

*Claudio Sommaruga **
THE "OTHER RESISTANCE"

Grandparents only have a past with generational “values” of Country, Family, God and ethics... But when I see in schools (books *inserted*) the ordeals suffered by my grandparents, (I would say that *inserted*) the “volunteers” in the camps also left their grandchildren freedom and democracy; I see the boys; my grandchildren, that they are moved, when they see in me, a grandfather who tells a sad but true story with a moral: *"Once upon a time there was a king ... or rather, no ... the king ran away ... And there was an Ogre ... but there wasn't the Blue Fairy! "*

* * *

Alessandro Natta¹, my Lager companion made the PCI leader after Berlinguer², had headed his diary (Einaudi, 1997) “*The other resistance*”, that in the concentration camps, that of the “NO” statement to the political, military and civil pressure from Hitler and Mussolini, when on “September 8, 1943” 700,000 of our soldiers loyally chose the path of exile and away from home!

One day I invited Montanelli, a critic of Italians as being carefree, pasta makers, mandolinists, etc. to reflect on those illiterate shepherds of Sila and Aspromonte, of the Madonna adherents and from Barbagia (inserted-geographical and cultural area of Sardinia), customary an kowtowing “yes sir” to barons, bosses, sergeants and colonels, but who said “NO” to the Nazis! Evidently in our DNA there are hidden skills that make me proud to be Italian!

Indro Montanelli https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indro_Montanelli

¹ Alessandro Natta (7 January 1918 – 23 May 2001), was an Italian politician and secretary of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) from 1984 to 1988

² W: JFS note: Enrico Berlinguer was an Italian politician. Considered the most popular leader of the Italian Communist Party which he led as the national secretary from 197

MOTIVAZIONE

MEDAGLIA D'ORO V.M. all'INTERNATO IGNOTO

(concessa "motu proprio" dal Capo dello Stato)

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MILITARE FATTO PRIGIONIERO
O CIVILE PERSEGUITATO PER RAGIONI POLITICHE O RAZZIALI,

INTERNATO
IN CAMPI DI CONCENTRAMENTO IN CONDIZIONI DI VITA INUMANE,

SOTTOPOSTO A TORTURE
DI OGNI SORTA,
A LUSINGHE PER CONVINCERLO A COLLABORARE CON IL NEMICO,

NON CEDETTE MAI,
NON EBBE INCERTEZZE,
NON SCESE A COMPROMESSO ALCUNO,
PER RIMANERE **FEDELE ALL' ONORE** MILITARE E DI UOMO,

SCELSE EROICAMENTE
LA TERRIBILE **LENTA AGONIA** DI FAME, DI STENTI,
DI INENARRABILI SOFFERENZE FISICHE E SOPRATTUTTO MORALI.

MAI VINTO
E SEMPRE CORAGGIOSAMENTE DETERMINATO,
NON VENNE MENO AI SUOI DOVERI

NELLA CONSAPEVOLEZZA
CHE SOLO COSI' LA SUA **PATRIA**, UN GIORNO,
AVREBBE RIACQUISTATO LA PROPRIA DIGNITA' DI NAZIONE LIBERA.

A MEMORIA DI TUTTI GLI INTERNATI
IL CUI NOME SI E' DISSOLTO,

MA IL CUI VALORE ANCOR OGGI
E' ESEMPIO E REDENZIONE PER L' ITALIA

(13 settembre 1998)

MOTIVAZIONE

GOLD MEDAL V.M. TO THE UNKNOWN INTERNEE

MILITARY PRISONER
OR CIVIL PERSECUTED FOR POLITICAL OR RACIAL REASONS,

INTERNEE
IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN UNHUMAN LIVING CONDITIONS,

SUBJECT TO TORTURE
OF EVERY SORT
FLATTERY TO CONVINCHE HIM TO COLLABORATE WITH THE
ENEMY,

NEVER GIVING IN,
HAD NO UNCERTAINTIES,
DID NOT COMPROMISE ANYONE,
TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO MILITARY AND HONOUR OF MAN,

CHOSE HEROICALLY
THE TERRIBLE SLOW AGONY OF HUNGER, OF HARDSHIP,
UNSPEAKABLE SUFFERING AND ABOVE ALL MORALS.

