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O.Qu.	- Oberquartiermeister	- Deputy Chief of the General Staff
O.T.	- Organisation Todt	- Todt Organization (Engr. and Ft. construction)
Lok.	- Lokomotive	- locomotive
Lkw.	- Lastkraftwagen	- truck

signed: Stange

(S T A N G E)

HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL

12 pages

RAILROAD SITUATION FROM JANUARY 1944 UP TO THE BEGINNING OF
THE MAY-OFFENSIVE.

by

the General in charge of transportation in Italy

Oberst i.G. Klaus Stange

Written at: Garmisch (Germany)

Completed on: 24 April 1947.

Sources: a) personal) Written from memory and from work notes
 b) documentation) from Gaunden.

Sketches: Railroad lines in Italy 1 : 1 000 000

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HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL

Klaus S t a n g e

Oberst i.G.

Railroad situation from January 1944 up to the beginning of
the May- offensive.

During the last months of the year 1943 unpleasant destructions of large switching yards occurred frequently, and south of the Appenin Mountains an increasing number of locomotive repair shops was put out of commission. Furthermore, railroad sections were interrupted again and again, in most cases near the same railroad stations and railroad engineering works, so that the various sections were blocked repeatedly for shorter or longer periods of time. This resulted in irregularity of the service and in piling up of trains, and made re-routing necessary in many cases, but, for the time being no immediately noticeable prejudice to the supply of the Heeresgruppe was brought about by these attacks.

A considerable increase in air attacks during 1944 had to be anticipated. It would be an easy matter to block the few railroad lines running toward Central Italy for longer periods of time, especially since there were many railroad engineering constructions along these lines. The western line from Livorno through Civitavecchia to Rome was hardly used any longer for military transports because of the immediate threat from the sea and because of the appearance of enemy airplanes, always showing up without any forewarning whatsoever. Repair work on the bridges and on the destroyed railroad stations was carried out with negligible manpower, in order to leave the enemy Command in doubt about the importance of this railroad line for the German transports. The central section through Florence and Orte to Rome, and the line along the eastern coast through Rimini, Falconara, Terni and

Orte to Rome and from Falconara through Ancona to Pescara constituted the vital arteries for the front and for Rome. Therefore it was imperative to keep these lines open to traffic. As long as the attacks were directed with a certain regularity almost always against the same railroad stations and engineering constructions, for instance Prato, Pontassieve, Arezzo, the Tiber bridges and the Paglia bridge north of Orvieto, as well as the railroad stations Orte, Poggibonsi, Rimini, and Foligno, etc., it was possible to complete the repairs with the available labor forces in a comparatively short period of time. Only from Orte on toward the south it was no longer possible to bring about a satisfactory adjustment of destructions on one hand and labor forces on the other hand. Frequently, reconstruction work could not be terminated during a period of favorable weather conditions, that is to say during rainy or cloudy weather. Through-transports to Rome and farther south, as well as return-transports from Rome to carry the great amounts of urgently needed rolling stock to Germany, became more and more difficult from January on, and consequently less frequent. From the middle of January on Orte was almost constantly kept in a state of destruction. There were never more than a few nights or days during which important transports for the front and for the immediate supply of Rome could be once more pushed through to the south. At the beginning of February, for instance, it was possible to move several heavy railway guns, urgently needed in the fighting action against the Anzio beachhead, into positions south of Rome.

In general it may be stated that from the end of January on direct railroad transportation to Rome and south thereof was hardly possible any longer and that, whenever this was the case, it represented a great exception of short duration. All of the troops and supply transports for the western

sector of the front had to be unloaded north or northwest of Orte. South of Rome the movement of smaller transports for the immediate supply of the front was kept up as long as into the month of May. Occasional troop transfers from the eastern coast to the beachhead through Avezzano were carried out a few more times but under great difficulties. The coal situation in the Rome area and south thereof grew tighter every day because of the persistent isolation. As a matter of fact, a few coal trains were moved from February to April via Siena, Grosseto, and Civitavecchia to Rome. But these were only drops in a bucket. The locomotive situation was also constantly deteriorating, since only minor repairs could be taken care of in the workshops near Rome. Our losses were further increased by fire from aircraft weapons and by our own wear and tear.

