



Mussolini's Army in the French Riviera: Italy's Occupation of France (The History of Military Occupation)

Emanuele Sica

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In contrast to its brutal seizure of the Balkans, the Italian Army's 1940-1943 relatively mild occupation of the French Riviera and nearby alpine regions bred the myth of the Italian brava gente , or good fellow, an agreeable occupier who abstained from the savage wartime behaviors so common across Europe.

Employing a multi-tiered approach, Emanuele Sica examines the simultaneously conflicting and symbiotic relationship between the French population and Italian soldiers. At the grassroots level, Sica asserts that the cultural proximity between the soldiers and the local population, one-quarter of which was Italian, smoothed the sharp angles of miscommunication and cultural faux-pas at a time of great uncertainty. At the same time, it encouraged a laxness in discipline that manifested as fraternization and black marketeering. Sica's examination of political tensions highlights how French prefects and mayors fought to keep the tatters of sovereignty in the face of military occupation. In addition, he reveals the tense relationship between Fascist civilian authorities eager to fulfill imperial dreams of annexation and army leaders desperate to prevent any action that might provoke French insurrection.

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