in the recession of the 1880s, wealthy islanders had experimented with schemes such as a small internal railway project, to entice the middle-classes to remain in Syros. Migration became obvious in the 1920s when the elegant houses of the wealthy were taken over by state officials. Their influx was an indication of the exponential growth of the civil service at national level, as the state became the principal employer.

The top-heavy state apparatus was symptomatic of the development of Athens at the expense of stagnating local towns and ports. According to the historian, Emile Kolodny, the wars since 1911 had intensified the predominance of mainland Greece, turning the island regions into ‘frontier zones’. Indeed, the ‘defection’ of some of Syros’s richest citizens in the pre-war crisis did not escape criticism in the local press. Under the pressure of censorship during the Metaxas dictatorship, it was not possible for a local paper to blame the state openly for its slow response to the deepening crisis of 1940. Thus the editor accused the rich Syriani who ‘abandoned their island to its fate’.

The issue of Syros’s economic status as Athens became the centre of gravity, draws attention to the vulnerability of an insular economy in the face of major shifts in market forces and national economic and social instability. Throughout the country, poverty was widespread among the agricultural and industrial proletariat. An increasing Greek population on the mainland made heavy demands on the country’s insufficient crop output, resulting in the importation of 60 per cent of its food: a dependency that would have grave consequences
during the coming war when the Allied blockade stopped all food being imported to Greece.82

A doctor from Syros, writing in the *Tharros* newspaper in January 1940, confirmed the findings of a League of Nations’ report of an average life expectancy in Greece of 34 years (compared to 65 in the US and Sweden and 60 in Germany and Denmark, 55 in Britain, Norway and Holland, 53 in Italy, 46 in Poland and 42 in Spain).83 The lack of proteins meant little protection from disease; children were the worst affected, three-quarters of school children showed signs of chronic malnutrition: pallor, melancholy, anemia and acute susceptibility to Greece’s most serious health problem, tuberculosis. The League’s survey of 1933 calculated that to bring in the required daily intake of 2,500 calories a day a family of four would need to earn 18,000 drachmas per month. Although life expectancy was higher among the urban middle-class in Syros this was not the case for the working poor: a worker’s daily wage was barely enough to pay for a few basic necessities. By 1940 the cost of living had risen sharply but wages had fallen.84

To sum up the island’s position within the Greek state, local developments reflected the impact of a complex transitional phase in the country’s history. The transformation of economic and political structures needed to construct a modern state, required centralization of trade and business. In Syros, the conjuncture which had enabled the economy to flourish independently may also have created a false sense of self-sufficiency. In fact, local elites were able to stage temporary recoveries. But the nation’s subsequent disengagement from commercial links in the East removed factors which had contributed to Syros’s early economic development. Nineteenth century growth was not replicated in the twentieth century and the island proved unable to absorb the last wave of refugees who settled there. The island’s economy was therefore vulnerable to the pending crisis of war and occupation.
Fig. 4 The early settlement of Ano Syros, 1776. Source: Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, 1 (Paris, 1782-1822)

Fig. 5 The port of Ermoupolis in the nineteenth century. Source: Kardasi, V.A., *Syros, stavrodromi tis anatolikis Mesoyéiou (1832-1857)* (Athens, 1987), picture 5
Fig. 6 View of Ermoupolis today. Photograph by Julien Lecoeur
The Italian military occupation of Syros began on 5 May 1941 with the deployment of a temporary force from the Dodecanese islands in the eastern Aegean. Italian aspirations for an empire in the Levant predated fascism and had been boosted by control of the Dodecanese, first occupied by the Italians in 1912. Mussolini’s vision for an Italian empire was spurred on by his intention to pre-empt ‘British encirclement’ in the Mediterranean by turning it into an ‘Italian lake’, a replica of the Roman mare nostrum.\textsuperscript{1} Even before the war there were signs that Italy was hoping to gain control of the Cyclades.\textsuperscript{2} In the event, following Italy’s disastrous invasion of Greece, the Duce’s ambitions were to be thwarted by German hegemony in Greece and the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{3} But the ambition to extend Italian influence in the eastern Mediterranean was not one the Duce would relinquish easily.

This chapter will analyse fascist objectives for the Aegean region and the viability of long-term ambitions for Syros. A series of attempts to push through Rome’s policy for the Aegean threw up unforeseen problems which also precipitated the famine. The nature of these policy decisions and the way they were implemented thus need to be analysed in relation to their socio-economic consequences.

Even before German planes began bombing Ermoupolis, prior to occupation, normal channels of authority had broken down. On 25 March 1941, Prefect Vrachnos informed the
Syros authorities that, due to poor communications, central government had delegated all powers to him. Soon many of the leading figures in authority would leave the island, following the example of the Greek government in exile. Although there were 150 Anzac soldiers in Syros (fleeing the German advance) there were no plans to defend the island and only a short-lived attempt to resist by the Greek military commander. The honorary French consul, Marin Rigoutsos, who carefully recorded the events of the occupation, was scathing about this gesture of defiance. He claimed that it had attracted the bombardment in which at least a hundred civilians were killed or wounded. The damage included the sinking of the boats in the port, and the destruction of port buildings. He noted that the noise and confusion caused general panic as many inhabitants rushed to evacuate the town. The wealthy set up home in their country retreats and the poorer citizens sought shelter in the hills and woods. According to Rigoutsos, the climate of fear exacerbated communal tensions caused by resentment of the island’s Italian and Catholic communities during the Italian invasion. Although German not Italian planes bombed the port, suspicions were rife; some of the townspeople commented on the fact that the Catholic citadel of Ano Syros had remained untouched by the bombing.

A series of factors had already aggravated anti-Italian feeling. The Italian attack on a Greek ship in the port of Tinos on the religious feast day of the 15 August 1940 shocked the nation and was a contributing factor in bringing Greece into the war. Few Greeks could remain unaffected by this ‘outrage’ which seemed deliberately staged at the island shrine on the most important religious date of the year. The explosion would certainly have been heard on the nearby island of Syros and, even if the event was played down by the government still anxious to stay out of the war, the islanders were undoubtedly aware of the gravity of the attack. Italian encroachment via their colony in the Dodecanese had long been considered a threat, particularly as Italian biplanes already used the port of Syros for refuelling. The second troubling event was the internment of members of the Italian community living in Syros following the Italian invasion of Greece; the policy was enforced in spite of resident Italians’ attempts to renounce
their nationality and consequent social tension and resentment. Tensions were exacerbated by the fact that the Italian invasion of Greece was regarded as a betrayal of past alliances and an extreme provocation on the part of an ‘inferior’ aggressor. Therefore, as elsewhere, the Orthodox authorities in Syros appealed to the German authorities in Athens, requesting a German occupying force in Syros. Many of the leading figures of Ermoupolis believed the Germans were likely to be ‘more pro-Greek than the Italians’.

The island capitulated on 30 April and the bewildered inhabitants of Ermoupolis were able to return to their homes. Soon after this, a token Axis contingent of three Austrians arrived and hoisted the swastika over the town. They met with no resistance as the local commander and his naval colleagues had already left to join the Greek government in Crete. While German sympathizers among the local notables hurried to welcome the three soldiers and made offers of help, others criticized this enthusiasm.

On 5 May, following an agreement between Berlin and Rome, a first Italian military contingent from the Dodecanese, renamed Le truppe delle Cicladi, took over the island under the leadership of Colonel Amilcare Farina. Three hundred Italian soldiers marched into the main square of Ermoupolis and lined up in formation. The flamboyant display, together with the singing of a notorious fascist song, was guaranteed to stir up public anger.

We’ll go for the Aegean, we’ll even take Piraeus
And – if luck holds true, we’ll grab Athens too!

**The Italian Military Occupation**
Initially, hostility to the Italian occupiers took the form of minor acts of sabotage and non-cooperation with Italian requests for respect to be shown to officers. Men sitting outside their favourite cafeneons did their utmost to ignore orders to stand up when officers passed or to show respect to rituals such as the raising of the Italian flag. But, according to Farina, after resentment of the Italian occupiers had abated, there was a degree of co-operation or mutual toleration, particularly on the part of the local authorities who never
‘questioned, or even obstructed the enforcement, of any order’.  
His troops’ familiarity with life in the Dodecanese contributed to easing tensions with the local population; some of the soldiers and support staff originated from the Dodecanese and were fluent in Greek and Italian. In addition, familiarity with foreign influences had been kept alive in Syros by the presence of French and Italian institutions and a variety of non-Greek residents.

Two incidents may have helped to improve relations between Italians and Greeks in June: first, the local fire brigade co-operated in putting out a fire on an Italian motor boat and, on the second occasion, an Italian telegraph operator lost his life when defusing depth charges and a torpedo in the port, averting considerable damage to the harbour and harm to the people. In recognition of the sailor’s courage, the local authority collected money for the funeral expenses, and a large gathering of citizens of Ermoupolis attended the funeral.

After two months in Syros, in July 1941, Col. Farina’s temporary occupation force returned to the Dodecanese and was replaced by the 7th Regiment of the Cuneo Division under Col. Giovanni Duca. Most of the troops stationed in Syros came from the Cuneo Infantry Division, whose Divisional High Command was based on the island of Samos, north of the Dodecanese. It was feared that the arrival of over three thousand combat troops from the Greek warzone would stir up bad feeling, thus destroying the relatively good relations fostered in the first two months of occupation. But the inhabitants of Syros were wise enough to adopt an appearance of resignation.

As for Col. Duca’s troops, their ability to adapt to life in Greece was helped by the close bond between the soldiers and their commanding officer formed during the Greek invasion campaign. Duca’s personality commanded respect and loyalty; aged forty-five, he was an educated and well-travelled man, having held positions of responsibility in the military intelligence service, and as military attaché in Brussels and Lisbon before the war. The colonel’s charisma, physical stature and elegant appearance also impressed some islanders. He was made an ‘honorary citizen’ of Ermoupolis by the mayor and councillors who collaborated closely with the Italians.
The nerve centre of the Italian occupation of the Aegean was in Rhodes where the Supreme Commander of the Forces of the Aegean, Admiral Inigo Campioni, was also governor of the Dodecanese islands. A clear distinction was made between the Aegean domain known as *Superegeo* and that of mainland Greece, *Supergrecia*, which was established in May-June 1941 under the Supreme Command of the Eleventh Army.
Alongside the military authorities in Athens, the Italian Plenipotentiary, Pellegrino Ghigi, was responsible for the civil administration of all Greek occupied areas except for a ‘special zone’ which included the Ionian islands, the Cyclades and the Sporades. But, whereas the German authorities tolerated some Italian preparations for annexation of the territories on the west side of Greece, they were not prepared to do so for the Aegean islands. German occupation of several key islands like Chios and Lesbos, close to Turkey, as well as the Greek coastline, underlined Hitler’s opposition to Italian ambitions for the eastern Mediterranean. Therefore Mussolini’s demands for Italian annexation of the Aegean islands were ignored. Although it appears that Hitler had not intended to invade and occupy the Balkans, and only did so for pragmatic reasons, nonetheless the region became indispensable as a source of supplies for the German war effort. The conflict of interest between the Axis partners would therefore centre on the extraction of raw materials from the Aegean area.

Italian occupation policy was formulated in Rome by the Foreign Ministry’s Fondo Gabinetto Armistizio-Pace or Gabap, which controlled all documentation from and to the occupied territories. It has been suggested that Mussolini played a pivotal role in the enforcement of occupation policy and that his ‘faithful vassals’ in the occupied territories probably carried out his orders without questioning them. According to this view, it was not until the Axis defeats of Stalingrad and North Africa and the Duce’s subsequent disinterest in the occupied areas, that the direct link between the Duce and his civil executive collapsed. This implies that there was a coherent centrally-directed command structure issuing consistent directives, yet sources close to the Duce – such as Ciano’s diaries – suggest otherwise. Also, while this may be a fair assessment of how the chain of command worked in some Balkans areas, it does not ring true in the case of the Aegean. Unfortunately the Gabap records are incomplete, especially for the Cyclades, but it is known that Mussolini quickly lost interest in Greece and her outlying areas when it became clear that Italy could extract little from this impoverished country. Most of all he felt humiliated by German hegemony over the one area he had hoped to claim as Italy’s exclusive ‘living
space’. Mussolini’s disinterest was confirmed after his visit to Athens on 20 July 1942 when he witnessed the state of extreme poverty of most of her citizens and the scale of the economic crisis facing the country. His attempt to persuade Hitler to reduce crippling occupation costs imposed by the Axis did not carry much weight and further emphasized his lack of power over events. As Ciano had noted back in 4 October 1941 when Mussolini was still optimistic about controlling Greece:

The Germans have taken from the Greeks even their shoelaces, and now they pretend to place the blame for the economic situation on our shoulders. We can take responsibility, but only on condition that they clear out of Athens and the entire country.

It soon became obvious that Hitler had no intention of relinquishing control of Greece while, at the same time, leaving Italy with the burden of supplying food to a country on the brink of starvation.

In spite of this, Italian ambitions for control of the Aegean remained alive as they sought to engineer the political and economic separation (distacco) of the islands from Greece, bringing them under Italian control. The decision to establish a separate Italian enclave in the Aegean hinged on the islands becoming an extension of the Dodecanese, itself a de facto Italian colony. In fact, the Dodecanese were referred to officially as i Possedimenti dell’Egeo, or il Possedimento, in an attempt to validate them as an Italian possession. Economic policies in force in the Dodecanese which involved the extraction of revenue and products for the benefit of the local administration and Italy, were to be applied in the Cyclades too. The advantages of developing Syros did not escape the attention of the Italian policy makers advising Duca:

There is every possibility of our having a major refurbishing port, with its own big industrial and commercial centre, in the heart of the Aegean, at the entrance to the Black Sea and close to the route to Suez.
The administration of the occupied territories in the Cyclades was the responsibility of the civil affairs office, the *Ufficio Affari Civili* (UAC) of *Superegeo*, which acted as an intermediary between Campioni and local branches. On 8 June 1941, local branches of the UAC were created in every prefecture. Most importantly for Syros, a civilian governor, Valerio Valeriani, took over the responsibility for civilian matters after the most critical phase of famine in the first year of occupation. His office, in conjunction with that of Public Assistance, *Assistenza Civile*, assumed overall control in the implementation of socio-economic policy.

One urgent task facing the UAC was to collect information regarding the local population and the prior administration of civil affairs. Significantly, with regard to the way policy was implemented, extensive powers were delegated to the Supreme Commander, Admiral Campioni: Mussolini’s decree of 4 May 1941 gave Campioni the power to ‘issue decrees which had the force of law’ in the *Possedimento* and occupied territories.

**The distacco policy**

In August 1941, following a directive from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, Campioni informed the military commands of Samos, Syros and Crete of the intention to effect the virtual detachment or *distacco*, of the Aegean islands from continental Greece in order to create a ‘de facto state of separation from the government in Athens’. The plan was to form a so-called ‘closed circuit’ of the occupied islands within the Dodecanese sphere by isolating them from direct contact with mainland Greece, ostensibly to protect the islands from escalating inflation on the mainland. In reality the priority was to discourage ‘any reinforcement of dependence on Athens’ and to stop Greek political officials from coming to the islands. But it soon became obvious that the prospect of separation from Greece was unthinkable to the majority of islanders and, in order to enforce such unpopular policies, discretion would be needed.

Realistically the only enforceable action in the short-term was economic, such as restrictions on exports and revenue destined for the Greek state. It was decreed that all the taxes
collected in the occupied islands would not be absorbed by the national budget; but would remain in local areas to pay for administration costs and fund civil servants’ salaries in the ‘foreseeable eventuality that Athens was not prepared to do so’. Contrary to Italian expectations, however, some administration costs were still being paid by Athens throughout the summer of 1941. On 16 July, Farina wrote to his superiors defending Athens’s willingness to co-operate with a large contribution for the month of June:

So far, as proof of Athens’s willingness to contribute to the administrative costs of the Cyclades, Athens has sent, in the month of June alone, 30,800,000 drachmas for the island of Syros and its dependents.

Farina saw no reason to doubt Athens’s willingness to contribute to costs in the future and he considered that ‘no further intervention’ was necessary by the Italians.

Nevertheless preparation for the distacco policy continued with an assessment of the structure and state of local finance. There were seven Government Funds operational on the major islands: Naxos, Santorini, Tinos, Andros, Milos, Kea and Syros, for the collection of taxes and the financing of local public expenditure. But the occupiers were in for a shock: in recent times the funds had shown an annual deficit and the budget of Syros for 1940-1 closed with a substantial deficit of nineteen and a half million drachmas. The Italians cautiously predicted a much smaller deficit of about nine million drachmas for 1941-2. In the event, the expenditure needed to meet public assistance costs by the end of 1941 would far exceed this estimated figure when occupation costs and food scarcity caused demands on official resources to soar.

In spite of Farina’s recommendation not to intervene in the running of the local economy, non-intervention was not what Admiral Campioni had in mind when promoting the distacco policy; nor was it the last time that he would disregard the opinions and reports of his own officers and civilian authorities, although they had a better understanding of local realities. In November Farina’s successor, Duca, was ordered to issue further restrictions on taxes being paid to Athens.
Some contradictions intrinsic to the *distacco* policy should have been immediately apparent: attempts to control the food supply by keeping food within the region failed for, although the authorities in Rhodes promised that nothing would be exported ‘until local needs had been satisfied’, they still insisted that surplus produce was to go to Rhodes. In fact, there was not enough food to go round and hence little chance of a surplus. In partial recognition of the food crisis in the Cyclades, Campioni announced a drive to stimulate agricultural production.\(^{32}\) Also the promise to maintain food levels in the region clashed with the occupiers’ own interest in extracting local produce and minerals for the benefit of Rhodes and Italy.

In effect, the Italian occupation authorities wished to establish a tributary system, an objective which contrasts with pre-war objectives for the Dodecanese, particularly for Rhodes, where extravagant infrastructural investments were made by the fascist regime.\(^{33}\) The aim there had been to build a showcase for fascism and enhance Italy’s international prestige. Syros and the Cyclades would benefit, at least initially, from a residue of the civilizing mission but the wartime policy of extracting all it could from the islands to compensate Italy for occupation expenses ultimately had the opposite effect.

**The impact of the *distacco* policy**

An attempt to enforce a total ban on exports, in line with *distacco* policy, was a failure and threw the Syros market into crisis. To soften the impact of the ban, the Italian authorities decreed that exports to Athens had to be balanced by imports of the equivalent value. This was feasible in theory but importers were discouraged by local prices which were fixed at a much lower rate than inflated prices on the mainland. The subsequent drop in imports made balancing imports and exports impossible and slowed down the influx of vital raw materials needed for industries in Syros. Without sufficient raw materials, many of the industries of Syros ceased production during the occupation and the networks of external and internal commercial exchange declined.

The collapse of the food supply was also linked to the controversy over funding from the government. The question
was taken up by Col. Duca in September 1941 when he estimated an annual deficit for the whole of the Cyclades of sixty million drachmas. Like Farina, Duca reported that Athens was still trying to honour her obligations to finance the Government Funds in October and November 1941. The sticking point was not so much the lack of funding for local administration but the failure of Athens to pay the extra occupation costs. The devastation brought to the Greek economy by the extraction of Axis occupation costs have been analysed thoroughly elsewhere. These accounts suggest that, as the destitute quisling government lost control over the national economy and food distribution, local areas were forced to operate as separate entities. The real impact on daily life of this critical disruption can therefore be observed in local areas such as the Cyclades. Here, in fact, less than a third of costs for September-November 1941 had been paid by the end of November. In the absence of payment from Athens, some of the occupation costs were being taken out of local funds during the most critical period of famine. It was not until the summer of 1942 that more substantial contributions to occupation costs began to flow from Athens.

The assumption that Greece could and would eventually pay the costs of occupation demanded by the Axis perhaps explains another grave miscalculation of funding needs made by Duca in October 1941. The death toll from starvation was rising on the island and in October it would exceed a hundred. Duca began his report to High Command with the grim announcement that there was no food available for general consumption on the open market except onions. Other products were immediately absorbed by the black market without even satisfying the needs of those who had the means to pay for them. Many islanders were now in a critical state of physical weakness, especially the children, and as many as five thousand people were in desperate need of help. The surrounding islands, which were facing severe shortages, were reluctant to export food and farmers generally had resorted to hoarding. He blamed the inefficiency of local and national authorities and noted that requests for help from Athens were being ignored. As a first step, Duca said he had made a systematic effort to raise money from those citizens with
the means to contribute, in spite of reluctance on their part. Adding to funds of 560,000 drachmas donated by Campioni himself, he had raised nearly three million drachmas and forecasted further contributions which he hoped to extract, ‘more or less coercively’, from other wealthy residents. This success and a military governor’s pride at being able to alleviate Italy’s financial burden, perhaps clouded his judgment and led him to emphasize, with tragic lack of foresight:

To sum up, I am pleased to announce that, for the near future, that is for the first semester 1942, I do not consider it necessary that there should be any funding on the part of the Government of the Possedimento for the public assistance of the Cyclades.39

The semester in question would be the most critical stage of the famine and Duca’s miscalculation undoubtedly had some bearing on the Italian lack of preparation to meet the food crisis.

The military governor’s failure to grasp the complexities of the situation was largely due to his lack of expertise in handling the administration of a Greek province. It soon became clear that the complexity of the task had been underestimated. He warned that if he was to take complete control of civil administration, in line with distacco policy, then far more extensive control and technical expertise had to be envisaged, including personnel who understood Greek. Communication in a language which was ‘far removed’ from that of the occupiers made effective control impossible. He said that the military authorities’ hold over the local administration was tenuous and that, without some degree of regulation from Athens, things could become chaotic. His command:

was not adequate to guarantee the legality and integrity of operations and of state officials, still officially controlled in their work and in the loyal application of the law by the Central Greek Administration, and which in future, will be subject to no such controls.40

In addition, the six Government Funds had to be superintended, along with all the other offices which were run
by the Funds, including the Tax Office, Prefecture, Town Hall, Gendarmerie, and schools.41

In February 1942 Duca raised the question of the impact of unpopular distacco measures imposed on underpaid Greek civil servants. He had quashed an order from Athens for their salaries to be paid in advance in the attempt to reform the Greek system of irregular, interim payments. But it was impossible to stop the news from leaking out: ‘A single private letter from Athens is enough for word to get around.’42 In his view, it was ‘easy to understand the outcry against an Italian block on payments or an increase in retail prices for tradesmen.43 Admiral Campioni, however, expected the islanders to conform to his decrees and was nonplussed by their suspicion of Italian intentions. As the leader of the fascist civilizing mission he seemed naively surprised by the lack of Greek appreciation of Italian efforts. He reacted with exasperation to the islanders’ complaints about the barrage of new restrictions and announcements (bandi), displayed on public buildings almost on a daily basis:

I have noticed that there is quite a tendency to gossip, to petty mutterings against every announcement of new measures, in general. These reactions could be ignored if they were not always accompanied by obvious signs of concern from the less-educated who, before even considering the advantages they might gain from new measures, start grumbling and predict the harm enforcement will bring them; hence the assumptions, the false rumours, the gossip.44

The status and payment of Greek civil servants was a key aspect of distacco policy.45 They were to keep their jobs as long ‘as they were amenable to collaboration’, but ‘close watch was to be kept for any signs of disloyalty’. In preparation for the break with Greek administration, Duca struggled to ensure that underpaid local officials would not be at a disadvantage compared to Italian officials. But payment proved problematic; salaries had always come from Athens and were now supposed to be taken from local sources. A soaring deficit was making this impracticable and, as Farina had predicted, regular payments from Athens were essential.46
On 30 January 1942, Duca admitted that the deficit in the Cyclades had increased significantly since his September estimate. Now as the famine escalated, an additional sum of twelve million drachmas was required for the public assistance fund in order to purchase food and firewood for the soup-kitchens and rations distribution. Other variable, but constantly rising expenses included a list of dependents such as the clergy and the bakers who had to be compensated for the fixed price of bread. Reality was beginning to bite and the fundamental question of who was going to pay for political changes and constantly rising expenses does not appear to have been taken into account, much less supported by an appropriate budget. Duca wanted to know if the military command was supposed to foot the bill for a long list of responsibilities with the funds allocated to it.47

Tragically for the Cyclades, the Greek government had neither the means nor the inclination to provide extra funds or food to relieve the winter crisis. In the autumn of 1941, alarmed by the prospect of an even bigger catastrophe in Athens, Greek officials took advantage of the Italian seizure of power in the Aegean to suggest that the islands were now the occupiers’ responsibility.48 This admission fostered fears, especially on the islands, that the Greek state appeared to have disintegrated. In his telegram to Rhodes of 14 September 1941 Duca signalled the ‘total disinterest’ of Athens for the plight of the Cyclades in spite of continuous and increasingly desperate requests and a visit to Athens by a delegation of notables from Syros to demand food for the starving people. The Metropolitan, Philaretos, presided over the appeal to the Minister in charge and warned that if they were not prepared to send food to Syros at once they would ‘do better to send coffins’. The Greek government responded that as a ‘unique and final concession’, 130 sacks of flour were to be sent from Piraeus to Syros; henceforth Syros was to be considered dependent on the Dodecanese for the provision of food.49 In November, Duca again inveighed against what seemed the ‘prelude to definitive disinterest’ in the insular province; he said Athens had revealed her intention to ‘forget about the Cyclades’ concluding that ‘she probably, no longer considers it part of her territory’.50 If this was wishful thinking, the
apparent absence of state authority seemed to give the Italians licence to fill the political vacuum themselves and to apply the *distacco* political objectives.

But the economic difficulties of implementing the *distacco* policy meant that it soon underwent a series of modifications and changes in direction. On 2 February 1942, Campioni reformulated a watered-down version of the plan, and implementation was postponed twice – to the first of March and then to the first of April – to coincide with the start of the Greek financial year. Telegrams went back and forth across the Aegean querying or confirming postponements and plans.\(^5\) As a prelude to the *distacco*, the six island Government Funds were to be amalgamated with Syros and Samos acting as central deposits for local funds on the dependent islands. The banking system was to be reformed and the local branches of the National Bank of Greece were to be prevented from carrying out their role as representatives of the national bank; some of the functions of local banks would be transferred to branches of the Italian bank, *Banco di Roma*.\(^5\)

The changes in the banking system had not gone unnoticed and rumours of the *distacco* caused dismay among the Greek population. In the minds of the Orthodox community the memory of ‘Latin domination’ was long-lived and the prospect of another round of Catholic supremacy evoked shadows from the past. On 5 March, twenty-three notables from Samos sent an appeal to the Italian authorities accompanied by a statement signed by the president of the island, the public prosecutor and the examining magistrate. It is perhaps one of the most significant and moving testimonies to the islanders’ plight and a desperate attempt to try and save Greece from disintegration.\(^5\)

While pledging ‘loyal collaboration’ with the occupiers in the interests of the people, they set out to defend national government by analyzing the existing centralized model and the old system of provincial autonomy.\(^5\) For them a return to the latter would mean all the values which had unified Greece would be lost. They said that the movements of national unification which had swept across Europe were significant achievements which had to be protected. They warned:
The principle of nationality requires states to be well organized and held firmly together in a single unit in order to escape the dangers of disintegration and civil war.\textsuperscript{55}

The authors predicted that the damage done by separation from Athens would be greater than any benefits and insisted that as local executives they would not be competent to carry out legislative functions. Ignoring Athens and recognising the prefect as the only state authority, as the Italians had ordered, would amount to flouting existing Greek law. The Italian plans put the local executives in a ‘position of illegality’ and would cause insurmountable problems. They stressed that nothing should be done without a law being passed by the government in Athens which would modify the island’s legal status. As a rather desperate last resort, the notables concluded with a dramatic and emotional appeal for Italian solidarity in memory of the fight for the unification of Greece.

The anomalies underlying the \textit{distacco} plan and its unpopularity with the Greeks, were becoming something of an embarrassment. In February 1942 Campioni recommended discretion, the policy would be enforced ‘without any official announcement or explicit notice’.\textsuperscript{56} But Duca objected that the \textit{distacco} could not be implemented without written orders.\textsuperscript{57} Confusion continued as the official inauguration of the \textit{distacco} was postponed for a third time, from April to July. On July 23rd 1942, the Civil Commissions and military commands were reprimanded for their ‘indiscreet references’ to the \textit{distacco}, in correspondence to Rhodes – an ‘unfortunate anticipation’ of plans only to be referred to in top secret, ‘corrispondenza riservata’.\textsuperscript{58}

When the new civil governor Valerio Valeriani took over authority for civilian affairs in Syros in the summer of 1942, it was beginning to look as if the \textit{distacco} might be discreetly abandoned. No progress had been made on the planned amalgamation of the six Government Funds nor was there any inter-dependence among the branches of the local banks which the plan had envisaged.

Writing to Campioni in August 1942, Valeriani said that any attempt to bring all state administrative organs in the Cyclades together under the auspices of Syros would be
complex and impractical. Also, while funding was still coming from Greece the military authority was adequate but when the projected funds eventually came from Italy this would involve a major shift in the management of local finances. Like Duca he called for more expertise from specialized personnel and considerably more resources. In other words, extending the empire would be expensive and would require time and expertise. Valeriani proposed to attempt to set things in motion in advance, easing the local banks and institutions towards the new regime. However even Valeriani, a fascist party member, could not work up much enthusiasm for the Duce’s vision for the Aegean. There was a note of lack of conviction in his observation that: ‘nothing decisive has been communicated about the distacco which can still be seen as an eventuality.’ He therefore recommended caution ‘before deciding upon anything permanent’.59

Local political and administrative structures
No foreign occupation can function without control over the local administration; it is therefore useful to consider the role of local government whose help the Italians needed to establish themselves in power. In theory, the prefecture, the municipalities and all the Greek local authorities were to continue to operate as before. However, they now had to obtain approval for all their decisions and transactions from the Italian Military Command of the Cyclades (CMC) and, from July 1942, from the Civil Commission of the Cyclades (CCC). Their declared intention was not to interfere in existing administrative procedures without due reason but, in practice, they controlled most aspects of local government.

Not surprisingly, this cumbersome form of double bureaucracy, including delays for translation, proved highly inefficient. In September 1941, Duca was exasperated about the ‘weighty procedures’ created by the ‘numerous structures which depend on this prefecture’. He decreed that his orders were to be carried out within twenty-four hours and the prefecture was responsible for instituting ‘faster and more efficient practices’.60

It is not difficult to imagine the impact of demands for efficiency on the slow-moving prefecture of Ermoupolis where
the mismanagement of the Metaxas years had done nothing to promote good practice. Absenteeism was a major factor and there was no prefect in office for the first two months of the occupation after the recall, in ignominious circumstances, of Prefect Vrachnos, Metaxas’s notoriously corrupt appointee. According to the French consul, Vrachnos was one of the worst examples of the officials produced by the Metaxas regime: the state’s most prominent representative was also ‘the most dishonest ever known in the region’. Accused of corruption by his constituents, he left for Athens in July. A temporary director, Nicholas Scapessos, was sent from Athens but he refused to stay, alarmed by the food crisis and ‘intrigues of the local elites’. Although the Italians had initially expressed satisfaction with Scapessos who showed them ‘obsequious respect’, after a month of absence from the post without justification, he was suspended. The lack of a titular state representative was considered ‘particularly damaging in the current food crisis’.

However, the vacuum of authority presented an opportunity to proceed with distacco objectives. As military governor, Duca announced that he was obliged to take over the prefect’s role, an interim measure which was prolonged throughout the occupation because a suitable prefect was not found. Nor was he impressed by the acting prefect, Nicholas Zontos, who ‘feigned obsequious loyalty’ while regularly sabotaging Italian orders with delaying tactics:

secretly criticizing, hiding or distorting actions in favour of the population, while maintaining secret contacts with the Athens government, outside the control of the Italian authorities.

The Italians suspected Zontos of being an ‘ambitious intriguer’ – however he was the only person available to assume the ‘regency’ and the occupiers were forced to make do with him. In fact, he was active in the resistance in Syros, working with the British from the start of the occupation.

Because the occupiers deemed prefecture staff to be ineffective, it was reduced to a ‘co-operative’ team of fourteen supported by a network of dependent offices
which carried out the necessary services including, most importantly, a food distribution department presided over by an inspector of food provisions and rationing. The French consul, Rigoutsos, noted in October 1941 that the prefecture, which had once been vibrant with activity, was now run by a skeleton staff of auxiliaries and a substitute prefect of low rank. It seemed to him that the state had lost all authority: ‘In fact, there is virtually no Greek authority in Syros, as everything goes through the Italians and nothing can be done without their approval.”

Things did not run smoothly between the two authorities and, in April 1942, the Italians were still complaining about lack of punctuality, discipline and coordination between the different branches of the prefecture. The crucial issue was the management of food: it seemed that state representatives needed to be supervised to prevent corruption. Rigoutsos noted that the occupiers had placed one of their Greek-speaking officers in the prefecture: ‘to keep an eye on everything; particular attention was to be paid to the crucial issue of the equitable distribution of food, which is critically limited.”

The occupiers also made major changes on the municipal level. Duca complained, in December 1941, that the Greek government had done nothing about: ‘the indolence of the local authority, a constitutional lack of organisational capacity and the absence of many of those leaders responsible for the administration.’ As a result he felt the whole service ‘had gone adrift’.

He said that the military authorities were forced to intervene in every sector in order to restore order. The mayor and local council were considered so inefficient that most of their duties had to be passed on to the prefecture. Alarmed by the general lack of commitment of local officials, the Italian authorities instigated a complete reshuffle. Duca claimed that the mayor’s neglect of his responsibilities of office was now so flagrant as ‘to stir up discontent among the people’. He was forced to secure Mayor Ladopoulos’s retirement but tried to be tactful about his shortcomings:

It was his lack of energy, perhaps due to his age and the ease and comfort that he has enjoyed in life, that has
distanced him from the desperate needs of the people
and which made me decide to induce him to retire
spontaneously.71

The new mayor, Theodoros Karakalàs, was disposed to
collaborate with the Italians. They saw him as ‘loyal, active,
energetic and responsive to our political directives’. Perhaps
not coincidentally, he was married to an Italian woman and
spoke the language. Together with the town councillors these
new appointees formed a different elite gravitating towards
the new centre of power generated by the occupiers. Professionally
Karakalàs was a ship’s captain whose maritime activities were
curtailed by the war. After the war when he was condemned
for collaboration, he admitted privately that he had been
attracted by the benefits of proximity with those in power.72

**Corruption and the gendarmerie**

The enforcement of occupation policies relied in part on the
co-operation and support of the local police or ‘gendarmerie’.
These too fell far short of Italian expectations, either due to
short staffing or the lack of commitment on the part of officers
and men. Duca was scathing:

> The Syros gendarmerie is no different from that of the rest
> of Greece: profoundly riddled with corruption, dishonesty,
arrogance and indolence. While affecting obsequious
> respect for the Italian occupation they are systematically
> obstructive which conveniently serves to cover their
> traditional apathy and connivance with delinquency.

The Italians claimed that the population despised the
gendarmes who inspired no confidence and, when they really
wanted the law to be respected, they came and asked for ‘our
*Carabinieri* and soldiers to intervene and smiled sceptically
when told to make use of the Greek representatives of law
and order’.73

After seven months of wasted effort Duca felt there
was little hope of reforming the Greek police force. The
commander on Paros was more optimistic although he agreed
that the gendarmes were generally ‘ignorant and uncouth
individuals’ and it was difficult to eradicate their faults. He put his faith in the good example of his officer, Captain Zambetta; the punishment of wayward gendarmes, which he inflicted liberally, was beginning to do the trick. One case was beyond hope however: the head of the Syros section of the gendarmerie, Kyriakos Kutrupis, was dismissed for neglect of duty in carrying out orders for the Provisions Commission and total ‘lack of interest’ in his own command and was dispatched in disgrace to Athens. Duca informed the military commands that, where Greek disciplinary measures failed, the Italians could apply those drawn up by the commander himself.

The failings of the Greek gendarmerie gave rise to a debate about replacing them altogether with Italian forces in line with distacco objectives. But not all Italians officials were ready to support this policy: Lieutenant Colonel Ferdinando Mittino, from the Carabinieri central office in Rhodes, argued against such a major change. He noted that Greek control over policing was supposed to be protected by the initial agreement with the Greek state and he felt substitution would raise problems of a juridical and technical nature. He, at least, understood that the logistics of substituting the Greek authorities were more complex than they might appear. His concern about an Italian take-over of Greek civil powers places him outside the camp of the Duce’s ‘faithful vassals’ bent on applying the distacco policy and among the growing number of its critics. He also warned that if the Carabinieri were to take over they would be dependent on the Greek authorities and would have to apply laws and penal codes with which they were not familiar, not to mention unfamiliarity with the language. To make substitution a viable alternative would require the abrogation of the Greek laws and any change would have to apply to all the occupied territories. The policy was therefore not enforced in the Aegean. Instead Mittino recommended fines to goad the Greek gendarmes into action, hoping that, ‘hit where it hurts, in the wallet’ the gendarmes would mend their ways.

Part of the problem was the decrease in the number of gendarmes on active service. On 21 October 1941 Duca appealed to the Superegeo UAC to send a contingent of at least 25 Carabinieri to supplement the insufficient presence of the Greek gendarmerie, to keep order and guard public safety.
(In Syros there were only 50 men compared to a normal peace-time contingent of 112.) In the end, Duca resorted to heavy fines for absenteeism and failure to carry out duties with the proceeds going to the public assistance fund for the poor.\textsuperscript{78}

To an extent, the gendarmes’ inaction can be understood as reluctance to implement the occupiers’ measures of control and as a form of passive resistance. According to Italian reports, their colleagues on the mainland were openly hostile to the occupiers and resolutely pro-British, conserving most of their efforts for the ‘ferocious persecution of the communists’.\textsuperscript{79} In Syros, poor morale among the police due to their unpopularity and very low pay seemed to be the main causes of their disaffection. Rigoutsos thought that they deliberately avoided controlling crime so that this would reflect badly on the Italians. But strong popular reaction against the breakdown in the control of public order, especially as crime escalated during the famine, suggests that police passivity did not have a lot of support.

As famine spread, the increase in crime became uncontrollable. It was inevitable that petty theft by the starving should go unpunished as the authorities struggled with the far more extensive problem of corruption and the blackmarket. The move to reform Greek public institutions stands in contrast to the growing disorder caused by the proliferation of the occupiers’ own restrictions on commercial and civilian activities. Ostensibly intended to stamp out the blackmarket, political and military considerations undoubtedly underpinned expanding controls.\textsuperscript{80} The result was an accumulation of orders and regulations which affected every aspect of daily life on the islands.

Thus from one aspect the \textit{distacco} had already become a reality: in order to travel anywhere a pass had to be obtained from the Military Commissions. Leaving the Cyclades was, in most cases, to be considered definitive and was regarded as ‘expatriation’.\textsuperscript{81} Travel for business or study purposes was not allowed if the traveller intended to return; nor was it possible for health reasons if the treatment was available at home. There were separate regulations for travel within the Aegean islands, and journeys to Italy and to the mainland required a permit from \textit{Supergrecia}, via CMC Syros, as did urgent or
temporary ‘expatriation’. In this respect, at least, the *distacco* became a reality in the islanders’ lives.

Thus if the *distacco* policy was a political failure it worked on a different level by effectively cutting the Cyclades off from the outside world. The bureaucratic complications of registering every activity and financial transaction had the effect of limiting freedoms and separating the islanders from the mainland. This was compounded by the confiscation of radios and the restriction of the press to an Italian-controlled broadsheet in Greek and Italian. The result was that not many islanders knew what was really going on in Greece, let alone in the wider arena of the war. The sense of isolation was made worse by the famine: few ships now visited the once busy port of Syros and every sighting of a boat was desperately awaited by the starving. In November 1941, the head of the Italian camp hospital, Medical Captain Manfrini, summed up the grim predicament of the people of Syros. The island had come to resemble ‘a doomed ship which was trapped out at sea and which had finished its last reserves of food’.

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At the start of the occupation, currency policy was used as a device for establishing Italian control. The measures were very much to the advantage of the occupiers and aggravated the mounting financial crisis on the island. In May 1941, drachmas remained in circulation but the lira, the currency of the Possedimento, was temporarily in use for the army’s ‘essential necessities’ in the first stage of occupation. The official rate was set at twice its real value: sixteen drachmas to the lira. This distorted rate provoked protests from Greek sources and perplexed Italian military commanders on some of the islands. Admiral Campioni explained that it was intended as a bonus for the occupation troops. The plan was to block prices in drachmas at the start of the occupation thus preventing rises in prices as a result of the exchange. This was not easy to achieve, however, and it was unrealistic to expect that the occupied population would not react against the manipulation of their currency. Campioni deplored the fact that the boost to the lira ‘was exploited by the vanquished for political and economic reasons, to our disadvantage’.

At first, lira flooded the market as the Italians bought up the limited produce available and the shopkeepers of Ermoupolis retaliated by pushing up prices. Finding the situation ‘alarming’ the occupiers then abruptly halved the value of the lira, on 3 July, to the disadvantage of banks and those who had accumulated sums of the currency. Subsequently the lira was withdrawn altogether.

Inflation meant that drachmas were in short supply and,
while waiting for a substantial draft to arrive from Rhodes, Farina was told to withdraw money to cover a run on drachmas, regardless of the effect on the local economy. He was also told to halve the drachma price for contracts and all outstanding payments 'but do this all at once, not gradually as good commercial practices require. We are the bosses here and we have to choose our moment to throw our weight around, as is only right in the interests of our country'.

Following this, drachmas were replaced by ‘occupation drachmas’ issued by the Italian fund for Greece, La Cassa Mediterranea di Credito per la Grecia. Gradually Greek drachmas were withdrawn from circulation and occupation drachmas imposed on a population which regarded them as worthless.

As well as trying to control values with occupation drachmas a form of ‘price calming’ or calmieri, which fixed prices as low as possible, was the most common anti-inflationary device. The aim was to avoid the galloping inflation of the mainland where some essential food items such as olive oil were as much as twenty-six times their pre-war price. In Syros fixed prices were imposed on commodities such as flour, olive oil, carob pods and dried fruit. In addition, the declaration of fuel stocks and goods was made obligatory and price tagging was introduced. Prices had to be displayed for retail in public commerce, and wholesale trade was restricted. Severe sanctions for non-compliance were devised and shops and businesses were to be closed down and recidivists arrested.

Yet, while the worst excesses of inflation were avoided in the short-term, there were many disadvantages to this policy. Traders were discouraged by very low official prices and tempted by the huge profits to be made on the black market; also price variations between different producers resulted in confusion. This was the case for olive oil and raisins purchased in Crete and destined to be exchanged with goods from Syros. In early 1942 the price of oil in Crete was double that in Syros and thirty drachmas more for raisins, so that importers had to be compensated by the imposition of higher prices in Syros. By the end of May market prices in Syros had risen sharply in spite of controls. Thus inflationary trends elsewhere in Greece exerted an influence on the island.

