

Translator's note :

In 2019, I asked James Smith and Mariella Tarricone to do some research in Corato for my Dad, who was over 90 at the time and wanted to visit the places in Corato which had a direct link to his grandfather, born in 1877 : where he was baptized, where he lived, where he was buried, who his siblings were, etc. Through this work, I discovered how closely a family's genealogy was linked to the phenomenon of migration from Corato. When the project 'A tale of two twinned cities : Corato and Grenoble' was created by the Atelier Généalogique, I accepted the proposal to be part of its web-site's editorial committee and volunteered to translate Pasquale Tandoi's book into English. I hope this translation will help to confirm the international nature of our project, with the objective of identifying transnational families that resulted from members of the same family emigrating to several different countries.
Signed, Gina Tarantini, www.emigrazione-corato.org, Pennsylvania, USA, April 2022

Original 2011 dedication

DEDICATED TO THE CORATINI WHO, BY THE THOUSANDS
ABANDONED THEIR HOMELAND
IN SEARCH OF BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS
IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD
AND

TO ALL THOSE IMMIGRANTS, ILLEGAL OR NOT,
WHO HAVE FLED HUNGER, WAR, DISEASE
AND PERSECUTION,
WITH DREAMS OF A FUTURE IN ITALY

SCUOLA SECONDARIA DI I GRADO "L. SANTARELLA" CORATO

National Operational Programme (NOP) 2007/2013 Competence Development Project C 1 –

FSE – 2010 -371 **"WRITING HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTS"**

When we were the illegal immigrants

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902-1959

EXPERT: prof. Pasquale Tandoi

TUTOR: prof.ssa Maria Lobascio

SCHOOL DIRECTOR : dott.ssa Danila Tempesta

2010-2011 School Year

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants

The following students participated:

Chiara Fabiano	Niky Fabiano
Chiara Roselli	Fabio Lamarca
Claudia Campanale	Lucia Larocca
Felice Bucci	Jonathan Moreno
Francesco Musci	Simone Piarulli
Giusy Adduci	Nunzio Inchingolo
Lucrezia Vangi	Sara Torelli
Mariateresa Di Gioia	Roselisa Anelli
Pasquale Pellegrino	Ilaria Diaferia
Titti Greco Miani	Nilde Tedone

Tiziana BasileoThe following students also collaborated : Francesca Antonacci, Gianluca Saragaglia, Giada Di Gennaro, Aldo Marcone.

Documentary resources used :

Archive of the Corato Municipality – Passport applications for the years 1920-1959

Ellis Island Foundation web-site in New York

“LO STRADONE” Coratino magazine

Coratino emigration to France : the Coratini of Grenoble (edited by the Tecnico Commerciale “Tannoia” Institute) Various web-sites

We would like to thank the following teaching staff for their collaboration : proff. Luisa Berardi, Gaetano D’Imperio e Luigia Prete.

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The NOP project "Making History from Documents" is a new opportunity that the Santarella School seized to offer its students avenues of reflection, moments of deepening ideas, and learning methods not always experienced during the usual course lessons.

The main goal of the project was to encourage students to rediscover their city 's past through various sources and documents.

The students "learned to learn" using various historical sources, such as archival documents, illustrated testimonies, museum exhibits, photos, letters, period newspapers, oral sources, etc., to reconstruct a part of the history of our local community, in particular, the phenomenon of emigration from Corato from 1902 to 1959. The computer network has proved to be an indispensable means, used appropriately, to obtain information with a character of objectivity.

The teachers made it clear that historical research requires precision, patience and commitment and that it must take place in several phases: the reading of documents, the collection of data, their tabulation, interpretation and insertion in broader historical contexts, both national and international.

But perhaps the most important aspect that emerged from the project is that of education. Today we are witnessing dramatic events related to the issue of illegal immigration. Every day the painful images of thousands of human beings fleeing misery, war and persecution pass before our eyes. The research project "When We Were the Illegal Immigrants " made the students aware that these situations were also experienced by the people of Corato and millions of Italians in the not so distant past. The memory and the knowledge of what we were hopefully will bring forth constructive behaviors for the present.

The hope is that our young students have internalized the need for an attitude of solidarity and the value of interculturalism as key tools for a future based on respect for the human dignity of all peoples.

*The School Director
Dr. Danila Tempesta*

The history of humanity is the history of migrations that are repeated and renewed over time, of ruptures causing new destinies. Countries that were once places of emigration have become much sought-after destinations for new migrants in their quest for a better world and a better future. Emigration and immigration: two aspects of the same human story. They, the "vu cumprà," are today like us, the "macaroni" of yesterday. Stories that echo the same needs, anxieties, fears, and dreams. History relives dramas already experienced and sends us back images of the past upside down.

Inherent in the migration experience is the need to examine one's own identity, not only for the migrants but also for the populations that receive them. Local populations must deal with people of different cultures, customs, ways of life, ways of thinking, and religious practices. They must put aside the characterization of immigrants as unknown people who "invaded our land". The duty of memory and integration, to remember who we were in order to live the present with greater coherence. This research work is carried out with the perspective that an education of globality and interculturality is the main antidote to attitudes of intolerance.

Italy has been characterized by large emigration flows. From 1861 to 1976 almost 27 million Italians went to live abroad; of these, 4 million were from Puglia.

In the aftermath of the Unification of Italy in 1861, the alternative for the "southern bumpkin" was to be a thief or a migrant. Once the peasant revolt had been harshly suppressed the only way to escape poverty and exploitation was to emigrate. This was an exodus that, contrary to common belief, affected all Italian regions with the exodus from the North being the majority between 1876 and 1900. Three regions alone provided 47% of the migratory mass: Veneto (17.9%), Friuli Venezia Giulia (16.1%) and Piedmont (12.5%). The situation was reversed in the following two decades, when most of the migration came from the southern regions, Sicily giving the largest contribution with 1,126,513 emigrants (12.8%), followed by Campania with 955,188 (10.9%).

For most of these migrants the beginning was very difficult. America itself was not quite the "promised land" as illustrated by the manifesto posted throughout Italy in 1909 by the Royal Commissariat for Emigration:

ROYAL COMMISSARIAT OF EMIGRATION

(Rome - April 1909)

This year in only three months more than 100,000 Italians have left for the United States. The available work is not sufficient to provide employment for such an enormous mass of laborers. Many of those who are already there are without work and are experiencing harsh living conditions.

Our emigrants are strongly advised against going to the United States at this time, where newcomers would be easily exposed to unemployment.

Emigration of the *Coratini* to the United States until 1919

The earliest documented records of emigration from Corato were obtained from the website of the Ellis Island Foundation located in New York.

Ellis Island is a small island at the mouth of the Hudson River in New York Bay. A former military arsenal from 1892 to 1954, the year of its closure, Ellis Island was the main border of entry for immigrants entering the United States.

The port of Ellis Island welcomed more than 12 million would-be U.S. citizens, who upon arrival had to show their travel documents with the information of the ship that brought them to New York. Immigration Service doctors screened each emigrant, marking on their backs with chalk those who were to be subjected to further examination of their state of health (e.g., PG for pregnant women, K for hernia, and X for mental illness).

Those who passed this initial examination were then accompanied to the Hall of Records, where they were awaited by inspectors who recorded their names, place of birth, marital status, place

of destination, availability of money, occupation and criminal record. They eventually received permission to disembark and were escorted to the ferry dock for Manhattan.

Those who were "flagged" were sent to another room for further screening. "The old, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf -mute and all those suffering from contagious diseases, mental disorders, and any other infirmities are inexorably excluded from American soil," as the handbook for new arrivals reminded them. However, it appears that only two percent of immigrants were rejected. For those deemed unfit, it was immediate reboarding on the same ship that had brought them to the U.S., which, under U.S. law, was obligated to return them to the port of origin.