The destruction of the locomotive workshops south of the Appennin Mountains, especially of those in Foligno, resulted in increasing the time required to run the locomotives to the workshops in northern Italy, and consequently in creating a certain tenseness in the locomotive situation. When the workshops in Florence were bombed to pieces during the first half of March, naturally this condition became still more difficult. Nevertheless, all transportation requirements, increasing because of the landing at Anzio and our own subsequent counterattacks, could still be fulfilled during the months from January to the last third of March.

Out of the 18 trains for the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Heeresgruppe crossing the frontier into the Italian area every day, about 9 proceeded to Central Italy and were mostly unloaded in the area Orte-Avezzano or in the area Orte-Spoleto. A few trains moved along the eastern coast as far as Pescara. The fighting near Nettuno-Anzio, the fighting in the bridgehead and on the Cassino front obviously required also troop transfers and the bringing up of new forces. As long as into the month of March we

succeeded in moving these troop transports on the central line as far as into the area north of Orte or, whenever the Paglia bridge north of Orvieto was destroyed, into the area south of Chiusi, and along the eastern coast line via Falconara and Terni into the area northeast of Orte, or in the eastern sector of the front as far as into the neighborhood of Pescara.

However the repeated destruction of individual railroad stations no longer permitted of maintaining a certain tempo but caused delays and required trans-loading as early as that time. That is to say, there occurred losses of time, which obviously had a detrimental effect both from the tactical as the operational point of view. Aside from these military transports, the Heeresgruppe was constantly and anxiously trying to move supply trains with foodstuffs for Rome's population as far south as possible, in order to make the task of further transporting them easier for the authorities of Rome.

It is true that railroad traffic in the North Italian area from January to the end of March was rendered more difficult by attacks on the large shunting yards and on transportation centers. Especially whenever Verona had been bombed, large bottlenecks occurred by trains piling up in all directions, which made it necessary to throttle the movement across the frontiers for short periods of time and to introduce temporary restrictions of domestic traffic. However, sufficient labor forces were available in North Italy so that all the damages inflicted there could be repaired in a comparatively short period of time. The daily traffic across the frontiers in both directions during this period amounted to about 50 trains (inclusive of coal and passenger trains). In general the entire amounts made available from the Reich could be taken over.

The increase in air attacks from January on, despite the still

frequently prevailing overcast, cloudy or rainy weather conditions, made it obvious that with the beginning of the period of constantly blue skies in Italy, and in preparation of an expected large-scale offensive, enemy bombing activity would be considerably intensified. The situation south of the Appenin Mountains had shown already that the available labor forces were no longer sufficient for rapid repair work - and that was essential in all cases. The Heeresgruppe ordered the assignment of several Italian construction battalions which were being formed at the time. Toward the end of March [sic] or the beginning of February the first of them were to be available. Repair materials, for instance steel girders, rails, etc., were distributed along the various sections. In northern Italy the Po-bridges were being reinforced and several switch lines were planned and work started on them. Active protection by German fighter planes could not be counted upon. Flak protection at particularly endangered engineering constructions, as for instance the Tiber bridges north of Orte, was available only in light forces. Attempts to use smoke screens were taken into consideration, however they were not considered very adequate due to the shortage in equipment available for this purpose. Therefore all of the responsible authorities looked forward with mixed feelings to the approaching period of clear weather.

This moment, which had been anticipated with anxiety, was reached approximately on 20 March. The new air offensive started, with greater intensity, and conducted in a somewhat different manner. Within a few days all of the railroad sections to the south along a line Pisa - Florence - Rimini were interrupted in several places by area bombing. Bridges along all railroad sections, over Siena as well as over Florence-Orte, over Rimini - Ancona, and over Falconara to Orte were attacked, damaged, and some of them completely destroyed. In the area around Rome

too, many railroad stations, several bridges, and especially the trains parked on the open tract were attacked.