In the first year of occupation the Italians identified internal factors as the cause of ‘damaging and often unjustifiable
increases in prices’. They blamed the Greek ‘commercial mentality’ and their ‘predilection for every form of speculation possible’ while taking credit themselves for the presumed successes of the calmiere policy. But these claims contrasted with the assessment made by the in-coming civilian governor of the island, Consul Valerio Valeriani.

Shortly after his arrival in July 1942, Valeriani began by taking stock of the crisis in Syros, a ‘once-flourishing commercial and maritime centre, renowned for its extensive industrial complex’. Unlike his military predecessors he did not apportion all the blame for inflation on Greek speculators but said that only a minority of islanders profited from economic and monetary disorder ‘to make easy and not always legitimate profits’. The main causes of the crisis were the difficulties in supplying goods of basic necessity needed by the population, the cessation of industrial production due to lack of raw materials, the almost ‘total paralysis’ of commerce – both internal and with continental Greece – and the problems of transport. Most of all Valeriani blamed:

> The vertiginous and unstoppable decrease in the purchase power of the drachma which continues, not just because of inflation – which is both cause and consequence – but also due to the scarcity and breakdown in the supply of every article.

The conflict between civil and military interests at the highest levels of Supergrecia was repeated locally when civil governors like Valeriani grappled with problems generated by occupation policies. He noted that, in spite of Italian plans for separation from Greece, the islands were still dependent on the mainland for fuel and raw materials and all domestic necessities. He was most concerned about the flourishing black market, which his military colleagues claimed to have brought under a degree of control, and his predictions that nearly everybody would be forced to use it were disturbingly accurate:

> The treacherous influence of the black market continues to develop and progress in spite of all the repressive measures in force to eliminate it. This is due to the
activities of those who can be defined as real speculators, but another phenomenon is becoming more widespread: *a tendency of entire social categories to become involved in order to overcome the insufficiency or lack of normal sources of income.*

Valeriani considered the situation in mainland Greece to be extremely damaging to the economy of the Cyclades, presaging ‘the devastation of entire social groups’ and only benefiting a tiny unscrupulous minority. The low value of the drachma was the main cause of the crisis and only the introduction of the lira, the ‘healthy currency’ in use in the Dodecanese, could bring recovery in the Cyclades. The current exchange rate did not correspond to real values: the lira was now reckoned to be worth forty to fifty drachmas.

Use of the lira would also make an economic *distacco* feasible by integrating the Cyclades into the Dodecanese and Italian financial spheres and allowing the islands to benefit from the lower prices in force there. But Valeriani’s proposal was not welcomed by Rhodes, suggesting that, for the High Command, the interests of the *Possedimento* would always come first. The crux of the problem was the unfair currency exchange rate and its impact on trade: it was highly beneficial for the Dodecanese and extremely damaging for the other islands forced to export goods to Rhodes. Although the value of the drachma had collapsed against that of the lira there was no further adjustment of the rate of exchange throughout the occupation period. It remained locked in at eight drachmas to the lira for the entire occupation period provoking, as Valeriani would later lament, great suffering and countless difficulties (*tantì e tanti guai*), for the islands dependent on the *Possedimento*.

A report of 5 November 1942, drawing Valeriani’s attention to these problems, reflects the growing awareness of Italian civil administrators in Syros of the conflict of interest with the Dodecanese. Rhodes was held responsible for fixing prices at unsustainable levels: Cycladic olive oil at 210 drachmas per oke (just under 1.3 kg), against the current price elsewhere in Greece of 40,000; Cycladic wine at 50 drachmas per oke with a current price of 2,000; A woolen dress at 20,000 when the price in Athens was 500,000 and a pair of shoes
at 40,000 drachmas, the price in Athens was 100,000. The disparity was so extreme as to ruin traders, who could not earn enough to purchase raw materials at prices current outside the Cyclades, or survive on the tiny income resulting from such draconian measures. In this internal analysis the Italian authorities now admitted that, since prices in Athens had begun to drop, artificially low prices in the Cyclades actually ‘favored the growth of the black market’. In other words, the calmieri policy was a cause of the very problem it was supposed to cure; in fact, the calmieri were finally abandoned in May 1943. The subsequent increase in goods coming from Athens demonstrated the negative effect of the artificially low prices which had deterred essential imports of food and raw materials for so long.

As inflation rose and the value of the drachma collapsed, the issue of how to control currency and the amount of money in circulation, continued to dog Italian policy, especially when its regulation was used as a substitute for the previous unsuccessful moves towards a political distacco. Perhaps the most damaging initiative concerned restrictions on the influx of Greek currency into the Aegean financial system. The rationale was to avoid increases in the Greek money supply and to stop more money being put into circulation without a corresponding increase in output. On 28 May 1942, Campioni imposed stringent controls on money exchanges but offered nothing to replace the flow of currency coming from the mainland. Most transfers of capital were forbidden although the local economy was dependent on the regular circulation of funds. An unwieldy process was instituted for the declaration of all money transfers: transfers to Italy or the Possedimento had to be deposited at the Banco di Roma and those leaving the territories permanently could only take a limited sum with them. Any transgressions would incur steep fines and goods would be confiscated.

Rhodes’ political objectives were clear: the aim was to:

| gradually disconnect the economy of the Cyclades and Sporades occupied by the Italian armed forces, anchoring them to that of the Possedimento and Italy, and if the different circumstances will permit it, to thus achieve an administrative distacco of our islands from the mainland. |
Clearly, as long as local banks were free to carry out operations with Athens, distacco objectives would be frustrated. Although there was no escaping the fact that it was still necessary for funds from Greece for the payment of pensions or for indemnities, all other operations to and from Greece were severely restricted and could not exceed 1,000 drachmas, with no exceptions made for rents and other sources of income. This stealthy application of the distacco was accompanied by a drive to attract clients from the Greek banks to the Bank of Rome, while reducing the role of the National Bank of Greece, confining it to the regional zone where it would function as an autonomous provincial ‘treasury’.

The May 1942 currency decree brought financial chaos. On 15 July Valeriani informed Rhodes that the impact was nothing less than catastrophic since, for many islanders, remittances were the only source of income. For example, civil servants’ salaries and pensions were halved, as were government subsidies from the mainland. When no help was forthcoming, on 24 July, Valeriani informed Rhodes that the situation created by the decree was ‘so difficult’, that a reply was urgently required. But it was only when the financial crisis became extreme that Campioni increased the limit on payments from Greece to 30,000 drachmas. The impractical aspect of control from Rhodes, which still insisted on authorizing every transaction, was highlighted when HQ became snowed under with paper-work: they beseeched the commands to ‘weigh each case up very carefully’ before passing them on to Rhodes.

The strongest case against the above measures came from Valeriani himself in a series of appeals to Rhodes in July 1942. He felt Syros needed to retain close relations with mainland Greece because proximity with the capital had triggered the island’s development and the Cyclades had always depended on the mainland for the funding of the administration. The massive deficit in the budget of the Government Funds was partly due to successive rises in civil servants’ salaries and pension payments in line with soaring inflation. To make things worse most sources of income were reduced because of the general suspension of all economic activity in the Cyclades. Secondly, central government normally paid funds to the
Gendarmerie and Port Authorities for pensions of sailors via the Post Office or banks. Thirdly, Athens supplied the funds for public works in the islands, and financed the Commission for occupation costs. Most crucially, central government had recently been honouring its commitments to public assistance: ‘hundreds of millions of drachmas have been sent in recent months’, to provide for the various soup-kitchens and public assistance. These considerations led Valeriani to plead that the 28 May decree be reversed and that his authority be restored:

Given that there are no funds available at all for local needs at present, acceptance of funds from Athens is vital and, consequently, direct authorization by this Commissariat would avoid damaging delays with regard to payments.

He also requested direct control over the payment of occupation costs, salaries to the Gendarmerie, Port Authorities, public works and public assistance.

From the islanders’ position, the currency restrictions were forcing industrialists and traders to take out loans or leave the Cyclades definitively. The President of the National Bank of Greece in Syros, Papavassiliou, and three representative of the Union of Greek Banks made a desperate appeal to the occupation authorities. They said that some of their wealthiest clients had substantial investments abroad which formed a major contribution to the revenue of the island. The collapse of the economy due to the war had been responsible for the financial depression and severe hardship. They claimed that the biggest contribution to public assistance still came from Athens but employers had been forced to take out loans in order to pay unemployment benefits. In short, the private sector was stagnating due to the occupiers’ block on the money supply and they argued very forcibly for an increase in the money in circulation and injections of cash from Athens upon which the local economy depended.

A further report from Papavassiliou, on 22 July 1942, gives an indication of the monetary chaos caused by the 28 May decree. He said he was in urgent need of the sum of three hundred million drachmas in order to continue operating but, as a result
of the decree, this sum could not be transferred to Syros. The lack of money in circulation was affecting the most vital needs of the island community: the bank was not in a position to carry out its regular obligation to pay two hundred million drachmas, of which fifty million were owed to the occupation authorities, for food to be distributed to the population and forty million for the public organizations, including the hospitals, which would not be able to function without funds. To make things worse, the balance held by the bank could not be withdrawn due to lack of available ready cash.27

Valeriani attempted to bring Campioni down to earth with a realistic assessment of the financial needs of the Cyclades and effectively arguing against the distacco. He said that although the attempt to protect the drachma had been appreciated the difficulties caused by the application of the decree were so severe that the administrative distacco of the Cyclades from the mainland now ‘appeared extremely improbable’.

To make the Cyclades autonomous it would be necessary to provide funds from other sources because, under normal conditions, ‘hundreds of millions of drachmas’ were transferred to the province from Athens. Funding could not be found locally and Valeriani thought that if the Cyclades lost their subsidies from Athens they would lose their only source of income. He warned that ‘if the fascist Government intends to eventually consider the possibility of taking over from Athens in this area, the financial burden on the Royal Treasury would not be less than one hundred million Italian lira, annually’.28 An absurd situation arose where other island military commands also ran out of funds, and Valeriani had to explain why the funding banks of Syros would not relinquish their cash.29 In fact the cash-starved banks were driven to engage in hoarding.

In the event, to Valeriani’s relief, help was forthcoming from another source. Unexpected support for restraint over the application of the distacco policy came from the Italian authorities in Athens. Discussions in July 1942 suggested that the Italian Foreign Ministry had lost interest in the distacco because it was still hoping to establish an Italian protectorate in Greece. The envoy from Rhodes was very displeased to learn that the civilian authorities had gone cold on the distacco issue in the light of these bigger ambitions.
He particularly objected to Plenipotentiary Ghigi’s dismissive comments on Rhodes’ efforts: ‘It’s far better for us to try and gobble up the whole of Greece rather than to start nibbling off crumbs and risk losing the rest.’ Apart from the fact that this ambition shows how unrealistic Foreign Ministry aims were, the divergence of objectives is also symptomatic of uncoordinated policies and lack of connection between the different Italian authorities in Greece, evincing further proof of a lack of coherent central control.

The truth was that tensions were mounting among the various occupation authorities in Greece and within the Axis. The Germans were opposed to the idea of Italian hegemony in the Aegean – let alone control of the whole of Greece. Rhodes’ intervention had so much disturbed the already fragile economy of the region that questions were raised at the top of the Axis occupation hierarchy. Germany had no intention of allowing the Italians to extract more products from the eastern Mediterranean and attempts to manipulate the geopolitical balance had not gone unnoticed in Berlin. On 25 August, Admiral Campioni was forced to climb down; he announced that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had questioned the May 28 decree. Their allies had woken up to the fact that the Italians were attempting to expand their control over the region by engineering the separation of the islands from continental Greece.

This disagreement echoed the conflict between the Axis partners in Athens over responsibilities for supplying Greece with food. The civil authorities were pitted against the Axis armies’ lack of restraint in extracting Greek produce and financial reserves through occupation costs. While the civil plenipotentiaries, Altenburg and Ghigi failed to restrain the demands of the armies, the Italians bemoaned Germany’s ‘plundering’ of Greece. Such was the power of the army that Rome considered ceding control of the country to the Italian military command, leaving technical-administrative matters in the hands of the Special Envoy, and replacing Plenipotentiary Ghigi with a Counsellor for the Legation. In fact, Ghigi himself requested to be transferred because he considered that power-sharing with the Germans was dysfunctional. It ‘paralyzes many undertakings ... adding to the food crisis in Athens’ which was
already aggravated by the ‘heavy-eating officer gangsters’ in the occupation armies. In the end, Ghigi was retained because of his strong links with the Germans and the Greek Prime Minister, Rallis. It was clear, however, that the armed forces had increased their influence – something which perhaps helps to explain Campioni’s persistence with distacco aims. But when Rhodes moved to increase its sphere of economic control in the Aegean, this was immediately blocked by the German authorities and Rome reacted by restraining Campioni’s initiative.

Campioni thus had no choice but to suspend the decree and allow the transfer of money to and from the islands. He concluded with the vague compromise that, for the importation or exportation of goods, authorization should be requested ‘from time to time’. Grave damage had already been done in Syros and on 26 August Valeriani was forced to release bonds from the Italian fund: Cassa del Mediterraneo di Credito per la Grecia because of the crisis caused by the absence of funds from Athens. On 31 August Valeriani telegraphed to Rhodes, asking for support in obtaining an urgent draft of three hundred million drachmas. He stressed that the lack of funds was causing ‘an ever deepening crisis’.

In spite of German objections, Campioni was not deterred from making a final attempt to advance the distacco in February 1943, less than a year later. By then, the slow revival of the economy on the mainland due to the impact of relief operations (forcing black marketeers to release goods at lower prices), encouraged Valeriani to hope that Syros could revive its links with the external markets. This clashed with Campioni’s determination to launch a new round of distacco initiatives in 1943 which, in turn, would lead Valeriani to harden his position to one of outright criticism.

The final stage of the distacco policy and the financial crisis
By February 1943, the national financial crisis and uncontrollable inflation were exacerbated by a renewed build-up of German troops in Greece and the inevitable increase in occupation costs. A massive drop in the value of the drachma may have influenced Campioni’s decision to re-launch the distacco policy with another series of sweeping
currency restrictions: Decree 32, of 20 February 1943, replaced its highly unsuccessful predecessor of 28 May 1942. As before, the measure which most affected the free flow of commerce was the call for authorizations for the exportation of money and goods. Once again Campioni drastically limited the amount of money which could be brought in and out of the area.

To avert a potential crisis Valeriani at last took the initiative, responding with a detailed critique of the policy and an attempt to escape the control of Rhodes. The importance of this statement lay in the appeal to put the interests of the Greek collectivity above those of the occupiers. He said dependency on Rhodes had failed because the province did not have a sufficient money supply to stand alone. He therefore saw an absolute (imprescindibile) need for the Cyclades to depend on mainland Greece, an entity which was ‘economically and territorially superior’ to the Possedimento. The escalation of the war hampered exchanges with the Possedimento and Syros depended on external markets to sell her produce and import raw materials. This was also an admission that past promises would never be fulfilled: doing business with Italy was an ever more unlikely prospect: ‘after twenty-two months of occupation, Italy and the Possedimento have still not replaced these markets’ as had been promised.

Valeriani said that, with the recent curb on speculation, the home markets had become more active resulting in renewed interest in Syros to revive imports from the mainland. He urged his superiors to take action: the time lost in carrying out transactions was crucial when inflation was causing massive price discrepancies even in short periods of time. Of course, he added, it would be ‘simply absurd’ to suggest that the Italians should relinquish all control, but interference should be reduced to a minimum.

Valeriani therefore asked for power of authorization to be delegated to the Syros Civil Commission which was clearly much more aware of the reality on the ground than Rhodes. These realities included the soaring deficit of the Government Funds, due to the increased volume of monetary exchanges linked to a huge fall in purchasing power, and the banknote crisis which was aggravated by the hoarding of currency. The recent decree took no account of the complex financial links
between Syros and all other commercial operators: the textile industry, for example, had vital links between branches on the islands and mainland head offices. There was normally a funding network supplying the many religious foundations, money sent from friends and families, and from navigation companies on the mainland to employees. But the decree blocked the normal transfer of funds leading in some cases to ‘absurd situations’. Valeriani appealed for consideration for the victims and suggested that the power to authorize money transfers be delegated to the Civil Commission in Syros: ‘thus easing the lives of numerous social groups who are forced, particularly in these calamitous times, to have recourse to the above mentioned operations to provide them with the means of subsistence.’

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the decree hit those dependent on money transfers very badly. Post was also held up for months although many Greeks depended exclusively on postal orders from their families in mainland Greece. On 7 June 1943, Valeriani urgently requested a telegraphic response lessening the harshness of article eight of the decree for ‘reasons of political necessity’: the recipients had no other means of subsistence. In response, while not withdrawing the decree, Rhodes conceded that subsistence money be increased to a maximum of 100,000 drachmas per person – an amount of little worth, often a fraction of the draft.

Even Italian interests were damaged by the lack of money in circulation: workers in the mines on Santorini could not be paid and work was suspended. This also provoked difficulties with the Greek authorities: G. D. Rallis speaking from the Prime Minister’s Office said the decree was making the ‘execution of state services extremely difficult’ and asked for permission to send money to the Government Funds in the Cyclades so that state functionaries could be paid. To avert the crisis a massive emergency telegraphic draft of one thousand million drachmas had to be sent from Athens. Quite understandably the Greeks were losing patience with the Italians’ constant tampering. But Campioni rejected any responsibility for the crisis, regarding their complaints as ‘completely unfounded’. Not surprisingly Campioni also rejected Valeriani’s criticism,
reminding his subordinate that the directive came from Rome and was the result of careful consideration by the Commissione Consultiva per il Diritto di Guerra, and approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Special Envoy in Greece. Yet, by June 1943, Campioni was far less confident when reporting to Rome about the decision to impose the importation of goods from the Cyclades to the Dodecanese, he reminded the Foreign Ministry that the idea had been ‘suggested’ by them.43

In the event, Campioni’s zealous interpretation of policy had already been overtaken by events. Summing up the occupation policy for Greece, a distinction was made by Rome between the strict regime linking the more productive Ionian islands to Italy and a much vaguer plan for the Cyclades where:

proximity to the theatre of war [has meant that] production rates were not as intensive as in the Ionian islands, nor has the process of separation from the rest of Greece been pushed forward decisively.44

Clearly, after objections from the Germans, Rome was now much more lukewarm about the distacco policy than Campioni realized. He was, however, not prepared to acknowledge the damage done to the economy of the Cyclades or take any responsibility for the food crisis. On the contrary, while praising the considerable efforts made by the Syros civil authorities to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, he also said that sacrifices had to be made. He warned that it was inevitable that local economies would be disrupted and many obstacles would have to be faced for the greater good of the projected ‘Roman Empire’ – a goal which still surpassed the whole humanitarian issue.

As previously, Campioni’s commitment to the distacco took little account of current events. By early 1943, Axis defeats in North Africa and on the Eastern Front meant prospects of victory were dim and the Duce had lost all interest in the occupied areas, particularly the remoter eastern Mediterranean. Ciano noted in his diary as early as 8 August 1942, that after Mussolini’s visit to Athens and a disagreement with Hitler on the issue of provisioning the starving Greeks, ‘with regard to Greece he avoids any and all commitments’.45

It had long been apparent that Italy was excluded from
power in Greece and that military considerations and the needs of the Axis armies were the main priority. Consequently, members of the Italian Foreign Office personnel were chary of working there and absenteeism was rife. The German authorities demonstrated their diminishing confidence in their ally by taking over the spheres of influence previously conceded to the Italians. On 10 July 1943, the new Special Envoy in Greece complained to his colleague:

If we don’t want to be thought of as a joke, our illustrious colleagues, ... who have assumed the responsibility of working in Greece but who only participate actively on an irregular basis, should understand that they have not just come here for the ride, for a week or so, and can then take themselves back to Rome. There’s no scope here for the genius or the dilettante. All they need to do is to be present, to stay here, to carry out their duties and all will be well. If not, we might as well shut up shop and then at least we won’t be making ourselves look ridiculous.46

A report from the Ministry in Rome, summing up the occupation in early 1943, showed that the vision of a Roman Empire was all but forgotten as the Germans encroached on Italian prerogatives. As far as Rome was concerned the issue of Italian ‘living space’ was most certainly dead (Non è certamente più il caso di parlare di spazio vitale italiano).47

When Campioni imposed further trade restrictions, Valeriani was left with no alternative but to by-pass Rhodes and apply directly to Rome. He wrote a detailed report to his friend and colleague, the head of the cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, Francesco Babuscio Rizzo.48 This confidential document, written by a fascist diplomat in order to urge his own department to change policy, is probably the nearest one could hope to find to a critical assessment of what was really happening in Syros and the Cyclades. It amounts to a clear condemnation of much that had been done by the Italian authorities during the occupation. It was also a direct appeal to bring dependency on Rhodes to an end.

For Valeriani, Italian policy was leading to economic
and social catastrophe. The Aegean island of Santorini was a significant example which had flourishing pre-war food industries, (wine and preserved tomato products). These had been blocked by Rhodes and their selling price cut down by the poor exchange rate – on average, at a ratio of one to one hundred compared to the products that the island needed to import. For example, a wholesaler paid 145 drachmas for an oke (1.3 kg) of wine, whereas to import an oke of olive oil cost 8000 drachmas. The island was being ‘plundered of its produce at derisory prices’ and the money earned was not enough to purchase one hundredth of what it needed to import. The selling price was fixed by Rhodes in relation to the lira but even when Rhodes fixed the price at 1000 drachmas the oke – a figure which seemed enormous in lira – it was derisory for the producer at a rate of eight drachmas to the lira.

The island which was in the most serious crisis was, of course, Syros – where it was now hard to imagine that before the war most of the islanders had lived relatively well or happily (gioiosamente). This contrasted dramatically with the present ‘death’ of the island since the start of the two years of Italian occupation:

> In the space of two years the island of Syros has died in every respect; the industries have closed down, shipping activities have been suspended ... the number of unemployed is consequently extremely high.

In spite of a huge effort by the occupiers to boost public assistance and create jobs through public works and the building of military infrastructures the island could not survive on welfare alone; people needed to earn a living, particularly those dependent on external commerce. Valeriani said that when he first arrived on Syros the money in circulation was abundant but the official market had nothing to offer whereas many goods and some foodstuffs were available on the black market. He received frequent requests from traders to export goods such as cotton goods but permits were refused by Rhodes. This was refuted by Rhodes which claimed that it gave permits for every possible operation when in fact, in Valeriani’s experience, ‘authorization was denied in almost every
case’. Valeriani felt that there was no comprehensible rationale for blocking transactions which were beneficial to the island. The situation had become so serious by August 1942, that he had decided to take things into his own hands, limiting the requests for authorization to Rhodes and granting export permits when he deemed it beneficial for the Syros authorities to do so. Most importantly, money was thus raised to ease the social crisis:

The exporter contributed a large sum of money to public assistance (often several hundreds of thousands of drachmas) and he was also obliged to import goods required by this market. They were not sold at Athens prices, which would have been prohibitive for the poorer members of society, but at a price established by us. In a word, a large amount of the profit made by the exporter benefited the consumer, by making a product available for sale which cost for example, 10,000 drachmas per oke (1280 gr.) at 400 or 500 drachmas.

The problem was that while blocking the export of textiles, cereals, onions, wine and preserves from the Cyclades:

Rhodes has requested substantial quantities of goods for the Possedimento, for which it paid derisory prices. For example onions at two lira the oke, that is sixteen drachmas – based on the incomprehensible rate of exchange of eight drachmas which is responsible for countless problems (che porta tanti e tanti guai).49

It was true that Rhodes regularly supplied Syros with food relief but Valeriani felt the supply of provisions was fair compensation for the financial sacrifices born by the islanders. The existing situation, which was already difficult, had become ‘impossible’ since the publication of the recent Decree 32. Traders were subject to restrictions which paralysed business.

The main thrust of Valeriani’s argument was to demonstrate that nothing would change as long as the Cyclades depended on the Possedimento. It was even affecting the lives of the Italian troops who were driven to using the black market. The
marines, for example, could not afford to buy a pair of cotton underpants, let alone eat out in a restaurant, which would cost a whole month’s salary. As a result:

Naturally they’re all using the black market, selling their bread rations and tins of meat, often going without food in order to get hold of a few thousand drachmas. On the mainland the officers and troops are given an equivalent in drachmas, here that is not so.

Dependence on the Possedimento was also invalidated by the escalation of the war in the eastern Mediterranean, and the sinking of most of the Italian fleet. The Rhodes-Syros route was particularly dangerous because of the vigilance of British submarines and the fact that the Italian navy could no longer provide an escort, whereas the connections with Athens were much safer and shorter. Worst of all, supplying the Possedimento had caused the pauperization of the Cyclades, robbing them of the only exchangeable products they possessed which they could have used in order to barter for goods of the greatest necessity, whereas by making exchanges with Rhodes ‘huge quantities had to be exported to compensate for imports’.

Finally, Valeriani criticized the unsustainable price levels fixed by Rhodes and the excessive subordination of the Civil Commission to the control of Supreme Command. The distance between the Dodecanese and the Cyclades was not only physical – he accused Campioni of suffering from a ‘distance from reality’.

As the bearer of this report was about to make his departure, Valeriani hastily made his most crucial point:

I also believe, from what has been said to me, that Admiral Campioni himself is in agreement that the best solution for the survival of these islands, is that they should come under the command of Supergrecia. Thus it would no longer be necessary for Rhodes to continue supplying flour, because in that case, the International Red Cross would provide for the islands – as it does for the mainland – with a saving of thirty million lira a year on our part.
But this supposed convergence of views was illusory. In fact, Campioni did not mention *Supergrecia* in his own report, a month later, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conflict of interest between the military and civilian authorities (similar to that in mainland Greece) was obvious. Campioni claimed that contrary to criticism against him, he had not neglected the interests of the Cyclades. He had promoted the industrial revival of Syros by attempting to increase the supply of raw materials to the textile and leather industries, and had obtained a promise from Plenipotentiary Ghigi, in January 1942, that the Cyclades would benefit from some of the raw materials going to Greece that year. He had also tried to launch the fabrication of artificial fibres as an alternative to cotton. Campioni admitted that there was no response from Rome to his appeals and both initiatives failed.

Unfortunately, although Campioni at last delegated the authorization of exports to the Cyclades Civil Commission, in response to pressure from Rome, it came too late to help Syros. Responding to Valeriani’s report, the Ministry made it clear that the Cyclades should be compensated with ‘products of equal value and not on the basis of an artificial rate of exchange’. This implied criticism of Rhodes’ policy was not tackled by Campioni who, instead, made much of the food supplied to the Cyclades. He claimed that the *Possedimento* had run up a thirty million lira deficit in exchange for a ‘tiny percentage’ of goods received from the Cyclades and concluded that the economic situation, especially the food supply, had ‘improved considerably’ since the previous year.

Instead, Syros’s difficulties were attributed to local scapegoats: Campioni’s report implied that the lack of relief from the IRC was due to the discontent of the people, and said he had done all he could to resolve the differences between the German and Italian maritime authorities which had prevented IRC ships from coming to the Cyclades. He therefore accused: ‘vast sectors of the Greek population with their tendency to profiteer and speculate, impervious to all measures of discipline and control applied by us.’ Finally, he singled out the Catholic bishop of Syros, Vutzinos, whose ‘subversive activities which are hostile to us, are even more serious than those of the Orthodox themselves’. 
Campioni’s efforts to try and help the Cyclades may have been genuine but his refusal to address the real cause of the economic collapse, over which he did have considerable powers of discretion, had brought catastrophe to the province.

Fig. 8 The Catholic Bishop Antonios Grigorios Vutzinos. Source: Roussos, M. & R., *Episkopi Syrou (1275-2000)* (Syros, 2001), p. 75
4: THE FAMINE

It is perhaps difficult to imagine how a relatively prosperous community could be reduced to starvation in a matter of months. In spite of early indications of the critical lack of food in Syros the inevitable consequences of the crisis seem to have taken the Italian and Greek authorities by surprise. As in many instances of famine, even today, both governments had underestimated the oncoming catastrophe. Arriving in May 1941, Farina’s contingent of troops encountered little opposition and the situation remained beguilingly peaceful. The poorest families could still scour the countryside for wild fruit and vegetables and could survive, temporarily, without their staple diet of bread. Rigoutsos complained that he only managed to buy ‘a few olives and the inevitable salted sardines’ which were all that was being sold in the market, to feed his family of seven. After the first week, onions brought from Andros were the only sizeable commodity on offer and the Greek authorities had to warn the islanders that a diet of onions alone was detrimental to their health. Even for the wealthy there was little food available on the black market. The Military Command recorded that in August 1941 there were no food supplies available, with the exception of onions, and very small amounts of other foods which were totally absorbed by the black market. These were on sale in quantities which were not even sufficient to feed the few who had the means to make use of the black market.¹

In addition, the resilience and stoicism of the poor may have disguised their desperate situation initially and deterred them from seeking help from the occupiers. The failure to act quickly was also due to an unwillingness to face the truth and
even doctors found it difficult to countenance the possibility of death from starvation. According to Captain Manfrini, an Italian medical officer, the first deaths from starvation ‘happened silently and the doctors themselves talked about it in a subdued way, uncertainly, as if they were not convinced that it was a natural thing’. Manfrini admitted that at first he too did not believe these ‘rumours’, thinking they were a ploy to get more food relief. But when he realised how serious things were and tried to talk to other officers, they refused to take him seriously and accused him of being ‘too soft-hearted towards local elements’.

In the bitter winter of 1941-2, the numbers of weak and desperate people seeking food at the soup-kitchens rose sharply and the Italians were most concerned about the mothers and children who were ‘in an extreme state of malnutrition’. The military governor, Col. Duca, returned from a month’s leave in January 1942 to discover a shocking decline in the health of the population:

I observed with my own eyes the haggard, anguished and yellowish faces of the majority of the population; a state that was not yet obvious before I left and which now affected not just the poorer people, but was common among the rich – proof that the food deficit was now critical even for those with the means to buy it.

Every day he received requests for food from all social groups, including professionals and the clergy. Almost the whole population was dependent on supplies from Rhodes; these were barely sufficient to keep them alive and did not leave them fit to work. It is clear from this report that considerable efforts to obtain food from elsewhere had already been made – usually by offering to exchange edible goods with products from the Cyclades. Duca reported that such initiatives had largely failed: only a small quantity of olive oil from Crete, allocated to Syros in September, had arrived. Further requests to Crete had received no response. Protracted negotiations since the summer of 1941 with Samos, Chios and the Ionian islands for the exchange of cloth for olive oil had broken down due to reluctance to give up precious reserves on the part of
suppliers and even the occupation authorities themselves. Duca reminded the Supreme Command that olive oil was the only source of fat in Syros and was an essential item in the staple diet of the islanders. The amount of oil allocated to Syros was 105 tons (400 for the Cyclades in total, that is: 500 gr. per head, monthly). By February 1942, at the peak of famine, Syros had received less than one quarter of the expected quota (20 tons). Another essential source of nourishment was raisins, but less than one third of the amount negotiated had arrived, amounting to only 2,500 gr. per head for five months. There had been no sign of the huge shipment of edible carob beans promised by Crete and Rhodes for four months, and only a tiny fraction of the dried figs due from the mainland had been delivered. Nor was there a reply to telegrams sent to the Italian command in Volos, requesting olives in exchange for wine from the Cyclades. Finally, Duca reported that the Syros potato crop was smaller than usual, and stocks had been consumed by Christmas 1941. The rations now being distributed per head each day amounted to: 150 gr. of maize flour, 8.6 gr. of pasta, 10 gr. of sugar, 6.66 gr. of cheese and 3.33 gr. of coffee substitute. Duca made it clear that these quantities were insufficient to keep people alive in the long term, especially as deliveries from Rhodes were irregular, as were the quantities of food being sent. Thus rations distributed in the months of January and February 1942 varied considerably over time and the outcome was reflected in the high rate of death due to starvation. Duca ended his report with a strong appeal for more food to avert an even greater crisis.

The failure to pre-empt starvation was partly due to delays while the occupiers sought to understand the local food supply and why it had broken down, as well as to try to maximize local resources.

**The pre-war food supply**

In spite of poor agricultural conditions, before the war a rate of close to maximum agricultural productivity was achieved. There were enough seasonal vegetables and fruit for local consumption and Syros exported the first crop to the mainland. Barley was the main cereal and was mixed with wheat to make bread – largely for the farmers’ consumption. Credit for the
high yields had to go to the farmers who were: ‘energetic, hard working and devoted to their land. With patient application over many years and by battling with the winds and drought, they have managed to transform arid, rocky soil into arable land’. However, home-grown produce only served some of the islanders’ needs and could not satisfy the demand for bread, the staple diet. The island was a clear example of a food-deficit zone: it produced less than 15 per cent of the grain requirement and olive oil, the other essential component, was also produced in minimal quantities. Therefore, 60 per cent of the island’s food was imported and even before the war agricultural production was deemed ‘quite insufficient for its population’.

A monograph on the history and resources of Syros compiled by the occupiers from information provided by the Greek authorities gives a useful overview of the island’s resources at the start of the occupation. At this stage, when the fascist civilizing mission still seemed feasible, there are indications that the occupiers thought they could reform food production. Hopes focused on fishing which had once provided a substantial part of the islanders’ diet. Pre-war fishing levels largely surpassed local needs and half the fish from the Cyclades was sold in Athens. But, at the start of the occupation, the Italians found that the fishing industry had ‘virtually disappeared’ due to lack of investment and very inadequate pay and working practices. The war had devastated the sector, greatly reducing the number of fishermen and destroying boats and equipment. But fishing skills were excellent and the quantity of fish extracted by dint of hard labour had always been considerable. The Cyclades fisherman was: ‘strong, sober and disciplined but has been left to his own devices’; there was no representative organization of ‘the poorest group of this industrious population’ and, although strong in numbers, their economic prospects were poor. Fish was sold directly in the port with very low prices established by bargaining, thus the fishermen were never able to earn enough in order to improve their conditions. In addition, equipment was antiquated and over-used, to the ‘great physical cost of the undernourished fishermen’ and traditional techniques were ‘primitive and certainly inappropriate to the fishing
capacity of the sea’. The agricultural sector was also very badly affected when much of the work-force was mobilized for war. The acute lack of food in Syros in the summer of 1941 was partly due to the absence of farmers who were unable to tend to their vegetables during the growing season.

There is no indication that central government did anything to compensate for the impact of the war on the country’s food supply. Greece’s dependence on imported food made her particularly vulnerable to any threat to the food supply from external sources, in particular the Allied blockade on shipping. Although the food crisis was predictable by the summer of 1940, the decision not to create food reserves compounded the fall in imports. In fact, food imports were reduced to levels which were ‘absolutely indispensable for immediate consumption’ when the pre-war government concentrated on importing arms. In addition to food, the loss of revenues from external sources, including the Greek merchant navy, aggravated the crisis. In Syros, remittances from merchant seamen had provided a substantial source of income which ceased abruptly in 1941.

As mentioned in chapter one, poverty and even hunger were common phenomena among the poorest workers in Syros, before the war. By 1940 soup-kitchens were already in place and over one thousand people were registered for public assistance. In the summer of 1941 the Syros authorities could not meet their commitment to supply the soup-kitchens three times a week. In July they only managed three distributions: two of onions and one of putrid lentils, salvaged from a ship which had been sunk in Piraeus. By September the Italians were forced to supplement the food for the soup-kitchens with supplies from military reserves. While waiting for promised supplies from Italy, Duca agreed to provide enough beans and pasta for three rations per week. In view of the escalating crisis, the Italians realised they would have to take over the *syssitia* (soup-kitchens) from the local authorities.

By this time the international community was aware of the desperate situation in the Cyclades and there were several attempts by the International Red Cross to send food. Unfortunately these deliveries rarely ran smoothly: on
5 November 1941 a mixed cargo of chick peas and beans as well as four crates of vegetables at last docked in Syros, but was found to be partly rotten.\textsuperscript{18} The edible stocks were distributed to the soup-kitchens and dependent institutions and then to the whole population. In an attempt to prevent absorption onto the black market, Duca warned that he would send anybody caught trying to sell Red Cross provisions to the military tribunal.\textsuperscript{19} In 1942, deliveries handled by the local IRC Commission were relatively limited and intermittent.\textsuperscript{20}

The crisis of the Greek wartime government extended to the local authorities who were singled out by many for their mismanagement and corruption. One citizen of Ermoupolis noted in his diary that the lack of leadership at a time of crisis left local people exposed to danger.\textsuperscript{21} Although the Syros authorities had already introduced some price controls before the war, and had attempted to restrict the growth of the black market, it seemed clear that they and the police were often too much involved in the trafficking of commodities to be able to enforce the restrictions effectively.\textsuperscript{22} By September 1941, when no bread had been distributed for over a month, the French honorary consul, Rigoutsos, wrote that it was not safe for the authorities to appear in the streets as they would have been attacked.

Probably the occupiers’ policy which most disrupted the local food supply was the \textit{ammassi}, the commandeering of the agricultural produce of the Cyclades. Requisitioning was a device used by many wartime governments, including those of Greece and Italy, to combat hoarding by farmers. The Italian occupation authorities in the Cyclades claimed that they would redistribute the produce on a fairer basis, ensuring that it was sold on the open market or exchanged for other produce from elsewhere.\textsuperscript{23} But after a large part had gone to the Syros soup-kitchens and institutions there was little left to sell to the rest of the population. Moreover, requisitions were also used to supplement the rations of the occupiers. However, the crops collected on the more fertile Cyclades islands were supposed to be used for bartering produce for the use of needy islanders and the Italian records show that exchanges were widespread and sometimes functioned quite well, when not appropriated by the black market.
The issue of corruption will be discussed in more detail below, but one example of abuse of bartering will illustrate how the Italians themselves provoked hostility to their policies. According to a Greek source on the island of Siphnos, Italian officers had engaged in lucrative trading for their own benefit: selling olive oil on the black market at nearly seven times the price paid to the producers, whereas only a ‘small quantity’ of wine from Santorini was exchanged for the benefit of Siphnos.24 Also, although the occupiers had promised that local crops would be allocated first to the Cyclades, part was shipped to the Dodecanese in exchange for food aid. Most crucially, as discussed in chapter three, Cyclades products were purchased by Rhodes at derisory prices, due to the weakness of the drachma against the lira.

Thus the ammassi were perceived locally as requisitioning for the occupiers’ own use. According to Rigoutsos:

Since the start of the occupation and in spite of the good will which they seem, at least, to bear towards the population so appallingly afflicted with starvation, they have done nothing but lay their hands on everything which the poor, infertile island of Syros can produce. They seize all the produce from the other islands the moment it arrives at the port, such as: potatoes, oil, grapes and raisins, wine, cattle etc. All this raiding is in order to feed the occupiers almost exclusively, a whole regiment in the Cyclades islands alone, without counting the naval and marine crews operating in this region, who also get their fair share of all these goods.25

(Not all the islanders perceived Italian controls in this way, however, and on Tinos some farmers welcomed the ammassi policy as a way of resolving unfair distribution of resources and commandeering by local profiteers.)26 Overall, many islanders were not convinced that there was any justifiable redistribution of produce – as they received little of the benefits – or that the occupiers’ motives were altruistic. Producers naturally feared for their own lives and that of their families and their sense of panic was exacerbated when their crops, or limited reserves, were taken from them.
Severe sanctions were imposed on those failing to comply with the crop collection rules. In February 1942, at the most critical stage of the famine, Campioni decreed that entire families would have emergency food stocks withdrawn if they failed to surrender crops, or if there was any attempt at illegal exportation. The reaping and threshing of grain was supervised and the milling of flour was strictly controlled, with farmers presenting documents to the miller for certification. Inevitably, the many complications in the control of production left the process open to theft and hoarding. Where small farmers were unable to bribe their way out of these regulations, the wealthy landowners had the means to influence the situation in their favour and corruption was rife. The biggest problem created by the ammassi was due to the derisory prices paid to producers, and the divergences in prices for those who escaped Italian control and sold on the black market.

The food supply from other sectors, particularly fishing, was also affected by the occupiers’ intervention. Security measures effectively limited fishing activities. Daily fishing was allowed at any distance but the traditional method of night-fishing was only permitted without lamps and within two miles of land. All fish had to be brought back to Syros and no transfers to other ships were allowed, with fines for non-compliance. The head of the fleet was responsible for the collective sale of fish at fixed prices and the distribution of the proceeds. Most crucially, private market stalls and bargaining was banned. Every man had to have a permit which was checked by the military command. Because of the weak physical state of the fishermen, they received an extra ration of bread and small quantities of beans. The occupiers claimed that their intervention had considerably improved fishing in the Cyclades. This may have been true initially but other factors indicate that the fishermen’s lot was worse during the occupation due to artificially low prices. The fact that it was necessary to supplement the men’s diet with extra rations to keep them alive and at work, indicates how poorly nourished they were even when the quantities fished were high. Surveillance was so severe that it was rare that fishermen managed to bring fish home; indeed the poorer working families in Syros ate
little or no fish throughout the occupation. Many fishermen died during the famine and it was significant that, in spite of high unemployment, locals were unwilling to take on their jobs. A private initiative to revive the fishing industry and the fishermen’s jobs, although supported by the Italians, failed because of lack of local support. Moreover, unsustainably low fixed prices meant that the bulk of the fish ‘disappeared’ onto the black market and never reached the official market place: one fish-merchant appealed to the occupiers to raise calmieri rates for fish in line with the present situation, ‘given that the price of fishing materials has risen excessively’.

The lack of produce in Ermoupolis, as soon as the occupying forces arrived, indicated that hoarding and recourse to the black market were already underway. Just as in the big cities such as Athens, uncontrolled panic buying resulted in the depletion of almost all stocks available by legal means. In the first weeks of occupation, food, clothing and materials in Syros were bought by the many Italian officers passing through the port, as well as the local occupation force. In return local merchants profited from the demands of Italian soldiers by raising prices by ‘three or four times’ their real value. Unable to afford such inflated prices, the poor were excluded from the market altogether.

When it proved impossible to stop Syros smallholders from selling produce clandestinely, the Italian authorities resorted to inspections and extended the ammassi to include forced purchases of fruit and vegetables. But these restrictions led to strong protests from producers who demanded the right to organize collection themselves. In May 1942, the authorities gave in and allowed a syndicate of fruit and vegetable merchants to pool the produce and to sell it at the agreed fixed prices. The failure of the ban on individual purchases from farmers was demonstrated when it was lifted on 30 June 1942.