The peak of arrivals was reached in 1907, with 1,004,756 people landing. From 1917, slight changes in regulations began to limit the influx of immigrants. The literacy test was introduced and, beginning in 1924, entry quotas were approved: 17,000 from Ireland, 7,000 from the United Kingdom, 5,800 from Italy and 2,700 from Russia. The Great Depression of 1929 further reduced the number of immigrants: from 241,700 in 1930 to 97,000 in 1931 and 35,000 in 1932. At the same time, Ellis Island became a detention center for forced repatriation: political dissidents, anarchists, those without means and without work were forced to return to their country of origin. Those forcibly deported from the United States amounted to 62,000 in 1931, 103,000 the following year and 127,000 in 1933.

The first Coratino, for whom there is reliable information and might be considered the pioneer of Corato in the United States, was a certain **Giuseppe Ruggiero** who landed in New York on July 5, 1902. He left Naples on board the ship Tartar Prince which could carry 1,000 passengers. Giuseppe, 27 years old, was registered as a laborer; his final destination was Hartford, Connecticut where he joined his cousin Nicola who had paid for his ticket. He had 31 dollars with him. For the next two years, no other *Coratini* were recorded. Then, beginning in 1905, the number increased; that year three men and one woman arrived in the United States. Giuseppe Tedone and Vincenzo De Benedittis landed in New York on June 7. They had left from Naples on

the ship *Cretic*. They were both married: the former was 38 years old, the latter 30. In the Ellis Island file, De Benedittis was registered as a "farm laborer" and "able to read and write"; it appeared that his final destination was New York, that he had paid for his ticket "himself" and that he had with him the sum of 30 dollars. Giuseppe Tedone had also paid for his ticket himself and stated that he would have a cousin named Benedetto Onofrio as a support point in New York.

The first woman emigrant from Corato found in the lists of Ellis Island dates back to 1905. Her name was **Giovanna Riccio**. She was 20 years old and was traveling with her husband of 22 years, Arturo Narciso, a barber. They had set sail from Naples on June 20 on the ship *Calabria* and had disembarked on July 5. They claimed to be headed to Brooklyn to visit an uncle. They had 10 dollars in their pockets.

They left in families, like Benedetta, Angiolina and Iolanda Di Gennaro, respectively 40, 5 and 8 years old; like the La Preziosa family, with Leonardo, 20 years old, Carmela, 23 years old and little Vincenza, 1 year old; Leonardo on arrival in New York had nine dollars in his pocket. The three would join a brother-in-law (Rosito) in Philadelphia; or like the sisters Maria Rosa and Pasqua Amorese, 14 and 20 years old, who travelled with their father Giuseppe on board the ship *Italia*. Departures from Naples followed one another at a steady pace on different ships; a group of *Coratini* left every 15 days or so. For example, on October 14, 1916 a good dozen *Coratini* embarked in Naples on the ship *Duca d'Aosta*.

In 1919, a total of approximately 1,400 *Coratini*, 1,091 men and 309 women, had already landed in the United States. From 1909 onwards, their number would be constantly increasing until the peaks of the exodus in 1913 and, curiously, in 1916, in the middle of the world war. It is not known how it was possible that in that year 281 *Coratini* emigrated, mostly young people fit to bear arms. Probably many left clandestinely and would be declared deserters.

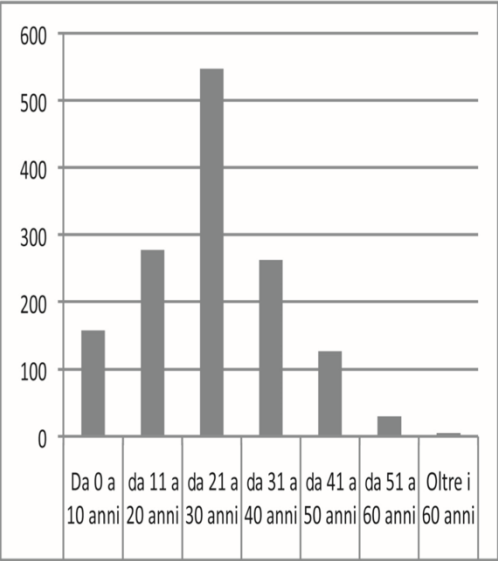
Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants

Below is the table of *coratino* emigration extracted from Ellis Island Foundation web-site¹:

ANNO	UOMINI	DONNE
1902	1	
1903		
1904		
1905	3	1
1906	10	2
1907	15	2
1908	4	-
1909	50	4
1910	49	20
1911	86	4
1912	56	14
1913	372	38
1914	88	17
1915	50	37
1916	281	150
1917	3	5
1918	4	1
1919	19	14
Totali	1091	309

Il grafico evidenzia la distribuzione per fasce d’età dei 1400 negli Stati Uniti dal 1902 al 1919



¹ It was possible to "sift through" the Ellis Island site, which contains millions of data, and extract as much information as possible about Coratini thanks to the intuition and computer skills of 12 year old Pasquale Pellegrino.

The flow of Italian emigrants, and therefore of people from Corato continued unabated at the end of the conflict.

There were those who left alone, those who brought a family member (or the whole family) with them, and those who embarked with other villagers. In any case, the Italians remained grouped together during the journey among compatriots or nationals of neighboring countries if necessary. It was vital to remain united and not to lose sight of each other even after getting ashore. It was only by moving in groups, living in the same neighborhood or locality, going to work as a group, possibly on the same construction site, that they could overcome the feeling of loneliness and disorientation that weighed on each of them in this country that was so far away and so different, whose language they did not understand. Southern emigrants were discriminated against compared to those from the north of Italy. From the moment they boarded the ship a clear and precise distinction was made between Northern Italians and Southern Italians. In the ship register, in addition to the Italian nationality, the city and the province, it was also indicated whether they belonged to the North or the South. Consequently, discrimination accompanied them from the moment they boarded the ship, and did not abandon them on land as American employers preferred an Italian from the north rather than a southerner. The location of the port of departure from Italy was a first filter in the distribution of the Italian population of different origins on each ship, whether from Genoa or Naples and Palermo. In the United States a clear distinction was made between north and south. On arrival, the place of origin was explicitly stated as north-Italy and south-Italy: one Italy, two races! The first category indicated a northern ancestry and therefore worthy of greater attention, the second a Mediterranean-African ancestry with all that follows. It should be noted that the "southern-Italian" immigrants were defined in American law as "of origin not clearly of white race".

The most important American newspapers did not miss any opportunity to denigrate the Latin-Mediterranean people who were not black but not indisputably white: dirty, lousy and proven criminals. New York Times of May 14, 1909: "***Italy is the first country in Europe for its violent***

crimes As a rule, Italian criminals are stabbers and murderers," Again in the New York Times of April 16, 1876: **"Italians have a natural tendency to criminality";** New Herald December 12, 1872 **"New York will become a penal colony for the refuse of Italy"**. Note the dates: 1872 and 1876. Even before the great emigration took off racist America was ready to welcome us! Why should we be surprised if after the massacre in New Orleans in 1891 (11 Italians were horribly slaughtered in the city's prisons by an angry mob organized and led by William Parkerson, the mayor's right-hand man) the vast majority of the press warmly and indecently supported the actions of the angry mob. The Washington Post wrote that the murderous mob had been provoked and forced to "break the reign of terror"; the New York Times affirmed that the lynching had secured the lives and property of the people of New Orleans. Much of the American press took the same line. The derogatory names used to refer to the Italians were:

- **Wop** (associated with the Neapolitan term "guappo"; meaning without papers/passport; people without documents) was one of the most used in the U.S. and was also one of the most offensive.
- **Goombah** (in the New York area, from the Italian "compare", in dialect "cumpà").
- **Dago** (in the USA it was used for all "Latin" people. It comes from the proper name Diego or from dagger, knife).

The ocean crossing, starting from Italy, lasted from 12 to 13 days. Almost everyone traveled in third class, where you slept in iron bunks down in the belly of the ship and ate soup (first class passengers, however, were served dishes prepared by chefs). On rainy days the most fascinating sight was the appearance of a rainbow reflected in the ocean. When the storm raged and the ship was at the mercy of the waters, the panicked passengers stayed crammed below deck until the storm was over. Conversation was another way to pass the time. Deepening their acquaintances consolidated that friendship, which was later necessary and useful to face, together and united, a world so different from the culture that the emigrants had just left behind. On the third-class deck, there were even improvised competitions, such as the spaghetti eating contest with hands tied or the "barrel game" and other similar pastimes.