Aside from area bombing, another form of activity was introduced, which was just as unpleasant materially and caused great damages. These were the fighter bombers. From that time on all of the railroad sections south of the Appenin Mountains were threatened and endangered all day long by Jabo-attacks. Fire from aircraft weapons on parked and moving trains, electric railroad conduits shot to pieces in many places and over long stretches, bomb hits on smaller bridges or on the open track, interruption and destruction of the railroad telephone communication system in many places, therefore delayed arrival of reports on these damages, constant threatening of the labor forces from the air, these were the new results achieved by employing fighter bombers, and which lasted from daybreak to nightfall. Trouble spots at many different and constantly changing points, which had to be located by time-consuming investigations, a steady increase in the number of repair workmen needed, constant moving about and reorganizing of labor forces, consequently loss of time in urgent repair work; electric installations out of operation because, due to the lack of trained electricians, repairs could not longer be carried out efficiently; losses in locomotives and rolling stock, which furthermore blocked up the tracks; working mostly during the night; railroad traffic in the entire area only during darkness. All these were consequences of the new air offensive. The difficulties seemed to pile up to unsurpassable mountains.

The supply of the fighting front and of Rome's population was being endangered unless the loss could be compensated for by other means of transportation. Unloading operations had to be carried out north and west of Florence. In order to assure the movement of supply, every effort had to be made to reach the area Arezzo, Chiusi, Perugia, and

[the area] Foligno, Terni by train. Concentrating railroad engineers, OT-forces, Italian construction battalions, German railroad workers along the section Florence-Orte was planned and executed, however, neither the switch line through Siena, nor the eastern section through Ancona to Orte could be completely deprived of railroad engineer and other labor forces. There too repair work had to be completed, it was not possible to give up the switch lines completely. As was shown during the later developments, it was easier and therefore possible repeatedly to move trains as far as into the desired area by using the section through Rimini.

In order to avoid casualties, air raid alarm systems had to be organized at all working places. Radio posts were installed, advance message centers were organized, motorized locomotive repair shops and construction trains were equipped, emergency water stations were prepared, use was made of tunnels already there to park trains. At the beginning of April four or five railroad engineer companies were moved in from France, light and heavy Flak batteries were installed in greater numbers along the Florence-Chiusi section.

By taking all these measures it was possible to open up the section for several hours or nights and therefore to move trains - jerkingly - as far as into the area round the Lake Trasimeno, Chiusi, and along the eastern route as far as into the area Foligno-Terni. Transshipping service on truck columns was organized, to bridge over the interrupted stretches, and to continue the transport beyond that spot by rail.

In North Italy the attacks on the large railroad stations Verona, Padova, Mestre, Ferrara, Bologna, and later-on also in the West on Torino, Milano caused considerable damages and losses in locomotives and rolling stock. Severe bottlenecks occurred everywhere in the north Italian area. Traffic within the country had to be further curtailed, movement across the

frontiers had to be slowed down. Nevertheless, it was possible to repair all these damages within a comparatively short period of time and in an adequate manner to permit railroad operations to continue and the trains required by the Heeresgruppe to be moved in.

signed: Stange

(S T A N G E)

HISTORICAL DIVISION SEAL

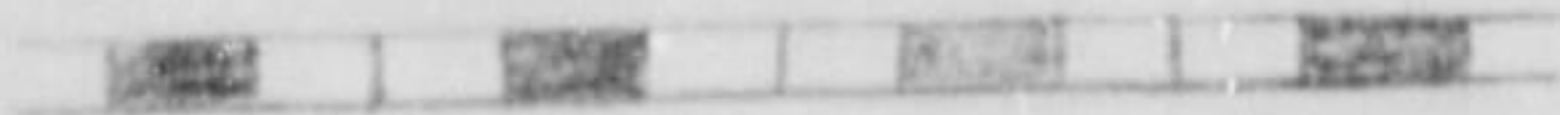

Translated: WDSS
Historical Division
11 December 1947: W.B.

S K E T C H

Main railroad net in northern and central Italy.