NEVER BEATEN
AND ALWAYS COURAGEOUSLY DETERMINED, HE WOULD NOT
FAIL HIS DUTIES

IN THE AWARENESS
THAT ONLY THIS THAT ONE DAY.HIS HOMELAND WOULD HAVE
RETURNED ITS DIGNITY OF A FREE NATION

IN MEMORY OF ALL THE INTERNEES
WHOSE NAME HAS DISSOLVED,
BUT THE VALUE OF WHICH STILL TODAY IS AN EXAMPLE AND
REDEMPTION FOR ITALY

Figure 1 Gold Medal of Honour for the Unknown Internee

THE BACKGROUND

On 8 September, in a single day, the Italians lost two wars against everyone, enemies, friends and friends and enemies. The Germans disarmed [*the figures rounded up to orders of magnitude*] of the 1,000,000 soldiers, 800,000 were captured, they interned 700,000 in the Lagers which in **twenty months** numbers were reduced, due to violence, to 600,000, including 50,000 dead in addition to the 30,000 of the first armed resistance, to the 35,000 political deportees disappeared in the concentration camps (mostly partisans, military, former IMI) **with 8000 Jews** and at least **20,000 soldiers killed in the Balkans, "badoglian" allied of the Titoites or directly enlisted in the partisans Slavs and Greeks!**

By the 8 September, **with an army abandoned to German fury without orders and support neither from the king nor from the fleeing General Staff, on their own initiatives our soldiers a desperate resistance exploded in 13 main battle theaters, from Corsica to Rome, Kefalonia and Corfu, the Aegean, Greece and the Balkans,**

From **the Nazi side, in parallel by force and deception, capture took place.** Transportation to Germany was foremost in the Nazi's mind. Our army which is not in any way collaborative and in most cases duped that it would be sent home! Their fate was not to be those as "*prisoners of war*" (PDG, POW, KGF) not to be assisted by the International Red Cross (ICRC) and not be protected by a neutral country, but as "*Italian military internees*" (IMI) labour slaves without any protections.

Hitler did not recognize the Kingdom of Southern Italy either as being under allied control, nor as a belligerent state (not even after the declaration of war on **10 October**) The IMIs were falsely considered "*deserters from Badoglio and were still Mussolini's soldiers awaiting redeployment*" (sic!) At first the Germans coerced them to enlist in the foreign division of the Waffen SS or in the "*auxiliary*" workers of the Wehrmacht (autumn '43), then in the Graziani divisions of the RSI (winter-spring '44). The soldiers were forced to work under armed guard. (Officers forcefully "invited" to voluntary civilian work!). Finally, from summer '44, like it or not, IMIs were made "*civilians*" by order as voluntary (but obliged!) "freed workers" in the Reich's war economy or, alternatively, militarized "in the battalions of that genius head of all of the air force (Luftwaffe).

THE "VIA CRUCIS" OF THE LAGERS

I summarize the labour of the IMI, known from the mostly late testimonies of veterans, from the best sellers by **Guareschi**³ and recent essays by a few historians and journalists, but with some growing interest editorial today.

The Lagers: like boxes of mud with an opaque lid of clouds, late dawns not followed by a sun early grey sunsets and sleepless, interminable, lightless nights on hard, cold and haunted beds parasites ...

Winter temperatures with peaks even below -15 °C, even down to -30!. Dilapidated shacks with piled up from 50 to 200 bodies, heated to human heat and from some small stove half off peat and perhaps with icicles with bumpy roofs.

³ Giovannino Oliviero Giuseppe Guareschi (Italian;; 1 May 1908 – 22 July 1968) was an Italian journalist, cartoonist and humourist whose best known creation is the priest Don Camillo.