Emigration of the *Coratini* in the 1920s

In the immediate post-war period a deep crisis at all levels gripped Italy. The process of reconversion from a war production to “peace” production caused industrial stagnation and an economic crisis. Southern agricultural fields that were abandoned during the war struggled to return to production hampered by outdated production methods. The lack of basic necessities caused prices to rise; inflation was followed by devaluation. The promises made to the peasant-soldiers to boost their morale following the defeat at Caporetto were not kept. Discontent in the working world manifested itself in many parts of Italy through the occupation of land. To prevent this, the landowners hired fascist militias. The clashes of a socio-political nature with the police multiplied as well as the number of dead and wounded.

Popolazione Corato 1861-2009

Anno	Residenti	Variazione
1861	25.189	
1871	26.367	4,7%
1881	30.798	16,8%
1901	41.739	35,5%
1911	45.307	8,5%
1921	50.010	10,4%
1931	45.026	-10,0%
1936	44.661	-0,8%
1951	45.467	1,8%
1961	39.452	-13,2%
1971	38.579	-2,2%
1981	41.198	6,8%
1991	42.750	3,8%
2001	44.971	5,2%
2009	47.872	6,5%

The situation in Corato

Corato was also the scene of clashes between fascists and communists. May 1, 1921 was a bloody day with gunfire killing one and injuring many before the intervention of an armored police car. There were numerous arrests among the members of the communist leagues. In August 1922 the Chamber of Labor was attacked and destroyed by hundreds of fascists. The situation in Corato was even more dramatic because of a serious geological disaster in 1922. After nine months of drought a torrential rain fell. The accumulated water cause foundations to collapse. Over 5000 families found themselves homeless and were housed in tents, then in wooden barracks and finally in "suppenne" (makeshift shelters). This difficult situation prompted the *Coratini* to emigrate causing a considerable demographic change. Despite the many deaths and injuries caused either by the war or by the Spanish flu epidemic, Corato reached a peak of population growth in 1921 with 50,010 inhabitants. In the following years, there was a real exodus of *Coratini*. In the space of three years from 1923 to 1925, about 3,774 people

(2,406 men and 1,368 women) left Corato with a peak in 1924 of 1,463 *Coratini* who emigrated. This does not include the number of illegal immigrants. This had a profound effect on the number of inhabitants of Corato. In addition to the number of emigrants, there was a decrease in marriages and therefore in births, since it was mainly young people who left the country. As a result the 1931 census showed a decrease in the *Coratino* population of 10%.

Destinations and figures of the Coratini migration phenomenon in the 1920s

ERITREA	1
LIBIA	3
SVIZZERA	4
ALBANIA	5
GRECIA	8
EGITTO	9
CANADA	12
GRAN BRETAGNA	21
BRASILE	30
ARGENTINA	76
USA	1215
FRANCIA	3686

Grenoble was the city that in large part the *Coratini* chose as the destination of their emigration to France. In the early 1920s the closure of the tanneries in Puglia and the agricultural crisis caused by the phylloxera infestation of the vineyards increased the number of unemployed. Since the beginning of the 19th century several leatherworking companies had developed in Corato . These leatherworking companies were also present in large numbers in Grenoble. It was mainly women who were absorbed into the glove factories and the textile industry in general. On the passport of the *Coratini* that expatriated to France the qualification most indicated was "seamstress". Of 1951 *Coratini* who emigrated in the decade 1920-'29, 1076 had

this qualification, 672 were simply housewives, 108 dress makers, plus other trades such as patching and embroidery. As for the men of Corato who emigrated in those years, 1036 were farmhands, 281 peasants, 761 manual laborers, 163 with the generic indication of "worker", 134 masons, only 60 employees and as many carpenters, 56 woodcutters and as many mechanics, 39 carters and other trades such as blacksmith, pizza maker, baker, painter, plasterer, etc..

Of the 3,686 *Coratini* who emigrated to France, 2,018 moved directly to Grenoble. The others dispersed in many cities of France such as Dijon (167), Lyon (13), Nice (28), Paris (81), Trieux² (28), Montbard³ (32), Marseille (7), Lancey (112), Brignoud (59), Amiens (10) and about a thousand scattered all over the country. In 1931 there were about 2,500 *Coratini* in Grenoble, quartered in the area of Saint Laurent, on the left bank of the Isère. The life of these immigrants was certainly not one of well-being and comfort. They lived in very modest houses often without sanitary facilities. The work was hard but at the end of the month they brought home a secure salary.

Fascism and emigration to the USA

The 1920s were crucial for Italy. In 1922 Mussolini took power with the March on Rome and in 1925 he established a dictatorship. Fascism always paid great attention to emigration in the belief that Italians abroad should be valued as the spearhead of the expansion of Italian interests outside the country.

Once fascism came to power it had two different attitudes towards emigration in two different chronological periods.

Until 1926, Mussolini's behavior was similar to that of the previous governments with the only variation being the decrease in the flow of emigrants following more restrictive U.S. measures.

Initially, Mussolini was confident that the demographic pressure, and therefore unemployment, could be alleviated by resorting to the old relief valve of emigration.

According to the Duce, "*whether good or bad, emigration is a physiological necessity of the Italian people. We are forty million people crammed into this narrow and lovely peninsula of ours which cannot feed everyone. And so we understand how the problem of Italian expansion in the world is a problem of life and death for the Italian race. I say expansion: expansion in every sense, moral, political, economic, demographic*".

² Trieux is a town of 1 853 inhabitants located in the Meurthe-et-Moselle department in the Lorraine region.

³ Montbard is a city of 6 300 inhabitants located in the department of Côte-d'Or in the region of Burgundy.

The only real novelty lay in the attempt of Mussolini's government to enhance the value of the emigrants, highlighting their technical and professional skills so that they could aspire to better jobs, but above all "to erase from international public opinion the prejudices and biases unfavorable to Italian workers."

The "highlighting" of emigrants was the formula that Fascism intended to adopt in order to encourage expatriation. One of the first problems that Fascist authorities had to face, however, with little success, was the crisis of expatriation to the United States caused by the Immigration Act of 1921. **The United States had proceeded, in recent years, to a downsizing of its immigration policy, in the wake of strong and growing xenophobic outbreaks and public concern about the lowering of living standards and wages, caused by competition from foreign labor.** Moreover, the indiscriminate demographic increase in the big cities and the simultaneous expansion of crime, often foreign, combined to amplify the fear of newcomers.

Previously in 1917, the non-admission of illiterates had been sanctioned. In spite of President Wilson's veto, a law was passed, the "The Literacy Act", which required anyone wishing to be admitted to the States to demonstrate the ability to read and write. But it was in 1921 that the United States "hit the brakes" by the passage of the "Emergency Quota Law." This measure limited immigration quotas based on immigrants' country of birth. Annual quotas for each country or origin were only 3% of the total number of foreign-born persons from that country recorded in the 1910 American census.

The American government was quite worried as the net balance of arrivals at the end of 1920 had, in fact, reached an average of 52,000 immigrants per month. In February 1921, the confusion in the port of New York was so great that the authorities were forced to divert ships loaded with emigrants to Boston. Gradually the enforcement of the law became stricter and fewer exemptions were granted. **Entire shiploads of emigrants were sent back across the Atlantic.**

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“LA MERICA!”

The ship Tartar Prince



The ship Cretic



Disembarkation at Ellis Island

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

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Disembarkation at Ellis Island



Disembarkation at Ellis Island



Ellis Island, on the quayside

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

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Ellis Island, registering disembarked passengers



Ellis Island, checking state of health.

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

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Ellis Island, the first meal served to immigrants on American soil



1930 - Repatriation of Cataldo Abbattista who entered the USA illegally 4 years previously



1930's – Voyage to the USA by Michele Altieri.

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The Coratino Ilarione Livrieri in Bede Littoria (from LO STRADONE, May 2011).