Another much-contested measure to stop hoarding was the restriction on the maximum quota of food to be retained by each household. As in the previous case, over-regulation, which encouraged rather than prevented abuse, was followed by a reversal of policy. In October 1941 households were ordered to declare stocks of food in excess of about ten kilos:
one oke (just under 1.3 kg) of flour and one of pasta or rice, one and a half of pulses, one of oil, half of sugar and butter, one of raisins, one and half of potatoes and half of soap, per family member. But declaration was risky as these goods might be seized, especially as inspectors from the Guardia della Finanza had the right to enter people’s homes at any time and frequently abused their powers. A year later, however, when the famine was under control, permitted stocks rose to five,
seven and in the case of potatoes, even ten times the amounts above. *Ordinanza* 5, of 10 November 1942, shows the amounts of flour, pasta, dried vegetables, oil, sugar, butter, raisins, potatoes and soap which could be retained by each family. 40

The absurdity of taking away precious stocks of food which would have enabled the islanders to survive was highlighted by the many appeals to the occupiers; the Catholic Bishop argued that there would have been nothing to complain about if the guards only confiscated the goods that had not been declared, but unfortunately they also deprived families of legal stocks. 41 He wrote on behalf of his brother’s family which was left with just twenty kilos of food, for ten people, for the whole winter. In another case, even the seed crop of barley, needed for sowing, was taken from a farmer. The Bishop warned Valeriani that if this harassment continued the farmers would be ‘terrorized’ and they would produce even less. He urged the civilian governor to control the Italian guards and their arbitrary enforcement of these draconian restrictions. The counter-productive effect of such controls was obvious, for it was those who did succeed in hiding food who survived. A local historian noted that his family survived because they had managed to keep some tins of olive oil, hidden away under the floorboards of the family’s country house. Typically the oil, which had been imported for military stocks, was bought on the black market from some Italian soldiers. 42

**The black market**

Some analysts of the Greek crisis have seen the black market or ‘private trade’ as an alternative form of food distribution which became necessary when the state was unable to secure the delivery of resources vital to the survival of its citizens. 43 Private trade’s potential for positive as well as negative influence on famines has been emphasized by economists. 44 And indeed, as in most occupied countries, private trade kept many Greeks alive when no other source of food was available and a large number were forced to adapt to using it. While some producers exploited the situation the black market remained, nevertheless, the last resort for everybody who could afford it. But the same mechanism which permitted the survival of some, proved fatal for more vulnerable sectors
of the population who could not pay the extortionate prices demanded. The unregulated nature of this form of food distribution meant prices were dangerously divergent, fuelled by the speculative ambitions of producers. Although the black market brought food to the island it could also have been a contributory cause of famine, as many contemporary observers assumed.\footnote{Gradually the Italian authorities became aware of how the black market functioned and tried various strategies to combat it.\footnote{A ban on discharging cargo at the port before the necessary documents were presented gave the occupiers increased control of the handling of imports. Meticulous restrictions were imposed on the issuing and use of import and export permits. Four copies of permits were made, one each for the ports of exportation and importation, one to be kept on board ship and one to be sent to the Cyclades Military Command (CMC). Another form, detailing cost prices, was to be given to the island military authority to determine the selling price, but nothing could be decided without the authorization of the CMC.\footnote{However, none of these measures fully succeeded, partly because they were sometimes extreme and fostered the illegal trading they sought to suppress. A systematic form of rationing in force by the autumn of 1942 went some way to securing that small amounts of food were evenly distributed among those with money to pay for it. But the constant imposition of fines for illegal trade and the naming of culprits in the occupiers’ newspaper, do not appear to have deterred those who had no other way of making a living.}}

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While most of Greece was affected by the black market in food, the specific circumstances of the port of Syros opened up particular opportunities for profiteers. It did not take long for those who sought to gain from the emergency to realize that import/export permits would be a new form of currency. In fact, the trading in permits appears to be the key to how the black market functioned in Syros.\footnote{As noted in chapter three, Valeriani objected so strongly to excessive restrictions on permits from Rhodes that he defied orders so as to re-launch the commercial activities of the port in 1943. When he took office in 1942 he reported that he was constantly asked for permits by traders who were driven to speculate}
on the black market for lack of any other source of income. The issuing of permits engaged the authorities in a battle of wits with ingenious Greeks. In June 1941, one man extracted an excessive number of export permits from the prefect by getting several other people to request permits for the same produce. 49

Tricking the authorities was a survival strategy most people relished: as in the case of a bread supplement claimed for 100 road workers, when their real number was less than 25. 30 In a typical case of smuggling, the Italians impounded illegal purchases of 3,200 eggs, two okes of cheese, a sack of beans, sixty okes of potatoes, twentyfive okes of aubergines and six chickens from two men, sent by the German Marine Administration in Athens, on a mission to buy citrus fruits and cereals from Naxos. 51 In another case, a man from Syros was caught in an unguarded bay off Andros, trying to exchange 150 okes of potatoes and 35 okes of barley for olive oil. He was arrested in spite of a personal letter from an influential Catholic figure appealing for clemency. 52 Fines were constantly imposed throughout the occupation, but these did not deter illegal exchanges. 53 Duca felt his hands were tied:

As to the question of inter-island contraband and with the mainland, mainly carried out with rowing boats or small sailing boats, really effective repressive action could only be effected when every island Command, especially that of Syros, has a fast motorized vessel for the use of the customs police; such action is only possible at the moment round a few of the smaller islands. 54

But Italian efforts to stamp out profiteering were undermined by the involvement of their own personnel. 35 (The buying and selling of ‘booty’ is a constant theme of the personal accounts and novels of the occupation of Greece. 56) In June 1941, after discovering that military stocks of food were being sold in the restaurants of Ermoupolis, Farina warned that ‘Certain officers must be watched if the exploitation of the food market is to be avoided’. 57 It was rumoured that some Italians had made a lot of money from buying up the assets of the desperate islanders and Rigoutsos said that they were: ‘In perfect accord
with Greek merchants and industrialists who were shameless speculators; some of these officers made as much use as they could of their position to enrich themselves by granting all sorts of import permits to Greek speculators who paid large sums of money – while permits were not granted to honest people from whom there was nothing to gain.58

Some leather merchants, in collusion with Italian officers, made astronomical profits: for example, tanned hides were resold at over eight times the cost price. Textile factory owners held back on quantities of cloth which could have been sold or bartered to bring in food to Syros.59 The Catholic bishop, Vutzinos, blamed the corruption and ‘indifference of the self-serving employers’ of the textile factories and complained to the occupiers about the endemic disparity between the miserably low incomes of the workers and the wealth of the merchants. He said that some factory owners had made ‘huge profits’ which allowed them to ‘live well and to make use of the black market to stock up on commodities’. The bishop represented the Catholic minority working in the factories of mainly Orthodox employers, and his comments reflect the tension between the two religious communities.

It was the major land-owning farmers who capitalized most on the famine: some even converted to grain production, abandoning the farming of vital crops needed in Syros for produce which would bring in a bigger profit from exports. Their sudden change in life-style as they acquired property could not be disguised – nor did they wish to hide their new status symbols. This was an opportunity for the mostly Catholic farmers to avenge what they perceived as decades of disparagement from the largely Orthodox community in the town. As in most of occupied Europe, including the Greek mainland, farmers were resented for withholding produce. For their part, Greek farmers felt they had been ill-treated in the inter-war years and that they owed nothing to the ‘privileged’ city dwellers.60 But in Syros religious intolerance aggravated the growing resentment which divided town and country. On the other hand, profiteering farmers had no compunction towards fellow Catholics and bought up the smallholdings of those already in debt and struggling to survive. Thus small landowners risked entitlement failure by relinquishing their
only means of survival, falling for the: ‘lure of a sum of money, even when it is being devalued by the minute, preferring it to a field or a kitchen garden which never loses its value and which would certainly have saved them from famine, even brought them wealth, if only they’d known how to hold on to it.’

In October 1941, Duca identified the social groups most involved in profiteering:

The curse of the black market is spreading in spite of every order and repressive measure, helped by the gendarmes themselves, who turn a blind eye so as to profit from it. The culprits range from the rich who acquire produce by paying its weight in gold, the farmers who are directly interested in keeping it going and the traders who make money on the illegal retail of the few products on the market, at huge prices, which compensate them liberally for the limited profits allowed by the calmieri.

When Valeriani took office as civil governor he noted that the black market was being exploited by ‘entire social categories’ but only benefited a tiny minority who ‘disregarded all scruples to make themselves rich’. This admission by the occupiers that the black market could not be controlled, suggests that it had effectively taken over as a means of distribution where the authorities failed to provide food for the population.

The controversy over famine statistics

The famine in Syros stands out as particularly severe even from the national perspective. It has been suggested that no other Greek town experienced such a ‘catastrophic deficit of births against deaths’. The excessive number of deaths for a small island and the persistence of acute hunger over four years have left a bitter legacy in collective memory. Because of this, a tendency to inflate the number of deaths has given rise to a controversy – reinforced in 1984 by the erection of a monument which commemorates the death of ‘8000’ famine victims. Although the civil registration records show a lower figure (around half that amount) many islanders remain convinced that the higher estimate of the death-toll is accurate. The survival of this myth is partly due to the significance of
the monument in collective perceptions, but also to local writers’ insistence on higher figures.

Fig. 10 View of the memorial tombstone for famine victims

‘The 8000 victims of starvation during the Italo-German occupation of 1941-1944 send a message of peace to everybody in the world. The municipality of Ermoupolis 1984’.

The main contention appears to be that the local authorities, in collaboration with the Italians, sought to diminish the extent of the tragedy by concealing the real death-toll in municipal records. Following this, several scholarly and demographic studies showed that this view was unfounded. In fact, thanks to the general accuracy of the Cyclades civil registration records, supported by church registers as well as the statistics collected by the Italians, it is possible to arrive at a significantly more precise figure for the death rate in Syros than that available for mortality rates on mainland Greece. According to Christos Loukos, the director of the historic archives of the Syros prefecture, the records offer one of the most detailed perspectives of the famine in Greece.

The Catholic farming community also had to defend itself against accusations that they fared better than the Orthodox islanders, either because the Catholic occupiers favoured them with extra rations or because they deliberately withheld food during the famine. In response one writer endeavoured to
show that the number of deaths due to starvation in the rural Catholic villages was relatively high in proportion to their small populations.\textsuperscript{67}

In the pre-war period, specific conditions in Syros distinguished local birth and death rates from those of the mainland and prefigured some of the patterns which were exacerbated by the famine. The civil registration records of Syros show that in 1935-39, the birth rate was already well below the national average.\textsuperscript{68} In the countryside, there was a similarly high infant mortality rate to that of Ermoupolis but the adult mortality rate in rural areas was lower than in the town, at 8.6 compared to 17.3.\textsuperscript{69} This disparity between town and country would be greatly exacerbated by the famine but it is significant that it already existed in milder form, before the occupation. The higher urban death rate was linked to low salaries and poor conditions.

The records show that from August 1941 there was a steady increase in the number of deaths from starvation.\textsuperscript{70} Civil records passed on to the Italians, gave a total figure for the whole island of 825 deaths by December 1941, compared to 124 for the same period in 1940. Comparing deaths in Syros, including Ermoupolis, from August to December 1940 and 1941, the development of the crisis is clear.\textsuperscript{71} (See Fig. 11)

The Italians were at pains to calculate deaths for their own records. For example, Medical Officer, Dr Manfrini, recorded that four times as many people had died in Ano Syros from August to October 1941, than in the preceding three months.\textsuperscript{72} Duca thought that there were nearly three hundred deaths from starvation from August to October 1941 in Syros whereas Manfrini gave a more cautious figure of 200.\textsuperscript{73}

By December 1941 the death-toll had soared to 323 (of which at least 241 from starvation) and reached a peak in January 1942 of 484 (approximately 337 from starvation) compared to 35 deaths in January 1941.\textsuperscript{74} There was a drop in deaths in February 1942 and another rise in March (in the last two weeks, out of 204 deaths, 151 were caused by starvation). The following charts show the extreme nature of the famine in Syros, particularly in Ermoupolis, which peaked in the winter months of 1941-2.
### 1940

<table>
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<th>November</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>

Total: **124**

### 1941

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<th>134</th>
<th>166</th>
<th>198</th>
<th>323</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Total: **825**

**1941 July-December. Estimated deaths from starvation.**

Local authority: **648**  Italian: **641**

### Local Authority recorded deaths in Syros in 1942:

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<tr>
<td>484</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Total: **2,037**  Italian: **2,107**

**Fig. 11 Tables of recorded deaths**

**Fig. 12**  The monthly death rate for Syros compared to that of Ermoupolis. Source: civil registration records of Ermoupolis; IAK 209 and 211; IDD 384/1942

--- = Rate for Ermoupolis
By May the death rate had fallen significantly and continued to decline, descending to near normal levels in December 1942. (There were 19 recorded deaths due to starvation in November 1942 compared to over 170 in November 1941.) This marked the end of the famine, in official terms, although acute hunger persisted throughout the occupation, particularly in the town. There is no evidence that the occupiers attempted to minimize the overall death-toll. Dr Villari, head of the Italian medical service, noted a total of deaths for the island from 1 April to 31 August 1942, of 773 (70 more than that of the civil register). For the whole Province of the Cyclades, 6,569 deaths were recorded in one year of occupation.

In view of the perceived under-registration of deaths by the ‘collaborating civil authorities’ (in fact, the Italians complained about the lack of co-operation in the Town Hall from those in charge of civil registrations), it is useful to compare their calculations with those made by other observers. Writing in the Syros periodical *Syriana Grammata*, one writer calculated that the death-toll was relatively high in some rural and mainly Catholic villages. This has been questioned by a study showing a modest death rate in most villages. A demographic survey of the famine shows the highest crude death rate in Ermoupolis where deaths exceeded births by 123.3 per thousand. It estimates that the crude death rate in the countryside was three times the pre-war rate, six times in Ano Syros and eight times in Ermoupolis. Another historian arrives at 1701 births against 4051 deaths for the entire period of war of 1941-45, with an overall figure of 1,228 deaths for the first three months of 1942, a slightly higher figure than that calculated above.

Taking into account the difficulty of making exact calculations based on figures provided in an acute crisis, some disparity is inevitable. A local observer has suggested that as many as five hundred deaths may not have been accounted for. Allowing for a large margin of error, however, would not bring the figure up to 8000-9000 deaths estimated by a local writer, supporting his claim with evidence from certain parish records. This estimate has been refuted by scholars because it includes burials in parishes ‘for which no data survive’. The miscalculation has also been blamed on ‘historical amateurism’.
In fact, the writer’s views expressed in his two-volume collection of islanders’ memories about the occupation period are not supported by the testimonies themselves. While the collection provides a wealth of useful, credible detail about daily life, the author’s comments are contrastingly extreme. He suggests that many bodies were left lying in the streets and buried in communal graves, ‘almost all anonymously’, due to the tyranny and ‘madness’ of the Nazi and fascist occupiers. However, very little evidence of unofficial burials and malpractices appear in his books. The military presence and the enforcement of the curfew usually precluded secret burials and only a limited number seem to have taken place. Some witnesses record that burials were postponed by relatives hoping to make use of the deceased’s ration cards, sometimes resulting in delays before the death was certified. One source said that ten destitute victims of famine from Santorini and from the Lazaretto mental asylum, were secretly buried because the neighbours did not have the strength to take the corpses to Ermoupolis. But if burials did not take place within the customary period, it was mainly due to the crisis and overwork in the cemetery. A verger working at the cemetery recalled that burials were delayed, possibly as much as ten days, because it was impossible to cope with the sudden increase of work during the most critical phase of the famine. In most cases the customary burial procedures were followed. Almost all deaths were certified and the last rites were performed where possible.

The civil registration records are considered to be as ‘accurate as possible’, given the critical situation produced by a sudden increase in burials, overwork and lack of space in the cemeteries. Moreover, several precautions were taken by the municipal authorities to try and maintain standards for the registration of deaths. Although common graves had to be used at the height of the crisis, these were close to or within the newly extended boundaries of the Orthodox cemetery and these burials were registered. As a precaution against inaccuracy, comparisons of registers from the Orthodox cemetery of Agios Georgios and the local authority were made, even during the crisis. Covering the period from February 1942 to May 1943, the local authority drew up graphs showing
(generally small) divergences between the records from both sources. Some of the discrepancy between civil registrations and those in the Orthodox cemetery records is due to burials in the Catholic cemetery, not included in Orthodox records. Normal procedures were observed as much as possible: death certificates recorded the full name, the parish where death occurred, the age, birth-place and residence of the deceased, as well as the cause and name of the doctor who certified the death. The supervisor of the Orthodox cemetery sent lists to the mayor twice a week, recording the burials of paupers whose families were unable to pay for their burial. These valuable details reinforce the validity of the civil registration records. It is true that generic terms or euphemisms were used to describe symptoms in the diagnosis of starvation – such as ‘exhaustion’, ‘swellings’, or ‘edema’. These terms appear on Greek death certificates as well as in Italian records. But there is no dispute over the critical nature of the famine in Syros: ‘The severity of the hecatomb cannot be called into doubt. In the first three months of 1942, 1012 citizens of Ermoupolis died, that is: three or four times more than the number of deaths ever recorded, in similar periods.’

As a result, the cemetery had to be extended twice and the occupiers issued an order for new land to be urgently expropriated by the Commune on 28 May 1942. The local authority records also show that many more workers had to be taken on to dig the graves, partly because it was heavy work and the starving labourers were weak. Improvised solutions were found for the lack of materials and graves were marked by numbered tiles or stones, as few could afford the price of wood for a cross. Lack of wood on the island meant few coffins were available and these were often re-used after the corpse had been buried.

In April 1942, in a desperate attempt to persuade the authorities in Rhodes to send more food, and perhaps shock them into action, Duca resorted to sending them a dozen photos of starving young men whom he described as ‘walking skeletons’. Very low resistance to illness was also caused by unhygienic conditions and Duca appealed for a large quantity of soap, vitamins and fuel. In response, Rhodes only agreed to send soap, reminding Duca that
the daily bread ration had also been reduced in Italy to 150 gr. and a 25 per cent reduction of the bread ration in the occupied islands of the Aegean was likely. But the shocking photos and Duca’s insistent appeals for more food for Syros appear to have been successful, for a steep increase in food shipped to Syros from Rhodes by the end of April, had a significant impact on the decline in deaths from May.

Fig. 13 Photographs of starvation victims.
Source: IDD 404/1942 and GAK-ANK
onwards (as demonstrated in the section on food distribution below).

**The geographical distribution of the famine**

As mentioned above, a significant aspect of the Syros famine was the disparity between town and country; in 1942, the death-toll was sixty to seventy per thousand in Ermoupolis and nineteen to twenty per thousand, in the country.\(^{96}\) Ano Syros held an intermediary position, between Ermoupolis and the countryside, with only a slightly lower crude death rate compared to the main town, but also a lower crude birth rate, probably reflecting more cases of poverty among Catholic farm labourers and casual workers, than in the main town.

The most obvious reason for the lower mortality in the countryside was the access that the rural population retained over food. Although this imbalance between town and country was common in Greece, in Syros it was exacerbated by existing religious tensions. Hoarding on the part of farmers was deeply resented and seemed confirmed by the low mortality rate compared to the town. But demographic evidence suggests that rural mortality patterns followed those observed before the war. In 1942, at the height of the famine, Vari, the richest Catholic village with 1071 inhabitants, declared two deaths in February and three in March whereas Ano Syros with 2,550 inhabitants suffered a higher proportion of deaths: 31 in February and 39 in March 1942.\(^{97}\)

In spite of better access to food for those in the countryside, the inhabitants suffered in other respects such as limited medical assistance. The Italian medical officer concluded that out of 773 deaths in five months, from April to August 1942, only 217 fatalities were in the town so the majority were in the countryside: ‘If one considers that almost all the sick of Ermoupolis and Ano Syros are under medical supervision, the difference between the two figures (556) can be ascribed for the most part, to [deaths] in the countryside.’\(^{98}\)

In Greece generally, while towns were worst hit by famine, the long-term impact of the food crisis spread to the country as a whole. In Syros the consequences of the ammassi, particularly of milk, meant that the infants in the town were better served than those in the countryside. After
the liberation of Greece in 1945, the country’s villages were found to be as destitute as the towns and in ‘heart-breaking’ conditions. UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) representatives reported that whole families were living in one room, while others had built make-shift huts with wood and branches. There were no sanitary facilities whatsoever; people were dressed in rags and had virtually no clothes or shoes to protect them from the cold. Many Greek villages were in ruins and in one rural district, 50 per cent of the population was ill, with illnesses such as rickets due to malnutrition: ‘Children’s skin was yellow, their eyes sickly, women were exhausted and lifeless. They were frightened they would not survive the winter.’

While Ermoupolis was a victim of hoarding on the part of some farmers, most of the rural population was also destitute by the end of the war because they had been forced to sell land to stay alive or were already vulnerable due to their status as landless labourers. However, if town and country were divided over the issue of food, there was also some mixing of the population due to the crisis: many Orthodox townspeople, especially those with country houses, moved out of Ermoupolis due to the famine and frequent bombing by the Allies, while some Catholics continued to live and work in the town.

Climatic factors also contributed to the islanders’ vulnerability during the famine. The winter and spring of 1942 were unusually cold, and an exceptional drop in temperature accounted for a sudden surge in the death-toll; a calorie intake which was insufficient for normal weather conditions, became ‘grossly inadequate following the extra expenditure of energy during the cold spells’. The barren hinterland of Syros produced little wood and many houses were in poor repair, some without proper roofs. As a last desperate measure to stay alive, some sold rafters, doors and windows to purchase food. An Italian doctor described in excruciating detail, the physical suffering of the starving, caused by:

Unprecedented cold weather: the persistent snow and rain is seeping through the roofs of the dilapidated houses of the unfortunate poor and adding to the ravages of death from hunger. It is as if some divine force has
decided to meet out exceptional punishment [replacing] the usual temperate climate of this land.\textsuperscript{103}

In January 1942 Rigoutsos lamented:

The total lack of combustible fuel and the scarcity of wood for heating, whose price is actually way above anything the poor can afford, are contributing considerably to the worst calamity Syros has ever known: death from hunger precipitated by the cold and humidity. ... Haggard faces, swollen eyelids and the heavy tread of the victim who senses that the cruellest of deaths awaits him; this is the ghastly sight you come across if you have the courage to go for a walk round the centre of a town which is itself, close to death.\textsuperscript{104}

The winter coincided with the lowest point of local agricultural production; considerable respite came in the summer months of 1942 when local produce was more abundant and anything that grew, including wild herbs and leaves, was gleaned by the hungry populace. In Syros, huge efforts were made to grow food on every available piece of land and this was encouraged by the occupiers who helped to supply seed crops. The gradual drop in the death-toll in the second half of 1942 corresponds almost exactly with the increase of imported food to Syros. The correlation between the fall in the death rate and the quantity of food provided by the Italians is not coincidental. The availability of edible commodities fluctuated considerably, if calculated on a monthly average, and it is hardly surprising that the peak of the famine in January, February and March 1942, occurred before the regular importation of food from Rhodes was established.\textsuperscript{105} The quota of rations available for distribution fell in January 1942 when the amount of imported food dropped by nearly three thousand kilos. (See fig. 14) Another decrease in April coincided with a smaller famine peak, after which distribution remained constant from May to September 1942, until the worst of the famine was nearly over. In May 37,258 kg of food were distributed which was more than double the amount for February, and coincided with a steady drop in the death rate.\textsuperscript{106} The chart featured
below, compiled from Italian and Greek records, shows that the increase in imported food from the Dodecanese had a significant impact on deaths from starvation from May 1942.

March, April and May were also the months when there was a sharp rise in patients recovering from acute symptoms of malnutrition, attending the Italian clinics, (the medical success rate will be discussed below). Although the decline of the famine can partly be attributed to the availability of seasonal crops in the summer, it seems fair to conclude that the determining factor was the increase in Italian imports of food and the development and extension of their public assistance service, *Assistenza Civile*. Credit for obtaining more help from Rhodes has to go to the military governor, Duca, who made several appeals in defence of the desperate population of Syros. But he was aware that the soup-kitchens only provided a subsistence diet, often of poor quality, which appears to have been just sufficient to sustain the islanders who had not succumbed to illness. The idea that Italian measures were a decisive factor in reducing the famine is also supported by the fact that there were few deaths from starvation in 1943, whereas famine as well as typhus and tuberculosis returned to the island after the Italians left. When the Italian occupation

![Fig. 14 Deaths in Syros compared to food imported](image-url)

*Shaded area represents food in kilos*

* = death rate
ended in September 1943, the departing authority left food supplies for the dependent population to be distributed by the local government. The German occupiers brought no food for the population and, inevitably, the lack of external food supplies coincided with two shorter periods of famine in January-February and June 1944.

**Demographic incidence**

It is customary to assess demographic crises by comparing the disparity between deaths and births but this is not an entirely reliable measure for Syros. Fear of shortages, apparent from the summer of 1941, does not appear to have been an immediate deterrent to procreation. A rise in the births at the start of the famine in late 1941 can be attributed to an increase in conceptions due to the return of soldiers from the front in the spring of that year. Therefore the number of recorded births did not fall substantially until after the worst of the famine in the summer of 1942. The drop in the birth rate from the late autumn of 1942 indicates that there was a temporary decline in conceptions corresponding to the most critical period of famine. There was a gradual increase in conceptions throughout 1943 and a birth rate equivalent to that of the pre-war period was reached by the end of the year. The surprisingly high level of conceptions, in spite of continuing hardship, may reflect optimism with regard to the outcome of the war, but could also be linked to the relatively high survival rate of children and the specific targeting of the young as beneficiaries of aid, by the occupiers. It is therefore possible that these factors influenced people’s decisions to have children.

Further variations in the mortality rate in accordance with age and gender also need to be considered. Although not specific to Syros, high mortality was quite significant for young men aged 15-35, in particular. In Syros, one third more young men than women of the same age group died, especially in the first months of famine. Although middle-aged men from 35-54 succumbed more than women of that age group, the rate was not as pronounced. Young boys under fourteen years were not vulnerable to excess mortality and it has been argued that this proves that the phenomenon was not
‘culturally driven’ as all men would have been affected alike. However, boys are not subject to the same cultural and social demands as post-adolescents, and are not usually expected to be major earners or protectors of the family. The view that women survive better due to physiological advantages, such as more body fat, seems widely accepted. But an exclusively biological explanation for women’s higher survival does not include important socio-cultural factors. Some demographers do not accept that biological causes alone can satisfactorily explain the considerable within-famine mortality variation: ‘... explaining the temporal internal variations within-famines still requires, social, political and cultural explanations.’

In Syros specific cultural factors may have influenced women’s chances of survival. It has already been observed that women’s ‘resourcefulness’ is often called upon during famines which force them to take on non-traditional roles. This kind of responsibility can be a source of empowerment in a patriarchal society, like that in Syros. In countries where women’s powers of decision are restricted to the domestic sphere, their lives may be transformed when they have to become: ‘primary decision makers and food producers for their households.’ A similar situation arose in Syros when women had to wait in the food queues because the men were too weak to stand. Many men were bedridden or they walked with a stick in a state of ‘total exhaustion’. Although food management could arguably be considered one of women’s traditional tasks, women also became almost solely responsible for the survival of the family. It has been observed in other contexts that adult women often bear a ‘disproportionate share’ of the burden of adjustment to crisis, in comparison to adult men. Although this is not a definitive explanation of the higher survival rate of women in Syros, it is possible that this active role stimulated them and sharpened their determination to survive.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that important cultural factors affected the psychological state of men. Even before the war when poverty was on the increase, a doctor noted the austerity of working men’s lives and their dependence on a few meagre but cherished comforts, such as bread and tobacco, as a source of psychological support. The loss of these few sources of comfort impacted on young
men’s emotional resilience. In the autumn of 1941, after more than a month without bread, a distribution of a ration of 300 gr. on 5 September had a dramatic effect. According to consul Rigoutsos, men were reduced to tears as they devoured tiny rations, miserable tokens compared to the huge quantities of bread they normally consumed. Indeed, it is true that the effect of the loss of the main component of working people’s diet should not be underestimated. Rigoutsos was not alone in observing the listlessness and depression among unemployed men which may have undermined their will to survive. Many survivors have testified that their state of mind impacted on their chances of survival; several male interviewees took pride in their ability to get by and particularly to outwit the occupiers by stealing food. Psychiatrists working in Athens noted extreme disaffection among male starvation victims, their alienation from loved ones and reluctance to admit not having had enough to eat. Pride and fear of humiliation were due to the high expectations placed on bread-winners, protectors and potential leaders of the family, in a society which regarded this as a primordial function for men. It has also been suggested that the men who were better providers were favoured with extra food within the family. It is thus possible that the loss of status weakened young men’s psychological resistance to starvation during the initial and most disturbing phase of famine.

Lack of employment and physical weakness were crucial factors affecting the islanders’ ability to survive. Indeed, unemployed industrial workers and overworked fishermen and farm labourers were the categories most susceptible to famine. In Syros unemployment doubled to two thousand during the peak of the famine, followed by a very sharp increase from the summer of 1942 to 1943. Although employers were compelled to pay their ex-workers three days’ wages per week in compensation, the amount was negligible – given the very low wages in force on Syros. On the basis of information gathered about Catholic unemployed, Archbishop Vutzinos depicted a critical case of ‘entitlement failure’; a situation which offered no way out of the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment and a bleak future for the working people of Syros.
Finally, a major positive factor which characterized the mortality rate in Syros during the first year of occupation, as in the rest of Greece, was the lack of epidemics. Generally, absence of food and vitamins or a very poor diet, as well as little or no soap, creates a breeding ground for disease, especially in a port with a history of epidemic diseases. Conditions in the port were dangerously conducive to the spread of epidemics (there had been 80 cases of typhus in 1922, 18 cases of bubonic plague in 1923 and 18 cases of jaundice with complications in 1928). The working poor had been particularly vulnerable to tuberculosis and cholera until medical services and quarantine arrangements slowly improved in the twentieth century.

Venereal disease was also common due to the many brothels in the port where conditions were squalid and no running water was available.

A picture of local conditions of hygiene can be drawn from lists of reforms proposed by the fastidious and fanciful Greek Captain of the Andros Gendarmerie, Arghirios Barzalias, who hoped to make use of the occupiers’ authority to enforce his personal fixation against dirt. His many suggestions may only have amused the Italians, but also give us an insight into the difficult or sordid conditions of daily life. Proposals included a ban on spitting inside public venues, on the shared use of nargilé (hubble-bubbles) and on the use of dirty, insect-ridden mattresses in hotels. He recommended that barbers should wash their hands when starting work and the sharing of towels and moustache combs should stop. His many ideas ranged from the feasible – the obligation of all men to adjust their clothing when leaving public lavatories – to the inappropriate: the arranging of private dustbins and flowers pots in uniform lines, matching shop-awnings and uniform colours for houses and shops. Although the Italians had no objections, the means of enforcement were lacking – as the military commission on Andros dryly informed the CCC.

While poor standards of hygiene prevailed in the port area of Ermoupolis, the upper parts of the town were cleaner and may have contributed to the lack of epidemics. The success in preventing an epidemic was also due to efficient collaboration between the Greek and Italian services in the enforcement of quarantine arrangements and the treatment of diseases such
as TB. Dr D.S. Vrondiades, director of public health for the province, co-operated with the Italian authorities, providing a survey of causes of death in the previous four years. The occupiers maintained and developed local facilities for quarantine against typhus, including the existing station on the island of Kythnos and a disinfection centre on Syros, for which two schools were requisitioned, one for military use and the other civilian. No passengers from Piraeus were allowed to disembark in the Cyclades without a medical certificate and all boats from Piraeus which were not going to Syros had to stop at Kythnos; where passengers spent fifteen days in quarantine, when necessary. This system seems to have worked well, and Dr. Vrondiades reported on measures taken locally to control typhus. From November 1941, the General Hospital in Ermoupolis provided vaccinations against typhus and made this service available from municipal doctors. Another of the greatest threats to public health was body lice, and in August 1941 information was circulated by the occupation authorities with regard to delousing, on the advice of Vrondiades. This entailed ‘the sterilization of clothes, head shaving, soap baths, oils and petroleum aspersions, hospitalization, or daily inspections’. But the lack of these materials, particularly soap, meant that most people from all social classes had to learn to live with lice at some time.

In 1941-2, 70.3 per cent of deaths were attributed to non-infectious causes linked to starvation: edema, exhaustion and chronic weakness, with 5 per cent to enteritis and dysentery and only 4.1 per cent to tuberculosis, the biggest potential threat in the circumstances. Typhus was much less prevalent during this period thanks to the preventative measures taken by the health authorities. Records from the prefecture for November 1942 show that out of eighty deaths, nineteen were from starvation, fifteen from pneumonia, seven from enteritis and eight from tuberculosis, pleurisy and meningitis, counted together. The Town Hall records are similar, with fourteen cases of pulmonary tuberculosis. The upsurge of a small outbreak involving TB and pneumonia was recorded but there is no mention of typhus.

To sum up: the famine appears to have been triggered by a conjuncture of local structural problems to which the
Italian occupation undoubtedly contributed significantly. Italian controls over food distribution, compounded by the requisitioning of crops, assured food for some sectors of the population but were counter-productive when they deprived others of the means of survival. The failure of both the Italian and Greek authorities to foresee and control the crisis resulted in the loss of possibly as many as four thousand lives from September 1941 to September 1943. While hunger persisted throughout the occupation, the increase in Italian imports of food from March, along with better weather and the greater abundance of local produce, were instrumental in substantially reducing the number of deaths due to famine by the end of 1942.
The severity of the food crisis and the need to extend welfare initiatives influenced the development of the Italian civil government in Syros. In order to manage the emergency and its consequences the occupiers intervened in the running of public health institutions and an ever-growing number of destitute islanders came under the wing of their public assistance programme. In a sense, fascist objectives which in Italy attempted to incorporate citizens in state institutions ‘from the cradle to the grave’, were achieved on a small scale in Syros when the majority of islanders became dependent on Italian public assistance. In the second year of occupation, the civil government and its public assistance service, *Assistenza Civile*, extended its control with a series of initiatives. The occupiers also took on the role of arbiter between different social groups, involving both occupied and occupier in a series of negotiations and adjustments of behaviour.

An assessment of the work of the civil government, in particular that of *Assistenza Civile*, is crucial because it reveals much about the successes and limitations of social policy in Syros. Handling the crisis called upon initiatives which far exceeded the initial intentions of occupation policy. Thus it is important to assess how the occupation government filled the vacuum left by the absence of an effective local and state authority. The *distacco* policy could indeed have been precipitated by the humanitarian crisis which rendered the islands dependent on Rhodes. When the occupation authorities in Athens questioned the validity of the *distacco*
policy, Rhodes’ strongest defence was the well-established civil authorities and their public assistance programme. However, time was running out for Italian hegemony in the region and Italy’s resources were depleted. Rhodes’ inability to provide adequate supplies in the final stage of occupation led to appeals to the International Red Cross and the emergence of a critical dispute about the distribution of IRC aid.

The constitution of a ‘Civil Affairs Office’ in the occupied provinces was considered necessary within a month of the start of the occupation, because of the ‘high level of [Italian] involvement in civilian affairs’. In the first year of occupation, civil affairs had been covered by over-stretched and untrained military personnel. To avoid the errors of his predecessors, Valeriani requested that officers working for the civil government should be released from most of their military obligations. Most of them were reserve officers whose predominant interest in the welfare of Syros was demonstrated by a report warning Valeriani of Rhodes’ plan to extract the produce of the Cyclades to their disadvantage, due to the highly inequitable exchange rate of the drachma against the lira.

The main section of the Syros Civil Affairs Office, Assistenza Civile (AC), covered the management of public welfare and health. With the hand-over of government to the civilian authorities in June 1942, AC took on an extended role. Public assistance quickly came to represent the chief activity of the civil government. To underpin the service an account was set up and funded by Rhodes, for the administration of civilian provisions. However, money raised from the sale of rations was to be paid into the account and used to pay for the cost of food distribution. At the same time, pressure was put on wealthy islanders to contribute to public welfare and the occupiers also experimented with levies on economic activities. In practice, it was not until the third year of occupation that they came up with an effective solution for generating funds locally to help subsidize public assistance. On 1 April 1943, a new account, il Conto Integrazione Assistenziale, was opened at the Syros branch of the Italian bank, Banco di Roma. Funds were derived from a tax on import and export permits and on profits. One of the objectives was to encourage exchanges of local goods within
the Cyclades and the import of edible produce from outside. But, as in other instances of lack of co-operation from Rhodes, the benefits of this scheme were reduced by the fact that trade with the Dodecanese was not subject to these taxes. In other words, the occupiers’ objectives for Rhodes were in conflict with their intentions to provide funds for Syros.

The assessment of local needs and Assistenza Civile
As well as gathering information in order to manage the local economy, the occupiers had also hoped to pre-empt social problems. At the start of the occupation, a survey of the food and clothing needed by the islanders to face the coming winter was carried out in the Cyclades. By the end of 1941, a population census was also completed based on information from the island commanders and the prefecture. The occupiers were alarmed by the lack of ‘adequate and legally sound’ local structures for gathering information. They complained that the local civil registration office ‘only helped in a nominal way’, and they were forced to make their own census of the population. They noted that, apart from the existing bread ration card, the only basis for the numerical and economic identification of families came from a ‘more or less precise and honest assessment’ by the employees of the civil registry, from the priests and the family relatives from the different parishes.

The lack of welfare structures gave rise to the formation of new groups which were ready to collaborate for charitable purposes. Women working for an association, known as Le Dame dell’Assistenza, went from house to house registering the economic plight of poor families with the help of Orthodox and Catholic priests. In general, the clergy was regarded as ‘helpful’ and the Catholic bishop, Vutzinos, instigated his own survey of the economic conditions of his parishioners. The subsequent expansion of AC’s sphere of competence evolved partly out of the need to provide food and medical assistance: an Italian out-patients clinic was instituted on 22 September 1941, and social facilities gradually developed ‘as the need arose’. As noted above, the importation of food from the Dodecanese was initiated because the local authorities could not meet their commitments, but the occupiers soon
became involved in food distribution.\textsuperscript{15} According to Duca:

Our public assistance activity did not cease when food arrived. It was necessary for me to intervene in order to regulate and organize the distribution of these precious means of subsistence, with the objective of allowing an equitable distribution of the provisions and to prevent the usual pilfering and dispersion due to the organizational inability and dishonesty of the [local] directive and executive organs.

To ensure the success of this operation full-scale rationing was introduced after the first Italian consignments of food arrived in November and October 1941. This included the issuing of a family ration card which would enable all families to purchase food from shops and the food distribution centre. In December 1942, AC took over the responsibility for food distribution itself through the \textit{Ufficio Annonario}. In order to avoid corruption among Italian administrators, staff was rotated and careful records were kept.\textsuperscript{16} The gradual increase in Italy’s commitment to supply food to the Cyclades islands was demonstrated by the rise in food relief to be shared out among the other most ‘deprived’ islands.\textsuperscript{17} In the Cyclades a total of 140,000 people received rations every month. The increases reinforced dependency on Italian imports for many islands and indicated a shift from the relative self-sufficiency of the other islands in the first year of occupation.\textsuperscript{18}

In Syros specific social groups such as the war-wounded, the clergy, postal workers, the Italian community (of 500), and the French community (of 30) benefited from the right to buy extra food when available.\textsuperscript{19} Rations were also distributed to institutions which were paying beneficiaries: the schools, the soup-kitchens, the civilian prison, the General Hospital and the section for children’s rations. Non-paying beneficiaries included: the three orphanages, the infants’ crèche and the clinics, the asylums for the mentality ill, the aged and the TB sanatorium. The competence of AC was gradually widened as it attempted to extend its safety-net to an increasing number of priority groups including some who were relatively wealthy before the famine. In December 1942, fifty-seven families
were added to the register for paid assistance either because they were: ‘particularly deserving or because they belong to an elevated social class, suffering nonetheless from the present shortages, because they cannot be registered at the soup kitchens and free distributions’.20

Also, in response to demands from those who claimed to be missing out on help given to the destitute, the occupiers tried to adjust food prices in line with purchasing power. When a major shipment of olive oil and raisins arrived in April 1942, after the bulk of the goods were sold at fixed prices to the ‘less well-off’, 30 per cent was allocated to those not entitled to purchase rations.21

Dependency on Italian food distributions was constantly increasing; in the last three months of 1941 approximately 3,500 islanders used the food-kitchens.22 By March 1942, this had risen steeply to 9,400 – one third of the total population of Syros. Much of the relief went to the twenty-four institutions (later increased to thirty-two) which included those receiving rations in the soup-kitchens. The role of AC was further extended when the services of existing institutions were reinforced, such as the three orphanages which were found to be ‘badly run’ by the Italians who took control of their administration. AC also took over the management of the TB sanatorium and the mental asylum with regard to the supply of food. The old people’s asylum was converted into a hospital for those suffering from malnutrition, with seventy inmates in August 1942.23

The amount of food allocated to different groups was, inevitably, a highly contentious issue and the occupation authorities were criticized for the failure to distribute food in significant quantities. In theory, the Italians aimed to bring daily rations up to 320 g per day for the public and sometimes higher for those in institutions, but amounts of food available fluctuated, sometimes to an extreme and fell far short of the recommended minimum quota of 2,500 calories per day.24

Apart from the army the most privileged group was the Italian community (which could collect rations directly from central supplies without using ration cards); their weekly ration was double that sold to other protected groups and more varied: 700 gr. rice, 700 gr. pasta, 105 gr. jam, 70 gr.
cheese, 140 gr. oil, 100 gr. sugar and 100 gr. grapes. This was in August 1942 when food availability was high; by contrast, in October 1942, Rigoutsos’s family was only allowed eight kg for one month (260 gr. per day) for each family member, except for his elder son who, as secretary of the consulate, received extra pasta and cheese.

The occupiers claimed that the food supply to the Cyclades was under control by the end of 1942 with the biggest relief consignment going to Syros. But acute inflation in black market food prices affected commodities for public distribution making prices prohibitive, even of rations. In November few could afford the ‘more expensive’ ration items such as pasta, grapes and condensed milk. Although the famine in the strictest sense had ceased by late 1942, the needs of the population were increasing; a gradual rise in the dependent population meant the occupiers were attempting to feed approximately 16,000 people by 1943. The number of those receiving assistance outside Ermoupolis went up with the institution of a school canteen in the village of Vari for 150 pupils, and a soup-kitchen in the village of Galissa for 80 people. Also, a second clinic was set up in Ano Syros, treating approximately 500 people and operating three times a week. In the winter of 1942-3, assistance to prevent further starvation was considered necessary even in the countryside. The welfare safety-net was thus gradually expanding to encompass two thirds of the population.