A biblical hunger: Tonino Guerra⁴, the great scenographer, summarized it in one sentence: *< I felt free when I saw a butterfly fly and I didn't want to eat it! >* The alimentary daily diet deficit exceeded 800/1000 kcal (of the 2000/3000 metabolism of a required by a worker) with the consequence of a " *self cannibalism* " of their muscles and fats and weight loss an- that of over 30 kilos; life expectancy was reduced to a few months, less than stealing potatoes, scratching in the kitchen waste, picking grass, fortunately receive some packages from home (only those from the north Italy and on average less than one each in twenty months!), A few crackers and a handful of rice from the propaganda fascist and finally selling off to the guards, on a black market, the last personal effects not requisitioned (boots, watch, medal ...) until someone collapsed and adhered: " *either I betray and eat with remorse, or fast and I die a suicide martyr!* " : the ethical dilemma of, " *better a living man or a dead hero?* " that puts in crisis the sense of duty of the soldier and the commander! Then there were the diseases (nearly 25,000 deaths): TB, petechial typhus, heart attack, dysentery, starvation ...) with rare hospital trains for Italy, but counterproductive cents for propaganda, and finally there were also collective violence, massacres and " *death marches* " final so as not to leave witnesses to the liberators, but fortunately limited by the precipitous end of the war.

THE " OTHER " RESISTANCE " (" without weapons ", " silent " ...).

In the extermination camps (KZ), political and racial deportees (mostly partisans captured without arms), they had no choices to make, but IMIs were instead subjected to a continuous choice (particularly officers), a catchphrase worse than hunger, like 20 months or 600 days or 50 million of seconds of opportunity to free oneself because at any moment it was possible, with a signature to Hitler and Mussolini, leave behind fences, hunger, disease, violence, deprivation of liberty,

Naïveté

⁴ Antonio "Tonino" Guerra (16 March 1920 – 21 March 2012) was an Italian poet, writer and screenwriter who collaborated with some of the most prominent film directors in the world.

Died: 21 March 2012 (aged 92); Santarcangelo ...

Born: Antonio Guerra; 16 March 1920; Santarc...

The passive resistance of the IMI manifested itself in the lack of political, armed and civil support for Hitler and Mussolini, with the costs of maintenance, lodging and custody (some tens of thousands of stolen soldiers at the fronts), with low labour productivity, by will and starvation (70 to 30% of a German worker) and finally by a multitude of small exasperated sabotages! The officers were soon separated from the troop, the personnel from the reserve, the elders (over 35 years) by young people, so that one would not influence the other not to collaborate. But it occurred there is also the opposite, of elderly people, who ended up "oberto collo" to collaborate and of young reluctant to the bitter end! Like my group of 370 junior second lieutenants, (classes '20 and '21), mostly of Oflager 6 of Oberlangen⁵, who after months of refusal to work, on 20 July 1944 were sentenced to forced labor in a war factory as political deportees "enemies of Europe", in the Straflager / AEL of Cologne, managed by the Gestapo with Wehrmacht custody and dependent on the KZ / SS of elimination of Buchenwald! On August 25th we mutinied (the military strike also punishable by death and chance perhaps unique in the historiography of the camps) out of solidarity with two colleagues in a prison cell for days, for reluctance to work, without blanket, bread, water and poor ventilation! Line up for two hours with his arms raised and numb, but without giving way, in front of an armed platoon commanded by a sergeant- wild people (war invalid with prosthetic skull eye, hand and leg) whilst our confidant - trustee, Paolo Desana (future senator in Italy) and his assistant Stella dug their own grave. The next day the sergeant was put under arrest for not ordering to fire! In that factory one evening, at the end of the shift, a friend of mine peed on a switched off electric motor, which when short by blocking the chain of work for hours: one of our many little exasperated acts of sabotage

THE LEGACY OF IMI

The history of the IMI, "volunteers" in the concentration camps, was culpably destroyed after the war by the "reason for state", ignored by people, the media and schools, and neglected until 1984 by historians! At the presentation of a book of mine to the Senate in 1992, sen. Boldrini, president of the former partisan, made a reflection: "if the 700,000 "NO" of IMI had been as many "YES", to join with the army (RSI inserted) , what story would be written? The war would certainly have been won by the Allies, but when and at what price, with a Hitler in the race for the heavy water atomic bomb and with avant-garde missiles and V2?

