

SALA DX

The Republic of Ossola

The Republic of Ossola was established in September 1944, during the German occupation. It encompassed all the Ossola valleys, extending as far as Mergozzo, Ornavasso, and the Cannobina valley leading to Lake Maggiore.

On September 9, a temporary government board was formed, which was led by Professor Ettore Tibaldi. This board oversaw the administration of government, finance, justice, transportation, welfare, and education within the liberated area.

During its brief existence of approximately 40 days, the temporary government board ensured the continuation of civil administration in the liberated region.

In September 1945, the Republic of Ossola was one of the first territories to be awarded the Gold Medal for Military Valor, in recognition of its courageous resistance during the occupation.

PANNELLO N 1

June 1944

The tragic march of the 43 partisan prisoners, captured during the Valgrande sweep in June 1944, ended with their execution at Fondotoce.

In June 1944, a tragic event unfolded as captured partisans were marched to Fondotoce to be executed. They had been apprehended during a raid in Valgrande earlier that month.

In June 1944, the Nazi-Fascists launched a heavy attack on the partisan militias in the Lake Maggiore and Ossola regions, which were regarded as strategic territories. The "Valdossola," "Giovane Italia," and "Cesare Battista" brigades bore the brunt of the attacks across the vast alpine expanse of Valgrande. The raids, carried out with particular cruelty and significant military force, ended by the month's close with a large number of casualties, at least 250.

Not only partisans, but also civilians in the alpine areas were killed. Others, after being apprehended, were shot in the villages at the valley's base, while some were taken to Germany.

The image depicts the horrific scene of the march between Intra and Fondotoce, which the Nazi-Fascists had orchestrated to terrorize the population. Miraculously, one of the executed partisans managed to survive.

Today, a memorial monument stands at the site of the massacre, located in an area known as the "Park of Memory and Peace." Additionally, the "House of the Resistance," a cultural and hospitality center that hosts thousands of visitors, can be found on the premises.

PANNELLO 2

The Gallows of Cannobio

On August 26, 1944, gallows were raised in Cannobio as retaliation for the partisan resistance activities.

Despite the severe blow dealt to the partisan brigades in June 1944, the resistance movement soon regrouped and resumed military operations against the occupying forces.

Two military reprisals followed these actions, one led by Captain Hans Clemens of the SS-Polizei, which began with the arrest of dozens of hostages who were later sent to Germany. Clemens had previously been one of the leaders responsible for the raid in Rome following the Via Rasella attack in March 1943.

Other clashes and casualties occurred in Anzola d'Ossola, Alp Grandi, and Premosello Chiovenda. Fortunately, the gallows were not used, but they remained a tangible threat to both resistance fighters and citizens.

Nevertheless, on September 2, units of the "Piave" division liberated Cannobio. Emboldened by this success, partisans went to the Cannobina and Vigizzo valleys, forcing the local neo-Fascist outpost in Masera to surrender.

The few remaining partisans in Cannobio were immediately attacked from the lake and forced to leave the town. Eight partisans died in the ensuing skirmish.

PANNELLO 3

The Partisan Offensive

In July 1994, a partisan sabotage operation led to the derailment of trains on the Sempione railway near Cuzzago.

The summer of that year had brought hope for a swift end to the war, with the Allies emerging victorious in the East, South, and in France. However, this period also saw an intensification of partisan activity across the region, marked by swift attacks on garrisons, sabotage of communication lines, and numerous skirmishes.

These events instilled a sense of helplessness and defeat in both the occupying forces (especially after the failed attack by Hitler) and the Fascists, which their propaganda could not conceal. Many Czechoslovakians and Georgians joined the partisan ranks.

While the entire Valsesia region was liberated for nearly a month in June, the fortified positions came under heavy attack in August, resulting in the gradual liberation of the Anzasca, Antrona, Bognanco, and Divedro valleys by the "Garibaldi" formations. The offensive reached its peak in September 1944, with the victorious attack by units of the autonomous "Valtoce" and "Valdossola" divisions on the fortified garrison in Piedimulera, effectively blocking the road to Domodossola.

Whereas these initiatives were conducted in an uncoordinated manner and with a certain overestimation of the partisans' actual strength, at one point the entire valley had effectively fallen under partisan control.

PANNELLO 4

The Liberation of Domodossola

In the early hours of September 9, 1944, a partisan force approached Domodossola from the south.

On that day, the "Garibaldini" partisans entered Villadossola, while during the night, Alfredo di Dio, the commander of the Valtoce partisan unit, and Dionigi Superti, the commander of the Valdossola partisans, negotiated the surrender of the town. The intermediaries were Domodossola's parish priest, Don Luigi Pellanda, and Don Baldoni from Masera.

The surrender of over 600 German garrison soldiers culminated in the rise to power of partisan colonel Attilio Moneta as the plenipotentiary authority. This was the logical conclusion of an untenable situation, both from a military and psychological perspective. The news of the surrender and the withdrawal of the Nazi-Fascists, who had been advancing down the Simplon Pass, filled the population with euphoria as they welcomed the first partisan force. The town squares were crowded with people, while the military command hung a poster announcing the liberation of Ossola.

The terms of the surrender, however, ultimately worked to the detriment of the "Garibaldini" formations, which led to arguments among the various partisan factions.

PANNELLO 5

The Battle of Gravellona Toce

The Russian Alexander Jkaciov who fought against Ossola partisans.

The battle of Gravellona Toce, which took place between September 11 and 13, serves as a clear example of the negative consequences resulting from a lack of coordination among partisan formations. The Russian Alexander Jkaciov fought alongside the Ossola partisans in this capacity.

The capture of this strategically important junction, connecting the Cusio, Ossola, and Verbano regions, would have provided far safer borders for the recently liberated area, as in Cannobio. However, the uncoordinated and poorly executed attack by the "Redi" "Garibaldini" partisans, a group that included Georgians, as well as the "Beltrami," "Valdossola," and "Valtoce" partisans, proved ineffective against the Nazi-Fascist stronghold where some of the withdrawn troops from Ossola had gathered.

The battle resulted in the tragic loss of 29 partisans and 5 civilians, with numerous others wounded. This engagement also highlighted the crucial contribution of numerous foreign fighters, many of them Georgians, who were part of the Ossola partisan formations. Many of these brave individuals are still commemorated by the monument located in the "Park of Memory and Peace" in Fondotoce.