The limitations of this over-stretched relief operation would soon become apparent, for there was no proportionate increase in resources in 1943. Italy and Rhodes were hard pressed to provide relief as the military situation worsened for them, and supply-lines dwindled. The solution was to make cuts: an Italian report for September 1942 addressed the need for ‘adjustments’ to avoid excessive dependency. The report claimed that economic conditions had improved for some social categories, making a decrease of public assistance allocations and some redistribution possible:

The soup-kitchens have been able to make cuts of 2,600 daily rations, saving a certain quantity of provisions which the Commission, in a spirit of charity, has had
distributed both to some middle-class families who for various reasons were in need of help, and to some islands of the Dodecanese where communities of sailors require assistance and soup kitchens have been established.

The occupiers argued that they were clamping down on what they saw as abuses of the ration system and in December 1942 an Italian medical officer reported that the distribution of 7,000 daily rations had been reduced to 5,000 by ‘excluding those who were benefiting abusively’ from the soup kitchens. This meant investigating those holding family ration cards to make sure all the claimants were still alive and that the bearer still had the right to assistance. In reality reductions were sometimes enforced to the detriment of the dependent islanders.

As a result of cuts, the amount of food being distributed by AC was gradually reduced: 32,000 kg in October 1942, under 30,000 kg in November and an average monthly distribution figure of a little over 22,000 kg in December. By the autumn the Italian authorities reported that ‘careful management’ was helping ‘to secure maximum efficiency to the benefit of the population’. As the famine statistics above show, they were justified in claiming that the mortality rate was low compared to the same months of 1941. The occupation authorities were now under orders from Rome – facing a growing crisis of its own – to insist on greater accountability: each institute had to fill in daily, weekly and monthly accounts. Fortunately for the hapless islanders, more help came from the Greek side in April 1943, as the local financial crisis eased; the Greek government was able to pay 175 million drachmas towards occupation costs, bringing relief to the islands and fulfilling part of the local authority’s obligations to public services.

Overall, in spite of the occupiers’ efforts to try and feed an ever-growing dependent population, contemporary accounts show that in 1942-3, there was rarely sufficient food available for public assistance or for sale in rations distributions. Almost the whole population was under-nourished and suffered from lack of fats in their diet or any form of meat. Also, as the Catholic bishop told Valeriani, hyper-inflation fostered dependence and public assistance was only a temporary
solution for the unemployed – who needed to work in order to pay for a viable diet. On the other hand, the impossibility of keeping up with black market prices meant that by 1943, AC was providing the only means of survival for almost two thirds of the population.

Probably the occupiers’ most effective policy was providing extra nutrition for infants and young children. Fascism’s longstanding demographic drives in Italy were probably reflected in the occupiers’ concern to protect children in Syros. Duca’s first initiative included the daily distribution of flour and rice to one thousand children aged one to three years and the provision of school lunches. Hot meals were served to pupils and teachers every day after the morning lessons, and three times a week during the vacations. Children aged one to six years, dependent on the Italian outpatients’ clinic (Ambulatorio Assistenziale), received milk and bread rations and the infants in the nursery were fed two meals and a snack daily.

The requisitioning and the redistribution of milk supplies in September 1941 ensured a supply for the town’s children and was intended to protect milk production from ‘easy speculation’. Heavy fines were imposed on producers trying to avoid the enforced milk collections. A new dairy of fifty cows was created in order to increase the milk yield and milk production increased considerably in the spring of 1942 and by April it was five times that of August 1941.

Small quantities of milk (1/8 litre or 200 drams) were distributed daily without charge to about 150 babies and 100 children under two were given 150 drams. Children in Ermoupolis aged two to four received 360 drams of fresh milk and 400 gr. of condensed milk could be purchased three times a week. Children under four received two free distributions per week of 110 gr. of wheat flour (unlike the adulterated maize flour available for the general public):

On payment, children from one to two and those from four to six years receive 45 drams (150 gr.) of white flour and 10 drams (32 gr.) of sugar, three times a week. Children aged two to four are excluded from this distribution because they receive condensed milk which is already very fortifying.
Similar distributions of food were made in Ano Syros, except where the Catholic authorities took over the task. From the Italian occupiers’ point of view the outcome of their child assistance policy was successful in the circumstances:

The results are more than satisfactory if we take into account that, on average, 1660 children are assisted in Ermoupolis and 240 in Ano Syros. We ensure that 1900 children receive food benefits, without counting the other public institutions, such as the nursery, the orphanages and the school dinners.39

One volunteer working in a nursery testified that the forty babies in her care (from twenty days to three months old) ‘did not suffer from hunger and ate well’, also helped by donations from the public.40

These successes may have led one Italian doctor to boast that, as a result of AC efforts, the state of the infant population was ‘really excellent’.41 But the Italians were not unaware of the drastic impact of famine caused by the high number of adult deaths particularly during the winter of 1941-2. The break up of families meant children of a young age became homeless until admitted to the hospices and orphanages.

However, they proudly reported that even during the summer holidays the school canteens continued to provide food three days a week for all school children. Thus young children ‘would be saved from certain death during the winter months and would be protected from serious physical deterioration due to lack of food, and so would be a little stronger when they face the coming school year’.42 Other services provided for children were sea-side holiday camps, such as those set up on the islands of Paros and Nios, where about a hundred children from poor families were cared for, for fortnightly periods. This was carried out with the ‘voluntary cooperation of local authorities’.43

Targeting the weakest through the medical services had paid off, according to medical officer, Molla, in December 1942: ‘Really critical cases of infantile malnutrition have practically disappeared thanks to the regular and adequate distribution of milk to babies up to 18 months old and flour
and sugar to children up to six years old’. He compared this to the huge number of cases (approximately 500) of malnutrition among children and adults in December 1941. Indeed, the first visitors to Syros in 1945 were surprised by the abundance of children who had survived the occupation whereas the adult population seemed much worse off. Child care provisions increased children’s chances of survival and, as discussed above, could explain the lack of an exceptional drop in births in this period.

The treatment of malnutrition

The Italian doctors also felt that they had considerable success in the treatment of the symptoms of malnutrition, even if they could have done a lot more to prevent deaths at the peak of the famine in January-February 1942. They said that lack of preventative action was due to the fact that famine victims came forward too late to be assisted: ‘The mortality rate in this category was extremely high especially in the first stage of famine because most of those attending the clinic were in the terminal phase of chronic malnutrition. In fact out of 562 registered patients there were 138 deaths’.

Initially, the Italians claimed a modest success rate of ten lives per thousand, against the current mortality rate in Ermoupolis:

From statistics drawn up for the period 1 December [1941] to 31 March [1942], it appears that out of 3403 assisted patients, the mortality rate was 59.65 per thousand. If we then consider the general mortality rate for Ermoupolis and Ano Syros, one sees that out of 18,250 inhabitants (according to the last census) there were 1,294 deaths, that is a percentage of 69.73 per thousand.

Once regular attendances at the Italian clinics had been established, and special rations given to those suffering from malnutrition, recovery became possible for many patients: ‘In a recent assessment of all registered patients it emerges that in 64 cases the edema has gone, in about 100 cases it is subsiding, in the other cases the infection is fairly stable. This serves to illustrate the usefulness of this institution.’
Because starvation was usually caused by a total lack of fats, patients suffering from the consequences of malnutrition received: 300 gr. of rice, 150 gr. of oil, 200 gr. of cheese and 100 gr. of sugar, every week over a period of four months. Double rations of oil instead of cheese were sometimes given as well as raisins and olives, when available. In August 1942, a service was instituted to allocate condensed milk to patients referred by Greek doctors, and 569 kg were distributed in the first month. The results of this regime were beginning to show by the summer of 1942 and Italian records claimed that, compared to the mortality rate for Syros as a whole, the rate among those receiving assistance was lower.48

The director of the Italian clinic, Dr Villari, noted a significant improvement among the group of 715 patients attending the Ambulatorio. They received the following foods free of charge: pasta, maize and wheat flour, rice, sugar, oil, cheese, carobs, jam and condensed milk. Among the 121 patients suffering from severe malnutrition, who were treated separately, some ‘could now be regarded as cured’ and no new cases had arisen. The number of patients assisted regularly by the Ambulatorio of Ermoupolis, which had risen in the spring of 1942, had fallen to 719 by August.49

The successes of the clinic in saving the lives of those suffering from malnutrition were repeated for some other starvation-related diseases; pneumonia and the skin disease pellagra had been widespread but had almost disappeared thanks to the fresh vegetables and fruit available in the summer of 1942.50 In December 1942 the general health of the population was considered to be stable, with fewer illnesses caused by malnutrition such as cachexia (chronic debility). However with the lack of green vegetables and olive oil in the coming winter, doctors were concerned that diseases like pellagra would reappear.

Summing up medical policy for 1942, the chief Italian medical officer claimed that the symptoms of malnutrition had fallen sharply in comparison with the previous winter:

There has been a significant decrease in the number of those suffering from edema caused by hunger which had a major impact on the mortality rate; from more
than 500 cases in December 1941 these have now been brought down to about 50 cases. At least one third of the 500 patients have regained a normal state of health. The general conditions of the sick have greatly improved and it is certain that the amount of food distributed to them will allow them to recover well from their illness.\footnote{51}

In fact, as the chart shows, there was an increase in attendances and patients treated in the spring of 1942, leading to a significant fall in deaths from starvation among patients in the second half of the year. This also corresponds to the increase in food imported by the Italians discussed above.

However these successes did not come without a cost; Molla admitted that, by late 1942, relief had been stretched even further to include a greater number of different categories and the minimal increase in numbers of those being assisted demonstrated ‘the severe selection criteria being applied’.

Credit for the maintenance of general public health must also go to the seventeen Greek doctors, including five specialists, working in Syros.\footnote{52} As noted above, the lack of
epidemics was partly due to efficient collaboration between the two services.53 But the conditions under which Greek doctors were working were extremely difficult and deteriorated as resources ran out. Unlike the Italians, they had no food to distribute in order to resuscitate the starving. Many of the doctors were elderly and they wrote to Duca to say that they were not fit enough to climb to the houses of patients living in the upper parts of town. They also requested food to give to those suffering from malnutrition.54 A surgeon reported on the desperate improvisations which were necessary in the operating theatre: surgeons had to use petrol to sterilize wounds and wear women’s aprons, lace gloves and other linen, as the only sterile material left on the island.55

The extent and limitations of co-operation between the Greek and Italian medical authorities were tested when the Italians found some Greek practices to be unsatisfactory. A case of meningitis which could have caused an epidemic went unreported by the Greek doctor in charge, and the patient was admitted to hospital, ‘putting the other patients at risk’. An Italian doctor asked that this act of ‘carelessness and stupidity’ be reprimanded by the military command.56 Also in January 1942, at the height of the humanitarian crisis, Duca was dissatisfied with the work of the hospital and prison doctors whose salaries were suspended for five days ‘for neglect in the execution of their professional responsibilities’.57

Differing medical ethics and social standards also suggest that the occupiers felt they could make improvements to Greek professional practice. Serious problems were reported by a Red Cross doctor, Antonio Costadori, from the Dermatological Clinic of the General Hospital.58 He objected strongly to the way some young women patients (classified as prostitutes), were being treated. He cited the case of a woman who lost her baby when not admitted to hospital in time for the birth, on the orders of the director. Others were interrogated after giving birth, a ‘practice which is utterly immoral and unworthy of any civilized country’. Another controversy arose over the non-implementation of the Greek provision of 5 May 1942 for the establishment of skin clinics in the provinces, including a twelve bed ward for women at the Syros General Hospital. Costadori said he was forced to find accommodation for six
women, sleeping two to a bed, in a small room (where one of the patients with scabies had infected another.) In addition, he noted the death of an Italian national who had been refused admission. Two Italian medical aides also testified to malpractices by the director, Mr. Mavris and the bursar, Mr. Antoniou, who were seen ‘in a state of repugnant drunkenness’ and had failed to distribute bread rations fairly. This evidence was corroborated by another officer, Antonio Palieri, confirming complaints from patients who did not receive the food allocated to them. The management had tried to shield itself from observation by dismissing Red Cross personnel. As the evidence was corroborated by the Italian police, the doctor felt an enquiry was needed:

I consider the director of the civilian hospital to be inept, unqualified (because he is not a doctor) and unworthy of the responsibilities of his position. ... He has transformed the hospital into his own fief where he tyrannizes the patients and the staff, in cahoots with the bursar mentioned above, and it seems to me that he is unpopular with the whole population of Syros.

In his view, there was no hope of co-operation with those whose mentality was ‘incurably byzantine and amoral’ and the director and bursar should be dismissed, because of the vital importance of the General Hospital in case of epidemics and emergencies. They had been cautioned by the Greek Medical Director, Dr Vrondiadis, ‘countless times’ in the last ten months. Costadori recommended another doctor, a ‘qualified hygienist’ who would collaborate with the Italian medics, as did the other Greek colleagues, ‘with efficiency and good will, to our complete satisfaction’.

If attempts to dislodge the corrupt director of the hospital brought the Italians into conflict with local notables, they were more successful in improving other institutions. The Italian military doctor in charge, Dr Pasquale Rodriguez, reported that the unsanitary conditions in the mental asylum fell far short ‘not just of the most elementary norms of public health but also those of basic humanity’. The patients had been deprived of minimal medical support and sufficient food for
many months – ‘hence the large number of deaths’ – and the rest were in a deplorable state of health, with clear signs of scurvy due to lack of vitamins. The prefecture was ordered to take immediate steps to repair windows which had been broken since the bombing in April, to request two voluntary Greek Red Cross nurses to assist with medical support and to inform the military command how the twenty male patients and four females could be supplied with clothes and blankets. By 21 November 1941, there had been an improvement since food had been much more abundant in the asylum but considerable pressure had to be exerted on the prefecture to execute these orders.

While the system of referral by Greek doctors of malnutrition cases to Italian clinics worked well, the situation at the General Hospital showed how difficult it was for the foreign occupier to cope with indigenous malpractice. It had taken ten months to make an unsuccessful attempt to have the director replaced. In the event, Mavris’s power to influence decisions seems to have outweighed that of the occupiers. Nor did the Catholic Bishop’s recommendation of a Catholic doctor for a post as pathologist carry any weight. Although Vutzinos protested that the doctor’s career was being obstructed by ‘religious prejudice’, Mavris retained the power to choose the doctor.

Even the charitable women’s association the *Dame dell’Assistenza* was accused of corruption. The occupiers noted that some women were taking advantage of their position by ‘showing favoritism’ and others were not up to the task entrusted to them. Members were reduced from 56 to 48, but the Italians were at pains not to alienate all the other women who worked with ‘diligence and self-sacrifice’. In fact, considerable efforts to alleviate suffering were also made by the religious and representative bodies. The Catholic Church contributed to the welfare of its parishioners by running its own school where children and infants were fed. While competition for food aggravated social tensions, a number of volunteers were struggling to hold the community together. For example, a kind-hearted woman working in a nursery explained how she treated head-lice among infants on her own initiative, ‘nobody paid me. I washed them, I combed their hair and deloused them ... I shaved their little
After the war a local surgeon wrote about the vital importance of the contribution of voluntary nurses and auxiliaries in the hospital, both in keeping things running in the most desperate situations, and in psychological terms, as a sign of moral strength.

**The unemployment crisis**

The increase in unemployment undoubtedly contributed to extreme poverty and entitlement failure. According to an Italian estimate in September 1942, the active population of the Cyclades as a whole was approximately 65,000, of which at least one tenth was unemployed, either on a temporary or permanent basis. They included 2,500 industrial workers (of which 1,700 were women in the Syros textile sector), 1,050 sailors, 1,000 craftsmen, 1,500 workers in non-specific sectors and 300 building workers. The gradual cessation of production due to the lack of fuel and raw materials meant the situation worsened in the following months. In April 1943 it was noted that: while in the other Cyclades islands unemployment had remained stationary since the previous August, it had gradually risen to around 6000 in Syros, compared to 2700 in 1942. The Italians blamed the ‘present state of war which has created a more serious economic and social situation in the Cyclades than in any other part of Greece’. This was particularly so in Syros due to the density of the population and the structure of the economy. The crisis was compounded by the destruction of commercial shipping which affected the families of sailors, port workers, butchers and fishmongers. Other badly afflicted sectors included coal merchants, building workers, millers, postal workers, metal workers, textile workers and craftsmen.

In a letter to Valeriani the Catholic bishop, Vutzinos, argued that the compensation given to the unemployed based on three days wages was inadequate, given the very low wages in the factories of Syros. Following the ‘almost total’ stoppage of production of weaving and spinning a majority lived off tiny sums which were insufficient to sustain a family and was ‘forced into stealing’ to survive because prices had risen more than 1000 per cent. Vutzinos repeated his previous accusations of exploitation by the employers who saw the workers as
‘production machines’. The bishop urged Valeriani to find a solution to the employment problem (as was the case in the Dodecanese), rather than the constant recourse to public assistance: ‘Here we always fall back on the soup kitchens. How can this meager source have any impact with its weekly supplies? What people need is real food. You can’t fill the working man’s stomach with crumbs.’

Valeriani replied that he had already made a proposal to Rhodes to increase workers’ salaries. As for the unemployed, plans were underway to send 500 men to the Possedimento where they would benefit from the same favourable working conditions as those employed there. In September 1942, a first contingent of 311 unemployed men was to be sent to the Dodecanese and in December a transfer of 52 miners from Naxos to the mainland was authorized. But the lack of raw materials precluded any increase in industrial activity, nor could the unemployed be absorbed by public works due to lack of funds. In the spring of 1943, there was a slight recovery in the tanning sector thanks to a loosening of Italian price controls. Although there were more opportunities for skilled workers the majority of the unemployed was unskilled, only 160 machine technicians and 25 tanners were out of work at that time. Attempts were made to transfer miners from Naxos to the mainland in January 1943 and March 1943. Even as late as September 1943, the Italians continued to support the transfer of workers from the islands and to accelerate the process. But attempts to control unemployment were partly negated by the intensification of the war in the Mediterranean which restricted shipping and the import of raw materials.

**Social Arbitration**
The occupiers’ role as a social arbiter mainly centered on requests for arbitration and granting raw materials or food to enable some to continue working. Negotiations usually started with appeals from professional groups or individuals. A typical case was that of the bakers and cake makers: Duca eased the crisis with the release of 675 kg of sugar each month from 3 April 1942. In response to a request from the Bakers’ Association, he conceded extra flour to bakers in view of the drop in quality of the flour used for bread. In compensation for
the ‘political’ or fixed price, bakers could claim the difference between the fixed price and the real value of the bread.\textsuperscript{79}

Compromise solutions sometimes had to be found when particular requests could not be met; in July 1942, instead of bread rations requested by customs officials, Duca allowed extra ration coupons for sugar, carobs and oil and three rations of vegetables per week.\textsuperscript{80} Adjustments to salaries were often means tested, as in an appeal from the Port Workers Association for under-paid dockers. Because of the vital importance of dockers in the handling of food, a register of some one hundred and fifty trustworthy workers had been made in order to control working practices and ensure a minimum wage for all.\textsuperscript{81} With the decrease in activity in 1943, there was a proposal to reduce the workforce by 25 per cent, and lift all restrictions on incomes and tariffs.\textsuperscript{82} Valeriani agreed to a 200 per cent tariff increase but rejected the idea of laying off any of the dockers.\textsuperscript{83}

As distributors of vital resources the occupiers retained great power in the psychology of the occupied. To this extent, their position as a symbolic source of protection went some way to making distacco objectives a reality. While there was no conscious change of allegiance, contact with the powerful authorities may have seemed the only chance of breaking out of an endless cycle of poverty and fear. For example, those gravitating to the new centre of power among the local authority took the unprecedented step of making Duca an honorary citizen of Ermoupolis. When the Chamber of Commerce received financial aid for its starving employees in April 1943, its director requested four photographs of Valeriani which would ‘adorn the houses of the families that you have saved from certain death’.\textsuperscript{84}

Trust placed in the occupiers was often disproportionate to their means of action. In one typical case, an applicant wrote that he had been out of work for some time and requested permission to work as a cobbler in order to survive, and a similar desperate request came from a man asking to work as a barber. The immediate responses of the authorities, scribbled in the margins of these two letters, highlight the arbitrary nature of some decisions (or the reader’s exasperation): ‘Let him get on with it!’ Ma faccia il calzolaio! in the second: ‘Who
stopped him from working as a barber? Having demanded that all administrative matters be approved by them, the Italians had set up a pattern of dependency where some felt it necessary to seek their constant approval.

There were instances, however, where AC’s arbitration was genuinely needed, as in two cases of ‘unfair dismissal’ brought by two female workers. In the first, both the employee and the firm put their case to the Italians, who weighed up the evidence, before choosing not to offer her compensation. In the second case Valeriani wrote to Ladopoulos, the owner of the biggest textile factory, requesting the grounds for dismissal. Workers considered it their right to appeal against their employers and believed the Italians would give their cases due consideration.

Other responsibilities taken on by AC included the granting or withholding of seeds and seed crops, particularly in the spring. Normally seeds were distributed by the Agricultural Cooperative of Syros, but in January 1943 Valeriani purchased a stock of bean seeds to be kept in reserve, so as ‘to be able to satisfy some of the appeals’ from individuals. But demand far outweighed supply and at least a third of those in genuine need could not be helped in the spring of 1943. To alleviate the crisis occasional shipments of seeds were imported from Rhodes for distribution to the farmers.

Probably the occupiers’ most effective reform was to attempt a measure of wealth redistribution with the institution of the account to fund public assistance set up on 1 April 1943 – Il Conto Integrazione Assistenziale. This was intended to help those on fixed incomes suffering from the rapid rise in inflation, but also benefited well-organized pressure groups. Vociferous lobbying by the Association of Traders brought them a one per cent levy on imports to fund their administration; and, although Valeriani complained that they were ‘becoming greedy’ they obtained several payments from April 1943 rising to 720,000 drachmas in July 1943, and continued to press for more money in the following months. Another beneficiary of assistance was the Association of Professionals, representing industrialists which received 150,000 drachmas in April, to pay the association’s staff. Funds were mainly given to those in desperate need: thus the Chamber of Commerce received 450,000 drachmas for its starving employees in April. Appeals
also came via the Prefecture to the Italian Commission, as in the case of the Port Authority staff, who could not make a living because imports had fallen ‘to a minimal level’.94 Another typical appeal came from the National Association of Manual and Clerical Workers, for help for unemployed skilled building workers.95 But a request from the mayor in support of the coal merchants of Syros was turned down with the complaint that ‘this is turning into a systematic barrage of requests’.96

Although the authorities often had to fend off requests for help, they won some sympathy for their accessibility and willingness to engage with the population. To this extent AC functioned as a source of social cohesion mediating between potentially antagonistic groups. It also shows that associative life was surviving thanks, in part, to mediation by the occupiers. An example of this was the creation of the civil servants’ cooperative, formed under the ‘high patronage of the Official General Consul in Greece, Valerio Valeriani’, in order to buy food collectively.97

Yet AC’s successes were constantly undermined by the impact of contradictory economic policies. While Valeriani succeeded in reducing the extraction of produce from the Cyclades and continued to protest against it on the highest levels, there was little he could do about the long-term effects of policies such as the requisitioning of crops, which compounded critical shortages even on the more fertile islands by 1943.98 The counter-productive impact of the ammassi was finally recognized in May 1943 when the practice ceased for most products.99

In September 1943, as the Italian occupation came to an end, another winter crisis was looming. Valeriani sent an urgent appeal to the Athens Red Cross representatives for oil, vegetables and pasta. His telegram requested the ‘greatest quantities possible’ of foods, especially olive oil which was now ‘absolutely non-existent’.100 The disappearance of olive oil stocks – once produced in abundance in the Cyclades – in just twenty two months of occupation, was a clear indictment of food requisitioning policies.

Fear of Italian requisitions sometimes obstructed food from reaching the Cyclades and some captains of cargo boats feared confiscation by the military commands on the
In addition, IRC relief to the Cyclades was delayed by the occupiers’ insistence on keeping control of deliveries themselves. They claimed that military objectives justified Italian supervision ‘given the noted signalling of information to English intelligence services’. On 30 January 1942, Duca insisted that the occupiers should take control in order to guarantee ‘justice in the distribution of supplies’. After an unauthorized delivery of thirty-nine okes of flour on 20 October 1942, he objected to further deliveries and was particularly irritated to discover that private individuals in Syros were directly involved with arrangements with the IRC.

In contrast, it was Campioni who warned that it was: wise to accept all possible external aid, especially if it is from worthy associations such as the Red Cross. In fact it is better to facilitate not obstruct their initiatives. It is understandable that those who are contributing wish to give some indication as to the destination of the goods being sent.

Unfortunately for the Cyclades, substantial help from the IRC was never possible, not least because of increased dangers as the war in the Mediterranean intensified. While negotiations with the IRC, the Allies and Axis representatives eventually led to deliveries of Canadian grain to the mainland, they failed to provide for the Cyclades. Talks held in Athens in October 1942, presided over by the Swiss IRC delegate, Junod, sought the cooperation of the Italian, German and Greek delegates to set up a committee to handle food aid. According to an Italian report the islands had been left out of the distribution of Canadian grain to the mainland; the Cyclades and Sporades were only included after the Italians’ insistence. Difficulties arose in January 1943 when for security reasons, the Allies banned the distribution of food in the Aegean using small boats. In February, the Swedish Legation proposed using smaller boats, but the initiative foundered due to a disagreement between Swiss and Swedish delegates. The Italians claimed they had tried to maintain the agreements, but in reality, they suspected that the British were behind the Swedish initiative and therefore did not support it. The Italian
Special Envoy for economic matters in Athens, Count Luca Pietromarchi, admitted in January 1943, that the Axis was reluctant to lose its freedom to export produce from the region ‘which the Axis economy required’ and to expose the islands to foreign interference for reasons of ‘political and military’ security.\textsuperscript{107} Although supplies later reached the island of Samos, tragically for the Cyclades no aid was forthcoming and the plan was abandoned. Rome was well aware of the critical situation and, in June 1943, Campioni asked the Foreign Ministry to seek help for Syros which was worst affected by the lack of Red Cross deliveries.\textsuperscript{108} But in July, an initiative to deliver Italian maize to the province failed due to transport difficulties and a dispute with the Greek government over the financing of the operation.\textsuperscript{109}

The contradictions in the occupiers’ policies were summed up by Campioni; he praised Valeriani for his ‘laudable initiatives’ in finding work for the unemployed and local finances for public assistance and improvements in public health while admitting, at the same time, that the economic plight of the Cyclades remained catastrophic. He said he had personally intervened (and failed) to try and acquire raw materials for Syros in order to get industries working again. The failure of these initiatives and a last minute attempt to make the Cyclades dependent on the IRC was an indictment of the distacco policy and a belated recognition of the impossibility of running the Cyclades from Rhodes.\textsuperscript{110}

The extension of Italian welfare initiatives gave the occupiers complete control of local administration – thus fulfilling one of the main long-term objectives of occupation policy. Although the Italian authorities did succeed in involving charitable groups and local leaders in the responsibilities of social welfare, there was little genuine power-sharing. On the other hand, the considerable effort orchestrated by Valeriani under the auspices of AC, suggests that, given their limited means, the occupiers were responsive to local needs. Some of their initiatives, particularly the protection of children and medical provision, were effective in alleviating suffering. Valeriani was prepared to consult the representatives of civil society and to act upon the suggestions of financial leaders. The occupiers’ role as arbiter between social groups and initiatives to increase
employment and fund public assistance enabled them to interact with the islanders in order to negotiate ways of coping with the consequences of the famine. In this respect, the Italian civil government and Assistenza Civile filled the vacuum left by the lack of effective state and local authorities, in a period of crisis.

Fig. 16 Military postcard with secrecy warning

‘Careless talk about the transfer or departure of your unit can often put your life or that of your comrades in danger. You must not talk to anybody, even your mother!’
Fascism was innovative in its use of the media and some historians consider that Mussolini’s skills as a self-publicist were the essence of his style of leadership.¹

Propaganda, surveillance of the population and the control of information, had very specific roles in fascist thinking and were intended to transform the way people thought in order to integrate them into the fascist state.² While this type of mobilization was not feasible in Syros, an attempt to spread the fascist message was made through the press, radio and cinema. It is useful, therefore, to assess propaganda initiatives and how they were received by the occupied population. The occupiers’ concern with their own image and Greek attitudes towards them also need to be examined in this context.

An important objective for an occupying force in war-time is to control the means by which the occupied have access to information – a task made easy on an island virtually cut off from the outside world. The occupiers aimed to fill the information gap with propaganda and they hoped that the population would come to depend solely on the information they supplied. As a first step to controlling access to information, on 27 September 1941, the use of long and medium wave radios was banned and radio sets were to be handed in.³ This was an attempt to stop the islanders from listening to BBC overseas broadcasts or other enemy broadcasting stations in Greece. Except for a minority with clandestine radio receivers, home listening was replaced by a news broadcast transmitted by the occupiers every evening, in the main square. With the
ban on listening to radios the only source of news, which was untainted by the occupiers’ intervention, was gleaned from visitors to the port. Even the military command was ‘in the dark and behind the times’, according to Duca.4

The dissemination of information was controlled by the Syros Propaganda Office, Ufficio “P”, while a separate office, Ufficio “I”, was responsible for the collection of intelligence material and the censorship of post and telegraphic communications. Surveillance focused on islanders engaged in any forms of resistance, including local groups, Greek political prisoners and non-fascist Italian soldiers who sympathized with members of the Greek resistance movement.5

Local informers were used to gather information about their compatriots but their identity and number is difficult to establish due to the reluctance of local people to name them. Traces of their existence appear in the documents referring to privileged categories entitled to buy extra food rations.6 The Italians’ main source of intelligence in Syros came from an Italian junior officer, Enrico Barman, who spoke Greek, English and German and who acted as an interpreter and link between the Prefecture and the Civil Commission. According to Valerian, he had infiltrated all social levels and the services he performed as an informer were ‘quite brilliant, especially in this period in which interest in pro-British propaganda has been reawakened’.7

The occupiers made ample use of the threat of surveillance in order to keep the occupied in line. The first issue of the Italian-controlled newspaper Cicladi warned everybody that the eyes of the Italian authorities were ‘focused on them’.8 And indeed, with a regiment of soldiers garrisoned in Ermoupolis and deployments in every village and along the coast, it was difficult for the islanders to escape supervision. Campioni called for extra vigilance in 1943 when Greek resistance on the mainland was escalating and spies working for the Allies were infiltrating the Dodecanese. Therefore identity cards were issued for men aged 16 to 65 and all those found without identification were to be arrested.9

**Organization and objectives**

While surveillance was used to root out resistance, propaganda was supposed to win over the local population. The primary
responsibility was borne by another office, *Nucleo Assistenza* (NA), working under the auspices of the military authorities. Cultural activities by the ‘Dante Alighieri Association’ (modelled on the same government-controlled, cultural organization in Italy) and the running of the *Casa di Dante* cultural centre in Ermoupolis were the responsibility of the Civil Commission, working in concert with NA in order to develop ‘the healthy work of propaganda’. The NA was in control of information and the censorship of film shows, notices and publications. There was also an Italian book and periodical service (which depended on the cooperation of Greek book-dealers).

NA’s main propaganda medium was the bi-weekly one page broadsheet *Cicladi*, written in Greek on one side and Italian on the other. The Italian text was translated by a loyal Greek-speaking Italian whom they trusted not to distort the occupiers’ words by using ‘ambiguous phrases and double meanings’ in Greek. The paper was circulated throughout the islands; in June 1942, 22,580 copies were printed for civilian use and 2,741 for the troops. In Syros the average circulation per copy was 4,000 of which approximately 800 were sold to civilians. The occupiers paid about one third of the cost of production and the rest was made up from sales and advertising.

In the first issue on 1 October 1941, the occupiers made no secret of the newspaper’s role. The paper would be ‘the public voice of collaboration, to be launched under the auspices of the *Fascio Littorio*’. But, behind the facade of cooperation with the occupied population, was the occupiers’ determination to further *distacco* aims, creating a local organ to develop provincial awareness and discourage interest in Greece. Thus ‘any reference or allusion to Athens as a capital or to Greece as a political entity was to be avoided, in other words to make people forget Athens’.

The benefits of Italian welfare initiatives were to be emphasized, while tacitly contrasting them with the Greek government’s lack of concern. However, Duca warned that the Greeks were far from gullible, so only sober references were to be made to the fascist regime and its good works ‘without being too insistent’. The paper was not supposed to be ‘too much in contrast with existing habits and systems’. It
would not be easy to fool the Greeks who were ‘polemical, intellectually sharp and preferred reasoning and example rather than the imposition of policies’.Political issues were to be played down in favour of local administrative and economic matters, avoiding personal affairs. As for the information supplied, Duca claimed it was genuine yet still ‘in tune’ with the occupiers’ policies. In reality, much of the paper was taken up with the Italian interpretation of the events of the war, emphasizing Axis victories.

The paper was also used as a vehicle for policy announcements or admonishments about profiteering – readers were warned that ‘individual interest had won over concern for the collectivity’. This kind of moralizing, typical of war-time discourse, also served the aims of fascist ideologues. They therefore highlighted the activities of cooperative islanders who took on their social responsibilities as, for example, the local councillors whose public assistance commission visited the island of Santorini to try to alleviate the food crisis there. Fund raising events were advertised and donations to charity were listed in line with fascist policy in Italy where public involvement was supposed to foster civil mobilization and be an effective means of ‘penetration’ of people’s minds. Regular references to those who had contributed appeared each day and numbers were printed in bigger and bolder type as donations increased. Naming and shaming was also used to clamp down on black marketeers by appealing to the islanders’ beleaguered sense of morality – as if to shift the blame for the crisis from the policy makers onto the desperate people. In January 1942, at the peak of the famine, the paper listed the names of those caught selling their rations, or watering down milk to sell on the black market, as well as bakers who were adulterating bread at the ‘expense of their starving compatriots’.

Another function of the paper was to advertise the work of Assistenza Civile. The paper claimed that the islanders could not fail to see that the occupiers’ actions were beneficial because the evidence spoke for itself. The rationale behind the ‘ammassi’ was illustrated, as on 15 October 1941, when potatoes were to be collected and ‘redistributed fairly’ to avoid hoarding. However, any reference to the steep rise in the death-toll is
remarkable by its absence. At most comparisons were made with the acute state of malnutrition of patients attending the Italian outpatients’ clinic and its success in treating as many as 1,495 patients in the first two weeks of November 1941.

Throughout the famine the newspaper emphasized the ‘human face’ of the occupation. For example, when Duca and a group of six officers made a visit to the Ermoupolis nursery for infants, a sentimental article entitled: ‘Little Signorina Irena is a star’ described their inspection of rooms full of squealing infants (including babies sitting on chamber pots). Duca noted that the officers were ‘all moved’ including one who was usually too reserved to show his feelings. They were proud that milk was being collected all over the island for the survival of the weakest and rice pudding was available for the infants, with raisins for older children. And, not forgetting propaganda opportunities, the nurses, we are told, ‘saluted in Roman style’.

One of the main propaganda objectives of the newspaper was to convey the ideology of the fascist regime. A series of talks given at the Casa Dante were published in the paper and the first was entitled La figura del Duce. Here, editorial restraints on the use of propaganda appear to have been abandoned or forgotten. Absorbed by his own admiration for the Duce, the junior editor of the paper, the young officer, Salvatore Piras, devoted no less than nine paragraphs to the Duce’s ‘proud and masculine smile’. Fascism’s aim was the promotion of Italy’s ‘empire nation’ manifested by the vitality of its people working together in harmonious collaboration in the name of the new corporative regime. As is clear from the critical analysis of the mass psychology of fascism, the regime fostered self-abnegation and the projection of the aspirations of a generation onto the Duce. For Piras the whole utopian system revolved around Mussolini, the inspiration and essence of the new Italy and worthy of total devotion: ‘Duce you belong to us, Duce tell us your bidding, you are always right, you are [the embodiment of] us all.’ (Duce sei nostro; Duce, comanda; tu hai sempre ragione; tu sei tutti noi.)

This young officer’s loyalty appears to reflect the isolation of soldiers cut off from changing attitudes in Italy. By the end of 1941, military defeats were affecting Italian public
support for fascism, particularly among military conscripts. At home, political fragmentation and ideological confusion were compounded by doubts about Italy’s war aims. In response to public disaffection with fascism Giuseppe Bottai had struck back by trying to mobilize young intellectuals to fight for Italian cultural hegemony, championed by the ‘soldier scribe’. Taking up the challenge, officers like Piras felt their role was to counter the threat of Nazi cultural supremacy as well as liberal-democratic cultural values.

Other published lectures included ‘Public Assistance and Welfare in Fascist Italy’, ‘Corporatism and Syndicalism in Fascist Italy’, ‘Fascism and Religion’, ‘Youth’, ‘An Overview of Italian Art’ and finally, ‘A New Order in a New Europe’. The ritualistic cult of youth – one of fascism’s founding myths – was used as a call to action. One speaker talked of ‘the souls of the young, linked by the blood spilled together’. Oblivious to a Greek audience which was all too aware of Italy’s bungled invasion of Greece, he still claimed: ‘In the name of the Duce, in the name of civilization, we do not wish to fall, we have never fallen, we shall never fall.’

**Culture and education**

It is clear that the occupiers hoped to elicit sympathy for a new form of Italian culture. In a lecture on Italian art in April 1943, the audience was told that fascism brought a new civilization based on principles which were ‘lapidary, indestructible, and fundamental to all human societies’. In the words of Mussolini: ‘In art, we salute the immutable, eternal power of the Italian genius.’

In spite of these lofty ideals, most cultural events were rather homely, improvised events, not unlike local talent contests. They gave local people a chance to escape from the grim reality of their daily routine and the occupiers a diversion from the notorious boredom of garrison life. The need to raise funds for AC, provided a convenient rationale for these events and an opportunity for the Italians to exercise their musical virtuosity. On two occasions Valeriani demonstrated his musical knowledge with speeches on Italian music. Both talks were illustrated with music in an extended performance involving local talents. Valeriani reported with pride on his
success in training the Greek amateurs, Mrs Vrondadis and Messers Axiotis and Assimomitis to perform in Italian:

romanze da polso such as Celeste Aida, Cielo e mar from ‘Gioconda’ Giunto sul passo estremo from ‘Mefistofele’, Chi ella mi creda libero e lontano from ‘La Fanciulla del West’, la Siciliana from ‘Cavalleria’, la Cavatina di Violetta in the first act of ‘La Traviata’, the Ave Maria from ‘Otello’ and Mi chiamano Mimi from ‘La Bohème’.

As well as accompanying the singers on the piano, Captain Major Luigi Bergamaschi gave some ‘much appreciated’ information on seven composers, with the participation of five Greek singers. The Italian singers recruited from the military were Marshal Siena, Captain Major Gaggioli, and Private Villani, all of whose ‘talent and emotion’ was displayed in their performance of Quando spunta la luna a Marechiare by Tosti. There were also four arias by various composers, as well as a long list of other songs of this type. Part of the garrison band, conducted by Sergeant Major Maestro Messina, performed the overture from ‘Norma’ – with 2 violins played by young Greeks – and the Intermezzo from ‘Cavalleria Rusticana’. Valeriani concluded his report to Campioni on an up-beat note. Ever aware of the opportunities for propaganda, he claimed that the active participation of the audience ‘crowned the success of this initiative, which marked a sympathetic act of Italian-Greek collaboration in this cultural event’.32

But the celebration of the anniversary of twenty years since fascism’s ‘March on Rome’ had a more pointed propaganda objective. As Valeriani reported to Campioni, it was a chance to promote the regime with a cultural event and an assessment of twenty years fascism.33 He concluded his talk with the words ‘the war we are fighting now is none other than the continuation of the campaign launched on 28 October 1922’. The coincidence of the same date, deliberately chosen by Mussolini to attack Greece, can hardly have been welcome to the Greek audience.

But for those who attended Italian language classes, there was some compensation for compliance as the speech was followed by prize-giving for star pupils. Language courses
were another propaganda initiative and the civil authorities claimed that classes were ‘crowded out by people of all ages and cultural backgrounds’. In September 1942, Valeriani announced that the take-up rate of membership of the Dante Alighieri was ‘highly satisfactory’ for, although it had only been launched a few months previously, it had already reached a membership of 650.34

Italian language was an ‘extra-curricular’ activity which was available to all school pupils and adults, leading to a university place in Italy for a few students. Unlike the imposition of Italian in schools in the Dodecanese, obligatory classes were not yet under consideration and, according to Duca, Greek schools were left to operate ‘regularly and freely’.35 By September 1942, there were forty-five hours of Italian classes a week, usually one hour sessions three times a week for each of the fifteen classes.36 The classes were run by Italian reserve officers or priests, many of whom were not fascists. One pupil, Stathis Chrisafis, remembered his teacher, a Fiat engineer from Turin, who had set them an essay entitled ‘Our Country’. It was an unfortunate choice of subject which inevitably triggered the boy’s sense of patriotism. But Chrisafis was impressed by the fact that the teacher had ‘protected’ him by tearing up his essay which was too controversial and that, in spite of this incident, he was awarded a new suit for his prowess in Italian classes.37

The audience

The ‘target audience’ for Italian cultural initiatives was not restricted to any social group; on the contrary, the idea propounded by fascism was to bind everybody together in united support of the regime, regardless of their religion or social class. As a result, the real audience for Italian events cannot easily be identified. Some Catholics, and particularly those with Italian nationality, were apparently ‘always present at these gatherings’ as well as other Italian speakers and local personalities who were obliged to put in an appearance.38 Although some of the Greek Catholics may have been drawn to Italian events, there was tension between them and Catholics with Italian nationality. The Italian community was perceived to be privileged unfairly by the Italian occupiers and to have ‘sold out’ to them.39 In view of past (and renewed) religious
tensions, Greek Catholics were not keen to be identified with the unpopular Italian community and this may have deterred them from attending events at the Casa di Dante. The latter’s unpopularity had increased when they were interned as ‘enemy aliens’ at the start of the war with Italy.

It was true that the Italians supported the Italian community of 300 members, which they felt had to be revived and ‘civilized’ as representatives of Italy. At first, they deplored local Italians’ ‘betrayal’ during the invasion of Greece when they renounced their Italian nationality in order to try to avoid internment. Duca described the elite as a bunch of petty-minded traders, and the rest as ‘very poor with no clearly defined jobs or means of subsistence’. But he was determined to raise them from ‘that status of timorous inferiority to which the Greeks had relegated them, particularly during the war’. He had made it his mission to rehabilitate the community, giving them extra food, education and official representation, embodied by a president with an office equipped by the occupiers.