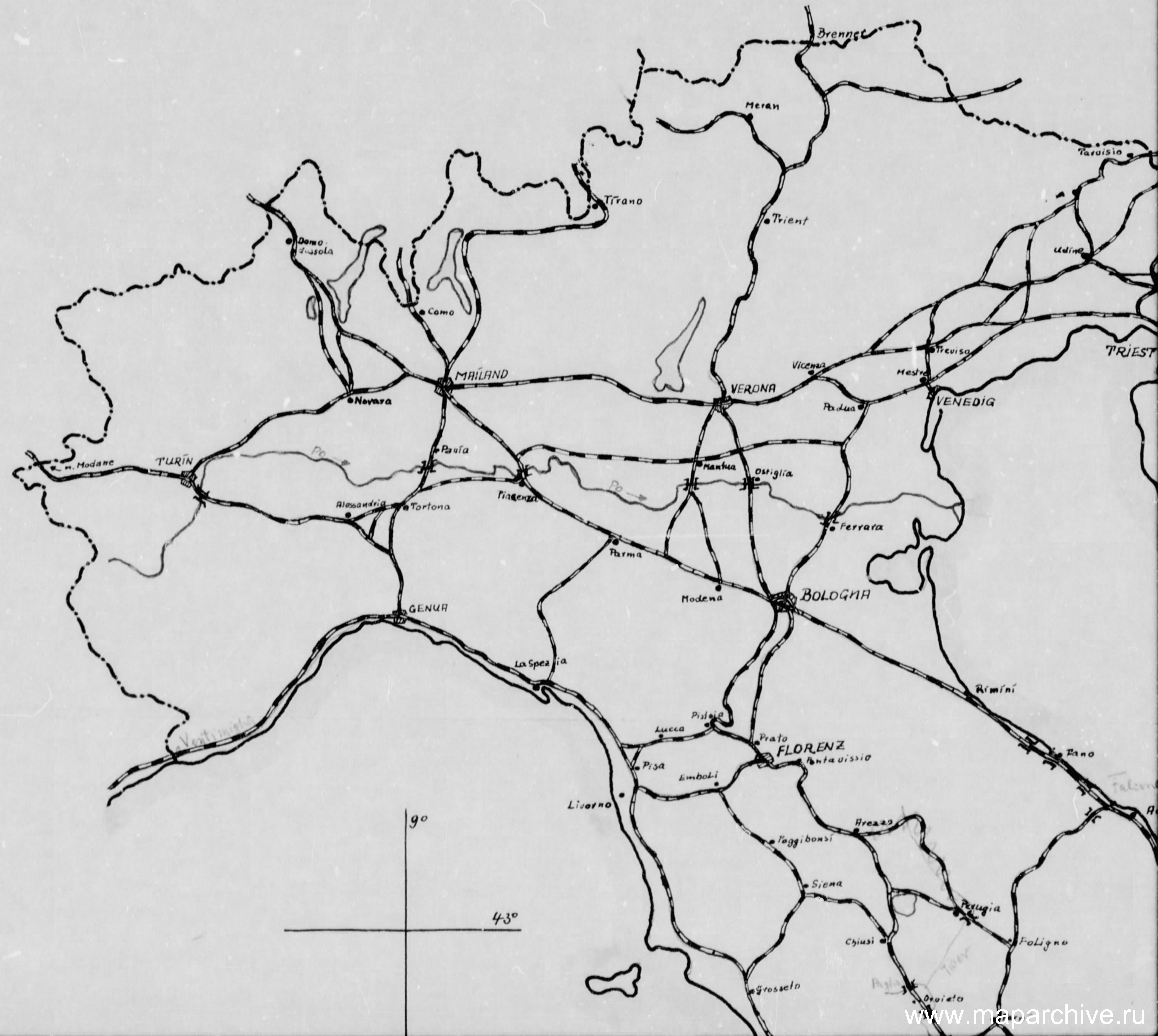
Map used: 1:2 000 000 Air -navigation map "Central Mediterranean."