France, late 1940s.
Emigrants working on construction of a railroad.
The last on the right is the coratino
Pasquale Lops.
Back in Corato, he became a leader of the
PCI and will be elected in the '80s Deputy and
then Senator. An Extraordinary Life.



1920s, scenes from Rue St-Laurent (from L'Emigrazione coratina in Francia:
I Coratini di Grenoble. Edited by the Ist. Tecnico Commerciale "Tannoia")



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(Grenoble, other images of the neighborhood inhabited by the Coratini (from L'Emigrazione coratina in Francia: I Coratini di Grenoble. Edited by the Ist. Tecnico Commerciale "Tannoia)

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

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[illegible]

JUMELAGE ■ La délégation de notre cité, accueillie pour les fêtes de San Cataldo, a rencontré des Coratins nostalgiques de Grenoble

CES CŒURS QUI NE SAVENT PAS MENTIR

Situé à quarante-cinq kilomètres de Bari dans la région des Pouilles – entre l'Adriatique et la chaîne de montagnes des Murges – Corato a vu graver sur sa porte principale cette citation : « Coratum felix, orbis que ubinam felius ». Autre-ment dit : « Heureux Corato, la plus fertile du monde ».

Et de cette fertilité la chaque habitant vient rendre grâce à San Cataldo, patron de cette cité italienne de 45 000 âmes qui, au VII^e siècle, a accompli des miracles en sauvant notamment les Coratins de la peste.

Durant quatre jours, célébrations, processions, attractions foraines et marchés se multiplient le matin et en fin d'après-midi, avant et après, ces heures où la chaleur devient accablante. Pour la circonstance, les illuminations s'étalent, sur plus de trois kilomètres « encerclent » le centre antique de la ville. Un des temps forts de cet hommage rendu à San Cataldo revoit la procession au cours de laquelle le troupeau d'argent – pesant quelque trois cents kilos – du saint est porté pendant deux heures dans les rues du centre ville.

Précédés de plusieurs dizaines d'hommes revêtus des couleurs des huit paroisses de la ville, ce cortège est suivi de l'ensemble des élus de la province, avec cette année la présence de Mme Bugada, adjoint au maire. M. Michal, conseiller auprès du maire chargé des relations avec les villes jumelées et Strippoli, conseiller municipal et maire de la commune libre de Saint-Laurent, reconnu comme un véritable enfant du pays par les Coratins.

Parmi les dizaines de milliers de personnes massées le long du parcours de la procession, nombreux étaient les Grenoblois d'origine coratine.

Destination Grenoble

Sans revenir en détail sur le périple effectué par plusieurs centaines, puis milliers de Coratins, leur nombre est généralement estimé à 25 000 en laire (dont près d'un tiers est installé à Grenoble). Ce sont dans les années 1920 que la plupart d'entre eux arrivent dans le Dauphiné, les entreprises locales spécialisées dans la tannerie cherchant alors des ouvriers qualifiés qui, plus tard, seroient repoints par leurs femmes et enfants.

Autant se crée une véritable « colonie » italienne qui prend alors possession de la montée Chalmont, de la rue Saint-Laurent et sur l'autre rive de l'Isère des rues Très-Cloître ou Chemin. Une présence encore renforcée après la seconde guerre mondiale par la venue de

Coratins employés notamment comme maçons.

Pour cette génération née à Corato, les liens avec cette cité du sud italien restent encore forts malgré la distance (120 km). Ainsi Michel Vangi n'était pas revenu « au pays » depuis quinze ans. Il a retrouvé la famille qu'il quitta en 1947 alors que son père devenait maçon dans notre région.

Tous les soirs, nous rendons des visites à droite et à gauche « priez-se-t-il », pour rencontrer des cousins et des amis. Mais pour autant, M. Vangi ne souhaite pas quitter la rue Condorcet. « Je veux rester à Grenoble aux côtés de mes enfants ».

Grenoble adoptée par les Coratins

Ce sentiment est partagé par Félix Di Candia. Né à Grenoble deux ans après l'arrivée de ses parents, il raconte : « Mon père s'est installé en 1925 pour travailler dans la maçonnerie. Avec ma femme, Lucie, nous revenons pratiquement tous les ans en Italie. Toute sa famille est là et elle revient toujours à Corato avec nostalgie. Mais nous passerons très probablement notre retraite dans la capitale du Dauphiné, à proximité de nos enfants ».

Son beau-frère M. Quatela a suivi un itinéraire différent. Venu à Grenoble sur les conseils et avec l'aide de M. Di Candia, il a été domestique d'abord, puis a travaillé comme plombier.

« Nous sommes rentrés au pays, en raison des ennemis de santé de mon épouse, alors que nos enfants étaient encore en bas âge. Tous les deux, nous regrettons notre travail et les habitants de Grenoble ».

Avec un sourire timide, sa femme acquiesce tout en surveillant la cuisson d'une énorme pizza dont la pâte s'élève encore et toujours, recouvrant les quartiers de tomates fraîches.

« Depuis notre départ, nous sommes retournés à Grenoble à deux reprises », l'empresse-t-elle d'ajouter comme pour mieux souligner

son regret d'avoir dû quitter l'Italie. Cette nostalgie de Grenoble apparaît également à travers les souvenirs d'Aldo d'Intino. « Je suis resté onze années à Grenoble. En 1968, j'ai été un de ceux qui ont peint la patinoire ainsi que les tours du Village olympique. C'est pour venir en aide à mes parents fatigués que je suis rentré avec beaucoup de regrets. J'étais bien à la bas à Grenoble ».

Revenir au pays ?

Mais qu'en pense la deuxième ou la troisième génération, celles de nos enfants nés dans notre département, et dont les parents ou grands-parents se sont établis à Grenoble après la première ou la seconde guerre mondiale ?

Alme et Hélène Lafandra, Nathalie, Lucrice et Bernard Depalma ou encore Eric Drogo soulignent que leurs parents ont rejoint Grenoble, Grenoble ou Saint-Martin-

d'Hères pour y travailler. Ces lycéens passent un mois de leurs vacances à Corato et confient s'habiller très facilement à son rythme, à sa douceur de vivre avant de s'envoyer à « moitié italiens ».

Peut-être feront-ils le chemin en sens inverse pour s'établir en Italie comme Chantal Pulito. Celle-ci, née à La Tronche, est restée jusqu'à l'âge de 20 ans dans notre ville. « Je retournerais à Corato toutes les années depuis l'âge de 5 ans et c'est ici que j'ai découvert mon mari ».

Corato ne manque pas de charme. Lorsque l'on s'y rend pour la première fois comme ce fut le cas pour Mme Bugada et M. Michal (M. Strippoli, président du comité pour la promotion du jumelage a déjà eu l'occasion de parcourir les rues de cette cité) on s'attend tel un cliché, bien accoutumé dans notre imagination, à découvrir une région désertifiée. La réalité se révèle pourtant toute autre.

Découvrir la douceur de vivre coratine

« Je croyais découvrir une ville pauvre, avoue M. Michal. Au contraire, elle est portesse de nombreuses richesses ». En effet, aujourd'hui Corato, entourée par les vignes et les oliviers, possède une zone économique où sont implantées, comme il se doit, une fabrique de pâtes, des entreprises de carrelages (une des particularités de la région) et un atelier où sont produits des cercueils dont une partie est acheminée à Grenoble.

Les chantiers de construction ne sont pas rares, immeubles, stade nautique et centres commerciaux sortent de terre.

Si Aldo Scisciol, maire de Corato, entend bien encore intensifier cette activité en multipliant les échanges sur le plan économique bien sûr, mais aussi culturel et social avec Grenoble. Des propos qui

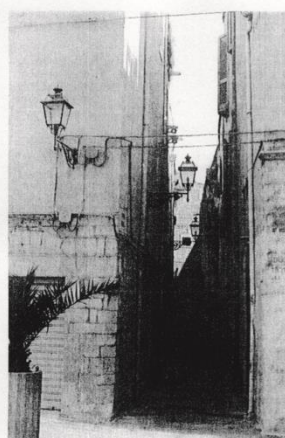
ont rencontré l'adhésion de M. Michal en charge du dossier des villes jumelées et qui au-delà désire que le jumelage devienne un véritable échange direct entre les populations des villes concernées afin qu'« chacun se connaisse pour se reconnaître ».