After the occupation there were complaints from the Orthodox population that the Catholics in general were ‘favoured’ by the occupiers in educational matters, such as opportunities to send students to university in Italy. But Italian classes, essential to obtaining a university place, were open to all at the Dante. The limitations were more likely to have been self-imposed – or were due to tensions between the two communities. The obstacles did not come from the occupiers who wanted integrated participation to further their propaganda objectives. As for Orthodox notables, the records show they were present at public meetings at the Casa di Dante. Interestingly, Rigoutsos thought the Italians did well to include both Orthodox and Catholic notables in all public gatherings and that this should be emulated in future, in the interests of social harmony on the island.

As for the impoverished Catholic community, the majority was unemployed and had other concerns than cultural advancement at the Casa di Dante which was located in Ermoupolis – whereas most Catholics lived in the countryside and country villages, from which there was little or no transport. Lack of food, clothes or the means to wash meant that it was unlikely that they attended the cultural activities
at the Casa di Dante (although there was an Italian class for illiterate pupils) and would no doubt have been ashamed to appear at public cultural events. Also, although educational levels were relatively high in the town (and included an evening school for the poor), the subject matter debated at the Dante was often aimed at an educated, probably middle-class, audience. On the other hand, a number of Orthodox citizens of Ermoupolis were attracted by the chance of extra food as well as entertainment, at a very bleak time in Syros.

A reliable witness who remembered these events, stated that Orthodox citizens attended willingly, although some now deny it – suggesting that to do so was seen as a form of collaboration. If that was the case, the take-up rate for Italian lessons in Ermoupolis was surprisingly high. Some explanation can be gathered from the incentives offered particularly to children, at a time when they were deprived of normal development. The majority consisted of children whose parents took advantage of the educational benefits or adults who either sought closer relations with the Italians or to benefit from linguistic skills. A crucial incentive was the distribution of extra bread rations to diligent pupils. According to one local source, civil servants were obliged to attend lessons or lose their jobs, whereas if they did attend they were rewarded with an extra ration of bread. This may have been true in some cases but Italian reports suggest that civil servants attended voluntarily.

The fascist message did impress a few who harked back to the old days of foreign ‘protection’. One Catholic wrote to the occupiers to express his gratitude, he said that past feuds between the two religious communities in Syros were so extreme that people hoped ‘a Great Power’ would intervene (although they would not have chosen Italy). Now he put his faith in the occupiers and said Mussolini, ‘like Moses’, would lead his people to the Promised Land and ‘reawaken the Roman spirit’. As a friend of Italy he was prepared to be governed ‘in the pure spirit of fascism, subject to the unique authority of Italy’.

**Italian attitudes to the Greeks**

Notions of Italian racial superiority ran through articles in Cicladi. For example, in the final published speech on ‘A new
order in a new Europe’ in April 1943, the speaker made it clear that unity among its peoples did not signify universal equality – a ‘natural leadership’ would inevitably emerge. There was to be none of the ‘corrupt egalitarian ideas of the communists’ or those upheld by the League of Nations. The Italians had not forgotten that at Geneva, the Italian representative had to sit next to the ‘rather barbarous and overly dark’ representatives of Africa or ‘the potently barbarous and black, like the Negus’. Total equality was an impossibility and there would always be rich and poor who were ‘born that way, according to God’s will’. Pictures in *Cyclades* of black American or Indian troops taken prisoner in North Africa, were intended to show that the English had no hope of winning the war with such ‘a mish-mash of races’.

Initially, Italian attitudes to the Greeks were equally as negative or muddled, focusing upon romantic notions about antiquity; debates in the paper sought to distinguish a humanist Italian cultural heritage from that of their Teutonic allies. According to some writers, the Venetian influence on the Greek language ‘revived the spirit of the Odyssey of humanity’ in a land where ‘the great pagan myths seem imminent and eternal’. The natural beauty of the landscape was idealized while lamenting the disappearance of ‘Romantic Greece’ and calling for a return to her classical origins. Unlike the ancients, modern Greeks were regarded by some officers as ‘primitive, devious and commercially fixated’. According to one commander on the small island of Anafi:

> Local people are still immersed in the somnolent apathy of certain Oriental peoples; their work tool most in use here is the *comboloi*, a kind of heavy rosary used to count the passing of time during interminable hours spent sitting in cafés.

But such clichés and stereotypes were invariably affected by increasing familiarity between occupiers and occupied and the small adjustments of daily life, as well as the changing circumstances of the war. There was a contradiction between the initial strictures given to soldiers not to fraternize with the occupied population and the need the occupiers felt to be appreciated and even liked.
But at first the Italians seemed particularly anxious not to be manipulated by their new subjects. On arrival in Syros, Duca told his men to be suspicious of Greeks’ motives and to avoid responding to any gestures of friendship which were bound to have an ulterior motive. ‘The Greek spirit is ambiguous, inscrutable, controversial, submissive in front of our forces but always deceitful, remaining unchanged and elusive’. Campioni too warned that the ‘obsequiousness of the people is due to self-interest’. As for the civil and religious authorities Campioni said they were to be treated cordially but firmly – it was ‘pointless’ to try to understand them:

With regard to religion, be vigilant and maintain particular surveillance of any marginally illegal activities in order to suppress any deviation, direct or indirect, from our directives.53

In his view, the triumphal spirit of the early occupation should be sustained and soldiers should continue to behave as ‘conquerors’, emulating ‘the high sentiments and awareness of racial superiority which are fundamental to the fascist and Italian upbringing of our people’.54

Although the Italians were cautious in the initial stage of occupation, they also wanted to win the approval of the occupied population. Duca contrasted the islanders’ perception of the Italians before they arrived as ‘barbarous, murderous, destructive vandals’, with the harmony of the later stage.55 He claimed initial animosity had quickly been dissipated by the behaviour of the troops and by public assistance and food, supplied ‘unstintingly’ by the occupiers. He said fear was substituted by gratitude and the general recognition of the occupiers’ ‘good qualities and organizational powers’.

On the other hand, it was galling to Duca that the Greeks refused to conform to this positive image conjured up by the occupiers. Their ‘atavistic weakness’ for dabbling in politics and their rigid classification of friends or foes meant they remained profoundly ‘Greek’, fiercely proud of their ancient roots and intransigent towards anyone who threatened their attachment to the Greek state; in other words the ‘chauvinist’ Greeks had no desire to become Italian. This undermined his
own prediction, two months earlier, that the Greeks would accept Italian domination provided their self-interest and commercial aspirations were satisfied.56

From the start the occupiers monitored attitudes towards them closely. On the islands the military commander, Luigi Gino, found people were ‘respectful, deferential and cordial’.57 Valeriani also thought the measures adopted in the first months of occupation had revived the spirit of the people and stimulated a change in feelings which generated ‘sympathy and gratitude towards the Italians, and pushing the most timid as well as the less needy to have recourse to assistance’.58 He told Campioni that, in spite of complaints about shortages of food and the requisitions, there was considerable gratitude to Italy and:

sincere admiration of the local commands who behave with truly Italian verve and generosity, carrying out the administration of the islands with a fine sense of humanity and justice.59

The most striking example of a reversal of feeling was on the near-by island of Tinos where anti-Italian feelings had been extreme following the sinking of a Greek ship in the harbour on 15 August 1940.60 In August 1942 Valeriani reported that, although Tinos lacked most of the basic foods, attitudes were surprisingly pro-Italian and exceeded even the most optimistic forecasts. He said the population of that island could be described as ‘Italian’ – borne out by the welcome he received in Tinos which was ‘so exceedingly warm that at times it reached a pitch of uncontained enthusiasm’. He described how the streets were crowded with people and decked with flags and the windows festooned with drapes and decorations. The rows of young people singing hymns to Italy and its representatives gave the occupiers ‘the distinct feeling of being at home’. He compared this to the hatred towards the Italians at the start of the occupation and gave credit to the work carried out by the commander for Tinos, who was ‘sincerely loved by the population’.

On leaving Syros in the summer of 1942, the first military governor, Duca, expressed his pride in making improvements
to the region in the name of the Duce and fascist Italy. At this stage the occupiers still perceived the occupation as a prelude to colonization and Duca felt Syros could be restored to its former importance as a strategic port connecting important shipping routes.\textsuperscript{61} This vision of a fascist haven of civilization depended, of course, on the continuation of the Italian occupation – in fact, by the time he left Syros, it had little more than a year to run.

\textbf{The cinema and public leisure}

In Italy cultural policy for the cinema aimed at building up a consensus for fascism; according to Ciano, the creation of a national popular culture would ‘capture the essence’ of the Italian people, involving everybody and binding them together.\textsuperscript{62} From 1937 there was a shift in policy towards using cinema to create a new fascist culture and Giuseppe Bottai believed that culture would be ‘Italy’s most valuable wartime weapon’. But state control of the film industry was never on a level of that of Goebbels in Germany, and the Italians themselves continued to watch foreign films regardless of official vilification of Hollywood values.\textsuperscript{63}

The choice of films for Syros appears quite haphazard. Duca complained that it was impossible to get hold of films from Italy in the first year, except for a few battered copies of \textit{Luce} documentaries sent from Rhodes.\textsuperscript{64} In the first three months there were a large number of French and foreign films (often dubbed into French), most of which provided entertainment rather than any particular political message.\textsuperscript{65} The censorship by section “P” of the military command was lax, allowing the screening of English or American films such as \textit{Queen Christina}, which had black as well as white actors, and a Jewish director. But they also showed the propaganda-led \textit{Scipione l'Africano}, a film that idealizes the glories of the Roman Empire in Africa. There is unfortunately, no record of the islanders’ reaction to the glorification of empire, nor of what they made of such symbols as the fascist ‘new man’ in war-time films.

In fact, many of the Italian films made in fascist Italy imitated Hollywood themes and even, unconsciously, adopted some of its values. These films were often meaningless outside their Italian context and their confused ideological messages
were likely to have been lost on local viewers. Critiques of the
effect of consumerism on women for instance, could not have been more out of place in Syros. The ‘shop girl’ films, such as Mario Camerini’s *Grandi Magazzini*, linking the pitfalls of sexual freedom and consumerism, cannot have meant much to hungry female spectators – except as a source of escapism into a world of fantasy.\(^\text{66}\) Two other society comedies, *Il signor Max* and *Batticuore*, made by Camerini, also embodied the contradictory moral themes of the clash between the old and ‘modern’ values, or the juxtaposition of sexual repression and modernization, which concerned fascist directors.\(^\text{67}\) The film *Casta diva*, made by the director of *Scipione*, Carmine Gallone, advocated female modesty in an amoral world of stardom but probably had the opposite effect, making the world of film seem attractive. If anything, the ‘white telephone’ films, with their luxurious, modern settings would have had more impact as an escape from reality, on an audience deprived of well-being and personal happiness. The comedies at least made the audience laugh and some films like *Casta diva* were repeated, which suggests that the cinema was popular and apparently watched by ‘big crowds’.

It was unlikely that the Greek audience was susceptible to the attempted emotional engineering of fascist films. Even in Italy, fascism’s influence on cinema most probably stemmed from ‘the general quiescence’ imposed on cultural life over two decades. In the opinion of one Syros observer, the townspeople were too cosmopolitan, linguistically competent and ‘familiar with western European cultural trends’ to be taken in by fascist films although he implied that Italian and German newsreels might have had an impact.\(^\text{68}\) He also thought that the screening of *Scipione l’Africano* was deliberately held back until a month after the *Casa di Dante* was opened to ensure a bigger, more receptive audience. Although the impact of overt political pressure should not be exaggerated the effect of more subtle influences, such as glamour and excitement, by which the ‘new fascist culture’ hoped to seduce its public, may have exerted some attraction on those deprived of any form of luxury.

The occupiers’ support of some public leisure activities appears to have been intended to manage leisure rather than to create consensus. In Duca’s words the initiative would bring
a return to ‘normality’, to a traumatized population. A project to set up a new open-air cinema in May 1943 was approved, provided that it was organized on time and paid for by the Town Hall. 69

Other leisure activities permitted by the occupiers, included swimming and fishing, although fishing was mainly for food rather than for pleasure. The Italians approved a number of permits for ‘leisure fishing’, pesca dilettante. 70 Swimming in the Nissaki area near the port was banned and the Ammos beach was not considered hygienic due to pollution from war-damaged ships. There was a local authority initiative to reactivate the swimming area below Vaporia and Duca gave the go-ahead for the construction of a wooden bathing platform at the beach in April 1942. 71 There was a definite attempt to bolster the morale of the population with a few leisure activities but anything on a larger scale, such as the OND corporative leisure organizations in Italy, was beyond the limited resources of the occupiers (although OND existed in Rhodes where they were increasingly popular). 72 Cicladi hinted, however, that the OND had a history of supporting local traditions which, in the light of the Greeks’ attachment to their customs, might endear them to such organizations in the future. 73

The occupiers were right in supposing that the most effective form of propaganda was the practical help of Assistenza Civile, and, consequently, its effect decreased as the Italians had less food to offer. A minority was lured into attitudes of compliance in return for educational and cultural advantages but these benefits were limited and provoked resentment from those who did not have access to them.
7: THE OCCUPIERS: SOLDIERS’ LIVES

Italy’s diminishing resources and failure to supply adequate military support increased the vulnerability of the outlying Aegean islands. In Syros, soldiers’ anxieties, which were generated by the lack of food, were compounded by the external events of the war and the decline in Axis supremacy. If fear alters the way people relate to each other and can reverse power relations, it may be possible to observe this process in the way soldiers behaved. In the build up to the Italian Armistice of 8 September 1943, the level of anxiety was constantly being raised. The circumstances of life in Syros imposed pressures on the occupiers, affecting their behaviour and experience of the occupation. This chapter will assess what it was like to live through this experience, how well soldiers were looked after by the army and how convincing they were as embodiments of Italian fascism. Also questions still remain unanswered about the dramatic events of the final stage of the Italian occupation and its sudden collapse.

**Daily life**

After the suffering and privations of the front, a small Greek island must have seemed to most soldiers to be a safer and more peaceful destination. But it was not long before emotions of ‘painful homesickness’ were recorded by those absent from home over long periods. In the Cyclades, most of the troops were not sent home on leave for extensive periods and in many cases not for the whole of the occupation – amounting to three years of active service. By 1942, even officers’ leave was cancelled as Allied attacks on the Aegean islands escalated.
Soldiers’ sense of isolation was aggravated by a defective military postal system which left soldiers without contact with their families for long periods. Duca complained that letters sent by ship from Italy in September 1941, took three months and airmail took over a month. Even telegrams from Italy were held up at Bari from which they were sent by post to Rhodes and in a typical case – a postal order sending money home on the 6th August 1941, took seven weeks to arrive. Post was held up due to censorship in Rhodes or Samos, creating a heavy back-log – and soldiers were told to write shorter letters or to use official reply forms. Even the governor, Valeriani, had to survive for months without six suitcases of his personal luggage, which had been mislaid in transit. After a long and heated exchange of telegrams and letters, his bags were found in a warehouse in the port of Brindisi. Duca was concerned that restricted contact with their families had a considerable effect on his men, who blamed postal deficiencies on ‘lack of care from their superiors’. Soldiers were beginning to feel increasingly vulnerable because they suspected that their superiors could not really protect their interests.

Homesickness was compounded by physical isolation, driving some to disregard orders to keep their distance from the local population. In many places in Greece, Italian soldiers mingled with Greeks in public places. However in Syros, where tensions between occupier and occupied were aggravated by the lack of food, relations were not as relaxed as elsewhere. In Athens, for instance, Italian soldiers were said to have made friendships because they needed ‘the illusion of a peaceful existence’, removed from the reality of war. Some found a family who would take care of their washing and with whom they could share their bread and enjoy human contact. According to a witness who moved out of the centre of Athens to a rural suburb due to the famine, Italian soldiers who were billeted nearby, appeared to ‘make a home for themselves’ and planted flowers and herbs. They also paid her family social visits bringing chocolate, wine and guitars to entertain them.

On arrival in Syros, Duca warned his men not to be taken in by over-friendly local people and to maintain the detached and disciplined stance of the fascist ‘new man’. The billeting arrangements for the majority of the troops (some 825
men) in the barracks, a former Greek military academy on the southern edge of the town, helped to keep them apart from the occupied population. A further 138 were deployed to the costal village of Finikas, 180 to Vari village, 150 to Parakopi and 150 to Krusa. Twelve officers of the High Command were housed in the Town Hall in the centre of Ermoupolis, although Duca lived near the barracks, where he could maintain closer contact with his men. His own advice, however, was revealing and suggests soldiers showed few signs of conforming to the fascist image. He told them to be polite and cordial with the population but not familiar. They should be reserved and should not divulge personal matters, letting off steam or indulging in the ‘kind of sentimentality which our latin character often gives way to’. From the officers down to the men there was to be no sign of that ‘bienitaliano that historically, has got us into so much trouble and brought a stab in the back’. It was absolutely essential to maintain solidarity amongst Italians and to remember that in front of strangers all criticism, disputes or discordance of opinion must cease, in order to present an image of the ‘highest degree of unity under one leader alone’.

Reiterated appeals for ‘appropriate conduct’ suggest soldiers did exactly the opposite. Rigoutsos, for one, was taken aback by Italian soldiers’ frankness which indicated sentiments which were anything but bellicose. One said ‘we were not made to be warriors; we love life, especially family life’. In December 1941, Duca’s temporary replacement, Ettore Bruno, repeated that soldiers should maintain formal relations, reciprocal respect among themselves, cleanliness and decorum in their quarters and strict self-control, especially in public. Superiors were to act swiftly ‘without unnecessary fuss and exhibitionism’, to clamp down on misconduct. Also, while congratulating the men for military prowess in Albania, Bruno warned that the lack of military glory in garrison life should not lead to the relaxing of standards. He reminded the men that their role was to dominate and to ‘never be deluded by the affection of the population’.

Fascist and military ideals reinforced the notion that the Italian army’s high standard of presentation would help to convince the occupied of their superior status. Whether this
worked is doubtful; the Greeks were scornful of the Italian bungled invasion and made the most of any opportunity to exercise their notorious wit against the hated invader. In Athens the Italian army’s appearance was much remarked upon for the lavish, black-feathered helmets of the Bersaglieri, the feathered hats of the Alpini or the immaculate white gloves and the antics of the Italian traffic police.\textsuperscript{14}

In Syros the contrast between local and Italian standards of appearance soon became obvious. By the second year of occupation even the French consul and his family were reduced to wearing rags and Rigoutsos feared they would soon be unable to show themselves in public. The very poor and those dying of hunger often appeared in the streets almost naked. In contrast, the attire of the occupiers, such as Duca’s immaculate appearance and frequent changes of uniform, prompted claims that the Italians had ‘helped themselves to the island’s resources in cloth and leather and allowed speculators to sell off the rest, provided that the Italians are well dressed and shod and at a very low price’.\textsuperscript{15}

The importance of appearance was confirmed by Col. Farina who countered accusations that in the Possedimento, military contingents ‘were lacking just about everything’, saying that his soldiers had been kitted out ‘\textit{in completely new uniforms} and all of this has come from the Possedimento’.\textsuperscript{16} He also deplored the foppishness of his critics, fresh from Italy, and made it clear to them that this ‘fuss was to do with fashion, novelty and feminine fancies’. He said that officers in transit in the port were ransacking Syros of her depleted goods and enclosed details of purchases made by a single officer: cloth and buttons for two khaki shirts and one light-green uniform shirt, eight reels of thread of various colours, three pairs of leather soles, a small bottle of quinine and a gentleman’s enamelled talcum-powder box. The officer also ordered a pair of men’s shoes and a khaki ‘Sahariana’ uniform.\textsuperscript{17} As Farina pointed out, the list was not long until you considered the ‘dozens and dozens of officers placing these orders in Syros’.\textsuperscript{18}

For most Italian soldiers the gradual degeneration of uniforms due to lack of suitable cloth and leather was a source of humiliation. But hunger soon took precedence over appearance and soldiers were reduced to bartering tins of
polish for food from the local population. Conversely, the military authorities engaged in barter in order to try and make up soldiers’ summer uniforms and sandals. In some remote areas where supplies were almost non-existent, uniforms fell apart and soldiers wore as little as possible – partly due to the ubiquitous problem of body lice (known to the soldiers as the ‘international enemy’ for their indiscriminate attack on both sides). The soldiers in Syros were closely supervised and do not appear to have been reduced to the state of neglect endured by troops in remote areas. However the living conditions of all Italian troops abroad were ‘below average’. It was not uncommon for Italian soldiers to walk around barefoot, even in Athens. Where soldiers were left to survive on their own, uniforms disintegrated; according to one soldier and writer: ‘Even our uniforms only faintly resembled those inspected by majors and colonels’. As Valeriani reported, by May 1943, a marine could not afford to buy a pair of cotton underpants and eating out cost a whole month’s salary.

Indications that standards were slipping was clear from a series of directives for the Italian army in occupied territories. Soldiers were pilfering everything they could, leaving the army with new articles of clothing acquired from those remaining in service, in exchange for their old kit which then had to be replaced. Unpunished violations of discipline were frequent because a high percentage of soldiers did not have identity papers or discs and ‘made up some story’ when questioned. The report blamed junior officers for inadequate supervision of the troops and the failure to observe regulations.

Ordinary soldiers were probably following the example of those officers involved in the daily commerce of buying up all they found, particularly from the destitute Greeks. In Syros, in spite of his tight hand on discipline, Duca was pained to uncover stealing and unlawful appropriation of goods by his men. Crimes ranged from stealing bread rations from a fellow soldier’s knapsack to taking goods from warehouses and stores. The number of organized break-ins and thefts, which were planned in connivance with local people, was growing at such a rate that Duca felt obliged to inflict heavy penalties and even to denounce soldiers who had behaved bravely in battle. He admitted this damaged the occupiers’ standing:
because it shows that there has been a decline in moral and religious values as well as respect for military regulations which undermines the effectiveness of our authority and the good name of the Regiment.  

But Duca unwittingly reinforced the impression of Italian weakness when he resorted to blaming the Greeks for their bad influence on the occupiers, alleging that the stealing was a symptom of ‘creeping greekification’ (grecizzamento). He also blamed indiscipline in the army on bad leadership, and officers who behaved like ‘simple-minded, badly-trained sheep dogs’. Duca showed some understanding of soldiers’ psychology when he advised officers to keep a close eye on their men, ‘not just when they needed a new pair of shoes or the right amount of rations’, but also monitoring their moods and behaviour. He was not in favour of draconian punishments for misdemeanours like drunkenness and said he had been forced to restrain over-zealous commanders. The men should be physically stretched – not just by military exercises but by ‘healthy occupations’ such as building work. He told commanders to monitor those who tended to go astray, without ‘excessive indulgence of the pranks of the young’. After several years of command experience officers would be held responsible for ‘lack of supervision and culpable acquiescence to crime’. Yet, apart from one case of murder, there is no record of soldiers facing military courts for theft. It seems quite likely that these measures, suggested by Duca near the end of his term of office, were not carried out so thoroughly by his successor Col. Luigi Gino.

Discipline was particularly poor when soldiers were sent on leave and many were making an ‘indecorous spectacle of themselves’. Escorting officers were empowered to hand offenders over to the military authorities, regardless of the recipient’s rank and to ‘resist harassment’ over this issue. But rules were often disregarded, soldiers had to be told not to smoke while driving trucks or motor cycles with the petrol tank open. Frequent accidents with firearms were blamed on the slowing down of the programme of moral guidance, on the part of commanders.  

More surprisingly, soldiers in some parts of Greece had to
be told to wear arms – suggesting discipline had become very lax (or the soldiers relaxed) due to the lack of military action. Campioni told the island garrisons always to be ‘alert’ to any threat. From the start of the occupation, he warned:

England, our main enemy, has still got enough strength left and could at any moment launch the full weight of its considerable navy, forces, and aircraft against the Aegean islands. *We must never be caught by surprise.*³³

As the Greek resistance movement grew stronger on the mainland, the military authorities issued a directive ordering the Italian forces to bear arms at all times and troops in the Cyclades even had to be reminded that they were in an occupied country: ‘All officers whatever their status, must always remain armed. I would like to remind you that we are in occupied territory.’³⁴

The idea that in some parts of Greece, Italian soldiers – given the opportunity – almost forgot about the war and spent a lot of their time pursuing their own interests is thus not without foundation. This is the impression given by semi-fictional accounts such as that of the writer and painter, Renzo Biasion, who was a soldier in Crete and other islands, in his notorious book, *Sagapò* (I love you). If his portrait of Italian officers and their female camp followers, living a life devoted to the pursuit of sex, material comfort, booty and profit is exaggerated, the general context and the desire for detachment from the war are quite credible. The harshness of life in Syros may not have permitted the blatant pursuit of personal interests, but even there, at least on a psychological level, soldiers do sometimes seem to have forgotten they were living in occupied territory.

Although hardship due to the long absence from home was one of the principal sources of distress, commanders were surprised by the endurance of some soldiers:

The health of the troops is excellent; their fighting spirit is strong and sincere even if some infantrymen who left with their battalions in December 1940 have been far from their families for more than two and a half years.³⁵
But in Syros, although standards of discipline were relatively high in the first year of occupation, many soldiers had few illusions about the war. At first Rigoutsos was struck by high standards of discipline and the politeness of the soldiers, although some admitted that they were ‘very tired of the war’, and the only thing they wanted was for it to be over as soon as possible, whatever the outcome. For them the return home to their families could not come a moment too soon. ‘Apparently this was their one and only concern’.36

By October 1942, the soldiers who brought invitations to Rigoutsos to attend the occupiers’ ceremonies were even more explicit and seemed to him to lack the moral force needed to hold an army together. Rather than talk about military exploits and naval victories they found consolation in showing Rigoutsos their photographs, ‘some of their wives, some their babies, some their fiancées, others even the whole family’. He said it was the celebration of twenty years of fascist government which brought frustrations out into the open. Rigoutsos was impressed by a young soldier who made insightful comments which he was certain would not have gone down well with Mussolini. The soldier said, with a sigh, that it was ‘because of the March on Rome that we’re now at war today’.37

But the men whom Rigoutsos had regarded as polite and disciplined six months before had, according to him, turned into vandals by the end of their stay. He put it down to the climate of anxiety caused by Axis defeats and the new regime under the military command of Luigi Gino:

In these parts, a very negative impression has been left by the behaviour of the Italian troops, particularly since the departure of Colonel Duca who, due as much to his firmness as to his prestige, imposed a sense of duty and discipline on the troops.

Rigoutsos initially complained about Italian vandalism to the occupying authorities, but his grievances were regarded as exaggerated by Valeriani.38 However, in the last few months of occupation, a property belonging to friends of Rigoutsos in the village of Kini, was wrecked by a military contingent billeted in the house. He claimed that their uncontrolled
behaviour was symptomatic of the disaffection felt by soldiers after the fall of Mussolini on 25 July 1943, and their fear and uncertainty about their future. They vented their feelings in the destruction of most of the buildings on the property: all the wooden structures, doors, roofs and windows were burnt for firewood and they sold the rest of the furniture. It was clear that they were frightened about what would happen to them in the hands of the Germans and seemed to have no faith that their superiors would protect them. Rigoutsos reported that ‘They had sold off all the remaining chairs, tables and beds at a derisory price in order to get themselves a little money, with the presentiment they would badly need it to face the unknown destination the Germans had in store for them’. The day these soldiers left Syros, no doubt in fear and frustration or a fit of gratuitous violence, they broke all the glass in the windows and doors.39 In fact, according to the commanding officer Luigi Gino, who succeeded Duca, soldiers were difficult to control in this period not least because he did not have enough officers to subdue them and reinforcements were of poor quality.

**Food supplies and the impact on morale**
Soldiers’ behaviour towards the local population was conditioned by the lack of food on the island. As mentioned above, Italian troops abroad were poorly nourished; even in Cephalonia where transport by sea was not as precarious as in the Aegean, rations were reduced to a minimum, and ‘were almost always inadequate to the needs of a soldier in wartime’.40 However, soldiers and sailors in the Dodecanese were better nourished than those in the Cyclades, at least until 1943.41 There seems little doubt that Italian troops in Syros received barely adequate and diminishing rations and were paid too little to buy extra food. Valeriani complained that they were paid far less than the troops of Supergrecia, on the mainland. By the second year of the occupation, the soldiers’ staple diet of pasta was greatly reduced.42 The rationing of bread imposed in Italy was extended to the army in December 1941; soldiers were told to join in the ‘noble manifestation of patriotism’ and when on leave, not to expect different treatment from those at home. Commanders were supposed to raise the level of soldiers’ thoughts and feelings, fostering ‘the
spirit of self-abnegation and sacrifice’. There were 26 officers’ messes in Syros, composed of 13 military units and 13 marine units. Ordinary soldiers ate their rations wherever they happened to be and officers in restaurants in Ermoupolis, which were adapted for this purpose. There were two meals a day, one in the morning after 7 a.m. (soldiers rose at 5.30 - 6 a.m.) and one at approximately 3 p.m. At first, the occupiers were better nourished than the local population; after the islanders had endured five months without almost any source of fat Rigoutsos complained:

The Italians are the only ones eating meat and all that constitutes a substantial diet. The bread they eat is wholesome but that given to the population, which is strictly rationed out (150 grams), is quite disgusting and a threat to their health’.

This situation did not last and by 1 December 1942, the imported food made available for purchase twice a month to the garrison officers’ mess was limited to small amounts of pasta, cheese, white flour, maize flour and, occasionally, a pot of jam for each officer. The requisitioning of imports such as olive oil ‘to supplement the rations of the troops’ occurred on an irregular basis, as on 3 March 1943, when 1000 okes of oil (under one litre per head) were available. Junior military and naval officers were entitled to even smaller quantities each while the officers of the garrison received the biggest share of pasta. Officers could buy wine when available, such as in September 1941, when Samos wine was on sale for four lire per litre. On average junior officers could purchase, bimonthly, small amounts of food ranging from 500gr - 1.500gr per head which were similar to the quantities distributed to the dependent population and were barely sufficient for survival. The difference was in quality and variety and included pasta, cheese and white flour.

While senior officers continued to eat reasonably well, it was the troops who suffered most: ‘They are not ignorant of the fact that officers have never been deprived of a thing and that their rich diet has not changed at all.’ Ordinary soldiers became noticeably thinner after the summer of 1942
partly because the bi-monthly shipments of food from the Dodecanese were delayed but also because the quality and quantity of food imported was diminishing. By March 1943, Rigoutsos noted that the contingent of sixteen Italian soldiers billeted nearby was really suffering from hunger: ‘Their loss of weight in the last few months was clearly visible to me’. Eventually, they came to his door begging for food.

The search for food brought the troops up against the population and earned them the reputation of being thieves. Indeed, even when acting under orders, their actions were regarded as outright stealing. Rigoutsos wrote that he had witnessed scenes between fishermen who had worked all night to catch a few fish and Italian soldiers who confiscated their only source of food without paying a penny. The soldiers then passed on the fish to farmers in exchange for other types of food such as milk, chickens and eggs. But these soldiers were always present in church on Sundays and their commanding officer took communion twice a week. He saw this as ‘Italian hypocrisy’ motivated by greed.

Of course, the boundary between official duty and abuse for personal profit was not always clear and often transgressed, if such accounts are true. Abuses took place in a climate where petty theft by the local population was tolerated by the Italians as a safety valve for those who were in desperate need. Both occupier and occupied recognized that compromises had to be made for mutual survival. While the islanders were willing to sell their scrawny donkeys to the Italians, who appeared to them barbarously capable of ‘eating anything’, some soldiers felt sufficiently desperate to beg for food from local people.

Complaints from farmers were common. In one case a farmer had let troops billeted nearby use a well on his land but they tired of walking around the farm wall and made a hole for easier access. When some goats escaped via the broken wall during the night and woke the soldiers in their camp – they allegedly defended themselves by taking pot shots and killed three goats (one apparently weighed 60 kilos) which they roasted and ate. The fact that Valeriani passed the matter on to the military command, suggests that efforts to control theft by the troops were still being made. But this was not always the case, according to another story recounted to the first British
raiding forces to arrive, soldiers would come to people’s houses offering to exchange food for other household items. Once the deal was done their ‘confederates’ from the Guardia di Finanza, would then return later to reclaim the food, which had been obtained ‘illegally’ by the unfortunate islanders.\textsuperscript{54}

**Leisure**

Some entertainment was provided for the troops. Films were shown either in the barracks or in special sessions reserved for the army in the public cinemas.\textsuperscript{55} Talks and events at the Casa di Dante were open to those who wished to attend and Cicladi was issued to the army. Pastoral care was provided by chaplains, with 27 assigned to the military contingents in the Aegean islands and four in the Cyclades, (compared to 124 for the rest of Greece). Only one was permanently stationed in Syros, Cappellano Virgilio Scuneo, and it is doubtful that one chaplain could provide much emotional support to over two thousand men. This also depended on soldiers’ adherence to Catholicism; while most of the Cuneo forces were from the north of Italy, some replacements came from the south where attachment to the Church was stronger. The memoirs of a Sicilian naval rating, stationed on Leros, show that he derived profound moral and emotional support from the military chaplains.\textsuperscript{56} The chaplains’ duties were also to proselytize fascism as much as religion, a task which they executed with varying degrees of commitment.\textsuperscript{57} Padre Scuneo’s talk on ‘Fascism and Religion’ at the Casa di Dante, published in Cicladi, showed support for fascism, attacking the common enemies of the Church and the regime who were ‘Freemasons, Bolsheviks and Socialists’.\textsuperscript{58}

While some soldiers, mostly officers, attended the Casa di Dante, others preferred lighter pursuits. Commanders could hand out three passes per week allowing deserving soldiers to remain out until 11.20 pm to go to the cinema. Soldiers’ musical talents were encouraged in public performances at the Casa di Dante and the Apollo Theatre and the military band had a regular weekly slot playing in the main square. The army also tried to sustain soldiers’ morale with physical exercise and sports to boost their team spirit, such as regular football matches between units, including a German team stationed
Ceremonies like the commemoration of the March on Rome, were attended by all soldiers and involved music, speeches, presentation of arms and parades. The festival of the regiment, which was celebrated on 1 November 1942, was an elaborate ritual which involved a troop inspection by Admiral Campioni. The event was carefully orchestrated in order to make a coherent presentation of about 1,500 men. The army also provided a soldiers’ club, with some facilities such as books, writing materials, musical instruments and games. Soldiers received letters and radio messages from Italy from women willing to stand in as ‘godmothers’ in order to boost the morale of the troops; sometimes these contacts were of great emotional support to those suffering from loneliness and isolation.

Overall, reasonably good care was taken of soldiers’ health, for example, numerous cases of malaria at the start of the occupation were carefully monitored and treated. The incidence of malaria increased from May 1941, and 11 critical cases were admitted to the Syros civilian hospital in mid-July – some with very serious complications. In August, the worst cases were brought in from the other islands and sent to the military camp hospital and it became necessary to open up another convalescent home. By the end of August the worst of the crisis was over, but malaria continued to occur from time to time.

Considerable efforts were made to deal with the problem of venereal diseases which spread rapidly among the troops soon after their arrival in Syros. It was reported that in the port, with its heavy traffic and numerous visitors, even before the war prostitution was widespread and syphilis and other venereal diseases were common. With the arrival of the occupation troops and because of the food crisis among the civilian population, ‘clandestine prostitution had increased on a vast scale, growing every day at an alarming rate.’

Prevention of venereal diseases was obstructed, however, by a number of factors. Local provision for the protection of the health of prostitutes was ‘rudimentary’ and the majority of ‘non-professional’ women trading sex for food did so in secret and could not be easily identified. For the Cyclades region from 1 August 1941 to 8 December 1942, 270 cases
of venereal disease were treated in the military hospital, and cases of syphilis and gonorrhea among soldiers gradually decreased. In late 1942, a case of cross-infection was caused by ‘irresponsible soldiers, presumably visiting Syros’, who infected six women who then re-infected other soldiers. Otherwise, as Gino reported, the results of the army health unit’s intervention were ‘very satisfactory’. Preventative measures included a fortnightly medical check-up and immediate admission to hospital of all soldiers infected with venereal diseases. However, Gino protested to his superiors about the inadequate supply of condoms. He said that, in a country where the women were seriously infected and personal hygiene was deplorable, condoms were the only prophylactic means which was really reliable. Supplies of these items were always irregular and the quantity insufficient to meet demand. Soldiers were suffering from the lack of condoms and continuously requested them. Gino advised that regular distributions of condoms would prevent most venereal diseases as, apart from a few exceptions, the majority of soldiers would make use of them. He admitted that the cooperation of the individual soldier was indispensable and without it, it would be impossible to obtain the good results the army aspired to achieve. One medical officer on the island of Santorini suggested that a garrison brothel be created to avoid uncontrolled prostitution. This would also help the physical and moral well-being of the troops, some of whom were suffering from:

nervous disorders which were certainly due to prolonged sexual abstinence which has not been calmed by military action.

Overall, it appears that army-approved brothels were never adequate, judging by the pressure put on local women by the Italian occupiers. It was not by chance that Italian soldiers in Greece acquired the epithet of the ‘army of lovers’ or s’agapò (I love you) and families had to protect their womenfolk from the invasive demands of soldiers. The quest for female company on the part of Italian soldiers was motivated by the need to replace the close bonds of family life as well as sexual desire.
It is more than a coincidence that ‘genuine affection’ was widespread and was the subject of novels, including those by Greek authors. Research on courting before the war in the Italian colony of the Dodecanese, suggests that Italian men were appreciated by local women who were used to arranged marriages with farmers and fishermen, often much older men, perhaps lacking charm and sensitivity. The success of some wartime relationships which provided mutual emotional and psychological comfort as well as the possibility of economic support, was born out by the high numbers of Greek women seeking to be repatriated with Italian men after the war. However, in Syros relationships were usually temporary involving, in some cases, housekeeping for Italian officers. For most women it was a painful but unavoidable compromise to ensure their own survival and that of their families.

The one thing that would have really boosted soldiers’ morale – the news that the war was likely to end – was kept from the troops. But by the end of 1942 all over Greece the number of Italian soldiers listening to Allied radio broadcasts greatly increased. In November, when news of Italian military disasters in North Africa was seeping through, the authorities on Syros tried vainly to clamp down on this practice. They noted that listening to news broadcast by foreign radios especially from London, was spreading through the ranks with deleterious effect and warned:

While you are reminded that listening to enemy broadcasts is a crime deserving exemplary punishment, all commands must be aware of the need for particular vigilance both of the use of individual radio sets and those in offices, canteens, the soldiers’ centres, local bases etc – which can undoubtedly be exploited.

Internal army newspapers or radio broadcasts were of no interest to those who no longer believed the propaganda about Axis progress. Apart from Allied broadcasts, most soldiers got their information via word of mouth, or the ‘soldier’s radio’ (radio fante), and it appears probable that by early 1943, soldiers in Syros had few illusions of the ultimate chances of Axis victory. Nevertheless, the drawn-out campaigns in
North Africa throughout 1942 were used to boost morale and disguise problems elsewhere. The authorities themselves had access to news and Valeriani admitted to Rigoutsos that in his view, the Axis had already lost the war.

If the fall of Mussolini and the Armistice of 8 September came as a surprise to soldiers in Syros, it was no doubt because they were not in a position to assess the gravity of the situation. Mussolini’s dismissal as head of government on 25 July 1943, was billed as a ‘resignation’ and his name was mentioned only once in the _Cicladi_ issue following the event. Instead, great emphasis was laid on the authority of the king, to whom the army owed its loyalty. A report about the state of mind of the troops of the 6th Cuneo Regiment stationed on Samos, claimed that following the events of July, the troops had behaved with ‘restraint, discipline and loyalty regarding the developments of the war and the action taken by the new Italian government’.74

This was not the response observed by the people of Syros. Rigoutsos wrote that many of the soldiers were ‘despondent and undisciplined’, if not out of control, in the last few weeks of the occupation. The Samos report admitted that:

soldiers were secretly longing for a peace agreement, which would mean the end to exposure to risk, and a return home to their families and their jobs. When news of the Armistice came it was a shock, bringing an end to dreams of an easy solution and fears regarding the tragic events in Italy.75

**The Armistice**

On 8 September 1943, the military commander of the Cyclades transmitted the first announcement of the Italian Armistice to the military units in Syros.76 Badoglio’s controversial directive that the army should cease hostilities against the Allies but ‘resist any eventual aggression from any other source’ caused great perplexity among the armies stranded in occupied areas. No clear line of action was given and the decision came so long after the start of Allied-Italian negotiations in July, that the Germans had time to reinforce their troops in mainland Greece and on some islands, particularly Rhodes.77
Although the Armistice brought hope to the Italian army that the war was nearly over, the ambiguous announcement exacerbated tension between fascist and non-fascist Italian soldiers. It became clear that there were many non-fascists in Syros:

Wednesday, 8 September 1943. The public radio announced the conclusion of an Armistice between the Italians and the Allies. Celebrations and delight all over Syros. There were a large number of Italians, non-fascists of course, who were as pleased as the Greeks about this Italian U-turn.78

In the absence of clear instructions, the choice was invidious. Those officers who adhered to fascism opted not to abandon their Axis partners, obliging the men serving under them to do the same, as was the case in Syros. The failure of the Allied-Italian initiative in the Dodecanese to resist the German forces and maintain control of the islands has been partly blamed on the Italians’ lack of clear directives.79 But some effective resistance did occur, and the reason why the decision to resist was taken by the HQ of the Cuneo Division in Samos, as well as military units on most of the other Cyclades islands, and not followed by officers of the 7th Regiment of the Cuneo Division in Syros, remains something of a mystery.

A series of preparations for defensive action against an attack on Syros had been set in motion prior to the Armistice.80 After the Armistice was announced, security was increased and the military command was surrounded by an armed platoon of 25 men. Gino’s instructions reflected the ‘defensive action’ policy:

All soldiers should behave in a serious, dignified and non-provocative manner. They should only resist in case of attack. Sentries should only shoot if attacked.81

In spite of these preparations, for the majority of the Italian occupying forces the Armistice came as a shock and produced ‘huge psychological difficulties’. The sudden switch in loyalties required a major readjustment after several years of Axis
partnership. These uncertainties were compounded by lack of confidence in their own military potential compared with perceived German efficiency.82 (In fact, the state of Italian equipment and defences was notoriously poor.)83 Although the forces in Syros had had almost no contact with the Germans, it was common knowledge that the Germans were better armed and that they had moved swiftly after August 25th, to increase their troops stationed in Rhodes – a sure sign that they did not trust the Italians. Advance propaganda by the Germans was intense and it appears that Gino allowed himself to be deceived by their promises of collaboration.84

Five days after the Armistice, on 13 September, a small German contingent arrived by boat, escorted by two minesweepers, to demand the hand-over of control of the island from the Italians. Gino summoned the Greek authorities for consultation but also warned them that any opposition would cause a German bombardment of the island. Unlike on the other islands, the Italian officers concerned did not offer the troops the alternative of resistance to the Germans, in spite of the large military presence of approximately 1,500 Italian soldiers in Syros, and about 3,000 in the region.