Explanations:

-  section with several tracks
-  section with single track

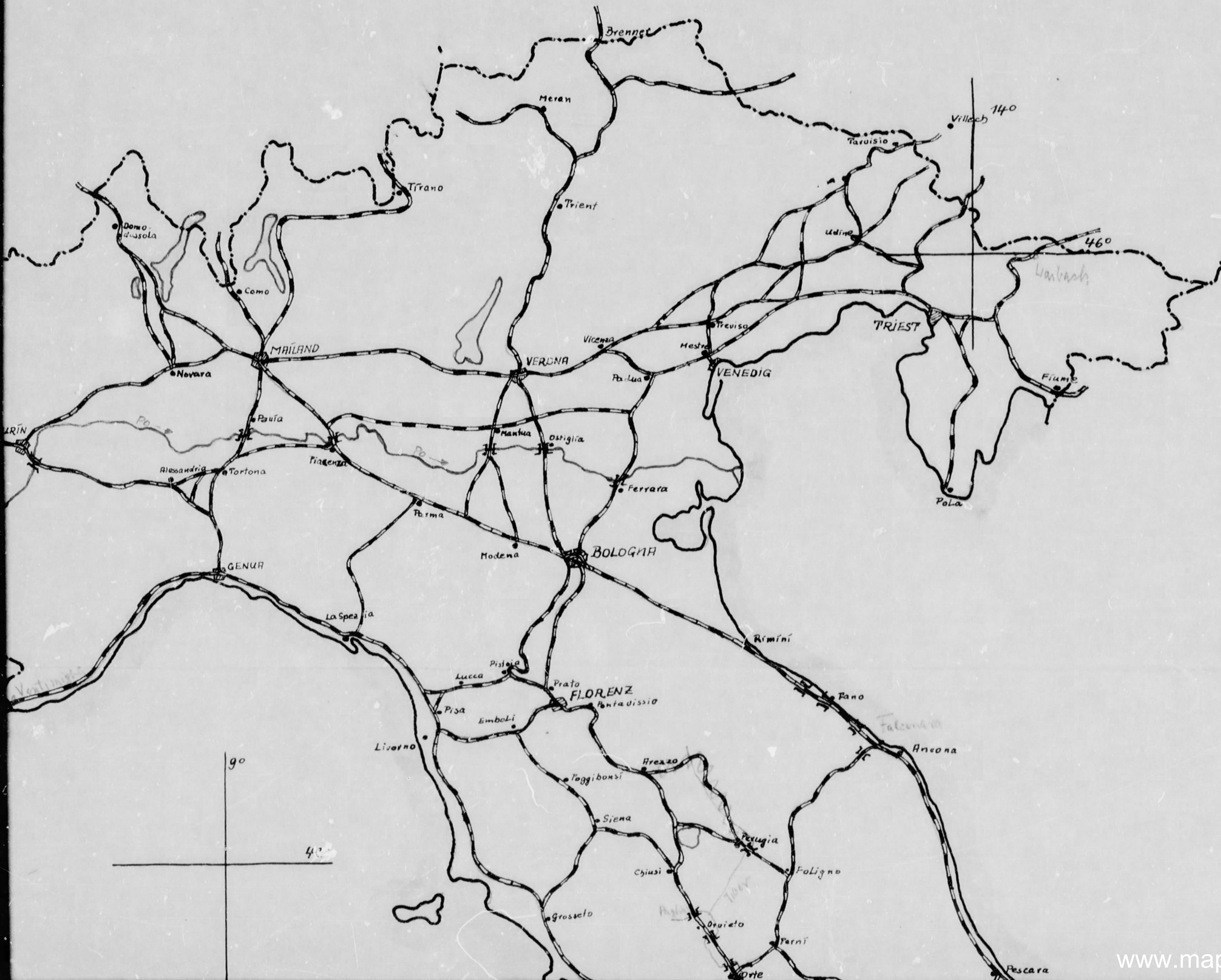
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