Et si les Coratins grenoblois, revenus au pays, sont nostalgiques de leurs années passées, entre Drac et laire, c'est parallèlement d'un indéniable placement au cœur que sont saisis les Grenoblois, forcément venus certains dans l'âme, lorsqu'ils s'effacent au loin les tours de « Castel del Monte », résidence seigneuriale de Frédéric II, roi de deux Siciles puis empereur de Saint-Empire au XIII^e siècle – au pied duquel s'étale la vallée où s'en accroît Corato. Cette ville dont la foi est toute entière exprimée dans sa devise : « Chi sine laire dol », le cœur qui ne sait pas mentir.

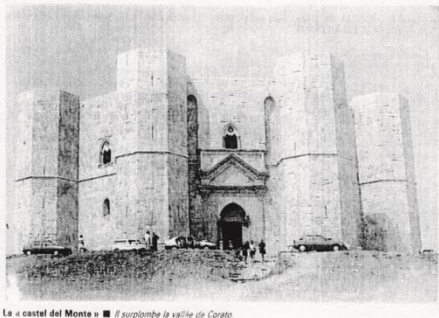
Luc BERTHOUD



La célébration ■ à l'église de Corato



Ruelle ■ Tout le charme de Corato



Le « castel del Monte » ■ il s'élève dans la vallée de Corato



Tout commence ■ en faisant

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants



The large family, now American, of Luigi Abbattista.



First home in Camden (New Jersey).



This is my home in Florida. I bought it in 1955 for 36 thousand dollars - in the winter, I am always in Florida, where it is always summer, it never snows

*The symbol of well-being achieved:
the second home in Florida. Beautiful caption on the back of the
photo that Luigi Abbattista sent to relatives in Corato.*

*questo è la mia casa
della florida
la comperare 1955
36 mila Dollri*

*l'inverno sto sempre alla
florida, là e sempre
stagione, non fa
mai neva*

Some photos from Luigi Abbattista's family album

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959



When we were the illegal immigrants



Carmela Bovino from Corato marries Philip D. Williams, who became chief of police in Philadelphia, as reported in the most popular Italian-American newspaper "IL PROGRESSO".

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants

"AMERICAN WEDDINGS" FOR THE SCISCIOLI FAMILY EMIGRATED TO THE USA



Late 40s



1954



1958

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants



At the beginning of the '50s, the head of the family Giuseppe set up a "bicycle rental" store in Maracay.



All at the end of the '50s his wife and son Alfonso left.



In the early 1960s, the store was transformed into a company selling bicycles.

THE CAVUOTO FAMILY EMIGRATED TO VENEZUELA

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants

1975 group photo of coratini emigrants in Venezuela in front of a bust of Simon Bolivar.



1975 event for the naming of Simon Bolivar Place in Corato.

Emigration of the Coratini throughout the world 1902 - 1959

When we were the illegal immigrants



Corato, Piazza Cesare Battisti, late 1950s: group photo of many Corato citizens repatriated from the USA in front of the Italian-American Club

There were strong reactions in the countries most directly affected by these measures. Italy also made its voice heard, but to no avail. It was realized that emigration no longer offered the opportunities it used to and that attempts to circumvent the restrictions were useless.

In 1924, a new quota law, the Johnson-Reed Law, reduced the entry quota to 2% of the countrymen living in the U.S. at the time of the 1890 census, resulting in a very strong penalty for countries like Italy, whose emigration was recent. In the end, the annual quota for Italy was reduced to 3,845 individuals.

With a drastic reduction in remittances from emigrants there was also a significant economic impact. This contributed to a considerable worsening of the balance of payments, of which remittances had always represented a substantial part.

Thus, Italian emigration was forced to move to other countries: France and other European countries, Argentina, Brazil and other Latin American countries, Australia and Africa. But even in these countries, the situation was not flourishing, especially in Argentina and Brazil, where economic difficulties discouraged many expatriates.

With the "change of course" of fascism and the world crisis, emigration subsequently suffered a sharp decline. **Things changed after 1926, when the regime espoused a policy of population growth. According to Mussolini, emigration was a loss of energy useful to the nation, "a dispersion" that had to be fought to the end, focusing instead on the increase in births to reach, in the early 1950s, the milestone of 60 million Italians.**

Permanent emigration, according to the government, had to be hindered because it led to the weakening of the nation. The exodus of the best and most productive forces was a great loss for the State that had trained them, not compensated by the "little gold" coming from abroad.

For this reason, it was made more difficult to issue the documents necessary for emigration, on which the authorities had to exercise the utmost "severity and frugality", distrusting anyone who tried to "exploit or incite" emigration and striking those who had taken too keen an interest in emigration, whether legal or illegal.

Fascism no longer spoke of "emigration", but of "Italians abroad". Once again, Fascism was trying to indicate a change of political direction by means of a semantic change: in the end, the emigrant would finally be recognized in his personality and rights as a worker.

All subsequent legislation was an attempt to hinder the exodus to foreign countries by every means possible, both to retain workers and, on the other hand, **to favor their expatriation to Italian colonial possessions.** It was indeed necessary to strengthen

domestic production in anticipation of an increased demand for labor for military purposes.

Law n.965 of 15 May 1939 had, in the meantime, created the "Permanent Commission for the Repatriation of Italians Abroad", essentially to facilitate the return of emigrants through the granting of various benefits. Repatriations, therefore, together with the policy of reducing emigration, continued to aggravate the process of decreasing remittances to the homeland and the flow of foreign currency into Italian coffers.

Apart from these general aspects, the 1,215 *Coratini* who emigrated to the United States in the 1920s settled in New York (1,011), Chicago (17), Rochester (23), Yonkers (12), Camden-New Jersey (13), Trenton (15), then Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, San Francisco, etc.

The emigration to Argentina deserves some reflection because, even if it involves only 76 people, it ranks third among the destinations "chosen" by the *Coratini*. The emigrants who went to the United States or France arrived in a society that was already structured, with social hierarchies in which the Italians, belonging to very low social strata, found it difficult to integrate. In Argentina, on the other hand, a new society was being established at the same time. An immense territory just waiting to be exploited economically. Our emigrants immersed in the Argentine reality were indeed Italians who left their villages without having attended school and discovered the fact of being Italian there, in Argentina. According to some researchers, the associative movement of Italians in Argentina is unparalleled anywhere else in the world, either in numbers or in social capital. It was not Italy, but Italians who had become rich, who created banks in Argentina, such as the Bank of Italy of Rio de La Plata, which was born in 1876. Towards the end of the 19th century, 40% of industrial entrepreneurs were Italians. It was a society and economy in full development, and Italians played a decisive role. On a smaller scale, the same can be said of the small group of 76 *Coratini*.

Emigration from Corato in the 1930s

ALBANIA	1
BRASILE	3
ARGENTINA	5
ETIOPIA	5
AOI	7
EGITTO	8
ERITREA	8
GRECIA	9
LIBIA	15
RODI	32
GERMANIA	47
USA	285
FRANCIA	568
TOTALE	996

The reduction in the flow of migrants in the 1930's was due to both the restrictive policies of some nations, and by Fascist policy which did not like the fact that Italians had to resort to other countries to find work (to the detriment of the goal of the **"eight million bayonets"** so dear to the Duce).

Several expatriation agencies and a host of illegal enterprises (like well-known shipping companies) carried out the exodus, promising a placement in various countries, but then abandoned the unfortunate to their fate; these were the same people who organized the repatriation of people who had sold everything before leaving, house, fields and cattle to pay for the trip, often to an unknown destination, or to be thrown on a deserted coast, which was said to be the El Dorado. As for "emigration fraud", a crime that was widespread until the 1930s, Mussolini put a stop to it with a law passed in 1931, which sentenced from 1 to 5 years in prison and a hefty fine *"whoever with false statements or using false information, encourages someone to emigrate or by sending him to a country other than that to which he wanted to go to, by being given or promised money for emigration ... by exploiting ignorance, economic misery, or the inability to find in Italy means of subsistence and correct living conditions"*. This law was passed because of the widespread despicable scam practiced by unscrupulous people.