It was Boldrini again who said that it appeared to him that the first articles of our Constitution had been born in the camps and I confirmed it. We reluctant officers at work had time to think and held in the camps of secret political round tables, with the post at the door. I remember the Christian Lazzati, the Communist Natta, the monarchist Guareschi and others with shareholder, republican or liberal tendencies: if however we had returned home one day, which Italy we would have found, probably republican and with which democratic constitution? And Lazzati was one of our "constitutional fathers"! In the camps, from the contact between prisoners of 28 nations, the united spirit of the UN and committee of Europe!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Lazzati

⁵ Stalag VI-C was a World War II German POW camp located 6 km west of the village Oberlangen in Emsland in north-western Germany

In the hut we made self-criticism of the "twenty somethings", of us former young fascists plagiarised and deceived and especially by our parents! It was then that we invented democracy to govern ourselves and from then on did we understand the insult of fascism . For 20 years they had forbidden us kids to think with the mind: parents and confessors, teachers and professors, hierarchal, colonels all thought (and would be wrong!) "*the Duce, Founder of the Empire!*" and sinker of Italy! But on 8 September, one by one, alone before God, Hitler and our conscience, without parties, colonels and suggestions, we had to think for ourselves. They had taught us the "values" and we applied them, faithful to the oath to our Army. The country was not broken but the state and fascist rhetoric to the fatherland was the reason for making mothers, and girlfriends cry, we imagined an ideal homeland pruned from fascists, a large "*family of families*" to be our preference for which a young soldier he could even die for... and it was the cross of our ordeal in the Lagers! But then we were creative young people, generous and impulsive.... Our average age was no more than 23!

A DEEP STORY!

Why the silence about IMIs, for whom even Mussolini acknowledged, there were also at least 7 million relatives and friends emotionally involved in Italy?

The answer is simple: we were heartburn at all! Coming home we didn't feel like heroes, there were exceptions and we were the masses, but we were proud of the duty performed at human limits ... and the State welcomed us with apprehension, distrust and indifference. Who we were? And whether Nazis, Republicans and the Red Army had brainwashed us?

For the government, mindful of the veterans of the Great War protagonists of the march on Rome and of the taking Fiume, we represented a political and demanding unknown. For the monarchy we were the embarrassing and resentful witnesses to such a poorly managed "September 8"! To the boys of Salò we were the traitors. For the armed and mostly republican "Resistance", we were true brothers of the "other." resistance ", but much more numerous and we could also have cast a shadow and then we were the wrecks of a monarchist army, runaways from the fascist wars, although it (monarchist army *inserted*) redeemed itself on 8 September by triggering the training the first civilian partisans! Then there was the amorphous mass of "*attendisti* –*hangers o* " as winners of the end of the bombings and ration cards, they were mostly those of the "*non-choice*" ahead of us to face choice!

Traumatized by the camps, disappointed by indifference and perhaps ashamed of the NO as of an intemperance of young people and many also volunteers in civil work, 90% of IMIs did not enrol in veterans associations, (the IMI *inserted*) closed himself off, even within the family and cleansed the trauma of the Lager like a narcotic, unfortunately to the point that the overall circulation of books concerning IMIs (except for the best sellers by Guareschi read mainly by non-internees) to this day equals the number of veterans, but like the classic half a chicken per head, there are those who get to eat one whole and those who eat nothing!