The hasty capitulation by the military and naval commanding officers in Syros was deplored after the war by the Italian navy (not normally noted for its support of resistance) who blamed their association with Greece for their lack of courage. They said that the damaging influence of contacts made in Greece explained the subsequent events in Syros, but did not excuse the climate of ‘weakness and defeatism’ of commands in Greece. This climate had prevailed over the spirit of loyalty and courageous resistance established in Leros and Samos.85

In fact, the reverse was true, it was due to the lack of links with Greek resistance in Syros as well as loyalty to fascism, that there was no Italian resistance against the Germans. While the military commander, Luigi Gino, remained loyal to Mussolini and was backed by a small group of high-ranking officers, he may also have given way to pressure from the naval frigate captain, Ernesto Navone. Navone later claimed that he was the only one who had maintained control of discipline and he was proud to have handed everything over to the Germans.86 He was most probably the officer who, according to Rigoutsos,
went against the tide to argue the fascist case during the public celebrations of Greeks and Italians on 8 September when:

An ultra-fascist officer got up to announce to his comrades and soldiers that the war was not over, and that Mussolini with his large band of supporters would continue the war alongside Germany which would ultimately win the war.87

Navone had already distinguished himself, six months earlier, for his lack of co-operation with the civil administration in a dispute over the ‘favouring’ of Greek citizens with extra food allocations. Valeriani condemned Navone’s lack of solidarity and warned that the naval captain should refrain from such comments which sounded like an attempt to ‘take control of this command’.88

It appears that Navone’s moment to take control of the occupiers’ fate came with the Armistice. His claim to have been the ‘only one in control’ of the occupation forces suggests that the military command’s hold over the troops was weak and that dissent was barely contained. In fact Gino had already admitted that he did not have the means to control the troops and Rigoutsos observed that the authorities did not seem to be in charge, failing to reprimand the troops ‘as if they feared them’.89 Significantly, the decision to capitulate without resistance was not unanimous. A post-war survey of the history of the resistance recorded the disagreement between ‘the naval and military commands which were on one side, and the junior officers and troops on the other’.

In Samos the decision to resist a German take-over was linked to British and Greek support of resistance in the Dodecanese islands and, apart from the fascist militia, the soldiers of the 6th Regiment of the Cuneo Division agreed to join the Italian-Allied resistance. Although the Germans reacted swiftly to retake the islands, there was considerable resistance in Leros which enabled the Cuneo Division to hold out longer and organize some resistance in Samos before the evacuation of part of the occupation force to Turkey.90 In fact, a dramatic series of events and valiant efforts at resistance had preceded the capitulation of most of the Aegean islands (including the other Cyclades islands) and it appeared at
first that Syros would follow orders to resist. When Rhodes fell, the military HQ handed over authority for the forces in the Aegean to General Mario Soldarelli, commander of the Cuneo Division in Samos, who moved to coordinate resistance on all the islands. After the small garrison on the island of Termia fell, Soldarelli attempted to regroup all the contingents on the larger islands. Gino in Syros appeared to be cooperating with this plan and a series of telegrams were exchanged. Gino reported ‘no change’ on 11 September but on the next day, at three o’clock, he radioed that German forces had ‘disembarked at S. Stefano Point with two minesweepers. They were followed by four mortar units and have immobilized our garrison’.

In his final message before breaking off communications with his superiors, he reported that German aircraft formations were continuously flying over Syros. Further requests from Soldarelli for news from Syros did not receive a reply – except for a message via Leros, that ‘Syros was negotiating favourably with the Germans’. Soldarelli then advised Gino that he did not consider it ‘necessary or appropriate’ to adhere to agreements made with the Germans, giving him a way out of any commitment. But in Syros unilateral decisions had already been acted upon. In fact, according to German records, Gino went to surprising lengths to try to hide his failure to obey orders to resist – instead there was a cover-up to ‘save face with his superiors’. He asked the Germans to simulate an air bombardment and at 07.00 on 15 September the planes arrived over Syros but did not drop any bombs ‘because the agreement had been signed in the meantime’. It therefore seems probable that Gino, in collusion with the Germans, intended to deny that he had received Soldarelli’s order for resistance.

This charade explains why the lines went dead from 13 September and, apart from ‘indiscretions’ from a telegraph operator in Syros, the silence was only broken on 28 September when a boat managed to leave the island bringing news of the capitulation. The boat owners declared that the Germans had arrived on 13 September, giving an ultimatum of three hours for capitulation, after which bombs would drop on Ermoupolis. They stated that the Germans then brought
all the Italians together to ask who intended to continue fighting with them. Three officers and 150 men declared they were not willing to fight with the Germans and they were immediately disarmed and taken off on the boats. Two days later two ships arrived and the rest of the soldiers went aboard after being stripped of their arms. These included those who had declared they wanted to continue fighting with the Germans. It appears that Col Gino suffered the same fate and was also shipped off.  

Seeing the soldiers being disarmed after capitulating without any resistance, Rigoutsos assumed they had decided to pull out of the war.

There could hardly have been a more discreditable sight than these once-proud soldiers of the Duce – or a more amusing one for the public – than to watch their ex-comrades in arms disarming them on the quays and sending them off like cattle on sailing boats and other small craft (about two thousand five hundred men). Seeing the soldiers being disarmed after capitulating without any resistance, Rigoutsos assumed they had decided to pull out of the war.

The poor ‘psychological state’ of mind of the soldiers and ‘a peace-time mentality’, have been identified as the reason for the predominance of Navone, Gino and their circle. Those who refused to capitulate to the Germans were the first to be shipped off to Piraeus, (no doubt in fairly brutal conditions in view of the extremely cruel way resisting soldiers left on Samos were treated). A further 160 Italians went into hiding to avoid German deportation or to join the resistance. These included civilian personnel like nurses and doctors, who were hidden by the Greeks. Italian and German records show that the remaining 1,100 soldiers were transported to Piraeus on 18 September 1943, 200 on 30 September and 190 on 18 October. (About 600 soldiers were retained for the defence of the island and to help with the practicalities of the handover.) Witnesses in Athens were shocked by the terrible state of those soldiers brought in from the islands; many had been kept without food and even water for long periods and their survival on the train journey to German camps was very much in question. As for the fascists, Navone’s subservience to the Germans secured his return to Italy to join the fascist regime in
the north, but compliance does not appear to have benefited all the other Italian officers; most of the occupation force was sent to labour camps, in Greece, Austria, Germany and Poland.

Some explanation for Gino’s action may be sought in the critical state of isolation existing in the Cyclades by 1943. It is possible that he felt let down by his superiors; since December 1942, he had made constant appeals for extra men and material. Allied bombardment was taking place on a daily basis by the summer of 1943 and Gino urgently requested twenty two anti-aircraft battery units and arms for the islands. A critical situation had arisen because drastic reductions had been made in the forces in the Cyclades. He argued that it was no longer possible to ensure the defence of the islands and to control public order. Gino’s appeals were largely disregarded and the troops he did receive included invalids as well as former deserters who could not be adequately supervised.

While the Italians failed to defend the Cyclades, the Germans showed themselves to be more astute: Syros, like Rhodes, was a strategic target and they moved quickly to secure these islands. But Gino and his supporters were, in turn, deceived by their allies. In spite of the Italians’ assurances that they were willing to continue fighting with their Axis partners (provided they were allowed to fight under their own regimental banner), the Germans decided that the Italians could not be trusted. Although proud to have taken Syros without firing a single shot, the commander of the German expedition, Admiral Lange, warned his superiors that the Italians with their:

apparent friendliness to Germany (Germanofilia) and crafty subtleties were angling to stay on the islands. Should there be an attack, they intended to hand [the Germans] over to the enemy.

Lange therefore asked for permission to remove all the soldiers from Syros.
From the start of the occupation social tensions were exacerbated by the lack of food in Syros and the prospect of starvation. The disparity between those who had access to food and those who did not, put pressure on social bonds and aggravated religious tensions. The war against the Italians and events preceding the occupation had already ignited suspicions against the Catholic population on the part of the Orthodox islanders.¹ In fact, the island’s history and the particular mindset of different social groups would profoundly affect attitudes to the occupiers, the way they experienced the occupation and most of all, how it was interpreted in collective memory. But food shortages put all the islanders in competition with each other, forcing them to behave in ways they would not have contemplated before the war. In this new kind of improvised existence, old values were temporarily suspended and access to food became the key determinant of social position.

This chapter will attempt to assess the social consequences of occupation. It will look at social categories such as the family unit and the status of women. It will also consider sources of inter-communal tension and ask who collaborated with the occupiers and who tried to resist.

**The family**

The fight for survival disrupted social customs and weakened the affective bonds which held society together. Even the family unit, a powerful and cohesive force in Greek society, was stretched to its limit.² In a community where closely-knit
family bonds were primordial, families generally closed in on
themselves and most parents sacrificed their own needs in
order to feed their children. But in the egoism born out of
fear and the need to survive, other families fell apart; where
it was unthinkable before the war for family members not to
greet each other, Panayotis Zaranis remembered that:

There was such great hunger and poverty that in our house
we had nothing to put in the pot for us to eat. We had grown
so far apart from each other that if we saw our father or our
brothers in the street we turned our backs on each other.4

In one case a young child asked the local baker not to give
his ration of bread to his mother because he claimed that she
would steal it from him. To ensure that parents did not eat
the portion distributed to children at schools, the authorities
ordered that the child had to be present and often mothers,
in a very weak state themselves, had to carry their starving
children to the school. The Italians recorded the drastic
impact of famine which caused the break-up of families,
leaving homeless, orphaned children to roam the streets.

Even where families held together, life for a child could be
fraught with fear and insecurity. One interviewee remembers
being frightened by the tramp of soldiers’ boots and the noise
of trucks on the street above her house. She would hide when
Italian soldiers came to the door and, in order to discourage
any sexual interest, her mother claimed that she and her sisters
were much younger than their real age. When there was
nothing left to eat, she remembers spending all her time on her
knees hunting for anything that might grow. A wild plant which
they gathered in large quantities from the countryside was
used to make an unpalatable stew. The family was particularly
traumatized when a family member, who was returning from a
trip to buy food in the farms, was badly beaten up by an Italian
patrol which confiscated the food.

The impact of competition for food dulled the islanders’
sensitivities and sense of social responsibility. Survivors recall
‘an absence of normal affection’ at a time when feelings were
secondary to the need to survive; this was particularly extreme
when coping with death:
Those who died at home were not declared, nor did people weep in an obvious way. Why? So that they could collect the deceased’s ration at the soup kitchen. They kept the corpse at home for three or four days, there was no smell at first because there was no flesh, only bones. 

This witness remembered that four bodies were left on the road for days until somebody came from the Town Hall with a hand-cart to take them to the common grave. What now shocked him, looking back, was that nobody seemed to care about those who had no family to look after them; there was no sympathy or humanitarian concern, ‘you saw a dead body and you felt nothing’. Psychiatrists working in Athens noted lack of concern, even for relatives, among patients who had undergone starvation; undernourishment caused a state of hyper-irritation and aggressive intolerance of others.

In the first three months of 1942, full mourning rites had to be abandoned when the daily death toll made it difficult to conduct funerals in the customary manner. Islanders were deprived of rituals which were an essential part of the way society normally functioned, both as a means of expressing their grief and of reassuring the living. At the peak of the famine, bodies were loaded onto carts, or carried on doors taken from private houses, as no stretchers or other wood were available, even for coffins. Burials in the common grave were perfunctory, at least at times when the cemetery personnel was over-worked. Even sacred objects were no longer taboo since the starving stole the wooden crosses from graves for firewood, and oil from shrines, inside the churches.

While starvation victims slowly gave in to desperation, some taboos still functioned and cases of suicide were rare. There is no record of how many took their own lives due to the difficult conditions under which doctors were working. Rigoutsos noted the suicide pact of two brothers aged seventeen and twenty which took place near his house on 10 April 1942; after a night-time raid of a farmer’s property they had cooked and eaten a good meal before taking their own lives. Although most victims of hunger were often too weak to take their own lives, religious beliefs either deterred those who might have wanted to do so or boosted the fight for survival.
Although tragedy haunted most families, some people found relief in humour, the last resort of those with little power over their own lives. Among the bedraggled and lice-ridden who were queuing for tiny rations of flour, any diversion was welcome: as for instance, when a woman who faked pregnancy to push her way up the queue, was discovered to have a cushion under a skirt. A couple who got married during the occupation, still joke about their reduced physical state and their ‘wedding feast’ which consisted of a few scraps of bread. Doctors operating in the hospital with extremely primitive means, were capable of irony about their working conditions because every attempt to sustain life boosted the community’s will to survive.

In fact, the stoicism of the poor was remarked on by many sources, including the Italians. The reluctance to show weakness which prevented some people from seeking assistance, also helped many to survive and boosted the self-esteem of the community. An extreme example was that of the Doukas family where the father’s sense of honour allowed him to act against the interests of his own family. His son recorded a school visit from the military governor, Duca, accompanied by his own son; the two boys became friendly and the hungry Greek child was given extra rations to take home. But his mother would not allow her children to eat the food until the father returned and, to the boy’s chagrin, it transpired that his father would not accept the gift and forced his son to return it.

Patriarchal values were threatened, however, when traditional gender roles were reversed or matriarchal power, held in check in normal times, was asserted. As noted above, starvation undermined the status of the male protector among men who were too weak to provide for their families. In many instances women were forced to fill the gap, queuing for food or replacing their men-folk in their protective role, as sole adult survivors. An indication of role reversal, enforced by circumstances, can be found in the appeals from women and orphaned young people to the occupiers. In one instance the widow of a printer who died during the famine, with three children and ageing parents to support, wrote to the Italian authorities beseeching them to commission work from the
printing works so that she could keep the business going herself.20 Another single woman wrote begging for a nursery place for her two-year-old daughter because she needed to work and her daughter ‘had become very thin and cried when left alone’.21 The implication was that leaving the child alone was her only option – a solution which would have been unacceptable in peacetime when extended families usually made sure children were cared for. A Catholic woman wrote to the authorities for help because she was nine months pregnant, had three children to support and had been forced to sell her bed in order to buy food.22 Another woman wrote because she had heard that ‘many poor families had been helped’; the details of this letter are typical of the predicament of many. She was a widow with four children aged four to fourteen. She said she had been obliged to sell all her furniture in order to survive.

Every day I go to the mountains and villages to collect wood and greens to feed my starving children, one of whom is ill. I weep at the thought of what is to become of us especially when we are sitting at table and my children ask me for food that I cannot give them.23

Often the eldest sibling took on the role of ‘parent’:

We are three orphans with no protection; our father died during the war of 1922. I am the eldest and have completed grammar school. I have now been left without a job for the following reason: I worked for four years, since 1938, at Mrs Konstantinidou’s bakery. But, because the 800 drachma wage was insufficient, I became ill due to the lack of food. They took advantage of my illness to dismiss me from my job.24

Although the girl received compensation from her employer, it was not enough for the family to live on and she begged the authorities to help her get her job back so that she could go on supporting her siblings. Boys too, were often in the same predicament: a Catholic orphan aged twenty-one from Ano Syros, who was studying Italian at Casa di Dante appealed for a
job because he and his sister were dependent on their brother for survival. Such groups or substitute families were under considerable stress and were barely holding together.

A moral panic?
The low status of poorer, especially unmarried women, made them vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The sudden rise in casual sex in return for food, threatened social conventions and the island’s clergy remonstrated about what they saw as the ‘vertiginous decline in morality’. Of the many girls and women who resorted to relations with Italian soldiers in order to survive, most were aware that there would be a high price to pay for transgressing taboos. But faced with starvation, unmarried women’s options were restricted; in a dowry-based marriage system, girls from destitute families had little prospect of any wealth in the future and stood much less chance of getting married after the war. The social importance vested in the dowry was such that some women refused to sell their embroidered linen dowries even when they were starving because, as they said, it had taken them years to make and they would not be able to do so again. Women’s poor prospects and social worth were undermined even further by the general indigence of the population and indeed it is likely that in some cases their own relatives sent them out to procure food from the Italian soldiers, in return for sex. (In fact, the practice existed elsewhere: in Italy, police reports gave evidence of families suffering from near-starvation who exploited their daughters in this way).

Although it was rumoured that Catholic women were more disposed to trading sex for food, which was ‘widespread’ in the town, Orthodox women were equally vulnerable. In fact, most soldiers had little contact with the majority of the Catholic population as they were garrisoned in Ermoupolis. Rigoutsos expressed shock that women from ‘good families’ resorted to ‘prostitution’, suggesting that on every level of society, no one was immune from the degrading consequences of famine. It was well know that, in the murky moral climate of a society in crisis, there were those who were ready to exploit this particular ‘market’, resulting from the Italian army’s demands for sex. These dealers were rated as the most amoral among
Syros’s newly rich profiteers. According to Mihalis Stefanos, women were used to extract export permits from the Italians in exchange for a few scraps of food; the women then handed over the permits to the ‘irreproachable Greek operating behind the scenes’. Stefanos thought that the aim was to accustom the girl who returned ‘to be subjected to humiliation time and again, just to get something to eat for a short while’. He reviled his ‘fellow-citizens’ for their betrayal of their own society and nation. For him these men were traitors whose behaviour threatened the moral fabric of the island community. The perception that there was a link between the trade in permits and prostitution was common and came up in the first newspapers published after the occupation by the communist-led resistance group EAM. On the whole, the blame was cast on the women, and scabrous songs and jokes expressed the community’s disapproval of women who associated with the occupiers. Nevertheless there was an awareness that these transactions had ‘protected the lives of the women themselves and entire families’.

The harshness of sexual trading was mitigated in cases where men and women negotiated a stable agreement providing for their mutual needs, or were drawn together by genuine affection. One Orthodox interviewee, living in a village outside Ermoupolis during the occupation, was very reluctant to admit that she was a ‘housekeeper’ for an Italian soldier although this enabled her to survive after her brother and sister had died of starvation. But the scars of the past have still not been effaced and even today both she and her daughter are still reticent about the social stigma attached to her behaviour.

On the other hand, at least four cases of inter-marriage between local women and Italian soldiers have been verified and in one case, an Italian soldier returned after the war to propose marriage to a woman with whom he had a child. (Although this may well have been because the Catholic Church encouraged fathers to take responsibility for illegitimate ‘war babies’. The local historian Andreas Drakakis noted that after the Italian Armistice many women in Syros gave shelter to Italian soldiers in order to protect them from deportation by the Germans. He also confirmed that a
few of these couples eventually got married. This conforms to a pattern of relationships discussed above, between Italian soldiers and Greek women, resulting in hundreds - possibly several thousand - Greek women moving to Italy after the war. Witnesses in Crete stated that Cretan women ‘lined up on the beaches’ in order to be repatriated with the Italians. One notable local case of inter-marriage was that of the Italian officer, Enrico Barmann, in spite of the fact that his role was to spy on the prefecture. This perhaps explains why the couple did not stay in Syros but the marriage does not appear to have created ill-feeling; EAM’s newspaper *Kykladiki Foni*, which was highly critical of collaborators, announced the marriage and wished the couple well. In another typical case, because the Greek woman was Orthodox and could not marry her Italian partner in Syros, they lived together until after the war when they went to Italy to get married. They had apparently boarded a train ‘full of Greek-Italian couples’ returning to Italy. Although the Italian government informed the British repatriation authorities that they would accept all the Greek spouses, provided they were married before entering Italy, even unmarried women were accepted in the mass repatriation of soldiers. There are also cases of Italian soldiers, particularly from the Dodecanese, who remained in Greece after the war with their Greek wives, including at least one in Syros. In this matter, therefore, it appears that public judgment was mitigated by circumstances and in spite of harsh attitudes to the behaviour of certain women, there was some flexibility over individual cases.

**Theft and profiteering**

While intimate relations with the enemy met with social disapproval, greater leniency was shown to stealing – an act which would have undermined moral values in peacetime. Even the authorities appeared to take little action against the many instances of petty theft by the starving, whereas the Italian records contain many references to fines or punishments for profiteering.

In the spring of 1942, seven farmers from the Chrissa area, wrote to the Italian authorities to protest at the increase of theft in the countryside. They said that they were used to
vagabonds living off the land but these had now increased tenfold and the perpetrators had turned into ‘confirmed thieves who were allowed to go free’ by the Greek gendarmes and rural constabulary. Their main concern was that they had to abandon their work in order to protect their land. They appealed to the occupiers to take over from the Greek gendarmerie and do a better job, claiming that the number of thieves had gone up from about one hundred to a thousand by October 1941, as the famine increased. Farmers from the more fertile neighbouring island of Tinos wrote to the occupiers arguing that theft of produce was out of control; they thought thieves, particularly those coming from Syros, should be heavily fined and not allowed to escape back home unpunished.

Thieves were known as saltadori, (coined from the Italian verb saltare, to jump) for those who jumped on lorries to steal goods in transit. In Athens, organized gangs of saltadori operated close to food deposits, sometimes with impunity. There were often extensive networks involving children acting as a warning system: in July 1942 the police managed to arrest a network of no less than 320 ‘black marketeers’. A resident of Ermoupolis, Markos K., has proud memories of his exploits as a saltadoro because he said was able to help his family survive the occupation and to get married during that period. He was one of the more fortunate, compared to his fellows, because he was a docker and had the opportunity to steal food. Stealing required ingenuity and a cool head; social prestige was attached to outwitting the occupiers and may have evoked old traditions according to which stealing was considered honourable and ‘brave’. A common trick was to wear two pairs of trousers with many internal pockets for concealing food, enabling dockers to bring some food home to their families. According to another witness this was how the food stealing was done:

My Mama made two pairs of trousers for me. One was tighter like underwear, the other was looser, sailor style, with lots of pockets and made of different cloths, so that it looked as if it was patched. I tied bags to my shins, - in between the two trousers it was like a storeroom. We
used to steal rice, sugar, flour whatever we could find there. The Italians did not notice. We had work there every day.

During the interview, Markos’s wife tried to discourage him from admitting to theft, but he was proud of his exploits which were sometimes achieved with the complicity of the Italian officer in charge. This was in spite of the Italian authorities’ concerted effort to rule out stealing in the docks by cutting down on the superfluous work-force and leaving only those who had been specially chosen for their honesty. The fact that dockers continued to evade surveillance suggests that deals were made between occupier and occupied, for mutual survival or profit. Because the port area was sealed off from the general public for security reasons, it appears to have become a zone where those working in the area operated in a separate world from the rest of the town. Most crucially, it was here that the majority of the island’s food was offloaded and stored in the central warehouse. The occupiers claimed to have taken control of food management because the local authorities were considered ‘too corrupt’ to be left in charge. Nevertheless, in a typical case of pilfering a team of men, delivering sealed containers of hot food to the schools and soup-kitchens, found a way of siphoning off some of the food before it was delivered. The existence of a large quantity of food, stored in an area surrounded by starving people, attracted all manner of ingenious thieves and became a focal point for Italians and Greeks with an instinct for contraband operations - sometimes under the noses of the Guardia di Finanza, and Carabinieri.

Witnesses talk of persistent theft of a wide range of goods, at considerable personal risk. These included anything from food from the farms and Italian stores, to dynamite and detonators. But only one self-confessed black marketeer speaks of a general ‘loss of a sense of humanity and self respect’; he took part in contraband dealings between Greeks and Italians and later with the Germans:

We gave them clothes, jewelry, utensils in exchange for food, cigarettes, flour, sugar etc. Sometimes they double-crossed us but we played lots of tricks on them too.
To contain inevitable social fragmentation, the Catholic bishop publicly forgave the stealing of holy oil from the churches and, on 8 March 1942, he conducted a service of atonement for the upsurge in theft during the peak of the famine. The temporary relaxation of moral codes probably fuelled endemic, large scale profiteering. While some of the island’s assets went to the occupiers, new forces came into play which were empowered by the redistribution of tangible wealth. Some leather merchants appear to have made ‘great fortunes’ supplying shoe leather for the Italian army, at the same time as they extracted very high prices from the islanders, whose footwear degenerated as prices became prohibitive. Profiteering traders were singled out by the occupiers as:

the category which has benefited most during our occupation due to lucrative profits made from their affairs, ... this is the only group which puts individual interest above any other.

As mentioned above, some farmers also rose in social status when they profited from the famine and acquired the land and houses of desperate smallholders. Nor did they wish to hide the newly acquired symbols of wealth which they felt vindicated them for the position of inferiority to which they had been relegated by the townspeople. They made a point of buying the trappings of bourgeois life such as pianos and fine clothes. Inevitably, they became the butt of jokes from the formerly wealthy elite who claimed the farmers did not know what to do with the pianos, asking if they could be operated electrically, or using them as coops for their hens. There was much laughter at the expense of one farmer who turned up in church wearing pyjamas.

While the ‘better off’ were initially able to pay black market prices for food, their wealth stimulated soaring prices. Some of the island’s wealthier inhabitants were said to have paid for food with ‘handfuls of jewelry’, as food became the only valid currency on the island. But even the wealthy could not buy food when there was none available. Thus the balance of power shifted towards those who were able to profit most from the food shortages. With so much wealth and property offered
in exchange for food, there were considerable profits to be made (in fact, all over Greece wealth was changing hands and devolving to different sectors of society. By the end of the war 6,500 new business or industrial enterprises were created and 350,000 properties sold to 60,000 buyers.)\textsuperscript{64} In Syros after the war, the trial of those collaborators who made abusive use of export permits for personal profit, indicated that this – together with black marketeering of food supplies – was the crux of the problem.\textsuperscript{65} At Liberation, EAM’s newspaper \textit{Kýkladíkí Fóni}, cited a councilor working with Karakalás, who was involved in selling olive oil on the black market together with profiteering industrialists who were close to the Italians.\textsuperscript{66} In Athens, the transfer of wealth was visible in the population of the city where new faces appeared in the bars and restaurants of the centre and impoverished ex-clients disappeared.\textsuperscript{67} In Ermoupolis, the old elite with country properties moved out of town and newly-rich traders kept a low profile, for fear of being attacked by the starving.\textsuperscript{68}

**Orthodox and Catholics**

With more food available in the rural hinterland, tensions increased between Orthodox citizens of Ermoupolis and the Catholics of the countryside. Even without any definitive proof some of the townspeople were convinced that the Italians favoured the Catholic farmers.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, Campioni made it clear in November 1941 that, because the farming population had more food, the distribution of rations on the Cyclades islands should favour the townspeople who were ‘generally devoid of any resources’.\textsuperscript{70} The idea of special status may have come from the farmers themselves; those on the island of Tinos appealed to the Italian Authorities for help because they said they had heard that the occupiers ‘helped and protected the farmers’.\textsuperscript{71} This contrasted with the Italian assessment of their relations. They noted that the farmers continued to feel they had been:

mistreated because of the low price imposed on their products. In fact in this matter they are not completely wrong, but like all Greeks in general, they have a tendency for self-enrichment at the expense of the community. It is
clear that this category has been least affected of all by the consequences of the war.72

The Tinos farmers claimed that, contrary to the opinion of the townspeople who were anxious to get hold of their produce, they had not become profiteers but were still barely self-sufficient. In their view the townspeople had never had to suffer the hardship, bad weather and hard labour of farming and yet they were now claiming an equal share in the produce. If the farmers were going to suffer injustice, they warned, they saw no reason for working. They were prepared to submit to the ammassi, provided a fair amount of food was left to them for each family member because men working a fifteen hour day required one oke of barley per day (not half, as rules allowed), its quality having decreased by 30 per cent.73 The Syros farmers also felt that they were not doing well enough out of the food crisis and were as resentful of the occupation and its consequences as their Orthodox compatriots. The Italians noted that they were: ‘highly intolerant of foreign domination of any kind, regardless of the effect of propaganda of any type.’74

In other words, the usual mechanisms of collaboration whereby producers are sufficiently compensated for requisitions (by being allowed to retain enough crops to make a profit) did not always work. In a majority of cases, the Italians were sabotaging this mechanism themselves by not leaving farmers with enough to eat. This was particularly the case in Syros where farming required huge physical effort, due to the poor soil, and was unfeasible on an inadequate diet.

As noted above, the division between town and country was similar to the rest of Greece: farmers engaged in hoarding and tried to maintain some control over the food they produced. In Syros, friction was exacerbated especially when Catholic farmers reacted with brutality to those caught stealing their crops, and meted out physical violence, even to children.75 From the Catholic side constant demands for food from the townspeople brought them into trouble with the occupiers: in the village of Vari, which was strictly controlled, farmers were beaten for having given or sold food to people from Ermoupolis.76 Only a minority of farmers was able to
accumulate great wealth and it must be concluded that they were powerful enough to evade the draconian requisitioning laws. Some deliberately reduced the cultivation of traditional crops in favour of more profitable crops, notably grain, for export.\textsuperscript{77}

However, it is above all the undercurrent of inter-religious tensions peculiar to Syros that makes it difficult to disentangle resentment and prejudice from fact. According to an Italian report, the religious question was of primary importance to local society and had ‘real political influence’. The Italians observed that mutual hatred between Orthodox and Catholics, especially at the start of the war, was such that they did ‘everything they could to harm each other’. The problem was aggravated during the conflict with Italy when Catholics in general, not just those with Italian nationality, were seen as ‘non-Greeks or even anti-Greek’; Catholics were persecuted, churches closed and religious ceremonies forbidden. Even some Greek Catholics, including a priest, had been sent to internment camps, along with those with Italian nationality.

There seems to be little evidence, apart from assistance given to the Italian community, that the Italians favoured the Catholics. In fact they complained that the Catholics ‘threw themselves’ upon them in 1941, expecting some form of ‘revenge’ or at least, privileges and powers which the Italians were not prepared to give them. They criticised:

local priests, perhaps accustomed to Greek methods of obtaining favours through personal connections and abuses, who had assumed a demanding and petulant stance.

The occupiers were forced to make it clear to the Catholic clergy that they had no intention of showing any ‘preference on religious grounds or in matters of individual rights’.\textsuperscript{78} When Catholic priests in Tinos demanded that the Italians dismiss the serving mayor, Duca rejected their requests. He noted that the local curates were the first on the list of those demanding the replacement. If they wanted to join the other locals in ‘playing petty politics’, he told the command to make it clear to them that they were quite mistaken.
The fact that we are Catholics does not mean we have to give the Catholics present in the Cyclades the advantage of preferential treatment.79

Yet, it is striking that even the French consul, Rigoutsos, a practicing Catholic educated by the Catholic Brothers, nevertheless expressed the suspicions of the Orthodox community. Referring to the Catholic bishop, he said that the bishops’ uncles, brothers and nephews had become ‘immensely rich thanks to exceptional favours they had received from the Italians’. In fact the bishop did try to intercede on behalf of his brother, the mayor of the village of Gallisas, but with limited success.80 It is also true that initially, the bishop himself obtained privileges, such as the use of a radio, and was on good terms with the occupiers. According to Rigoutsos: ‘This prelate although well educated and very intelligent, actually went out on jaunts with the Italians to his native village to baptize some child to whom the commander was made godfather - while his Orthodox brothers were dying of starvation.’81

But while Bishop Vutzinos frequently used his position to try to intervene on behalf of his parishioners, his appeals did not always succeed even in small matters. He was unable, for instance, to prevail on the Italian authorities to provide thread to make socks for the bare-foot children of his parish in the bitterly cold Christmas of 1942.82 From the highly defensive rebuttal, published after the war in support of the Catholic bishop, one can surmise that accusations against him were bitter and that he became a focus for general feelings of resentment against the Catholic community.83 Vutzinos saw his role differently; he had used his authority to provide food for the destitute and to protest to the occupiers about the exploitation of working people.84 According to Catholic sources his compliance was limited: he had not conceded to an Italian request for preferential seating for the occupiers in the churches, nor to lay on special services for the Italian officers.85 For his followers he was also vindicated by his contribution to the resistance and his courage in harbouring Italian soldiers after the armistice. On 20 November 1943, he was arrested by the Germans for possessing a radio and held in the Averoff prison in Athens. The Italians had also suspected Bishop
Vutzinos: Campioni warned Valeriani that he was not to be trusted, accusing him of abusing his position and the privileges granted to him, by spreading counter-propaganda - often to ‘figures of the highest importance’. He reported the bishop to Rome, complaining that his subversive activities were ‘even more serious than those of the Orthodox themselves’. Nor should it be forgotten that Vutzinos remained in Syros to protect the interests of his parishioners throughout the occupation, whereas the Orthodox bishop retired to Athens.

There is little indication of Catholic islanders influencing the occupiers’ decisions. Even powerful figures like Mayor Karakalàs, or the bishop of Naxos, had requests turned down. A degree of even-handedness on the part of the occupying authorities may have helped to allay some of the religious tensions. The occupiers also brought the religious leaders of Syros together at public functions and church leaders themselves are said to have achieved improved mutual relations in their efforts to appeal for food from Athens. Religious tensions slowly abated when there was a change in attitude by those Catholics who had ‘secretly welcomed’ the Italians at the start of the occupation. Representatives of EAM’s post-war successor, PEAEA, have testified that the Catholics supported the resistance movement by the end of the war. This shift made it possible for the more extreme religious tensions to be absorbed or suppressed.

Collaboration

Some of those who gained from the occupation could be easily identified (such as islanders who ganged up with Italian officers to make profits) but, on another level, for most people survival depended on tacit acceptance, compromises and petty abuses. A few felt empowered by the occupiers’ presence, as was possibly true in the case of an ‘powerful’ cleric accused of acting in the occupiers’ interests. A witness, who had survived by collecting his deceased mother’s bread ration, accused the cleric of denouncing him and physically abusing him when he objected. In fact, the occupiers were anxious to clamp down on false claims for food and succeeded in reducing the number of rations distributed by 2000 portions in December 1942. They could not have done so without the help of
local information, usually available to the clergy. Those who collaborated in this way were helping the occupiers and not their starving compatriots; their motivation can only have been to win the approval of the occupiers and gain power or influence as a result.

On the other hand, incidents of this kind have to be seen within the context of increased social friction and antagonism which offered a chance to settle old scores. While denunciations of fellow citizens in Greece were never on the level of those recorded in some other occupied countries, notably France, the Italian authorities received several anonymous letters against those working for them, or from citizens with old grudges to air. One priest received an anonymous letter slipped under his door, accusing him of collaboration in direct terms and signed by ‘the society of your enemies’.94 But the occupiers had an interest in protecting those disposed to work with them. They felt there was a smear campaign against an employee of the prefecture, Giorgios Dimitriu, who was appointed Inspector of Food Distribution and who was accused by his colleagues of ‘unfair distribution’ of food supplies from which they were excluded.95 In fact, Dimitriu had uncovered the misuse of ration cards by the secretary to the prefecture. The abuses included using a falsified card and supplying six false cards to his father-in-law, thus allowing a ‘considerable amount of extra rations’ to be claimed illegally. By denouncing his colleagues Dimitriu was bound to make himself unpopular, although their accusations against him were later withdrawn, following an official enquiry.96 The incidental detail that Dimitriu was the only one among his colleagues willing to help decorate the Town Hall for the ‘March on Rome’ celebrations does reveal, however, that his willingness to collaborate exceeded the call of duty. It was also incriminating that the Italians made use of his talents to monitor his compatriots and felt he would be useful in uncovering serious fraud and theft of merchandise being carried out by the Syros Customs.

Most islanders regarded civil servants as collaborators. They were a substantial group of some 300 employees whom the occupiers relied on to carry out their orders. The Italians noted that the population in general displayed:
apparent obsequiousness to their own civil authorities when in fact they do not have much faith in them, as they consider them to be subservient to us in order to extract personal benefit for themselves.\(^97\)

The position of the civil servants was invidious because they were under orders from the Greek government in Athens to maintain ‘real collaboration which will secure the future of our country’. At the same time they should continue to act as faithful and patriotic servants of the state, being aware that every citizen was faced with ‘duties of exceptional gravity’.\(^98\)

Fear of losing their jobs at a time when they were unlikely to find other employment, undoubtedly motivated most to stay on. Those who were not from the island, to which they perhaps felt little loyalty, were trapped there for the duration of the occupation. Instances of officials who left their posts in order not to collaborate with the enemy are rare, such as the president of a commune in Paros, whose withdrawal due to ‘evident reluctance to collaborate’, was accepted by Duca.\(^99\)

The perception of civil servants as collaborators may have stemmed from a collective need to find scapegoats in a critical situation which left the local people without official defences. But, as in other occupied countries, the definition of who was collaborating varied according to circumstances and was not the same during the occupation and in its aftermath.\(^100\) Motives of collaborationism were often linked to pre-existing ethnic or ideological conflicts, as was the case in Syros.\(^101\) These very conditions made it difficult for post-war society to expose collaborators or their families who were still living in the community. Similarly, although intense public resentment was reserved for informers, they are referred to very obliquely.\(^102\) One interpreter is named for having made himself ‘all too available’ to the occupiers, (but as a Catholic he may have been singled out for special criticism).\(^103\) Some close collaborators undoubtedly existed, evinced by provisions made by the occupiers to try to protect them against reprisals from the local population after the Italian Armistice.\(^104\) But few were officially identified: ‘little over twelve people’, openly sympathised with the Italians, among those who had worked as interpreters and informers. They felt it necessary to ask for
protection and transfer to the Dodecanese prior to the Italian armistice in September 1943, and provisions were made for this.

Local perceptions of collaborators focused on the Italian-nominated town councillors and notably the mayor of Ermoupolis, Theodoros Karakalàs. From the Italian point of view he worked efficiently and did a much better job than the ‘corrupt and irresponsible’ mayor whom he replaced. On leaving the Cyclades, Duca paid tribute to his loyalty in the face of public derision. He apparently worked with honesty and disinterest and he brought order and discipline to the town and reorganized public services and those of the Town

Fig. 17 Cicladi newspaper showing Admiral Campioni. Source: Cicladi, 21 May 1942
Hall. Duca noted that in spite of ‘sarcastic remarks and occult threats of his compatriots’ he had constantly adhered to fascist policy. Nor had he hesitated ‘to render public homage to His Imperial Majesty and the Duce, making known and supporting our political directives in the framework of the present war and in the vision of the post-war’. Duca recommended that the mayor be rewarded with the honour of ‘Cavaliere’ after the war.105

On the occasion of Campioni’s visit to Syros on 21 May 1942, in a letter from the mayor addressed to the public which appeared in Cicladi, (see fig. 17 showing his letter with his Italian signature: Teodoro Caracalla), Karakalàs had no compunction about urging all citizens to be present to welcome Campioni expressing their ‘gratitude and devotion’. Flags and banners were to be displayed and shops decorated to celebrate the occasion. He wanted Syros to demonstrate heartfelt support and ‘faith in the great Mediterranean nation in its march to victory’. Karakalàs was very useful to the Italians in performing a number of representative roles and could be trusted with responsibilities such as going to Athens to request food.106 Perhaps if he had restricted his work to administrative duties in the interests of Syros, as seems to have been the case with the acting-prefect Zondos, he would not necessarily have been seen as a ‘traitor’. But the mayor was identified locally as being too close to Italian interests. Although Orthodox, he was married to an Italian woman and spoke fluent Italian. It was his self-elected role as a representative of fascism and flattering admirer of Mussolini which made him unpopular with his fellow-citizens. Typically, he sent a telegram of congratulations to Mussolini on the occasion of the March on Rome celebrations of 28 October 1942, ‘from the Town Council and the whole population of Ermoupolis’.107 According to Nikos Filaretos who knew him professionally as a fellow ship’s captain after the war, Karakalàs admitted that he had succumbed to the benefits of being in power. He is regarded generally as ‘a bit of a fool’ (ligo vlakas) who failed to understand the consequences of his actions.108 In other words, by labelling him as merely ‘stupid’ some islanders have found a way of assimilating him, especially as he returned to his profession as a sea captain which took him away from
the island. He was imprisoned briefly after the war but his sentence was rapidly quashed, suggesting that he continued to have friends among those in power.

**Resistance**

Although the occupiers found dissenters difficult to identify, they reported that most of the active British supporters were officers from the Greek army, now disbanded, of whom many were present in the Cyclades. (But leniency on the part of Duca, in allowing a ship with approximately one hundred Greek officers escaping from Greece to continue their journey, suggests he preferred to avoid arresting them in Syros.)\(^{109}\) Italian reports also identified a large sector of the ‘intellectuals and well-off who ardently hope for an Anglo-Saxon victory’.\(^{110}\)

In fact there were a number of incidents where doctors refused to comply with Italian laws for which they were punished with fines and temporary suspension from work. There was an indication that the pro-German sympathies among some sectors of the middle-class before the war still existed when two doctors on Andros were more disposed to obey the Germans than the Italians.\(^{111}\)

The occupiers, who carefully monitored attitudes to them, noted that even the ‘lower orders’ (il minuto popolo), who usually showed little interest in politics were ‘affected by the pro-British influences’ by November 1942. The writer of this report also had few illusions about the loyalty of the industrialists whose offers of co-operation were only ‘apparently sincere, being masked by skilled hypocrisy’.\(^{112}\) The clergy tended to follow the same compliant line as the civil servants, in spite of Campioni’s initial fears of a patriotic lobby from that source. But the professional classes kept their distance, assuming what was considered an ‘acceptable’ stance and ‘collaborating when asked to do so’, but could not be trusted in any way. The occupiers also suspected seafaring elements who took every opportunity to leave to join the Greek forces in Egypt.

Opportunities for resistance were limited on a barren island without the cover of a *maquis*, and not least, the presence of a regiment of nearly two thousand soldiers, some of whom were being trained specifically to police the occupied population.\(^{113}\)

In spite of Italian vigilance a series of acts of sabotage were
carried out, for example disabling electric power supplies or military aerials. In one isolated case, an unidentified individual took a few pot shots at an Italian patrol on the outskirts of Vari. Anxious apologies from the local notables and clergy clearly indicated that they wished to minimize any reaction from the occupiers.\textsuperscript{114} Sabotage led to extended curfews, arrests, imprisonment and rough treatment or beatings in the jail of Ermoupolis, and serious offenders were sent for trial by the military tribunal on Samos. Some islanders were in contact with the British whose use of submarines enabled regular visits to the Cyclades islands and the establishment of a secret base on the neighbouring island of Yiaros.\textsuperscript{115} These groups supplied information on Axis ships and convoy movements as well as organizing escapes from Syros to the Middle East and Turkey.\textsuperscript{116} A small group of supporters of the communist resistance movement EAM was formed in Syros in 1942 and split in cells of three to five members. The organization was ready to take action at the end of the occupation, distributing leaflets and editing a newspaper, in the brief period of freedom before the new government clamped down on resistance activities.