The *Coratini* migration in the thirties was considerably reduced. In nine years, from 1930 to 1939, on the eve of Italy's entry into the Second World War, only 996 people emigrated from Corato, plus an unknown number of illegal immigrants.

During this decade, it is interesting to note a new direction of *Coratini* migration, namely to East North Africa, both to the colonies or to Egypt. The regime did not consider it emigration, but as the economic, commercial and cultural expansion of Italy in the lands considered its own and that following the conquest of Ethiopia in 1936, were part of the "glorious" empire of eastern Africa Italiana. From 1937 to 1939, we find 5 *Coratini* left for Addis Ababa, 4 in 1934 for Alexandria in Egypt, 8 in 1937-1938 for Eritrea, 8 overall for the AOI (Italian East Africa). Libya deserves special attention.

The *Coratini* pioneers of the colonization of Cyrenaica

Never was colonization more unfortunate than the Italian colonization in Libya. In October 1911 the Italian troops sent by the liberal government of Giovanni Giolitti landed in Tobruk, Derna, and Benghazi and ventured into the country almost without encountering resistance. The Italian invasion succeeded and in October 1912 the Istanbul government signed the Treaty of Ouchy (Lausanne) under which Turkey withdrew its armed forces

from Libya, leaving the country to Italy. After the Great War ended, the adventure of Italian colonization in Libya could resume. The bloodiest phase of the conflict was attributable to Marshal Pietro Badoglio, who entered the Libyan scene at the end of 1928 declaring that he would not give respite to anyone who had not submitted; and also to General Rodolfo Graziani, who from March 1930 launched the last and hardest phase of repression of the Libyan resistance. In this context, forced displacements of the population were organized on a scale never seen before. Graziani took the order literally, organizing the forced displacement of the entire population of Cyrenaica along the coastal plain, between the sea and the slopes of the plateau. It was a march, in winter, of hundreds and hundreds of kilometers. Badoglio wrote to Graziani in 1932: "*... The Gebel must be dominated by the Italian settler ... The indigenous people must be convinced or, rather, become accustomed to considering that the concentration camps along the coastal territories of Cyrenaica and Sirtica are their permanent destination.* The outcome of those policies was in any case dramatic. It was impossible to calculate the exact number of deaths, which were numerous. Moreover, Badoglio ordered that anyone among the indigenous people found on the Gebel, where the deportation had begun, should be shot. In September 1931 Umar al-Mukhtar, the elderly leader of the resistance (he was almost 70 years old), was captured and hanged. On January 24, 1932 Badoglio was able to declare that the rebellion had been definitively crushed and Libya "completely subdued". According to official Italian data, between 1923 and 1932, 6,500 people died in anti-guerrilla operations. But scholars, who in recent years delved into the matter, have calculated that there were instead several tens of thousands. Perhaps even one hundred thousand.

On August 13, 1932, Luigi Razza was appointed president of the Ente (Agency) for the Colonization of Cyrenaica. Razza launched an ambitious plan to bring Italians there who were willing to work hard. According to Armando Maugini, who headed the Cyrenaica Land Services Office, **the people of Apulia were the best that Italy could offer Libya for their ability to cope with the harsh living conditions of the pioneer phase**. "*The settler of Apulia*" wrote Maugini in a report "*is well suited to this type of colonization, not only because of his adaptability and great sobriety, but also because he is very attached to the family and comes from a territory whose farming conditions are very similar to those of the Cyrenaic Gebel. This settler exerts a power of attraction on his fellow men who have remained in the Mother Country, so that one day they could spontaneously intensify the process of settlement of the areas already occupied by the people of Puglia*". Luigi Razza confirmed: "*The choice of families was initially made in Puglia, and particularly in Bari, because the transfer of a first group of six families from Corato transferred to the colony as an experiment, provided excellent results, and*

therefore they became a first point of support that could function as a model in case they came in contact with people of the same origin...The settlers have already acclimated very well and are attached to their land, having already been able to discover how to best exploit it."

The conditions for starting new businesses in the colony were terrible. Due to a drought 1936 was a very bad year for crops in Tripolitania. At this point it seemed a mistake to have sent large families to Libya: the presence of children and the elderly proved to be an obstacle to the proper exploitation of the land. And there was a change of attitude. 1938 was the year of the so-called "twenty thousand" operation. According to Italo Balbo, this was the number of 'non-immigrants' who went to Libya. Why do we talk about 'non-immigrants'? **Fascism had always pursued an anti-migration policy and could not deny it.** The transfer of the twenty thousand to Libya, says Cresti, *"was presented by the Italian newspapers as the exact opposite of the previous painful experience of those people who had left in search of living conditions that Italy could not offer. To leave was no longer a sad event, but a thrilling and joyful adventure, full of good surprises. For those who left it was no longer a matter of leaving the living environment and society they had known, but the possibility of creating new and solid group bonds with those who were experiencing the same situation. It was no longer the continuation of miserable travel conditions, but the participation in the luxury of modernity, no longer the prospect of scarcity, but of abundance, no longer the cold and distrustful reception given to foreigners, but the manifestation of a warm and fraternal welcome in a country that no longer declared itself to be "overseas", but an integral part of the motherland.* The departure was organized from Venice on October 28, on the anniversary of the march on Rome. It was widely reported in all the newspapers. But the unfavorable results of the agricultural season caused considerable difficulties by the end of 1939.

Then Italy entered the war in June 1940. In February and March 1941, the first British occupation dealt "a violent blow to the still fragile building of colonization in Cyrenaica". There was practically no peace in Libya which, instead of reaping the first fruits of the work of the "twenty thousand", found itself to be a theater of war. The settlers panicked and flocked to the bank to withdraw their savings, trying to escape to Tripoli and return to Italy. As the Allied troops advanced, the local Arab populations ransacked everything whenever they could. But between December 1941 and January 1942 it was the beginning of defeat for the Italians. It was another terrible year and on January 23, 1943 British troops entered Tripoli. All contact between Libya and Italy was interrupted. A few thousand Italians remained there to work until the end of the war and beyond, even when in 1949 the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of Libya as an independent state, which was proclaimed in 1951. In 1956, an agreement between

Italy and Libya regulated the presence in the former colony of Italian compatriots, who became, for the most part, small landowners. But they would all be expelled after the coup d'état of the officers led by Gaddafi, who in 1969 overthrew the monarchy⁴.

At the time of the Italian occupation, in 1933, a settlement was founded under the name of *Beda Littoria Rural Village*. The village is located on the plateau of Jebel al Akhdar, at about 600 meters above sea level, 30 kilometers from the Mediterranean Sea and extended over 2,642 hectares. A church, a town hall, a post office, a headquarters for the Fascist party, a multi-purpose hall and a dispensary were built. The village was populated by settlers who arrived from Italy as the result of the colonization policy defined by the fascist government. The greatest flow took place between 1937 and 1938. In this region crops of wheat, legumes (peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas, lupines, chick peas), fruit trees (almonds), grape vines, and olive trees were grown⁵.

During the Second World War Beda Littoria became the headquarters of the German command of Panzergruppe Afrika commanded by Erwin Rommel.

In 1939, **Angela Cialdella** and **Giuseppa Malcangi** left Corato for Beda Littoria. Other *Coratini* also went to Derna, which during the Italian colonial period was the second city of Cyrenaica, after Benghazi.