But above all there was the "cold war, woe to those that evoke the crimes of a Germany now a partner in Europe and in NATO. So for decades governments locked up the military and civil massacres, the slaughter of Kefalonia and the "other" resistance in the "closet of shame" and in inaccessible archives just like the tragedies of the Shoah

(Holocaust Italy implicated?) . Like the Balkan epic of 50,000 of our soldiers (with 20,000 fallen) that after 8 September they did not surrender to the Germans, 33,000 enlisted (in units or singles) in the local partisan formations and 17,000 of the "*Regia Divisione. "Garibaldi"*"Partisans and the "*Italy*" Brigade (together with 12,000 fallen) in contact and resupplied by Badoglio, but of which we do not want to speak because they became allied to the communist Tito: but then were not Roosevelt and Churchill allied to the Communist Stalin? Worthy of the tradition of the "Garibaldini of Argonne" and today followers of the history of the "Association Garibaldi", whoever remembers them, in institutions, media, people and school?

<https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/volontari-garibaldini-nelle-argonne-52-organizzazione>

There is no Italian institutional archive of IMI, not even at the historical office of the Ministry of Defence, but at the FAST in Berlin there are 375,000 IMI cards ignored by the institutions and by our own historians and to say that it would be enough to duplicate them and it would be a nice gesture, the first, of Germany towards IMI!

AFTER THE DAMAGE THE MOCKERY!

After slavery, the mockery of IMI, too numerous and excluded from compensation for suffering e free labour for the German war economy! So in 1960/63, 1981 and 2001/5 when he came- only a few thousand living civil deportees were compensated by the Germans or Italians, but with the specious exclusion of IMI! But for consolation, the Italian state belatedly granted them e "*oborto collo*" a "*VM Gold Medal*" to the "*Unknown Internee*" buried in Padua and then, to the ever fewer living IMIs, a "*Cross of Merit of War*", paper diplomas of "*Patriot*", "*Combattant*" and "*Volunteer of Freedom*", and now in an attempt to mute dissent, a "*Medal of Honour*" to relieve their conscience. But how many Milanese, people in authority and citizens, know that the remains of a first "*Unknown Internee*" are in Milan, in the Civic Citadel of San Sebastiano buried since 1951 remembered only by veterans and now for a few years by Municipality of Milan who is the director of the depositary?

The Italian courts go condemning Germany for compensation to the victims and to back-pay salary for the free labour by "Hitler's slaves" which, however, the governments of Merkel and Berlusconi did not give recognition to; - they do not wish to create precedents for any compensation for their own colonial crimes war that may eventually be made!

But, "*dulcis in fundo*", a bipartisan Italian-German Historical Commission has recently been established, a "*you poor things ... you have suffered ... but we have not forgotten you: in 2012 we will tell your story!*" Maybe shared with compromises ... However we IMIs will by now almost all be in the clouds with our passing, the true guilty buried by the Italians and Germans and any future bipartisan we would have preferred the apologies that were never received from Germany and Italy and neither copies of the German IMI archives! But apologies involve acknowledgments of guilt and consequent reparation; that never will be, a snake eating its own tail!

A BITTER REFLECTION!

There are official days more or less dedicated nearly everyone, events for famous people, saints and categories but there is no remembrance day dedicated to IMIs, hosted here and there, perhaps on January 27th of the Shoah (we IMI of the "other" Lager), on 25 April

day of the Liberation and on 8 September the beginning of Resistance (we IMI, of the "other" resistance). Yet the 700,000 Italian soldiers of the "NO!" (first fighters and IMI) with their 700,000 "NO!" they discard the Resistance and the **gestation** of a free, democratic, republican and European Italy!

Memories in no particular order!

Nothing is more embarrassing than talking about yourself without false modesty, silence and boasting and, in the my case, stumbling upon memories that still disturb me, so that the scars of the veterans never quite heal!