Thus the Italians were right in suspecting the islanders of a constant, if subdued form of resistance. Patterns of non-co-operative behaviour can emerge from a particular context, reflecting historical identities and past conflicts, as has been clearly identified by historians of occupied France.\textsuperscript{117} In Syros, graffiti was forcibly removed from walls and school benches but the occupiers could not force people to rise to attention when officers passed or to salute when the Italian flag was raised. Clandestine radios were only used by a small number but nothing could stop news leaking out. When the British broadcast information via the BBC on how to undermine the occupiers’ morale, they had no doubt that in Greece their suggestions were superfluous, ‘the Greeks need no urging to repeat this to any Italian listeners they can find’.\textsuperscript{118} Incessant stealing from the occupiers’ reserves although motivated by hunger, also gave the occupied the impression of scoring points against the occupier – a small-scale war of attrition which boosted the community’s self-esteem. The struggle not to give in for four gruelling years of hunger and the degradation of filthy physical conditions was in itself, a form of resistance.
An important consequence of the lack of widespread organized resistance meant that Syros and most of the Aegean islands were not directly involved in the civil war between government and resistance forces and the subsequent political polarization after the war. At the same time, the general desire in postwar Greece to bring collaborators to trial was hampered by political events and the weakness of central government. Although the government passed three acts of parliament intended to pursue collaborators, the circumstances and lack of a police force willing to support the state meant that only a small number were brought to justice.\textsuperscript{119}

The lack of effective action against collaborators was reflected in local events. Karakláš’s immediate release from jail, conformed to the general pattern of leniency towards collaborators in post-war Greece, as did the lack (or concealment) of official local records of trials, which are still being withheld from legal investigators at the present time.\textsuperscript{120} Between 1945 and 1950, 215 cases from the Aegean area came before the courts on Syros, but most were dismissed due to ‘insufficient evidence’. In the case of Karakalàš and the municipal councillors, not even the evidence that they had voted Duca’s honorary citizenship of Syros seems to have been sufficient to indict them. It is no surprise, however, that Duca’s citizenship was immediately withdrawn by the new municipal government after the war.\textsuperscript{121}

Issues of collaboration and resistance were confused when it was communist fighters in the resistance who were more likely to be tried and sentenced to prison than the collaborators, in tune with the political climate in the rest of Greece.\textsuperscript{122} For the few collaborators who were convicted in Syros, incarceration was symbolic. Nikos Filaretos was himself sentenced to prison for a strike on board his ship in 1947. He witnessed the treatment of ‘collaborators’ who spent the night in prison, but were allowed out during the day to sit in the cafeneions playing backgammon.\textsuperscript{123}

For some islanders feelings of bitterness regarding the failure to bring collaborators to justice remain alive. One local controversy surrounds the case of the acting prefect, Vaitsis Vayias, who served under the Germans. Like his official counterparts in the quisling government in Athens, he used the justification that he was ‘prevailed on’ to take office, by officials
in central government and had responded to the German threat that if he did not assume power they would do so themselves.\textsuperscript{124} By engaging widespread support when he took office he effectively covered himself from condemnation in the post-war era. He also availed himself of the undercurrent of division in Syros society linked to religious sympathies. Some islanders continued to look more favourably on the Germans, who occupied the Cyclades from October 1943 to November 1944, which may explain why they were less resentful of Vaitsis than they were of Karakalas. Vaitsis appears to have come out of the occupation with a relatively clear record, although a continuing controversy surrounds his name. Ultimately, the drive to pursue collaborators worked against the other prevailing desire of the islanders to try to return to a state of peacetime normality and to put the catastrophic events of the occupation behind them.
Following the end of the Italian occupation in September 1943, Syros was occupied by the Germans until 11 October 1944. Unlike the Italians, the German occupiers’ objectives were mainly military, leaving the government of the island in the hands of local officials. The German occupation was, in a sense, merely a holding operation as they awaited the expected withdrawal of Axis troops from the region. To avoid the British bombardment of the port the new occupiers tended to operate inland, leaving Ermoupolis to run itself. However, local officials were warned that if they failed to administer the island, the German occupiers would be forced to take over.

Military medical facilities were made available to some of those in a critical state but no attempt was made to import food supplies as their predecessors had done. Reserves of flour and olive oil left by the Italians for the dependent population and entrusted to local officials at the National Bank, were distributed until 11 January 1944 when supplies ran out. Nevertheless, the prevailing opinion among islanders is that the German occupation was ‘less barbaric’ than that of the Italians. This was partly because of a policy of minimal interference in the administration of the island and the lifting of all restrictions on commerce which stimulated the market in food – but at black market prices. Most significantly, the threat of Italian hegemony and empire building was removed, to the intense relief of the population. Yet the prevailing climate was one of fear as the Greeks were left in no doubt that the new occupiers, unlike the Italians, would shoot anyone caught breaking laws or attempting resistance.
As no price controls were instituted by the local government, inflation rose astronomically. At their peak, prices were 3000 times their pre-war value – causing an acute devaluation of the drachma. The ensuing food crisis resulted in two further small peaks of famine in January and June 1944, and in an increase in cases of tuberculosis, rising to epidemic levels after the war. On 21 January 1944, a crowd of starving people broke into a grocer’s store to steal the remaining stocks. There was no attempt to control the uprising by the local police because they were apparently ‘terrified that this group of crazed men and women who were like walking skeletons, would attack them’. Those who had control of food made massive profits and, as the local government was ‘almost non-existent’, corruption and theft increased. Public anger against the ineffective local authorities erupted in demonstrations on 20 and 21 February 1944, at which the communist red flag appeared.

The only relief came from the Red Cross which managed to send small amounts of food on an irregular basis from 2 February 1944. The gravity of the situation emerged after a visit from a Swedish Red Cross representative in February. Some UNRRA supplies reached the Cyclades in April 1945 and in June, the arrival of shipments of large quantities of corn, beans and fertilizers began to reverse the critical situation, along with exchanges of cloth for olive oil, with other islands. However high prices and low wages provoked strikes in three factories in June.

The expected political radicalization which Rigoutsos had predicted would break out after the war, effectively began to emerge. EAM supporters, such as Andreas Yianniris, who had established a substantial following in Naxos and Andros, were active in Syros. EAM recruited widespread support by issuing information to the islanders; the newspaper *Kykladiki Foni*, the organ of the Cyclades branch of EAM, began publication on 5 October 1944. It became a vehicle for the denunciation of collaborators and also persuaded factory owners to contribute cloth to be exchanged for oil, for the starving population. It also encouraged and supported strikes among underpaid factory workers in 1946 which resulted in temporary improvements. However in the build-up to civil war, EAM’s activities in Syros would soon be suppressed and its newspaper
ceased publication in 1947. Yianniris himself was arrested and imprisoned on 4 May 1946. The fate of this newspaper reflects the gradual exclusion of left-wing forces from political life in this period.

It was not until November 1945 that the food supply improved substantially with the arrival of an UNRRA shipment of wheat. Tragically, the physical state of many of the islanders precluded a speedy recovery. An UNRRA representative reported that the population was seriously debilitated and many were suffering from rickets and skin diseases like scabies, due to lack of vitamins. Small children had hair on their faces and swollen stomachs, their clothes were reduced to rags and none of them wore shoes. Conditions were so severe that even by the end of 1946 many islanders had still not recovered to full-health. Endemic poverty persisted for a prolonged period: a majority of children lacked shoes as late as the 1960s and food relief in the form of powdered milk was still being distributed in schools at that time.

General economic recovery was slow due to the widespread damage of war to Greece’s infrastructures, transport system and sources of raw materials, including agricultural produce. In Syros, as part of a continuum of pre-war trends in conjunction with the impact of war and occupation, most of the factories gradually closed down and 20 per cent of islanders emigrated, reducing the population to 13,500 by 1971. The last four textile mills closed in the 1980s and the only remaining major employer was the recently expanded, Neorion shipyard (which also closed for a period in the 1990s). Under-employment constituted a major problem until the gradual recovery of commerce and light industries and the development of small-scale tourism (9.1 per cent of economic activity in 1998). That year the Commercial Union of Syros reported that the following sectors were active: garments, shoes, spirits, electrical goods, jewellery, stationery, building materials, haberdashery and cars. The Neorion shipyard has recently re-opened and remains the most important employer.

The critical political climate in post-war Greece accentuated pre-war structural problems affecting local government. Corrupt practices in the local administration even impacted on the management of UNRRA supplies: it was reported that
civil servants benefited unduly from the distribution of clothes. The withdrawal of food aid was used as a threat by the right-wing prefect of the Cyclades against those supporting the resistance as well as to win support in the elections of March 1946. Greece was split into two political camps when the EAM-ELAS resistance movement abstained from the 1946 elections and right-wing forces took control of government. In Syros Prefect Karapostolakis threatened left-wing supporters and their families but this was also a warning to all those who did not support the government. Voting in Syros remained predominantly conservative until 1974.

With no armed resistance the civil war did not affect the island directly, but the ensuing disruption and the repressive climate of the 1950s inhibited the development of new political and social structures (taking place elsewhere in Europe). While Syros was spared the trauma of the conflict on the mainland, the relentless pursuit of resistance fighters cast a long shadow. This was reinforced by the existence of a prison camp on the nearby island of Yiaros, where prisoners were treated very brutally. Two interviewees, Levtheris Vazaios from Syros and Yiorgos Iovanos from Athens, testified to the kind of treatment they had received in island prisons. Yet both also suffered from the long-term social rejection they experienced afterwards, made worse by the impossibility of making themselves heard in a society where public opposition to the state was seen as unpatriotic. Long after the war islanders were told by the Syros police not to associate with Levtheris Vazaios who, as a social outcast, could not find work.15

The atmosphere of the post-war years was revived locally when the Yiaros prison camp was reopened during the military dictatorship from 1967-74. Another interviewee, born in 1954, remembers the climate of fear in her childhood; this particularly affected her parents who were children during the war and occupation and whose susceptibility to postwar pressures was aggravated by the trauma of the past.16 In fact, national reconciliation could only be initiated after 1974 when the military dictatorship fell and there was an attempt to heal the wounds of civil war.17 It was significant that a communist and local representative of the Greek resistance movement, Nikos Filaretos, was elected mayor by the people of
Ermoupolis in 1974, to the surprise of the candidate himself. In his words, it was significant that a ‘relatively conservative’ electorate made this choice and suggests that political dissent needed to be aired.

In Syros political quiescence in the decades after the war led to the survival of many submerged myths in public memory, stoked up by subjective interpretations and unexpressed resentment which kept old myths alive. This was particularly so as memories of starvation, occupation and collaboration were not debated publicly to any significant extent. A lawyer and local councillor recalled that his mother never talked about her experience of the occupation. Perhaps it was considered too threatening for a small island community to investigate what had really gone on. There remained an undercurrent of rumours about the identity of profiteers and collaborators and the role of the occupiers, as well as religious tensions. In 1984 the opening of the wartime communal graves and the reburial of the remains in a newly consecrated grave, as well as the erection of the monument to the ‘8000 victims’ in the Orthodox cemetery of Ermoupolis, provided the first real opportunity for public grieving and a memorial service.

The critical state of indigence of the islanders after the war had also led foreign observers to assume that Italian rule was ‘particularly vicious’. British Raiding Forces (whose mission began with the liberation of the island of Chios from the Germans), found conditions on Syros to be much worse than in Chios:

Woefulness I have seen before, but not a population so generally reduced as this, whose every face is sickly from long want. Life has gone on – children abound – but in a submerged way, at a level where everything denies the reason of life. I have not seen one woman who was not wan, and not a child not waiflike. A whole generation has been blighted .... The Italians here were oppressors more hated than the Germans.

Accusations against the Italians centered on the fact that the worst period of famine took place during the Italian occupation in the winter of 1941-2. Such opinions were
also influenced by particularly strong reactions from some Orthodox islanders against the Catholic occupiers. Catholic farmers who were resentful of the crop requisitions also upheld the view, sanctioned by collective memory in the post-war, that the Italian occupation was more brutal and arbitrary than that of the Germans. But both Orthodox and Catholic interviewees have privately admitted that in their own experience, this was not entirely the case. A Catholic woman from Ano Syros remembered the food, particularly the cheese, distributed by the Italians and an Orthodox man from the quarter near the docks, who was seventeen in 1942, remembered the ‘flour, beans and cheese in tins’. It is not uncommon to meet people who are of the opinion of a witness whose family owned a general store, that ‘it was the Italians who saved us’. The former mayor, Nikos Filaretos, and his colleagues also agree that the Italian occupiers did what they could to alleviate suffering. But the political climate of the post-war favoured the official view which condemned the Italian occupation outright. As observed in a survey of collective memory in the Dodecanese, in Syros there appears to be a disparity between the official version of events and that of private experience. The former tends to be upheld by some of the more educated people while the latter emerges from the private ‘counter-memories’ of those not schooled in the official view. Collective or public versions of events are also most likely to be repeated by younger generations who had no experience of the occupation but are influenced by received opinion.

It was more than four decades after the end of the war before the first serious attempts to reflect on the events and impact of the war and occupation were published in the periodical *Syriana Grammata*. The issue of July 1991 (dedicated to the occupation period), stirred up discussion on the island particularly as it gave voice to Catholic views and contained a defence of Bishop Vutzinos who had been accused of collaboration with the Italians. It provided the first reasonably accurate estimate for famine mortality and gave a balanced view of the Italian occupation while condemning their collusion with black marketeers. Further controversy arose over another scholarly analysis which raised the issue of those
who benefited financially during the occupation. While the law of 1949 allowed surviving owners to repurchase houses or land sold cheaply during the war, questions remained unanswered about the identity of those who retained newly acquired wealth and property.

Even today, bitter disputes remain alive: this has been illustrated by a battle over the status of the ex-mayor of Ermoupolis, Stavros Vafias (in office during the dictatorship of 1967-74) who was accused of collaboration and profiteering during the war. The controversy arose over an apparent attempt to cover up the past. Following the 1975 ban on the displaying of pictures of collaborating officials in municipal buildings, Vafias’s photograph was removed from the Town Hall by his critics on the Left. But after his death in 2003, the decision was taken to replace the photograph and to name a street after Vafias. There appeared to be a consensus among some representatives of left as well as right-wing parties to try and bury unacceptable episodes of the community’s history and restore the ex-mayor’s reputation. In reaction, there were protests from critics and another (unofficial) removal of the picture. It is clear that frustrations survive below the surface of the apparent harmony of the community as well as anger over unresolved issues and injustices.

Many misconceptions about the occupation are linked to the confusion and extreme polarization caused by Greece’s civil war. As in the rest of Europe after the Second World War, official reckoning with collaborators only bore a tangential relationship to what actually happened and the issue of collaboration remains ambiguous and highly charged. Also, although religious tension among Catholics and Orthodox in Syros has now largely dissipated, it resurfaced together with the renewed interest and debate about the occupation mentioned above. Most importantly, the traumatic impact of famine on the collective psyche should not be underestimated. Understandably enough, the death of so many members of the community will never be forgotten. Public anger was expressed in the search for scapegoats – thus engendering myths about the perpetrators which have become solidified in collective memory.

The findings of this book, based on archival research in
Syros, Rhodes, Athens and Rome, as well as personal accounts and interviews with islanders, present us with a significantly different picture to that found elsewhere. This study has shown that understanding how the Italian occupation functioned requires close examination of the implementation of occupation policy and how it impacted on society. Two recent studies of Italian occupation in the Balkans and Greece (mentioned in the introduction), have analysed the theories of fascist ideologues and Italy’s occupation strategy for the region, with much emphasis on the brutal execution of counter-insurgency policies. However the case of Syros does not confirm the existence of policies of deliberate brutality. While it can be argued that the occupation contributed to and aggravated the famine, there is no indication that this was deliberate. On the contrary, the Italian occupiers made considerable efforts to try and alleviate the food crisis and the medical impact of famine. What is missing from the works mentioned above is detailed information about the daily workings of occupation government and local power relations. The originality of the Syros case is that an abundance of material exists which provides insight into the local dynamics of power and little-known details of the occupiers’ relations with the occupied society. Individual abuses of power such as stealing food from the starving or sexually exploiting hungry women, tell us more about the ‘infinitesimal’ power relations engendered by fascism, than the regime’s grand ideological designs. On the other hand, the occupiers’ beneficial use of their powers and their accessibility cannot be disregarded: the islanders’ personal letters and appeals, together with the occupiers’ responses and consultations with local bodies, testify to the existence of interaction between occupiers and occupied.

New knowledge about the Italian vision of a New Order has been gleaned from the analysis of the occupiers’ implementation of the distacco policy. The attempt to detach the Cyclades from mainland Greece in favour of Rhodes, was problematic from the start. The occupiers were slowly disabused of the idea that the local administration could become financially self-sufficient and survive without subsidies from Athens. Thus the anomaly of incomplete separation from Athens dogged distacco aims throughout the occupation.
A critical example of economic mismanagement resulting from distacco aims, was the banning of exports from the Cyclades; the ensuing crisis forced the occupiers to backtrack and allow exports if balanced by imports of equivalent value. But importers were deterred by local prices fixed at a much lower rate than on the mainland. The consequence was to limit even further the influx of vital raw materials, needed for industries in Syros. Further implementation of the distacco included the 28 May 1942 currency decree which had catastrophic results for those dependent on income from the capital. The decree of 20 February 1943 imposed another block on currency and brought the economy of Syros to a standstill.

The occupiers’ attempts to transform the way the local economy functioned aggravated an already critical financial situation and reduced funds available for public assistance. However, contrary to some local opinions, the Italians’ mishandling of the most critical phase of famine was not due to callous indifference but rather because the military governor, Giovanni Duca, was not a financial expert. His failure to predict a massive rise in costs in early 1942, was compounded by central government’s abdication of responsibility for public welfare in Syros during the crisis. On the other hand, it was during Duca’s administration that Rhodes was eventually persuaded to provide additional food relief in the spring of 1942, which helped bring the most critical period of famine to an end.

The most original and interesting aspect of this occupation concerns the work of the public assistance service, Assistenza Civile, which was crucial in managing the food supply and in helping with medical assistance to the starving. The programme was relatively effective, within limited and decreasing means, in initiatives to feed the population and in controlling malnutrition and disease. Most significantly, the role of AC had to be expanded to provide a safety-net for two thirds of the population. With the breakdown of the Greek central and local government, the Italian civil authority came to replace them as the only effective government on the island. The ensuing economic and social chaos in Syros after the Italian withdrawal in September 1943 is evidence
that the Italian civil authorities had provided a viable form of government.

In trying to avert crisis in 1942, the civil governor, Valerio Valeriani, came up against the shortcomings of the central authorities in Rhodes. Disagreement, which escalated in the second year of occupation, was highly significant because it reflected a difference in understanding of what the local situation required. The Syros authorities acquired a much sharper awareness than those of Rhodes of the problems of the island’s economy and of the need for immediate action to deal with the consequences of famine; whereas Campioni and his administration were more concerned to preserve a form of tributary system to the detriment of the Cyclades. Also, Rhodes persisted with distacco objectives even when the Germans stepped in and the Greeks objected, or when economic measures proved manifestly bad for the islands. Valeriani was thus forced to disobey orders and ultimately to appeal to Rome directly. His request for separation from Rhodes implied an indictment of the distacco policy and, by extension, questioned the rationale behind the vision of a New Order in the eastern Mediterranean.

Counter-productive policies were also imposed at a higher level, due to Italy’s intrinsic lack of power in Greece, and were exacerbated by the conflict in Athens between the Axis civil authorities and the army. While the former struggled to provide food and stem the famine, the Axis armies ransacked Greece of most of her assets. Also, Italian diplomats regarded Athens as a backwater where they had little power; their lack of commitment was reflected in the calibre of officials and their ability to resolve issues, such as the dispute with the IRC, with particularly critical consequences for the Cyclades.

The status of Syros in the Greek state was complicated by the quisling government’s inability to assume responsibility for the Cyclades during the famine. Indications from Athens that they should look to the Italians to provide food, reflected the breakdown of state authority and the crisis of the Greek nation-state. As in the rest of Greece, the absence of central authority left local areas to fend for themselves and foreshadowed national disintegration. Thus the appeal against the distacco by the notables of Samos (quoted above) was
particularly apposite because it predicted correctly that the failure of the state would result in civil war.

While the Italian authorities achieved political control their propaganda effort failed to win the Greeks over to fascism. Although they won a measure of popularity with their contributions to public assistance, there is little evidence that this was any more than temporary. Nor was there much time for propaganda to win the occupied over: the psychological penetration to which the fascists aspired, had less than a year to take effect before the islanders’ scepticism was reawakened by news of Italian defeats in Africa. Convoluted moral messages in films and propaganda initiatives were meaningless to an audience deprived of the most basic comforts. The occupiers’ reports indicate that they were all too aware that many Greeks were politically shrewd and resistant to propaganda.

It is difficult to assess the degree of allegiance to fascism of the occupation authorities themselves, because their words sometimes belied their actions. Duca exhorted his men to behave with the cold detachment of conquering fascists yet he himself appeared beguiled by the superficial friendliness of a starving population in desperate need of help. Valeriani too, played his part giving public speeches on fascist history but ultimately refused to execute detrimental policies which furthered the distacco. Young officers such as the editor of Cicladi, Salvatore Piras, were clearly convinced by fascism and the role it dedicated to young people, whereas many ordinary soldiers appear to have been largely indifferent; their main concern was their isolation and painful separation from their families as well as fear of starvation. There were some ardent fascists among the naval officers based in Syros, and among high ranking army officers like Luigi Gino. The split between these men and the junior officers together with the ranks was revealed at the Armistice of 8 September 1943 when observers noted that large numbers of non-fascist Italian soldiers celebrated with the Greek population.

The facade of Italian fascism in Syros collapsed with the Armistice. Italy’s imperial experiment, predicated on a new geopolitical configuration in the Aegean, was short-lived. It was also an economic failure and a political illusion. Many economic problems were caused by the war, but it was the
occupiers’ pursuit of unrealistic economic objectives which tipped the balance in an already critical situation. The myth of the New Order was the main source of the devastation brought by the Axis, according to Rigoutsos. In March 1943, he wrote that he had yet to see anything carried out by the Axis powers in Europe which was ‘just, morally acceptable, or humane’. Rather than bringing the new civilization they had promised, the Axis occupiers had ransacked food reserves, starved entire populations and meted out injustices while terrorizing the occupied with repressive policing. Before the war, the ideology of fascism and Nazism had appealed to those who sought an alternative to communism and capitalism, and who were attracted by the concept of a united European economy. The depredations of war and occupation soon shattered illusions about Axis intentions, in particular the realization that a European union under the Axis would be purely economic and spelt death to community life.

Rigoutsos’s view is appropriate for much of Europe under the Axis and in Syros too, the New Order brought, in the civil governor Valeriani’s own words, the virtual ‘death of the island’. The abuse of power implicit in the invasion and occupation of Greece was much exacerbated by the pursuit of fascist imperial objectives. However, although recent research seeks to highlight the brutality of the Italian occupation of Greece and the Balkans, in the case of Syros at least, the picture is much less clear-cut. Relations between the occupiers and the occupied were often ambiguous and there was some understanding that, in a critical situation, a mutual trade-off of advantages was beneficial to both parties. After the islanders’ preliminary resentment and fear abated, there was a degree of adaptation or adjustment to the new situation and both parties sometimes benefited from a measure of shared humanity. While some soldiers behaved brutally, especially over the critical issue of food, others were more restrained. Mutual suspicions remained however, and as Italy’s military failures began to indicate that the occupation would be short-lived, the islanders felt more secure and less likely to be awed by the prospect of Italian ‘protection’.

As for local controversies which remain unresolved, the late historian, Alan Bray, suggested that reaching a consensus on
the exact number of victims who died during the occupation is perhaps not as important as trying to understand the impact of the occupation on the collective psyche. Ultimately, the islanders’ perceptions, whether accurate or not, are an intrinsic part of their wartime experience and should be respected. Clearly in a bi-confessional and structurally diverse society, influenced by different perceptions of the same reality, disparities remain: some look back with a measure of humour and pride at their own ability to survive, others find it hard to forget the fear and bitterness which divided the country long after the war. In Greece generally, a concerted effort has been made to bury the antagonism produced by the events of the 1940s. If controversies still trouble the war generation in Syros, the reasons for this can only be determined by those intimately concerned.

A visitor to Syros, soon after the war, noted that Ermoupolis had become a quiet, provincial town, abandoned by most of its wealthy merchant families. He was invited by the mayor to attend a Catholic Easter ceremony along with other Orthodox officials as a ‘nice compliment to the minority sect’, suggesting that at least officially, the two denominations were reconciled. Conflict had been reawakened by the events of the war and occupation but the Catholics’ support of the nascent resistance movement before the end of the war went some way towards calming religious tensions. In the post-war era inter-marriage between the two communities was at last sanctioned by the churches, especially after 1974. Yet there is still a sense today that the Catholic community is regarded as a slightly anomalous ‘minority’ and, for its part, the Catholic Church still issues leaflets advocating a more ecumenical spirit in Syros. Generally, most interviewees were keen to play down the notion of religious tensions after the war and claim that this is no longer a concern. However, one reliable Orthodox witness has said that in the 1960s tension was notable; although she grew up near the Catholic quarter she had no Catholic friends and was not encouraged to do so. Suspicions against Catholic farmers who hoarded food, together with rural isolation, served to prolong resentment in the immediate postwar period, especially as poverty in rural areas aggravated the perceived ‘backwardness’ of country people.
The visitor to Syros, mentioned above, observed that by 1947 the island appeared to have recovered from the war and that the cafés and restaurants of the port were buzzing with life and were serving an abundance of food. This was an early foretaste of the commerce and service industries which would bring a measure of prosperity to the island in future decades. As for attitudes to food, the term ‘katohi syndrome’ (occupation syndrome) is used to describe another outcome of famine in Greece: notably, the preoccupation with eating and serving an abundance of food on the part of those who lived through the occupation.

In Ermoupolis today there are two public signs which recall the Italian occupation, but their significance is not entirely what it might seem and reflects the dichotomy in public memory of the Italians. The first is displayed on the building which served as an Italian prison and reminds us of the tortures suffered there by those accused of sabotage and acts of resistance. In fact, the sign was put up by the Cyclades representatives of EAM to commemorate the bravery of Greek resistance fighters and not to emphasize Italian brutality, as would appear at first.33 The second is the Italian inscription Assistenza Civile, etched on the plinth over the main entrance to the municipal building which now houses the prefecture’s historic archives. The reason why this sign has been left intact is not obvious. Some islanders suggest that it is in the interests of conservation of the historic building which housed the Italian public assistance service and now conserves its archives. According to others this record stands as a reminder of a positive aspect of the occupation and the efforts made by the occupiers to offer relief to the starving population. Ultimately, both plaques bear witness to contrasting views and memories of the same events and emphasize the need for a differentiated approach to the interpretation of collective memory.

All over occupied Europe the impact of the Second World War was felt for several decades after the conflict was officially over. In cases of famine, population displacement and civil war the physical and psychological damage was prolonged and the suffering endured will never be completely effaced in the memory of its victims. It is only by revisiting the past with the benefit of distance that they can perhaps be reconciled with
memories which haunt them. Others look back with a measure of humour and surprise at their own capacity for survival; they gained new experience and found resources in themselves of which they are still proud.

There are, of course, many untold stories and this book is dedicated to those who were punished and imprisoned unjustly and whose contribution to the Greek resistance was never fully acknowledged. As for the analysis of communities under occupation, more work needs to be done in local areas if we are to understand fully the impact of Axis occupation on society. Surprisingly intense and continued media interest in the personalities and habits of the main actors in the Second World War tends to detract from the reality of life during that time. For many, including subsequent generations, the intensity of life and personal heroism of millions of people is also a source of fascination. In fact, the human struggle of individuals and communities will always grip the public imagination as long as the devastating impact of the Second World War still troubles public consciousness.
INTRODUCTION


For the opposite argument see Steinberg, J., *All or Nothing. The Axis and the Holocaust 1941-43* (London & New York, 1990)

Rigoutsos, M., ‘Syra sous l’occupation italienne d’abord, allemande ensuite’ (Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Athens Embassy. Série B No 9)


Burrin, *La France à l’heure allemande, 7*

### Chapter 1


2. Kolodny, E., ‘Hermoupolis-Syra, naissance et évolution d’une ville


Faziolis was the last of the sea-faring adventurers who attempted to control and extract money from Syros; Kardasi, V.A., *Syros, stavrodromi tis anatolikis Mesoyeiou* (1832-1857) (Athens, 1987), p. 99


9 Zakythinos, p. 68 and pp. 56-69; Koukkou, p. 18; Abela, pp. 483-485


11 Bisti, pp. 618-673

12 Frazee, pp. 315-26; Le Bas, p. 19


15 Kardasi, *Syros, stavrodromi tis anatolikis mesoyeiou*, p. 29; Abela, p. 723. By 1940, the population of the island consisted of 17,872 Orthodox compared to 7,446 Catholics


19 Anderson, R., *Observations upon the Peloponnesus and Greek Islands made in 1829 by Rufus Anderson*, V (Boston, 1830), p. 155

20 Carlisle, Earl of, *Diary in Turkish and Greek Waters* (London, 1855), pp. 184-5

21 Quoted in Agriantoni and Fenerli, p. 47

22 See Drikos, T., *H porneia stin Ermoupoli to 19o aiona (1820-1900)* (Athens, 2002), pp. 219-265: also lists men affected by drug abuse according to origin (including 27 English sailors) and by profession: pp. 271-285

24 Ibid., p. 609
25 Chios was one of the ‘privileged islands’ enjoying autonomy under Ottoman rule. See Zakythinos, p. 54; Kardasi, p. 34; Harlaftis, G., History of Greek-Owned Shipping 18th – 20th Centuries (Athens, 2001), pp. 130-145
26 Kolodny, p. 192-195; Abela, p. 723
27 Ledhuy, pp. 595-627; In Syros not many were ready to risk their lives in the war, even the wealthy. See Fenerli, A., ‘Les premiers constructeurs de navires à Hermoupolis (isle de Syra) 1823-33’ The Evolution of Wooden Shipbuilding in the Eastern Mediterranean during the 18th and 19th Centuries. First International Workshop (Athens, 1993)
29 Ibid., p. 606
30 Abela, pp. 623-624; Loukos, Ch., I antipoliteusi kata tou kiverniti Ioanni Kapodistria, 1828-31 (Athens, 1988); Ledhuy, p. 603
31 The banker Andreas Syngros, remembered being enraptured by the sound of money being counted in the first branch of the National Bank in Syros. See: Agriantoni and Fenerli, Ermoupoli-Syros, 53
32 Abela, pp. 483-485, p. 547, pp. 579-596
33 Dimaki, To emporion tis Syrou, p. 602
34 Kardasi, V.A. ‘Ermoupoli: astikes leituryies kai symberifores’, Neoelliniki poli. Othomanikes klironimies kai elliniko kratos, II (Athens,1985), p. 585. In 1835 imports were 75.9 per cent of the national total (and 57.9 per cent of total exports) and fluctuated around that level through the 1840s.
35 Ledhuy, pp. 607-613. There were 920 ships from the Cyclades (30 were 350 tons) the highest concentration in Greece although lower than that boasted by the Greek state. In 1834, 3,000 Greek ships, 1,413 from abroad used the port of Syros and 1438 left for destinations outside Greece. See also: Mansolas, A. Renseignements statistiques sur les établissements industriels à vapeur en Grèce (Athens, 1876), p. 55
36 Kardasi, Syros, stavrodromi tis anatolikis meseyeiou, pp. 34-37
37 Ledhuy, p. 604
39 Anastassiou, p. 31; DAE: A/I/ ‘Klirodotima Stam. K Proiou’, 6A2; Agriantoni, and Fenerli, p. 74
40 See Syriana Grammata, 19 (July, 1992) For the refugee crisis; See DAE A and B/ ‘Idiaitera (1)’ for philanthropic legacies and bequests for
orphanages and public institutions

41 See Eleftherios M., O kairos ton chrisantemon (Athens, 2003)


44 Agriantoni and Fenerli, ibid.; Loukos, ’Petites villes en Grèce’, 599 and ‘La petite ville face à la grande; le cas d’Ano-Syra à la fin du siècle’, Ariadne, 7 (1994 ), pp. 151-164

45 See Loukos, Ch., ‘Epidimia kai koinonia. I cholera stin Ermoupolis tis Syrou (1854), Mnimon, 14 (1992), pp. 192-196


49 Kolodny, pp. 196-197

50 Ibid

51 Kardisi, Syros, stavrodromi tis anatolikis Mesyeiou; Loukos, ‘Mia elliniki poli’, p. 591


53 Loukos, ‘Illusions and Realities’, p. 141-142

54 Ministère du Commerce et de l’Industrie, ‘Mouvement commercial, industriel, agricole et maritime de Syra en 1909’, Rapports commerciaux:
La Grèce, situation économique 1905 à 1909 (Paris, 1910)

55 IAK 22 Promemoria per il Signor Maggiore La Marca, 1941


58 Kolodny, p. 198


60 Tharros, 6 September 1940, 1: Report by Anotaton Oikonomiko Symvoulio; IAK 223/8287/0 Monografia. Lists the firms which moved to Athens

61 IAK 22 Promemoria per il Signor Maggiore La Marca, 1941

62 Tharros, 7 July 1940, 1; IAK 106 A.G. Salachas, Marine Agents, to CMC (Comando Militaire delle Cicladi), 27 January 1942

63 Agriantoni and Fenerli, p. 22

64 Tharros, 15 December 1933; Tharros, 5 January 1934

65 See: Gkoutos, H.G., Oi aperyies sti Syro to 1879 (Athens, 1999)

66 Loukos, ‘Mia elliniki poli se parakmi’, p. 595

67 Mazower, Greece and the Inter-war Economic Crisis (Oxford, 1991), 278-281; See also Clogg, R., A Concise History of Greece (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 86-93

68 Bellou-Kail, A., Markos Vanvakaris (Athens, 1978), pp. 70-80


70 Ibid., pp. 209-212


72 Loukos, ibid., pp. 206-214; also To Vima tís Syrianis, 1 October 1922 and 16 October 1922

73 Tharros, 31 December 1939, 1; DAE 20/ ‘Koinonikoi Pronoia. Eranikoi katalogoi’ 1939/1940. DAE O/B/ ‘Proypologismoi’ 11. ‘Efimeris tís Kyverniseos: Tou Basileiou tís Ellados’, 20 May 1941 and 19 August 1941; Tharros, 21 March 1940. Contributions were raised which ranged from 50 to 500 drachmas from individuals, 1000-2000 drachmas from companies and a donation of 4000 from the banker Emmanuel Tsiropinas
Chapter 2

1 Mussolini, B., Speech of 4 October 1922; Doumanis, Myth and Memory, pp. 41-47; Mack Smith, D., Mussolini’s Roman Empire (London & New York, 1976), pp. 118-120

2 Links between Syros and the Dodecanese were established when Italian amphibious planes in transit to Rhodes made regular stops at the island in the 1930s

3 See van Creveld, Hitler’s Strategy, p. 165, regarding the Greek armistice and the division of Greece between Axis partners. See also Simoni, L., Berlino, Ambasciata d’Italia, 1939-1945 (Rome, n.d.) for the diplomatic negotiations prior to the Axis invasion

4 Dimotikou Arheiou Ermoupolis (Municipal Archives of Ermoupolis, henceforth: DAE) Municipal Correspondence/ A1/11457 Prefect Vrachnos to police and port authorities, 25 March 1941

5 Anzac troops were billeted in the boys’ high school: See Halaris, D.N., Ta Katohika, I, (Athens, 1997), p. 276

6 Rigoutsos, p. 1

7 Ibid, p. 2
For the Governor of the Dodecanese, Cesare De Vecchi’s unilateral decision to torpedo the island of Tinos, see: Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed*, p. 174, pp. 248-9

‘O Vaias Vaias milaei sto Dimitri Varthaliti’, *Syriana Grammata*, 41 (January, 1998), p. 24. Vaias was present when the Town Council met to discuss how to stop the Italians coming to Syros. See also DAE municipal records for 12 May 1941: A payment of 13,000 drachmas was voted to pay for the prefect’s visit to Athens to hand over ‘important secret documents’ to the German authorities

DAE Municipal Correspondence/ A1/1653 Mayor Ladopoulos to Col. Nazor, 5 May 1941, informing him of the German occupation of Syros; 1650B Telegram: Col. Farina on Naxos to Mayor of Ermoupolis, 5 May 1941, declaring the Italian occupation of Naxos and Paros and asking if the Germans had arrived on Syros

Halaris, *Ta Katohika*, I, pp. 138-144 and pp. 263-268

Rigoutsos, 2; Stefanou, M.P., *Syrianes Selides II* (Syros, 1999), pp. 71-73; Halaris, I, p. 288

*I documenti diplomatici italiani* (Henceforth: DDI), IX, vi, 1919-1943, Belgrade, 22 April 1941: Discussions with Ciano and Ribbentrop; See also: DDI IX, vii, 402, ‘Italian Plenipotentiary for Greece, Ghigi to Ciano, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Athens 18 July 1941 and 553, 3 September 1941; Archivio Centrale dello Stato. (Henceforth: ACS) /PCM G 7/8 20506 from Ciano, 5 July 1941: the role of the Plenipotentiary in Greece

*Andremo nell’Egeo, prenderemo pure il Pireo*  
*E, se tutto va bene, prenderemo anche Atene!*

IAK 31 II/7660 Col. Farina to Comando Supremo delle Forze Armate dell’Egeo (Supreme Command of the Aegean Forces. Henceforth: CS FAA.), 20 June 1941

IAK 1/624 Captain Mario Napoli to Marina Sira, 1 August 1941; Halaris, I, p. 289

IAK I/Ordinanza 146, 16 August 1941, signed by the Acting Mayor of Ermoupolis, N.Kambanis and 2 Councillors, commending the bravery of R.T. Carbonari Vittorio.