Documented in the lists kept in the Municipal Archives are **Lucia Scaringella** (1939), **Riccardo Tarricone**, **Anna Leo**, **Benedetta Mangione** (1938), and **Maria Antonia Acella** (1935). As for the other Libyan destinations, we found, as early as 1930, **Angela Leo** to Tripoli, in 1931 **Felicia Pini** (wife of a *Coratino*) in Benghazi, in 1934 **Angela Marzocca** in Benghazi, **Giuseppina Tondi** in Tripoli in 1937, **Nunzia Perrone** and **Luigia Scarnera** in Cyrenaica in 1938, and in 1939 **Luigi Riccardo Mazzilli** and **Michele Lops** in Libya. The presence of so many women is explained by the fact that they joined their husbands who had left previously, and indicates that these were real colonies of a permanent nature. In Beda Littoria, several *Coratini* married fellow countrywomen they met in Libya. They bore the children who later returned to Corato. In a very interesting article published in the May 2011 number of LO STRADONE, the result of some painstaking research, Rossella Cipri described stories of Coratini who lived in Beda Littoria. She described how **Ilarione Livrieri** married **Serafina Amorese**, had two daughters by her in 1939 and 1941, and received from the government 40 hectares of land which he worked with both oxen and tractors.

Michele Piccarreta was also born in Cyrenaica in 1938, where his father had moved six years earlier. The fascist government had given him 70 hectares, both arable land and pasture, as well as livestock. According to his testimony the Cyrenaic Gebel was being

⁴ This part was taken from an article by PAOLO MIELI - Corriere della Sera. 22-02-2011.

⁵ Wikipedia

transformed thanks to the work of many peasants from Puglia, into a very fertile area with orchards, almond trees, vineyards, arable land and even with the cultivation of flowers. The war destroyed the dream of these *Coratini* to become prosperous farmers. Some returned to Corato during the war, others remained until the late 40's and early 50's but the Libyans had become increasingly hostile towards them. And Gaddafi had not yet risen to power!

They returned to Corato empty-handed, after many sacrifices, considered in Italy to be halfway between refugees and illegal immigrants. They were the "displaced" persons of Cyrenaica, who encountered many difficulties in reintegrating into the society of Corato.

The "organized" emigration to Hitler's Germany: the Coratini during the Third Reich

Following the alliance between Mussolini and Hitler signed in 1936 and called the Rome-Berlin Axis, bilateral economic agreements stipulated the sending of Italian agricultural and industrial labor to the Reich. Overall, between 1938 and 1943 five hundred thousand workers, mostly men, were enlisted by the German war economy. In 1938, 31,000 workers left, then 36,000 in 1939; and from 1940, the annual quota stabilized around 50,000. In addition to workers, the Third Reich demanded construction workers and miners from its Italian ally. From the autumn of 1938 to the end of 1939, 9,500 Italian "organized" emigrants crossed the Brenner Pass: 3,000 destined for the construction of the Volkswagen workshops in Fallersleben, others to Salzgitte, where the construction site for the large Hermann Goring Werke steel mill had been opened. In 1938, 40 workers from Corato were probably sent there. Two of them were only 16 years old (Cataldo Cusanno and Benedetto Diasparra); Giuseppe Giaconelli, Luigi Giaconelli, Francesco Mazzilli, Paolo Mongelli, Savino Balducci, and Vincenzo Perrone were 17 years old. Young men were requested and in fact the oldest were 35 years old (Vito Sforza and Francesco Faretra)⁶. Four other *Coratini* were sent to Germany as farmers: Francesco Cifarelli, Marino Diaferia, Luigi Masciave, and Giuseppe Lastella.

When war broke out, Italian volunteer workers in Germany found themselves in close contact with Polish, French, Belgian and Soviet prisoners of war. The Italians enjoyed a slightly different treatment from prisoners of war as they were

⁶ *The other Coratini were* Pasquale Strippoli, Francesco Lafranceschina, Vincenzo Lasorsa, Cataldo Perrone, Niccolò Bucci, Vito Tarricone, Giuseppe Tedone, Cataldo Cipriani, Savino Maldera, Luigi Mazzilli, Giuseppe Maggiulli, Enrico Cifarelli, Cataldo Fusaro, Alfredo Tota, Michele Maldera, Alfredo Nardelli, Potito Tarricone, Sergio Gangai, Alfonso Maino, Leonardo Caputo, Vincenzo Ferrante, Cataldo Perrone, Cataldo Cipriani, Pasquale Mastromauro, Pasquale Leuci, Vincenzo Lamarca, Domenico Perrone, Filiberto Fusaro, Cataldo Tarantini, Savino Patruno.

allowed to send home the money they earned. Many of them came from the South and had left behind a situation of great poverty that encouraged them to stay, despite the hard work and frequent harassment. They were sustained by the hope of being able to earn enough to ensure better living conditions for their families.

As the conflict worsened, the treatment of foreign workers became increasingly harsh, even though Italians were protected by the alliance between Mussolini and Hitler until the Armistice. Foreign workers were subject to strict controls by the Nazi party both in the workplace and in the dormitories. Those who were declared to be inefficient were sent to labor detention camps.

The Italian workers were not always well regarded by their German bosses because their work rate was lower than that of the Germans. Italians were immediately classified as unreliable, due to the fact that many tried to flee in search of better jobs, while others were simply considered slackers. In reality, they were extremely humble people who had been pushed to go to Germany by the dream of earning more money and thus being able to support their families in Italy. The working hours for these workers were ruthless, and many Italians suffered harsh punishments for trying to steal some food or a few pieces of clothing to better shelter from the bitter cold in Germany.

When fascism fell in July 1943, Italian workers in Germany found themselves in a very difficult situation, unable to leave Germany; and from September on, they became prisoners. In fact, Germany, engaged on several war fronts, increasingly needed more labor to keep its industries going. The Italians were now considered cowards, traitors, and vermin. They became slaves, subjected daily to contempt by the Germans who never missed an opportunity to reproach them for the turning point of September 8.

As the situation of the war became more dramatic and Germany began to falter, there was endless barbarity in the work and extermination camps. The prisoners were forced to work for twelve hours a day, receiving beatings for every minor infraction. Most never returned home. **We do not know the fate of these *Coratini* workers in Germany.**

Emigration from Corato during the Second World War

1946	1947	1948	1949
71	296	309	424

The drums of war that had resounded in Europe in 1939 had in fact almost completely blocked the emigration of people from Corato. Only 42 *Coratini* managed to obtain a passport to expatriate. In 1940 only a dozen *Coratini* emigrated to the USA and 4 or 5 to France before the "fateful" day of June 10. Thereafter no passports were issued. During the tragic years of 1943 and 1944 ,a passport was required to travel within the national

territory. But starting in 1946, in a country that was a pile of rubble and mourning its dead, the young people of Corato took to the road abroad in a crescendo of expatriations, directed as usual to France (651), the USA (107) and, a new destination, Venezuela (275).

Emigration from Corato after the Second World War

ARGENTINA	20
AUSTRALIA	4
AUSTRIA	6
BELGIO	3
BOLIVIA	5
BRASILE	20
CANADA'	83
EGITTO	1
EUROPA	116
FRANCIA	2545
GERMANIA	9
GRECIA	4
INGHILTERRA	2
JUGOSLAVIA	2
LUSSEMBURGO	1
MALTA	1
SUD AMERICA	1
SVIZZERA	52
TRIPOLITANIA	1
USA	490
VENEZUELA	1134

In the decade from 1950 to 1959, 4,500 *Coratini* emigrated. As the 1950s progressed, Venezuela replaced the United States in second place, while France retained its primacy as the favorite nation of *Coratini*, Grenoble being by far the city in the world with the largest "colony" of *Coratini* abroad. Here, homesickness was strongly felt, especially by the first wave of immigrants who had struggled to integrate into French society. The inability to integrate was due to language difficulties and to a certain hostility initially that dated back to the Italian-French conflicts of the late 19th century. The presence of so many immigrant associations confirmed the close link between them and their country of origin and their roots.