My CV of Italian Military Internship (IMI) is unusual: compared to that of most of IMI: in fact I am one of those who suffered more Nazi concentration camps and places of detention (14!) straight with three releases and because I am one of the few IMI to have also been *political civil deportee*! All recorded in a clandestine diary, 60 letters from the camps and 60 poems as virtual escapes (cf. *C. Sommaruga, NO!*, ANRP, Rome, 2001)!

But my story is a bad tale that of a grandfather has the duty to tell and grandchildren have a right to know: *Once upon a time there was a king ... no ... the king had escaped! And there was the bad orc... but not there was the Blue Fairy!*

BACKGROUND: THE "TWENTY YEARS"!

Born in 1920, raised as a battery chicken in the fascist school from kindergarten to **engineering graduate**, programmed for the war as leader of the **"avant-garde sailors"** for 3 years of *"pre-military"*, 6 high school and university exams of *"military culture"* and then the and the Officers School. Promoted S. Lieutenant. of Artillery on 5 September 1943, three days later, still without a weapon and oath, **I lost two wars against enemies now friends and friends now enemies!**

Indoctrinated with the *"prompt and absolute blind obedience without asking why"* and with the "values" of *"Patria"*. *Family, God, Duty ...*, dispensed from thinking by parents, confessors, teachers, hierarchs, colonists and the Duce who thought (and was wrong!) for everyone, *"founder of the Empire"* and sinker of Italy! **The regime indoctrinated us with war games, shotguns and uniforms, with sport from literal to the patent athletic.** *conditio sine qua non* to enrol in the Polytechnic in 1938 and then, practicing a sport in order to take the engineering exams (sic!): in my case *"cyclist racer"*, already put on the saddle at 14 years old by none other than the **legendary Alfredo Binda**, with a pat on the back and a *"Boy go! And win !"*

Back then it was easy to **indoctrinate** ourselves, first in the world in sports, with champion cyclists like Girardengo and Binda, with two world football championships (and the legendary Meazza), with Olympians, motorcycles (Gilera, Guzzi ...) and racing cars (Alfa Romeo, Maserati, the "Scuderia Ferrari" and the myths Nuvolari, Varzi ...), even the French Bugatti was the creation of an Italian! The baptism of the air was given to me twice as a gift at 16 years of age on a tandem two-seater biplane, perhaps from the Great War, me in front with headphones, goggles and scarf. (I felt like a Baracca or a "Red Baron"!)

These were the years of Nobile's polar airships, intercontinental raids of De Pinedo, Ferrarin, of the great ocean crossings of Balbo, the first in training with Savoia Marchetti seaplanes and speed records for seaplanes, still unbeaten ti, by Macchi, with De Bernardi and Agello!

And the war came, awaited and feared as in Buzzati's "*Desert of the Tartars*"! But it was a war of aggression in countries that were not wrong a hair and I saw comrades of the University Militiaria (MUVSN) leave voluntary and bold... and maybe return horizontal with a medal!

In 1942 I too went to war, although the only child of a widowed mother, but I soon realized, with anger, that Mussolini had deceived me and we would have lost the war with our few old weapons, muskets mod. 1891, Tripoli and French war guns of 1911 or war prey Skoda from 1917! Few of the novelties, such as the "*cingolette*" (we baptized "*sardine cans*"!) small semi-armoured and uncovered spiders, with anti-aircraft and machine gunner in view!

THE 45 DAYS OF BADOGLIO

On the morning of July 25, 1943, it was Sunday, at the Officers' School of Siena and the strange sayings and non-sayings by the chaplain and the colonel! Then in the afternoon the patrols prevented us from going into the city from the nice outing. At 7 pm, the patrol leader, who presided over the *Casa del Fascio* abandoned by the leaders fleeing with heaps of compromising photos torn or burned! Fascism followed by a fascist-like repressive military autocracy: parties and trade unions prohibited, racial laws are in force and the order (which we have disregarded!) to shoot on sight on the groups more than three people!

SEPTEMBER 8: "SEMBLANCE OF RESISTANCE" AND CHOICE!