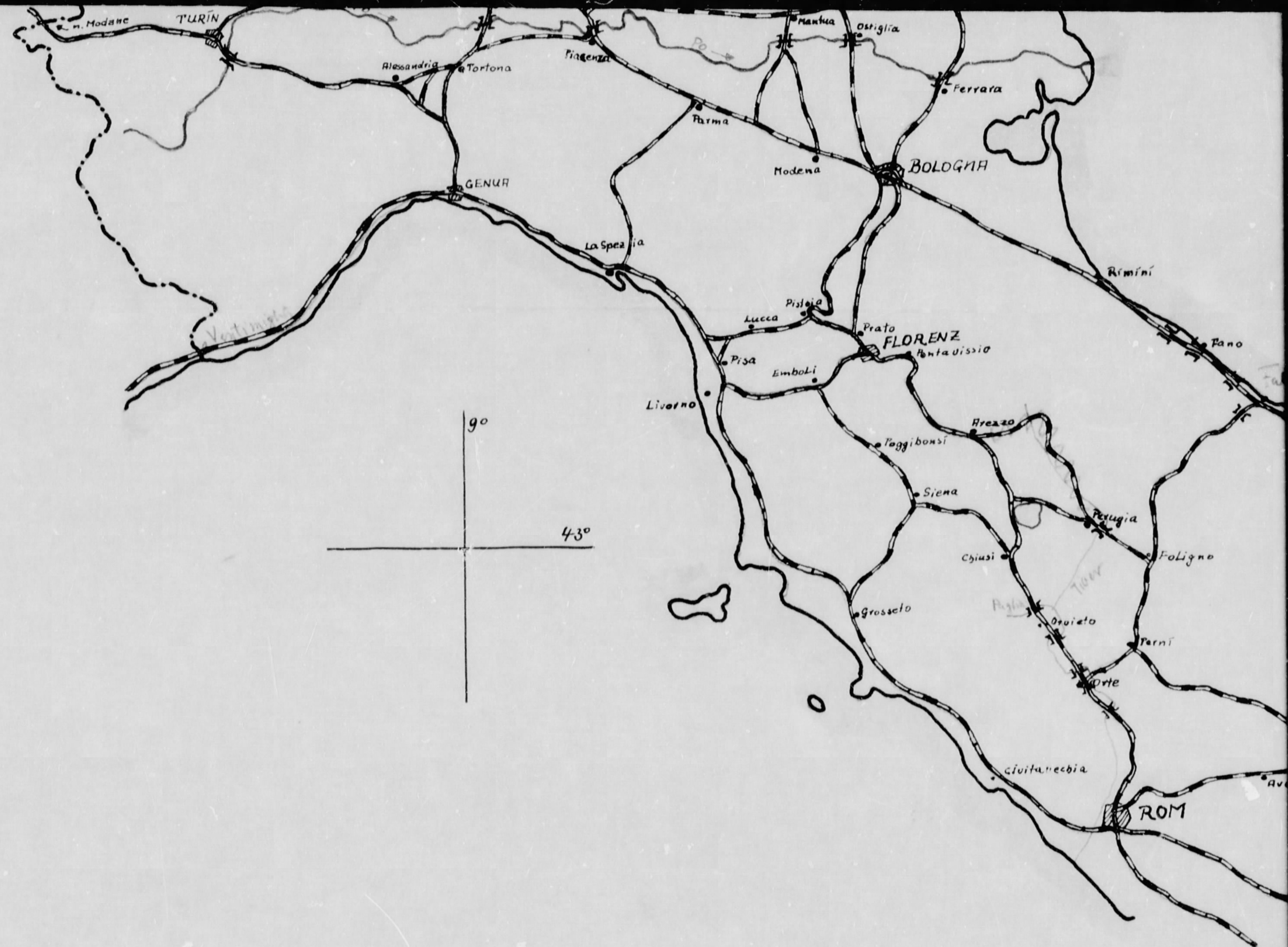
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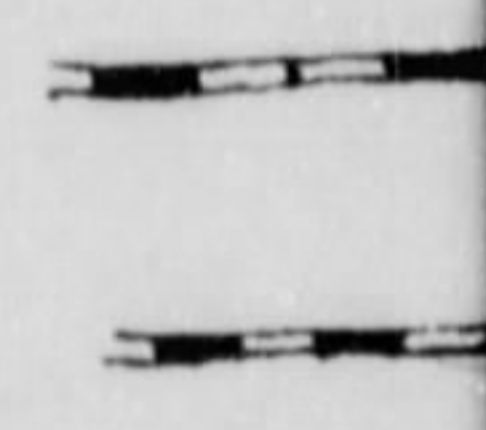
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