In the 1950s, the integration of Corato's inhabitants in the transalpine city made enormous steps forward. The Grenoble press reported on the tour of the Coratini orchestra "La Santa Cecilia" directed by its conductor Miglietta in July 1953. It clearly speaks of music at the "service of Franco-Italian friendship finally found and recovered after the well-known dark years⁷." The daily newspaper "Les Allobroges" headlines "*Corato*

pays a visit to Corato". The three days of the performance of the Miglietta orchestra were a real triumph, with "delirious" enthusiasm. The newspaper Dauphiné Libéré: ... *The Corato band made a triumphant entrance yesterday afternoon in Grenoble and the hundreds of people who accompanied the fifty-two musicians through the city were able to appreciate their demeanor and especially their musical value. We are grateful to the many people from Corato who live in our city, and to the organizers, for*

⁷ In 1940, Italy had entered the war by occupying the south of France.

the wonderful days they have given us". Thanks to Maestro Miglietta and his orchestra, our emigrants finally felt the pride of being Italian, southern, and above all, *Coratini*. A moment of redemption for those who had been called "macaroni" with contempt for too long.

Gradually the *Coratini* became aware of now being a community that had to organize itself to preserve its ties with the native land, to cultivate "*coratinità*". Among the various associations that arose, it is worth mentioning the active "Association of *Coratini* of Grenoble and the surrounding area". Currently led by Savino Ferrara, it has celebrated 25 years of activity.

The awareness of having lived a history, a past worthy of being told and handed down, has encouraged some *Coratini* to publish the difficult experience of their emigration in books and newspapers. This is the case of Victor Fusaro, who arrived in Grenoble from Corato with his mother and two brothers, author of the book "*Raconte-moi. Ton Quartier. Image du passé*". ("*Tell me about it. Your neighborhood. Image of the past*"⁸). In 650 pages, Fusaro recounts the many aspects of the life of Italians and *Coratini* in Grenoble since 1920, especially in the Saint-Laurent district, which consisted of mostly dilapidated buildings. The migration path was classic: the father left first in search of fortune, which then was simply getting a job. When this work became secure enough, they would call for their wife and children, often very young. One can imagine the difficulty for these women, who had never known the world outside the city limits, to face a long journey, on the third-class benches of trains that bumped up the peninsula for hours. Then there was the border crossing, the formalities to be completed, the unknown language. And finally the reunion with the husband and the beginning of the hard reality of being an immigrant, living in cramped quarters with relatives. Victor Fusaro tells us: "*My father arrived in the Saint-Laurent district like most of the people from Corato. We did too, since one of my mother's sisters had settled in Grenoble and lived on the banks of the Isère. My aunt had a small house and for a while we shared our life with her family, so that often there were ten of us in the same room, waiting to find a new place to live. In Saint-Laurent Street in 1931, 30% of the population was of Italian origin. The number of Coratini reached 3,436, or 38% of Italians. These neighborhoods abounded in subcontractor shops and piecework which were often the first place for a female migrant to enter the labor market*"⁹.

⁸ Lo Stradone, November 2009 - Alessandro Acella, Victor Fusaro tells his story. The *Coratini* who chose Grenoble.

⁹ Lo Stradone, December 2009 - Alessandro Acella, Coratino Grenoble. The St Laurent Italian Quarter.

Meanwhile, in the U.S. many *Coratini* who emigrated immediately after the war assimilated themselves into American society with relative ease.

In **1910** the discovery of huge oil reserves in the Maracaibo lagoon began to bring wealth to Venezuela. By the end of the **1920's**, Venezuela was the world's largest oil exporter. But this did not improve the social conditions of the common people. Widespread poverty and the lack of government projects related to education and health provoked popular uprisings that led Venezuela to its first democratic elections in **1947**. But democratically elected presidents were often overthrown by military juntas. In the 1950s, Venezuela had great prospects, so much so that it attracted immigrants from Spain, Portugal and Italy. In the 1950s, Marcos Perez Jimenez, a member of the military junta that came to power in 1948, appropriated all powers to himself and became dictator of Venezuela.

Convinced that European immigration could be crucial for the development of the country, Jimenez favored it in every way, allowing the entry of about a million foreigners (among them about 300,000 Italians). From about 1947, the migration of Italians which reached its highest peaks in the years 1949-1960 (with more than 220,000 emigrants), decreased drastically in the sixties of the twentieth century, to become a rare occurrence in the following decades. With their 800,000 descendants (including those of "mixed" origins), Italians currently constitute the second largest foreign community in Venezuela after the Spanish.

The first *Coratini* left for Venezuela in 1947. There were about 87 of them. In July, the first *Coratino* to take out a passport for the South American country was **Vito Di Bartolomeo**, a 31-year-old farmer, followed the same month by Giovanni Bevilacqua (farmer), **Vincenzo Leo** (farmer), **Nicolo Quercia** (farmer), **Augustino Iurillo** (farmer), and then in August by **Luigi Di Bisceglie** (farmer), **Michele Sivo** (mechanic), **Tonino Lafasciano** (carpenter), **Richard Piccininni** (barber), **Luca Bucci** (farmer), **Savino de Palo** (pasta maker). From September the number increased dramatically. This very first wave was obviously made up only of men. The first women to have a passport for Venezuela were in October, **Benedetta De Palo**, 21, a housewife, and in December, **Angela Faretra**, a 37-year-old housewife. Most of the *Coratini* who emigrated to Venezuela were artisans: hairdressers, shoemakers, mechanics, cabinetmakers, carpenters, electricians, blacksmiths, painters and others.

We asked Mr. Vincenzo Agatino, promoter and, for decades, president of the Italian-Venezuelan Center of Corato, to describe some aspects of the Corato experience in Venezuela.

The first people from Corato went to Colombia and Brazil, where an agrarian reform had allowed many "campesinos" to have a piece of virgin land to cultivate, a goat, a pack animal and nothing more. The initial enthusiasm was soon followed by the disappointment of a terribly hard life with little profit. So those first Coratini crossed the border illegally with their families and went to Venezuela. They were the ones who called other Coratini from 1947 onwards. They left on ships that were remnants of the war, even destroyers, adapted in some way to transport passengers. The voyage could last from 12 to 21 days and would dock at the port of La Guaira, about twenty kilometers from Caracas.

The people of Corato "invented" any kind of work. Those who arrived as a barber perhaps started to work as carpenters, whoever was a bricklayer turned into a mechanic. Nobody gave up. Every possibility was explored. In Venezuela it was very easy to undertake any activity, without special permits or bureaucratic obstacles.

Italians were well regarded in Venezuela, which at that time, and even today, was a very rich country thanks to oil. While in Italy you needed 600 lire to exchange for a dollar, in Venezuela you could exchange 3.35 bolivars for a dollar.

Venezuelan women appreciated the Italian man because they saw in him a model of seriousness and attachment to the family. I myself emigrated to Venezuela in 1952 and married a Venezuelan woman, with whom I had four children.

The Coratini settled mainly in Caracas, Maracaibo and Maracay. Together with many other Italians, from Venetians to Sicilians, they made a significant contribution to the construction of major projects such as highways and skyscrapers. The tropical climate was not always well tolerated by the Italians, who often fell ill.

The vast majority of people from Corato sent a lot of money to their families who remained in Corato. It can be said that the building development in the 60s and 70s in Corato was possible thanks to these remittances. Many developers sold apartments on paper, cashing in handsomely before construction even began."

Mr. Agatino has always been committed to keeping the link between Corato and Venezuela alive. Three Venezuelan presidents and several ambassadors have come to Corato. Thanks to the efforts of the Center, *Venezuela* and *Simon Bolivar* plazas have been named in Corato. Mr. Agatino concluded: *Most of the people of Corato have had so much from Venezuela, I am sorry that, once repatriated, not everyone remembers it.*

Note: Our survey, which has sought to tell the story of *Coratini* emigration in a succinct manner (especially from a statistical and numerical point of view), is only a starting point for a more in-depth analysis of a phenomenon with profound social, economic and psychological implications. Our data covers about fifteen thousand *Coratini* who have left their city over the course of almost sixty years. In addition to these, there is a large number of illegal immigrants. Many of them repatriated, unable to bear the nostalgia for their loved ones and for the country they had left forever. Others had the tenacity and courage, mixed with anger, suffering and hope, to put down their roots in another country forever. People have left, people have returned, newcomers have come, and some of our "young minds" have fled abroad.

This is the unceasing rhythm of a humanity always on the move, searching for a place where life, finally dignified, is worth living.