At the end of July, the course ended no appointments but additional manoeuvres for the coastal defence of Grosseto, now a "war zone" after the Allied landing in Sicily. Meanwhile 19 divisions German brigades came through the Brenner Pass to control an unstable Italy. A German motorized unit shadowed even our manoeuvres! Then at the end of August a short leave and on September 5 appointment as officer: I hugged my mother and my "godmother", who according to the custom should have encouraged me and the regiment off to war to, brave and stiff in my flaming diagonal uniform!

But three days later, 8 September, in transit to Alessandria destined for the 121st Art. DF based at Grosseto, around 7 pm, I learned from the radio of the officers' mess, the armistice with the Allies and that we should defend ourselves from those who (unspecified) had attacked us! Officers poured into own compound in the city, I and two recent-appointed colleagues reached the "*Cento Cannoni*" barracks which also housed the detachments of two regiments (11th and 121st Art. DF). The next morning we were joined by the colonel and some officers that arrived at 7.30. I was on a lookout at a window while one of our truck went to the ammo dump to pick up, you never know, ammunition! I saw it pass later half an hour with our military as prisoners of the Germans in combat gear while a Panzer waited in front of the closed door of the barracks, with our sentry left forgotten in the sentry box. Stunned, I raised the alarm, the Colonel asked Rome for instructions and in plain language they replied "*enjoy yourselves... but without using weapons!*". But how, with kicks and punches on an armored car? Ultimatum of the Panzer: 10 minutes to surrender, then a blow opens the door! Behind we had positioned well on display a 75/27 without ammunition, just to psychologically block the Germans, but behind the carriage gate we hid one with a blank shot. The colonel thundered "fire" but the shot was wet and not "Boom!" he said "poof ..." while the colonel thundered "*We resisted! The honour of arms!*" and waved a white sheet! End of the farce!

The Germans immediately ordered us young officers to carry out public order service (OP) in city and then there was our first "NO!": but how, should we have shot the Italians? On about a hundred only one joined, while the **colonel** asked the German NCO to let him go home while we yelled at him "*Coward! Long live the king ! Long live Italy!*"

At night, 12 officers tried to escape from the garrison where they had locked us up and through the attics we reached the contiguous carabinieri barracks where a major threw us back and alerted Germans. **We ended up locked up in the "citadel" of Alexandria. On balance, 250 Germans had captured 5000 Italians!** Other NOs followed! and on September 13, with the deception of a luxurious troop carriers of first class, now German war prey, in three officers per compartment we left Alessandria for the unknown! **In the stations we threw tickets collected by pitiful women who then informed them our families with words of encouragement!**

On September 15 the troop carrier stopped at Tarvisio, I heard cannon shots, they were the last Guards at the **Frontier that still resisted, then we were ashamed of our farce of resistance!** \

Then, hardly in Austria, the brutal reality: in the stations they humiliated us to bodily needs with the backside addressed to civilians and the boys threw stones insulting us with a **Bado g lio with a hard " g "!**

THE SHOCK OF THE LAGER!

On 18 September we are unloaded in **Bremervörde (Sandbosdtel)**, a sorting camp for 40,000 soldiers Italians and our first impact with the fence and with what awaited us: a malabolgia of damned depressed at **the news that in that camp 20,000 Russians had died shortly before of petechial typhus. Germans had deserted the camp, feeding it from outside with tosses of bread over the fences, with consequent consequences grabbing fights by the Russians, cannibalism, bonfires of inseparable corpses.** The Germans believed that this gift of intimidating us with this dramatic welcome but after our new "NO!" We are moved to in Poland at the rear of the Russian front!

Five days under armed guard in 50 per cattle wagon, food for three and no water, defecate acrobatically (some even in their mess tins!) and five deaths dumped upon arrival in Poland at Czenstochowa (St 367). Locked in the " *Nordkaserne* " we find some Russian tankers and graduates in hollowed out in the underground hatches and the victims of refined humiliation that so I write down in my notes verbatim secrets:

<Denutrition - (food) less than half a ration - Walking on all fours licking the ground – Running throwing himself on the ground every two steps - Going around a German who was constantly moving, you know- always lute him in front - Kicks and blows - Dead>.

