

the people of Turin. On the contrary, the years between 1943 and 1945 represented the worst period of World War II for the local population. The new government's delay in accepting the Allies' demand for unconditional surrender allowed Hitler to rush military reinforcements on to the peninsula. When Badoglio officially announced Italy's surrender and Allied forces landed on the southern mainland in early September 1943, the Nazis swiftly took control of Piedmont and of most of the country north of the battlefield, forcing the king and his prime minister to abandon Rome and retreat to the south. In the same month, Hitler rescued Mussolini from prison and installed him as the nominal leader of a German-sponsored Fascist state, the Italian Social Republic, with its base in the town of Salò, north of Milan.

The new regime enjoyed even less support than its predecessor in Turin. While the reconstituted Fascist party, the Republican Fascist Party (Pfr), claimed a membership of 11,000 in the city in mid-1944, no more than 500 were actively involved. The overwhelming majority of the people, including industrialists and workers, turned a cold shoulder to the new party. The political isolation of the Pfr in the Piedmontese capital encouraged its extremist tendencies as it evolved into a loose collection of violent paramilitary groups. Armed conflicts between the Pfr militias and a growing resistance movement only accentuated the misery of the city's residents caused by extreme shortages of food and energy. Turin's small but remarkably accomplished Jewish community suffered most directly the horrors of the Nazi occupation. After September 1943, they had little choice but to escape, hide or fight. The decision of the Republic of Salò to arrest and intern all Italian Jews in November led to the deportation of 800 local Jews, half of whom subsequently perished in concentration camps.

The inability of civil authorities to manage the war crisis in Turin forced the local residents to rely increasingly on the leading non-governmental institutions of the city, Fiat and the Catholic Church. Even before the summer of 1943, the automotive giant had developed its own private social welfare system to provide its employees with basic necessities such as food, wood, and clothing. The company also maintained the size of its workforce and payroll even as it cut back on production. After September 1943, Agnelli and Fiat attempted a difficult balancing act, collaborating with the Nazi authorities to protect the plants and jobs at the same time that they gave clandestine support to the resistance movement and established ties with the Italian government in the south. Catholic charitable organizations helped fill the void left by the disintegration of the Fascist regime by providing assistance to the needy,