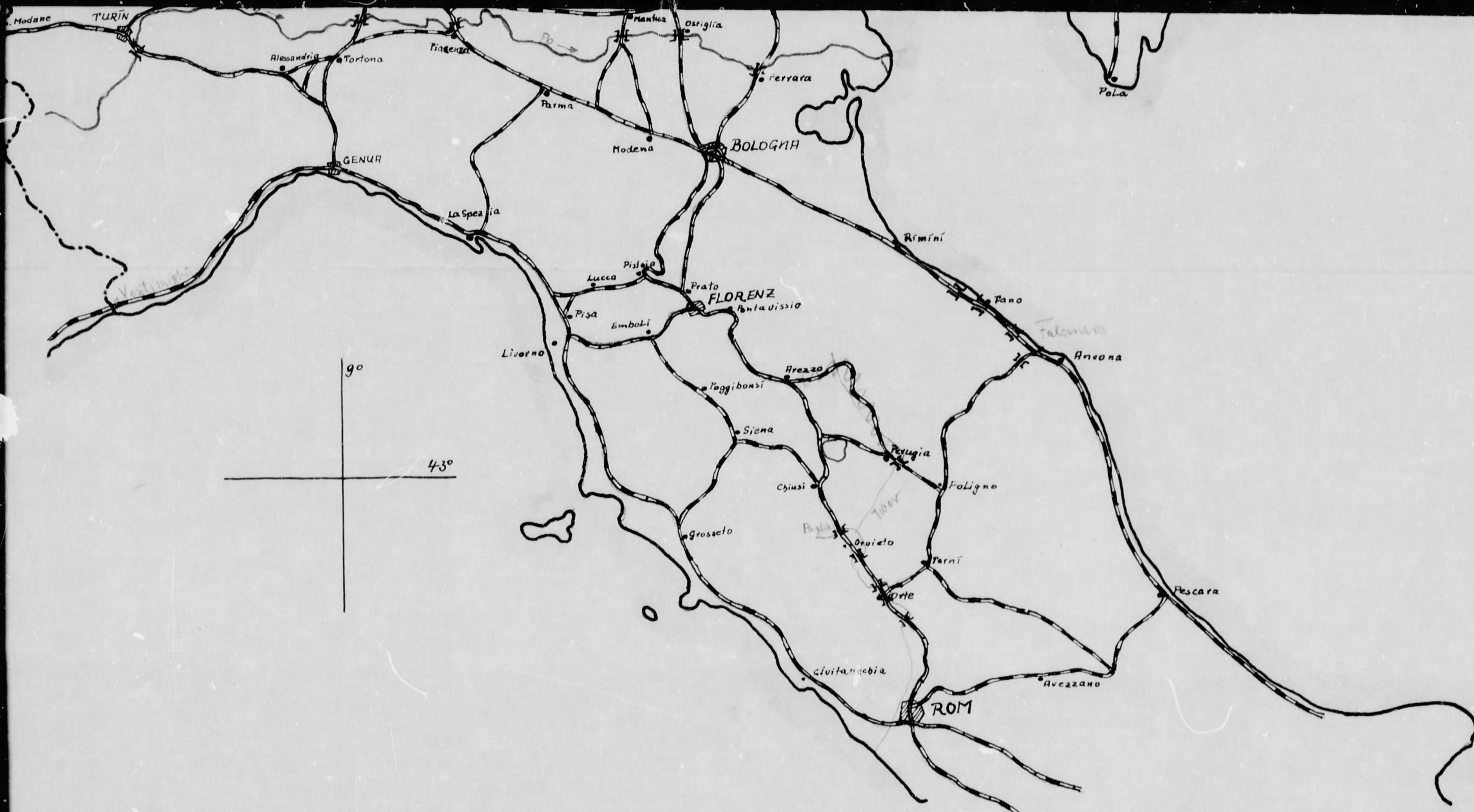
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Erläuterungen:





Erläuterungen:

-  mehrgleisige Bahn
-  eingleisige Bahn