Rigoutsos, p. 3

AUSSME Military High Command: Historical Archive in Rome: Archivio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell’Esercito (Henceforth SME), SME/1373/ DSM 7 Regiment, 24 May 1941

IAK 10 the CV of Col. Giovanni Duca

van Creveld, ibid., p. 176, suggests that while Hitler had no interest in
pursuing the war in the Balkans the region was indispensable as a source of raw materials

22 Rodogno, p. 179
24 See: Mazower, Inside Hitler’s Greece, p. 31
25 For Italy’s gradual assumption of control of the Dodecanese see: Doumanis, 45; Regarding attempts at colonization by the fascist governor, De Vecchi, see: Grazzi, p. 126 and p. 135
26 IAK 223 ‘Monografia. Movimento della navigazione’, p. 3
27 IAK 31/5997 Gen. d’Armata Ettore Bastico to CM Syros, Samos and Crete, 8 June 1941; IAK 31 II/660 Col. Farina to Superegeo HQ, 20 June 1941
28 IAK 35/11039 CS FF AA. to CM Samos, Syros and Crete, ‘Direttive per l’azione politica economica nelle isole occupate’, 27 August 1941
29 IAK 43 V/747/14 Farina to Prefecture, 25 June 1941; IAK 43 IV (G), Duca to CM Naxos, Santorino, Tinos, Andros, Kea, 6 September 1941
30 IAK 43 II/1366/6 Farina to CS FF AA., 16 July 1941
31 IAK 44 Ordinanza N. 32, issued by Duca, 16 November 1941
32 IAK 223 ‘Monografia’
33 Doumanis, p. 125
34 IAK 43 II/5454/14 Duca to CS – UAC and Ufficio Servizi, 3, 17 October 1941
35 Mazower, Inside Hitler’s Greece, pp. 62-69; Hondros, pp. 63-65
36 IAK 43 II/7385/14 Duca to CS-Ufficio Servizi and UAC, 25 November 1941
37 IAK 47/0785/14 CCC to HQ-CA, ‘Distacco amministrativo’, 19 August 1942
38 IAK 212 III/5087/3 Duca to CS FF AA. Ufficio Propaganda e Assistenza, 3 October 1941
39 Ibid. Duca’s emphasis. See also SME 1373/4 Duca’s final report, 28 June 1942
40 IAK 43 IV/ 7385/14 Duca to CS FF AA. ‘Bilanci Casse Governative’, 25 November 1941
41 Ibid., 2; IAK 56 I/07127 and 3044/B; SME/DSM/1374 Duca’s final report, 28 June 1942, pp. 8-10
42 IAK 35/834/14 Duca to Campioni, 6 February 1942
43 IAK 35/834/14 Duca to High Command, Ufficio Servizi-Affari Civili, 6 February 1942
IAK 25/25 Clerical Workers Association to Duca, 8 June 1942

IAK 25/0165/3 Campioni to CCC, 15 September 1942

IAK 35/11039 CS delle FFAA. to CM Samos, Syros and Crete, 'Direttive per l’azione politica economica nelle isole occupate', 27 August 1941

IAK 43 II/1366/6 Farina to CS FFAA., 15 July 1941


IAK 22/7513/3 CMC to CS FFAA., ‘Attività del Governo Greco nelle Cicladi’, 28 November 1941

Rigoutsos, pp. 13-14

IAK 22/ 3968/3 Duca telegram to HQ Rhodes, 14 September 1941

IAK 22/7513/3 CMC to CS FFAA., 28 November 1941

IAK 35/6550 Campioni puts off distacco to 1st March: 8 February 1942

IAK 35/2089/17 Angiolini to 7th Regiment infantry, 20 March 1942

IAK 35 425/AC Campioni to CD Samos and CMC Syros, 17 February 1942

IAK 40 I/1024 Notables of Samos to CM Samos, Appeal and ‘Promemoria’, 5 March 1942

The late inclusion of Samos into the Greek state meant the island’s autonomous status had been within the living memory of the writers

IAK 40 ibid

IAK 35/725/AC Campioni to CMC, 17 February 1942

IAK 45/1661/14 Duca to CS FFAA. ‘Distacco amministrativo’, 6 March 1942

IAK 45/3942/AC Central UAC to all Commands, 23 July 1942

IAK 47/0785/14 Valeriani to HQ-CA, ‘Distacco amministrativo’, 19 August 1942

IAK 7/3863/3 Duca to Prefecture, 14 September 1941

The Metaxas dictatorship 1936-40, replicated and reinforced many of the weaknesses of the over-centralised state and its reliance on clientelistic networks to the detriment of effective representation of local constituencies. In addition the regime discouraged opposition and made it difficult to remove corrupt state officials

IAK 32/3323/6 Duca to Prefecture, 24 September 1941

IAK 7/4405/3 ‘Ordinanza N.14 Sospensione funzioni Direttore Prefettura delle Cicladi’, 25 September 1941

IAK 7/77354 Ministry of Interior to Prefecture, 30 December 1941
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Rigoutsos, p. 3 and p. 6
4 IAK 181 I/ Ordinanza No 10 from Duca, 23 September 1941
5 IAK 43 V/ 7380 Ufficio Servizi delle Forze Armate dell’Egeo (Henceforth: US FF.AA.) P.M. 550E to Farina, 3 July 1941, ‘Promemoria per il Col. Com. Amilcare Farina’
6 Hionidou, V., *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece, 1941-1944* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 41
7 IAK 181 I/ Ordinanza No 7 from Duca, 1 September 1941: Declaration of fuel stocks; Ordinanza No 9, 1 September 1941: Price tagging and No 9 (III), 19 September 1941, imposing retail price tagging and banning wholesale prices in shops
8 IAK 3/2902/2 Duca to CMC, 13 April 1942, ‘Olio e uva passa per la popolazione’.
   IAK 3/5080 Duca to CMC/UAC, 26 May 1942
10 IAK 10 I/62 Valeriani to Campioni, 20 August 1942, ‘Situazione economica, finanziaria e monetaria delle Cicladi’
11 IAK 10 ‘Promemoria per il Console Generale Valerio Valeriani’, November 1942
12 IAK 19 Monthly report, November 1942
13 IAK 19 Monthly report, 3 May 1943, ‘Prezzi Calmieri’
14 IAK 47/507/AC Campioni to CD Samos and CMC, ‘Distacco amministrativo delle isole occupate’, 2 February 1942
15 IAK 55 I ‘Bando del Comandante Superiore delle FF.AA. dell’Egeo relativo alla disciplina delle operazioni in cambi e divise nelle isole Cicladi e Sporadi occupate’, 28 May 1942
16 IAK 55 I
17 IAK 55 I/3295 ‘Disciplina operazioni in cambi e divise’. Campioni to CC Samos and Syros, 24 July 1942;
   IAK 55 I ‘Istruzioni relative all’applicazione del Bando 28 per la disciplina delle operazioni in cambi e divise nelle isole Cicladi e Sporadi occupate’.
18 IAK 55 I/08184/14 Radiogramma Valeriani to Egeomil, US, Rhodes, 15 July 1942
19 IAK 55 I/0340/14 Radiogramma Valeriani to Egeomil, US, Rhodes,
24 July 1942
20 IAK 55 I/4256/A.C. Campioni to CC Syros and Samos, 2 August 1942
21 IAK 55 I/4146/A.C. Maj. Francesco Lillo US Affari Civili to CC Syros and Samos, 5 August 1942;
IAK 51 I
22 IAK 55 I/0315/14 Valeriani to CS FFAA.US-AC, 23 July 1942
23 IAK 55 I/0633/14 Telegram from N. Pezzella, Syros Post Office to Affari Civili Syros, 8 August 1942
24 IAK 55 I/0315/14 Valeriani to CS FFAA. US-AC, 23 July 1942
25 IAK 56 II/ President of NBG Syros branch, A. Papavassiliou and Committee members of Union of Greek Banks: B. Diamantopoulos, S. Malissiano, N. Naoumides to Valeriani, 15 July 1942
26 IAK 47/3455/AC Campioni to CC Samos and Syros, 29 June 1942
27 IAK 56 II A. Papavassiliou to Valeriani, 22 July 1942
28 IAK55 I/0319/14 Valeriani to CS FFAA. US-AC, 23 July 1942
29 IAK 56 II CM Nassos to Spadavecchia CCC, 21 July 1942;
IAX 56I1 Valerian’s reply to CM Nassos, 28 July 1942; IAK 55I/3155/AC Arrigo Angiolini, Ufficio Servizi Samos to CS FFAA.US-AC; IAK 55I/0880 Telegram from Bruno in Santorini to CCC, 26 August 1942
30 GAK-AD (General State Archives – Archives of the Dodecanese) IDD (Italian Administration of the Dodecanese. Henceforth IDD) IDD 404/1942 Maj. Carmelo La Rosa to Campioni, 29 July 1942
31 MFA Gabap b.21 Raffaele Guariglia, MFA, 13 August 1943; DDI, IX, vii, 86:MFA Gabap b.21 Special Envoy for Economic and Financial matters in Greece, Athens to MFA, 27 July 1943; also 17 March 1943 and 13 July 1943, ’Appunto per il Duce’
32 IAK 29 Telespresso 8/16199 from MFA Gabap, to CS FFAA. ‘Conversazione circa situazione economica – finanziaria in Grecia’, 23 October 1942
33 Gibson, The Ciano Diaries, p. 389
35 IAK 56 II/ 0864/14 Valeriani to the Agent of the Bank of Greece, 26 August 1942; IAK 55 II/ 0860/14 Valeriani to CS.FFAA. US-AC, ‘Ripartizione 300 milioni di dracme a banche locali’; IAK 55 II/ 0919/
NOTES

14 Telegram from Valeriani to US Rhodes, 31 August 1942
36 IAK 53 II Bando No 32, 20 February 1943
37 IAK 53 II Valeriani to CS FFAA, 25 March 1943
38 IAK 53 II/02257/14 Valeriani to Egeomil, Rhodes, 7 June 1943
39 IAK 53 II/02257/14 CMC US to CCC 10 June 1943; IAK53 II/4923AC CS FFAA. to CCC 13 July 1943
40 IAK 53 II/3371/B Ten. Col. Emanuele Bruno to CCC, 6 August 1943; IAK53II/8359 Acting Prefect Zontos of Cyclades to CCC
41 IAK 53 II/3403 G.D. Rallis, PM’s Office to Maj. A. Lamarca, CMC, February 1943
42 IAK 53 II/5024/AC Campioni to the Office of the Special Envoy for economic and financial questions in Greece, 15 July 1943
43 MFA Gabap b. 21 CS FFAA. to MFA, 23 June 1943, ‘Situazione economica ed alimentare delle Cicladi’
44 MFA Gabap b. 21 ‘Dati sulla popolazione’. Internal draft report on the situation in Greece since 1940 made in 1943. (No exact date or author)
45 Gibson, The Ciano Diaries, 512. For the financial situation in Greece see: p. 529 and p. 531
46 MFA Gabap b.21, Fagiuli to Bonomi, 18 June 1943
47 MFA Gabap b.21, ‘Dati sulla popolazione’, 1943
48 MFA Gabap b.22, Valeriani to F Babuscio Rizzo, 6 May 1943
49 MFA Gabap b.22, ibid
50 MFA Gabap b.22/4407/AC, Campioni to MFA ‘Situazione economica ed alimentare delle Cicladi’, 23 June 1943
51 MFA Gabap b.22/3499 Babuscio to Valeriani, 28 July 1943; MFA Gabap b.22/1/18309, Telegram Rhodes to MFA, 21 June 1943; MFA Gabap b.22/20467 Telegram MFA to Rhodes, 15 June 1943

Chapter 4

1 IAK 18 ‘Inquadramento delle attività assistenziali in Sira dal 1 Agosto 1941 al 31 Agosto 1942’
2 SME/1373/DSM/2875C Allegato, Cap. med. P. Manfrini to Duca, 15 October 1941
3 Ibid; IAK 20/Allegato F. ‘Sezione Assistenza Sanitaria Civile’, 1942
4 IDD 384/1942 Duca to CS FFAA 5 February, 1941
5 Yermasimidis, K.G., To Panorama tis Syrou (Syros, 1933)
6 IAK 223 ‘Monografia, Risorse Agricole dell’isola di Sira’, 10 September 1942
7 IAK 79 I Olive oil production in the Cyclades from 1 October 1941-June 1942; IAK 81 I/2458/13 Duca to CS FFAA, 19 August 1941. The Cyclades produced 9,560 kilos per annum and imported 196,968 kilos, most of which was needed for Syros.

8 WO 204/8888 Report No H.10, 12 August 1943

9 IAK 223 ‘Monografia’

10 IAK 223 ‘Monografia’: ‘Organizzazione e rendimento della pesca nell’isola di Sira nel quadro generale dell’attività peschereccia delle Cicladi’

11 Ibid

12 Ibid

13 ‘Apo to Imeroloyio tis Scholis “Ayios Yeorgios” (Frère), Syriana Grammata, 15 (July 1991), pp. 241-2;

14 Although the Greek economy was predominantly rural, generating 35 per cent of the GNP, the focus of agricultural production was on luxury goods for export such as tobacco and currants.

15 Sbarounis, A.J., in Meletai kai Anamniseis ek B’ Pankosmiou Polemou (Athens, 1950), p. 106; Delibanes, D. and Cleveland, W.C., Greek Monetary Developments 1939-1948 (Indiana, 1949); Hondros, p. 64: The deficit of the Greek economy due to the war was 4,563,000,000 drachmas in 1940 and 7,516,000,000 in 1941; See also: Hionidou, V., Famine and Death

16 MFA Gabap b. 22/4407/AC Campioni to MFA, 23 June 1943, ‘Situatione economica ed alimentare delle Cicladi’

17 IAK 212 II/10159 to CM Samos, Syros and Crete. ‘Assistenza invernale alle popolazioni nelle isole di nuova occupazione’, 8 August 1941; IAK 212 II/4906/3, 4 October 1941

18 IAK 211 I/1 President of the Local Commission for the Distribution of IRC supplies to CCC, 4 December 1942; IAK 18 ‘Relazione mensile’ November 1942. IRC deliveries of white flour sent via three motor boats, amounted to 65,841 okes

19 IAK 181 I/ Ordinanza N. 30

20 IAK 211 III/103/U.A. In November three motor boats delivered 65841 okes of food, including 200/400 okes of white flour for distribution to the population and various institutions; IAK 5/5494 Mayor to CCC, regarding 40,500 okes of wheat flour for the general population; IAK 211 III/106/UA, Prefecture to CCC, 4 January 1943. In December
3930 kg of grain, 2560 kg of flour 2200 kg of condensed milk, 40 kg of cheese, 100 of potatoes, 36 kg of oil, 130 kg of resins, 5 barrels of milk, 66 bags of semolina as well as 23 bags of children’s’ shoes were delivered

21 Stefanou, M.P., *Syrianes Selides*, II (Syros, 1999), pp. 71-77. Similar attitudes to Greek black marketeers are expressed by others who lived through the occupation on Syros. See: P. Zaranis in Halaris, *Ta Katohika*, I, p. 142

22 Rigoutsos, p. 10

23 *Cicladi*, 1 October 1941-7 February 1943

24 WO 204/8888 Report No H.10, 12 August 1943

25 Rigoutsos, p. 23 and p. 38

26 IAK 84 I Farmers of Tinos to Duca, 9 April 1942 and 27 April 1942

27 IAK 3/2547/13 ‘Raccolta ed ammasso cereali’, Duca to CMC, Prefecture of Syros and CS FF.AA dell’Egeo, 3 April 1942; IAK 19 ‘Attività Civile nelle Cicladi: Riepilogo attività svolta nel periodo del 1 agosto 1941 al 1 aprile 1942

28 IAK 81/543 Campioni to CM Samos and CCC, 15 February 1942

29 IAK 3/2547/13 ibid

30 IAK 97 I Duca to Comando di Distaccamento Vari and Finnikas, 14 September 1941

31 IAK 223 ‘Organizzazione e rendimento della pesca nell’isola di Sira nel quadro generale dell’attività peschereccia delle Cicladi’

32 IAK 97/ 6446/16 Duca to F. Venudaki, 5 November 1941, ‘Viveri per pescatori’. IAK 19/ ‘Relazioni mensili 1941-1942’ Regia Marina, Capitaneria di Porto to CCC, ‘Relazione pesca novembre 1942’, 4 November 1942

33 IAK 97 II S. Ten. Mario Longoni, commander of Mykonos to CCC, 4 April 1943; IAK 97II Duca to CM Paros, 16 May 1942

34 IAK 97 II Duca to CM Paros, 16 May 1942; IAK 97 I Letter from Dimitris Kutsukis, ‘Fish merchant’, to Prefect, 5 November 1941

35 Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, pp. 23-72

36 Rigoutsos, p. 3

37 IAK 3/2474/842 Karakalas to CMC, 13 May 1942; IAK 3/4329/II Duca to Karakalas, 17 May 1942

38 IAK 19 I from Maj. Antonino La Marca, ‘Circolare’, 30 June 1942

39 IAK 181 I/ Ordinanza N. 21 from Duca, 15 October 1941

40 IAK 182/ Ordinanza N. 5 from Lamarca, 10 November 1942

41 IAK 25 Vutzinos to Valeriani, 12 October 1942

45 Stefanou, Syrianes Selides, pp. 71-77
46 IAK 18 ‘Relazioni mensili’; IAK files 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 16II, 20, 23, 29, 86, 106 regarding the black market
47 IAK 19 2b ‘Permessi importazione e esportazione’, April 1942
48 Stefanou, ibid
49 IAK106/798/7 Farina to CS F.F.A.A., Ufficio Servizi, 26 June 1941
50 IAK 3 II/197/D Duca to the Prefecture, 17 April 1942
51 IAK 106/3 II Carabinieri Reali Addetti al CM Naxos to Carabinieri Reali CM Syros 24 July 1941
52 IAK 106/193014 Telegram, Farina to Comiles Andros; M.A. Sigala to Farina, 29 July 1941
53 IAK 10 Fines imposed in the summer and autumn of 1943; IAK10 II 1136 Gino to Commune, 16 August 1943: Antonio Perris was fined 20,000 drachmas for illegal export of cereals. The same for G. Felucatis (1135/G.) for contraband export of cheese; IAK 29: examples of fines imposed from early 1943
54 SME/1373/DSM/3024 Allegato 42, Duca to CS F.F.A.A., 24 October 1941
55 IAK 10/62 Valeriani to CS F.F.A.A, 29 August 1942; IAK10/1837/ C Gino Luigi to CCC and ‘Sezione “I”’, (Interpreter and Informer section), 23 February 1943
56 See for example: Biasion, R., Sagapò (Turin, 1953); Baldi, G., Dolce Egeo, guerra amara (Milano, 1988) Carità, R., Un cipresso sanguina in Grecia (Milan, 1967)
57 IAK 23/628 Farina to the Prefecture of the Cyclades 15 June 1941; IAK 23/630 Farina to Command of the Detachment in Ermoupolis, Royal Marine and CS F.F.A.A
58 Rigoutsos, p. 40
59 After the German occupation in 1944, warehouses full of material were discovered and owners had to be persuaded by members of the resistance to surrender these goods in return for food. Interviews with Nikos Filaretos, September 2004; See also IAK 25 Ladopoulos to Valeriani, 31 December 1942; IAK 26 Th. D. Velissaropoulos & Brothers S.A. to CCC 5 March 1943 regarding this textile factory still functioning in 1943
60 Mazower, *Inside Hitler’s Greece*, pp. 27-30
61 Rigoutsos, p. 6; Loukos, ‘Thanatoi apo peina’
62 SME/1373/SSM/Duca to CS. FF.AA., 24 October 1941
63 IAK 101 Valeriani to Campioni, 20 August 1942
64 Kolodny, p. 193
67 *Syriana grammata*, passim, 15 (July, 1991)
68 Valaoras V.G., ‘A Reconstruction of the Demographic History of Modern Greece’, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 38 (1960), pp. 115-39. The crude death rate was 17.3 per thousand on Syros and 14 per thousand nationally. The crude birth rate on Syros had dropped in the 1930s, from 25.9 to 22.4, and was below the national rate of 27.6 by 1939; See also: Hionidou V., *Famine and Death* pp. 26-27, and ‘Send Us Food or Coffins’, pp. 189-195; Kolodny, ‘Hermoupolis-Syra’, 21, explains the inter-war factors: an ageing population and an imbalance of women to men, mobilisation from 1912 – 1922 depleted the male population, migratory movement and an influx of young people, (51 per cent under 15) from Asia Minor. There were 61 men per 100 women between 20 to 44 years, hence the fall in the birth rate. Births exceeded deaths by 7.3 per cent in 1926-1930 but the high infant mortality rate undermined this
69 DAE Civil register of births and deaths
70 IAK 209/ 0478/8 V.Valeriani to CS FF.AA. UAC, 1 August 1942, gives the total death rates for 19 Cyclades islands: 1,911. Other high rates were Santorini: 181, Andros 174, Naxos 149, and Tinos 113
71 DAE Delta/E/Thanatoi/6II, 28 November 1941, ‘Emfainousa tous Episymbantas Thanatous en Ermoupolei kata tous minas Iouliou/Noemhriou ton eton 1940 kai 1941’
72 SME/1373/DSM/2875C Allegato, Cap. med. P. Manfrini to Duca, 15 October 1941
73 SME 1373/DSM/ 3024/C Duca to CS. FF. AA., 24 October 1941
74 DAE Syros civil registration records, July 1940-November 1944; IDD 384/1942 Duca to CS FF.AA., 5 February 1941
IAK 18/40 Ibid., ‘Assistenza agli endematosi’; IAK 28/77/AG La Marca to Ufficio A.C. 30 November 1942, ‘Famiglie Assistite con più di sei membri’: They were to receive fortnightly: 4kg pasta or rice, 4kg maize flour, 1 kg of oil, 0.750 cheese, 0.750 jam, 1.500 sugar or jam

IAK 209 I /3765/AC Valeriani to CS FF. AA. AC, ‘Mortalità popolazione civile’, 1 August 1942

IAK 18 Public Assistance report for September 1941 to March 1942


Loukos, ‘Thanatoi apo peina’, p. 194

Hionidou, “Send Us Food or Coffins”, and Syros civil registration records

Kolodny, ‘Hermoupolis-Syra’, p. 193


Halaris, Ta Katohika, I, p. 173

Hionidou, “Send Us Food or Coffins”, p. 187

Loukos, ibid., p. 192

Halaris, ibid

Varthaliti, T.B., ‘Katohikes anamniseis’, Syriana Grammata, 15, p. 227

Roussos, N., Ta apomnemoneumata enos kandilapto (Syros, 1946), pp. 24-25

Loukos, ibid

DAE D/E, ‘Thanatoi 10, (Dimarcheio kai Nekrotafeio)’. Figures from April 1942 to September 1943 Sec Appendix. Local authority charts

DAE I/Nekrotafeio/9 February 1942-May 1943

Loukos, ibid., 193, DAE ‘Sigkritikos pinax thanodon ton minon Ianouariou, Febrouariou, Martiou kai Apriliou 1941 kai 1942 en ton nomo Kykladon.’; IAK 209 I-III; IAK 20 Allegato F4, puts the rate for December 1941 to April 1942 at almost 70 per 1000, but claims a lower rate for those helped by the clinic

DAE 1, Nekrotafeoi/12 and Ordinanza No. 64 Bis

IAK 3 Ordinanza No. 60 issued by Duca, 28 February 1942

IDD 404/1942 Duca to CS FF. AA. AC, 3 April 1942; IDD 404/1942 Ten. Col. Angiolini to Duca, 3 April 1942

Loukos, ibid., p. 194

IAK/209 The President of Vari to Mayor, 13 April 1942

IAK 18 ‘Assistenza agli endematosi’

100 Iorgos P., oral testimony given in an interview in April 2004
101 Valaoras, V.G. ‘A Reconstruction of the Demographic History of Modern Greece’, 224. He shows that deaths in Athens coincided with “cold waves”, demonstrated by a chart of the average daily temperature.
102 SME/1373/DSM/2875C Allegato, Cap. med. P. Manfrini to Duca, 15 October 1941
103 Ibid., p. 22
104 Rigoutsos, ibid., p. 19
105 IAK18 ibid
106 IAK18 ‘Sira’, ibid.; IAK 20 ‘Allegato E. Assistiti’, June 1942
107 The details of medical intervention and food distribution will be discussed in the subsequent chapter on the work of ‘Assistenza Civile’
108 TB struck Syros after the war and 20-25 per cent were afflicted in 1946. See Tharros, 10 December 1946
110 DAE Syros civil registration records
113 Macintyre, K., ‘Female Mortality Advantage’, in Dyson, T. and O Grada, C., Famine Demography, p. 255
115 Stefanou, Syrianes Selides, pp. 81-82
116 Drèze and Sen, p. 81
117 Tharros, 5 January 1940
119 Stefanou, Syrianes Selides, pp. 77-81
120 Interviews with: Haris L., 10 April, 2002; Markos and Eleni K., 20 August 2002; Markos M., 3 April 2004; Vasios M., 3 September 2005; Alexis P., 7 September 2005
121 Skouras, F., (et al), I Psihopatholyia tis pienas, tou favou kai tou anghous (Athens, 1991), p. 345
122 Hionidou, *Famine and Death*, pp. 176-7
124 IAK 19/01841/8 5 May 1943, ‘Relazione mensile’, April 1943
125 IAK 23 Vutzinos to Valeriani, June 1942
126 Ibid
128 SME/1373/DSM/2875C Cap. med. P. Manfrini to Duca, 15 October 1941
130 IAK 26 Sotto Comando Gendarmeria di Andros, A. Barzalias to CCC. ‘Intorno alle misure di pulitezza e di igienica delle botteghe dei barbieri’, 6 April 1943; ‘di igienica dei caffè’, 18 April 1943; ‘degli alberghi e delle cucine’ 20 April 1943; ‘delle vie, dei pedoni delle case, dei cortili ecc.’, 24 March 1943
131 IAK 26/023763/3 CCC to Prefecture and CM Andros, 26 June 1943 and 26/4535/02 CM Andros to CCC, 21 June 1943
132 IAK 26/023763/3 CCC to Prefecture and CM Andros, 26 June 1943 and 26/4535/02 CM Andros to CCC, 21 June 1943
133 SME/1373/DSM/2875C Allegato, Cap. med. P. Manfrini to Duca, 15 October 1941
134 IAK 208 I Dr S. Vrondiades to CMC, 18 June 1942
135 Ibid; DAE I/’Demosia Ygeia/Eksantheticitos tyfos/2277 letter to the Mayor, November 1941
136 IAK 210 I Kythnos Quarantine Station (10 May 1942-17 August 1943) Ordinanza 69 issued by Duca in August 1941 regulates controls for typhoid fever; IAK 210/481/3 2 July 1942; IAK 208I/610/3 Military Dr Pietro Palmieri, 4 August 1942 regarding the requisitioning of the school
137 IAK 208 I Dr S. Vrondiades to CMC, 18 June 1942
138 DAE, I/’Demosia Igeia/ Eksantheticitos tyfos’, no 2277; IAK 28/105/S.C. Gino Luigi to CCC. Six cases of typhus, 4 on Syros and 2 on Andros, for November 1942; IAK 29/133/S.C. Bruno to CCC 1 January 1943: 4 cases and 5 on the other islands
139 IAK 211 III; GAK-DAE, I/’Demosia Igeia/ Eksantheticitos tyfos
140 IAK 211III/103/U.A. Prefecture to CCC, 4 December 1942; IAK 208 I /66/S.C. Dr P. Palmieri to CS FF.AA. 11 November 1942
141 IAK 211 III/ 5685 Mayor of Ermoupolis to the prefect, 1 December 1942

Chapter 5

1  IAK 31/5997 Gen. d’Armata Ettore Bastico to CM Syros, Samos and Crete, 8 June 1941
2  IAK 10/8/Ris/a.c.Valeriani to CS FF. AA. ‘Organico del Commissariato Civile’, 9 July 1942
3  IAK 10 ‘Promemoria per il Console Generale Valerio Valeriani’, November 1942
4  IAK 10/8 ibid; IAK 20 ‘Verbale di Consegna’, 18 July 1942
5  IAK 20 ibid., concerning the ‘Duca-Palieri’ account which contained more than forty-five million drachmas and the ‘Compensation account’ containing more than three million
6  IAK 65/IV Director of Syros branch of Banco di Roma to CCC, 24 March 1943
7  IAK 10/01850/3 Valeriani to CCC, 4 May 1943
8  Due to the poor drachma/lira exchange rate exporters did not readily trade with the Dodecanese, but imports were imposed on the Cyclades
9  IAK 212II/10159 Campioni to CM Samos, Syros and Crete, 8 August 1941
10  IAK 18 ‘Inquadramento delle Attività Assistenziali in Sira’, 4 December 1942
11  IAK 23 Vutzinos to Valeriani, June 1942; IAK 25 Vutzinos to Valeriani, 12 October 1942 and 18 December 1942
12  IAK 20 ‘Allegato F. Sezione Assistenza Sanitaria Civile’, 18 July 1942
13  IAK 212 III/5087/3 Duca CS FF.AA., 5 October 1941
14  IAK 10/174/Ris.CC La Marca to CCC ‘Ricostituzione e dipendenza dell’Ufficio Annunario Civile’, 9 December 1942; IAK 5/174/CC La Marca to Town Hall, ‘Ufficio Annunario’, 9 December 1942; IAK 10/319 A. Maioli and B. Corrado to CCC, 1 August 1942; IAK 10/85/ RIS Valeriani to CMC, ‘Personale militare Ufficio Viveri Civili’, 9 April 1943
15  IAK 20 ‘Verbale di Consegna, Allegato D, Sezione Amministrazione Viveri Civili e Magazzino Viveri; ‘Allegato E, Assistenzi Civile’, 18 July 1942; IAK 20 II/536, Capo Ufficio Imbarchi e Sbarchi, to CMC, 27 June 1942; IAK 21/42/D ‘Dati riassuntivi’, December 1942: School meals were served on the twelve main islands and soup kitchens also
existed on Santorini, Naxos, Formia, Andros and Anafi
18 IAK 19 ‘Relazione mensile’ for December 1942, showing the population and food distributed to the islands
19 IAK 19 ‘Enti Assistiti’ (1942); IAK18 ‘Sira. Inquadramento degli Istituti Assistenziali’: Half the Italian families were given free rations; IAK18/2818/D ‘Viveri per la collettività francese di Sira’, 14 October 1942
20 IAK 21/42 ‘Dati riassuntivi sull’attività svolta dall’Ufficio Assistenza Civile dal 1 giugno al 31 dicembre 1942. Assistenza Famigliare’, 31 December 1942
21 IAK3/2902/2 Duca to CMC, 13 April 1942
22 IAK 20 ‘Allegato D. Sezione Amministrazione Viveri Civili e Magazzino Viveri’, June 1942: 4,219 tons of relief supplies were received in this period of which 110,600 were left in stock
23 IAK 18 ‘Sira. Inquadramento degli Istituti Assistenziali’, 4 December 1942
25 IAK 18 ‘Sira. Inquadramento degli Istituti Assistenziali in Sira dal 1 agosto 1941 al 31 agosto 1942’, September 1942
26 IAK 18/2818/D Cantoni to AC, ‘Viveri per la collettività francese di Sira’, 14 October 1942
27 IAK 18 from CCC, ‘Relazione mensile’ for November 1942, 4 December 1942; IAK 19/2554/1 Duca to CMC, ‘Burro per la popolazione’, 3 April 1942. In November 1942, Syros received nearly 70,000 kg of food whereas Naxos, with a population of just 1000 less than Syros, received only 7,035 kg of sugar
28 IAK 19 ‘Relazione mensile’ for December 1942
29 IAK 20 ‘Sezione Assistenza Sanitaria Civile. Allegato F’, 18 July 1942
30 IAK 3/1840 Mayor to Palieri, 8 April 1942; IAK 3/1785 Duca to the Town Hall, 5 May 1942
31 IAK 21/42/ Ten. Medico W. Molla to CC ‘Assistenza’, 31 December 1942
32 IAK 18 ‘Relazione mensile’ for November 1942, ‘Assistenza’
33 IAK 19/01841/8 ‘Relazione mensile’ for April 1943, 5 May 1943
34 IAK 23 Vutzinos to Valeriani, June 1942
36 IAK 18 ‘Ammasso del latte fresco e assistenza infantile’, November 1942
37 IAK 20 ‘Allegato F. Sezione Assistenza Sanitaria Civile’, June 1942
Comparing this with rationing in other countries like Britain where adults received 350 gr. sugar a month, see Davies, J., *The Wartime Kitchen and Garden* (London, 1993) pp. 19-20

39 IAK 18 ‘Ammasso del latte’ ibid

40 Tsikoudi K. in Halaris, II

41 IAK 212/47. Ten. Med. D. Villari to CCC, ‘Relazione sull’Assistenza Sanitaria Civile dal 1 Settembre al 1 Ottobre 1942’, 14 October 1942

42 IAK 212/2824/D ‘Relazione sull’attività assistenziale per il mese di Settembre’, 16 October 1942

43 IAK 28 I/8409/C Gino Luigi to CCC, 10 September 1942


46 IAK 20 ‘Allegato F. Sezione Assistenza Civile’, 18 July 1942

47 IAK 20 ibid

48 IAK 18 ‘Assistenza agli endematosi’; IAK 28/77/AG La Marca to Ufficio A.C, 30 November 1942: Families with more than six members were to receive fortnightly: 4kg pasta or rice, 4kg maize flour, 1 kg of oil, 0.750 cheese, 0.750 jam, 1.500 sugar or jam

49 IAK 18/40 Villari to CMC. ‘Ufficio Assistenza Sanitaria Civile: Relazione sull’assistenza sanitaria dal 1 aprile 1942 al 1 settembre 1942. Ambulatorio Assistenziale’, 9 September 1942

50 IAK 20 ‘Allegato F. Sezione Assistenza Civile’, 18 July 1942

51 IAK 21 42/D from Ten. Medico W. Molla to AC, 31 December 1942

52 IAK 208 I: Lists of Greek doctors (no date)

53 Ibid

54 IDD 446/1943 Medici di Sira to Duca, 27 January 1942

55 Kabanaros, P. ‘Anamniseis enos heirourgou apo tin Katohi’, *Syriana Grammata*, p.5, p. 50

56 IAK 209 I Dr Pietro Palmieri to CMC, 22 October 1941. Re ‘Dr Alvisatos Dionigi’.

57 IAK 22/573/G Duca to the ‘Cassa Governativa’, 31 January 1942; IAK 22/521 Confidential report to CM Andros, ‘Elementi locali anti-Italiani’, 31 October 1941

58 IAK 3/3772/C Duca to the Prefect, ‘Sezione dermoceltica’, 5 May 1942; IAK 208 I 183/R Dr Antonio Costadori to CMC, ‘Relazione sull’andamento dell’Ospedale Civile in generale ed in modo speciale della sezione dermoceltica femminile’, 20 June 1942
IAK 208 I 7263/3 CMC to Prefecture, 21 November 1941
60 IAK 28 II 3/D Col. Emanuele Bruno to Prefecture, 3 December and 14 December 1941
61 IAK 208 I Vutzinos to Duca, 25 April 1942; IAK 208 Duca to Vutzinos, 13 May 1942
63 IAK 23 Vutzinos to Valeriani, June 1942
64 IAK 28/98/S.G. La Marca to Leonida Calambochi, 10 November 1942: regarding a committee to collect funds for poor pupils in the schools of Syros
65 Tsikoudi K. in Halaris, II, p. 322
66 Kabanaros, *Syriana Grammata*, p. 15 and p. 50
67 IAK 18, ‘Relazione mensile’ for November 1942, 4 December 1942;
IAK 19/01011/3, 8 September 1942
68 IAK 19/01841/8, ‘Relazione mensile’ for April 1943, 5 May 1943
69 IAK 23 Vutzinos to Valeriani, June 1942
70 IAK 23 ibid
71 IAK 23 Valeriani to Vutzinos, June 1942
72 IAK 19/01011/3, 8 September 1942
73 IAK 25/0118 Valeriani to Town Hall, 17 September 1942
74 IAK 19/01841/8 ‘Relazione mensile’, 5 May 1943
75 IAK 19/02478/3 ‘Relazione mensile’, 6 December 1942
76 IAK 19/01535/3 ‘Relazione mensile’, 6 April 1943; IAK 28I/02821/3
Valeriani to CS Ufficio Servizi -AC, 7 September 1943;
IAK 38/02412/8 Valeriani to CS FFA. dell’Egeo, 2 July 1943
77 IAK 16/02788/3 Valeriani to CM Naxos, 3 September 1943
78 IAK 3 II 1852/D Duca to Prefecture, 3 April 1942; IAK3II/8015/D
Duca to CMC, 22 April 1942; IAK 3 II (no date) Cake maker,
Konstantinos Tsiknas’s letter passed on by Duca to Mayor;
IAK 28 L. Karamleuzos to CCC, 11 December 1942
79 IAK3II/ 1030/D Duca to Prefecture, 23 April 1942
80 IAK3/1764/D Duca to the Town Hall, 12 April 1942
81 IAK 223 ‘Monografia, Movimento della Navigazione’, October-
November 1942
82 IAK 28I/8991/C Gino to CCC, 7 September 1943
83 IAK 28I/02831/3 Valeriani to CMC, 16 September 1943
84 IAK 64 I/955 A.Vatimbellas, Director of the Chamber of Commerce
to Valeriani, 6 April 1943
85 IAK 26 J. E. M. to CCC, 6 April 1943; A.G.R. to CCC, 7 April 1943;
IAK 28 Maria Cheremi to CCC, 12 October 1942
86 IAK 26 Velissaropoulos & Brothers S.A. to CCC, 5 March 1943
87 IAK 25 Francesca Luigi Vamvakari to CCC, 21 December 1942; 25/02801/3 Valeriani to Ladopoulos, 23 December 1942; E. Ladopoulos to Valeriani, 31 December 1942
88 IAK 78/1039/13 Giovanni Marengo to CCC; IAK 78/1391/13 Valeriani to ‘Unione delle Cooperative Agricole’, ‘Fave da semina’, 1 March 1943
89 IAK 78/7213/13 Dr Umberto Soleri, ‘Ufficio Agrario delle Cicladi’ to CCC, 24 July 1942: referring to the 5000 kg of maize seed sent from Rhodes
90 IAK 65 IV Director of Syros branch of Banco di Roma to CCC, 24 March 1943
91 IAK 64/02775/14 Valeriani to Banco di Roma-Filiale, 1 July 1943; Telegram from G.A. Salachas, July 1943; IAK 65/57 Association to CCC, 2 February 1943; IAK 65 IV/62 Association to CCC, 20 May 1943
92 IAK 65 IV/2381 Association of Professionals to CCC, 7 March 1943
93 IAK 64 I/955 A. Vatimbellas, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, to Valeriani, 6 April 1943
94 IAK 65 IV/2421 N.S. Tsontos to CCC, 16 March 1943
95 IAK 65 IV/24 National Association for manual and clerical workers to CCC, 10 March 1943; IAK 65 IV/826 Town Hall to CCC, 16 March 1943
96 IAK 65 IV/892 Mayor to CCC, 27 March 1943
97 IAK 20 Cooperative’s Provisional Committee to CCC, 30 October 1942
98 IAK 10 Telegram 44RIS/CC Valeriani to Comiles Naxos, 7 March 1943, regarding the critical situation in Naxos; IAK 10 Telegram 06489 from commander Rustichelli to Valeriani, 9 March 1943
99 IAK 77 II CM Andros to CCC, 6 September 1943
100 IAK 10 268/RIS Valeriani to IRC Athens, 2 September 1943
101 IAK 3II/1865 Mayor to CMC, 7 April 1942
102 IAK 211 II/567 Duca to CS FF.AA., 30 January 1942
103 IAK 211 II CMC to CCC telegram, 2 December 1942; IAK 211 III/103/U.A. In November 1942 three motor boats delivered 65,841 okes of food, including 200/400 okes of white flour; IAK 211 III/106/U.A. Prefecture to CCC, 4 January 1943. In December 1942, 3930 kg of grain, 2560 kg of flour 2200 kg of condensed milk, 40 kg of cheese, 100 of potatoes, 36 kg of oil, 130 kg of raisins, 5 barrels of milk, 66 bags of
semolina as well as 23 bags of children’s shoes
104 IAK 211 II/675/AC Campioni to CMC, 14 February 1942
105 See Hionidou, *Famine and Death*, pp. 143-4
106 MFA Gabap b.21, G. Arnò to the Foreign Ministry, 13 October 1942, 
Telespresso 17806/2070 from Allard of the Swedish Legation in Berlin, 
22 November 1942
107 MFA Gabap b.21, ‘Croce Rossa Italiana’, Athens, to Plenipotentiary 
Pietromarchi, 12 January 1943.; Pietromarchi to Greece, ‘Appunto per 
il Barone Scammacca’, 24 May 1943; MFA Gabap b.21 Special Envoy 
for Economic and Financial matters in Greece, Athens to MFA, 27 July 
1943; also 17 March 1943 and ‘Appunto per il Duce’, 13 July 1943
108 MFA Gabap b.21, Campioni to the Foreign Minister, 21 June 1943
109 IAK 10/2923 The Head of Civil Affairs in Athens (Supplies Office) to 
CCC, 17 July 1943
110 IAK 10 /76/RIS, 3 April 1943; IAK 10/9335/ Telegram: Valeriani to 
Regio Consul Arnò and IRC Athens, 2 November 1943

Chapter 6

1 Mack Smith, D., *Mussolini’s Roman Empire* (London and New York, 
1976), p. 94 and pp. 212-249; Cannistraro, P., *La fabbrica del consenso: 
Pàscismo e mass media* (Bari, 1975)
pp. 235-237
3 IAK 181 I Ordinanza No 12 from Duca, 27 September 1941; IAK I 
Zontos to Syros Gendarmerie, 4 September 1941; IAK 2 Ordinanza 
No. 43 from Bruno, 7 January 1942; IAK 4 Mussolini’s Bando No. 159, 
3 May 1943
4 SME/DSM/1373/2480 Duca to CS FF .AA., 6 October 1941
5 Halaris, I, 288-9; Varthaliti, D.B., *Syriana Grammata*, p. 15
6 IAK10/1837/C Gino to CCC and ‘Sezione “I” ‘, 23 February 1943
7 IAK 10 from Valeriani, ‘Rapporto informativo relativo al Sott.te 
Barmann Enrico’, 14 December 1942
8 Cicladi, 1 October 1941
9 IAK 30 N./2302/C.S. Campioni to all commands, 25 October 1942 
IAK 31/6100/3 Duca to Com. 17 Sezione mista CC.RR. and Town 
Hall, 30 October 1941
10 IAK 20/Allegato H, Sezione Propaganda e Direzione Giornale Cicladi; 
CM Ufficio “P”, from Ten. G. Bollini, 26 June 1942; IAK 10/3354/ 
A Roberto Sequi, CS FF AA., ‘Sezione “P” ‘ to CCC and CMC, 8 
December 1942
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List of Interviewees

Interviews conducted in Syros in 2001-5 (the following were willing to be named)

Yiorgos Drakakis (video interview 6 September 2005), 1923-2007, he was the brother of the local historian Andreas Drakakis and was a lawyer.

Haris Baroutakis (recorded interview with Nikos Filaretos, 7 August 2004). He was born after the war in Syros and is a member of PEAEA.

Nikos Filaretos (first interview 3 September 2003 and recorded interview 7 August 2004). He was a ship’s captain, former mayor of Ermoupolis in 1974-78 and president of the Syros branch of PEAEA.

Dimitris Halaris (interview 5 August 2004). He was born 1936 in Ermoupolis. He has written several books on Syros and the Cyclades.

Dimitris Krinos (interview 6 August 2004), 1926-2005. He was a former lawyer and author.

Antonis Syrigos and Nicholaos Payidas (interview 6 August 2004), both lawyers and town councillors born after the war.

Kyriakoula Drosou Psilopoulou (interview 5 September 2005). She was born in 1929 and is Orthodox, living in Ermoupolis.

Angeliki Psilopoulou (interview 10 March 2003 and video interview 7 September 2005). She was born in 1954 in Ermoupolis and is head archivist of the Cyclades Archives.

Petros Dambrosio (interviewed on 8 April 2002). He was born on Leros in the Dodecanese and has Italian nationality. He is well-known for having saved part of the port by defusing German explosives on the night before the German occupiers left Syros.

Levtheris Vazaios (recorded interview 7 August 2004). He was born in 1925 in Ermoupolis. He was active in the resistance and was sent to an island prison camp.

Pseudonyms have been used in the following cases:

Iorgos P. (interview 10 April 2003). He was born in 1928 and is a Catholic living in Ermoupolis. His father owned a greengrocer’s store and was a member of the association of retailers.

Markos and Eleni K. (recorded interview 20 August 2002). He was born 1925. They are Orthodox and lived in Ermoupolis.
during the occupation and were married during the war.

**Sofia B.** (interview 9 April 2002). She was born in 1925 and is Orthodox living in a village outside Ermoupolis.

**Vlasios M.** (video interview 3 September 2005). Born 1943, he is a Catholic living in Ermoupolis.

**Barbara B.** (interview 10 July 2001). She was born in 1936 in Ano Syros, and is Catholic.

**Markos M.** (interview 3 April 2004). He was born in 1927 and is a Catholic who lived in the village of Vari.

**Mario X.** (interview 2 April 2004). He was born in 1937 and is a Catholic, living in Ano Syros.

**Elena V.** (interview 1 April 2004). She was born in 1930 and is Catholic, living in Ano Syros. Her grandparents were from a ‘mixed marriage’ her grandmother was Orthodox.

**Haris L.** (interview 10 April 2002). He was born in 1935 and is Orthodox living in Ermoupolis.

**Alexis P.** (video interview 7 September 2005). He was born in 1925 and is Orthodox living in Ermoupolis.

**Interviews conducted outside Syros 1996-1998**

**Patras**

**Maria and Anna P.** (interview 5 April 1997). Maria was born in 1923 and her sister Anna was born in 1926 in Patras.

**Luisa B.** (interview 20 August 1998). She is Italian-Greek born in Palermo. Her father was an Italian officer stationed in Patras.

**Stathis P.** (interview 6 April 1997). He was born in 1927 in Samos where he lived during the occupation.

**Lesbos**

**Theodora M.** (interview 5 September 1997). She was born in 1926 in Lesbos and lived in Athens during the war. She worked as a secretary for the British under General Scobie, in Athens.

**Athens**

**Stavros T.** (interview 5 May 1998). He was enlisted in the Greek forces in Egypt and fought with the British at Tobruck.

**Yiorgos X.** (interview 7 May 1998). He was a baby during the Athens famine and his life was saved by a German officer.

**Yiorgos Iovanis** (interview 10 September 1996), 1915-1997. He was born in Athens. He fought in the resistance with ELAS and was arrested and imprisoned on the island of Makronissos.
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