

1920 - 1960

## CORATO MUNICIPALITY PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

By Marina Labartino

The historical archives of the Municipality of Corato contain two files containing the four registers of passport applications submitted by citizens of Corato between 1920 and 1960 for travel abroad.

Apparently, a dry list of names, surnames, dates, occupations, acronyms, unspecified foreign cities, spelled as they are pronounced (e.g. Bruclin instead of Brooklyn), with sometimes indecipherable spellings. Some lines indicate a generic destination, mentioning only the country or state; others specify landing places.

Browsing through these precious documents, equipped with gloves, page after page, in the very short time allowed by municipal officials in the presence of a trusted person, proved sufficiently that it is an important source; useful not only for reconstructing the history of Coratino emigration to the world, but also as a social sample of the time.

### FIRST REGISTER

September 15, 1920 to December 31, 1925

On September 27, 1920, the names and surnames of the first Coratino family to apply to go to France already appears, without specifying the place.

Fifteen days later, on October 30, 1920, the first specific request to emigrate to Grenoble, which that year became the preferred destination for Coratini residents. The closure of local tanneries and the crisis in agriculture caused by the spread of phylloxera, which had affected Apulian vineyards, led to increased unemployment in both sectors. In France, on the other hand, these sectors were booming. In the passport applications, the most common qualification was thus "worker" or "farmer" for men and "tailor" or "dressmaker" for women.

### SECOND REGISTER

January 1, 1926-June 17, 1947

In general, applications show a decline, due to laws enacted during the fascist period to hinder the exodus to Europe and America.

The number of pages speaks for itself: in the decade 1937-1946 they can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

While the government discouraged emigration to places deemed unsuitable for an expanding nation, it also favored emigration to its colonial possessions in Africa. Corato did not miss the opportunity and, in 1932, six families applied to emigrate to Egypt and Libya. They were the "pioneers" of the colonization of Cyrenaica. The most important flow occurred between 1937 and 1938.

Then Italy entered the war for six long and terrible years: from September 1, 1939 to September 2, 1945.

In 1940 there were only three applications for expatriation: two to Albania (militarily occupied by Italy on April 7, 1939) and one to Greece, to Rhodes in the Aegean.

In 1941, applications still preferred the Balkan Peninsula as a destination: Albania, Rhodes Aegean, Thessaloniki and Zadar.

In 1942, Libya was again in vogue.

In 1945, toward the end of the world conflict, Grenoble timidly re-emerged.

In 1946-1947, inquiries favored nations such as Switzerland and France. The enigmatic acronym S.U.A. is also often found, which turns out to stand for the United States of America.

### THIRD REGISTER

January 2, 1948 - May 1955

In 1948, applications for expatriation to Grenoble, France, England and Europe in general continued to be numerous.

A student applied for a passport to emigrate to Turkey, someone went to Germany, others to Canada and to SUA, the Italianized abbreviation for USA.

During this period, the mass exodus moved to South America: Venezuela was the new country attracting Coratini, and some also chose Argentina.

By 1949, requests for expatriation became numerous, both in Europe and abroad. Four years after the end of World War II, economic recovery in Southern Italy was slow. The qualifications listed often did not match the profession one intended to pursue. Any job was suitable, as long as one could earn a decent living. It is the young people who embark on new adventures, especially in France, the United States and Venezuela. Surprisingly, a surveyor asks to go to Iran.

A new non-European nation appears on the 1950 list: Brazil.

A student goes to Yugoslavia, a tailor to Egypt, and a saddler to Venezuela.

In 1951, the choice of destinations does not change.

In 1952, the flow of emigration was mainly to the already "proven" nations. However, some asked to emigrate to Belgium, others to Holland, and still others chose the distant and mysterious Australia. We do not know by what means of transportation they arrived there. It must be said that today, by sea it involves a three-month voyage by ship, whereas by air it takes no less than 20 hours, not counting stopovers.

In 1954 the flows polarize mainly to two nations: France and Venezuela.

In Europe: a few go to Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Yugoslavia, Greece and England, one request to Malta and Luxembourg.

In the Mediterranean: one request for Egypt and Tripolitania.

Overseas: still coveted are the US and Canada, followed by Argentina and Brazil, very few to Bolivia.

### FOURTH REGISTER.

May 17, 1955-December 28, 1960

In the five-year period no significant changes from the destinations already mentioned.

It should be mentioned, however, that in 1956 there is a long succession of pages listing numerous requests for expatriation to France, mainly to Grenoble.