Our other NO! and we junior officers are transferred to Chelm St 319 / C, a rundown camp on the former Russian border, a relic of the Great War, inaccessible to the Red Cross and even to the Nazis the Russian "subhuman", but evidently suitable for us! The Lager, a box of mud with an opaque lid of clouds, endless sleepless nights, without light, on hard beds saturated with parasites. **Cold with peaks even below –15 ° C.** Ugly dilapidated shacks licants of human bodies, heated to human heat and a couple of semi-

extinguished stoves for little peat, icicles with bumpy roofs. No news from home, biblical hunger with a daily deficit of even 1000 kcal is the consequence of the " *self cannibalism* " of muscles and fats, with life expectancy of a few months without being able to steal potatoes, scratch around in kitchen waste, pick grass and selling off for bread, to the guards, the last non-requisite personal effects (boots, watch, medals- ta ...) until someone ended up collapsing and joining. " *Either I betray and eat with remorse, or I fast and die as a martyr!* ". The eternal dilemma, whether it is " *better a living man or a dead hero* " that undermines the meaning of duty! Then there were diseases (TB, petechial typhus, heart attack, dysentery, starvation ...) and violence also collective (*outdoor gymnastics in the snow!*) because classified as soldiers of Mussolini waiting for employment, at least as workers!

In Chelm, in October 1946, the Polish judiciary exhumed 3,122 military corpses of non-op- many, in a fir forest planted by the Nazis to mask the pits and renamed by the Poles " *the pan Italians !* ", including perhaps 400 officers from my camp: an unsolved enigma because, for " *reason of state* ", we must not recall the war crimes of Germany, now a partner in NATO and Europe! On 4 December, St. Barbara, in 64 first-nominated second lieutenants we secretly pronounced ours oath by officers, but which will then not be recognized in Italy because it was not pronounced to a "Co- unit commander "but only to a Major! Another 300 second lieutenants were sworn in secretly in the other camps! The Red Army is approaching and on January 19, 1944 they transferred us to the Ivangorod fort of Deblin, there will be 9000 interned officers, Others "NO!" and at the end of March, they transport us back to Germany, towards Dutch border intended for voluntary civilian work, which meant self-demilitarizing and becoming deserters of the Royal Army and collaborators of the enemy but with the mitigating circumstances of hunger, disease, violence and family problems!

IN THE "STRAFLAGER" OF COLOGNE

The Germans select the youngest, convinced that they would submit to work more easily of the elderly, but the opposite also occurs, elderly who end up collaborating and young people instead reluctant to the bitter end, Like the 370 second lieutenants (200 with the undersigned by Of 6 of Oberlangen) of the '20 and '21, transferred to St VI G in Duisdorf (Bonn) and sentenced on 20 July 1944 to forced labour in a war factory as political deportees " *enemies of Europe* ", in the Straflager / AEL in Cologne, with Gestapo custody, Wehrmacht custody and **Buchenwald** elimination KZ / SS dependency! There we mutinied (the military strike severely punished) in solidarity for two comrades held, for days in a prison cell, in the dark, without a blanket, bread and water and with little air flow! There they keep in formation for hours without giving in, even with their arms raised up to numbness in front of a platoon commanded by a mad sergeant (invalid with skull, eye, hand and leg prosthesis) while our trustee, Paolo **Desana** (future senator in Italy) and his assistant dig there the pit ! The sergeant then served a three-day arrest for not having ordered to "fire!" In that factory one evening, at the end of the shift, a companion of mine peed on an electric motor that was off, which was turned on again it shorted by blocking the chain of work: one of many symbolic but emblematic acts of sabotage of the "other resistance!" of IMI!

ILLUSION OF FREEDOM!

In September 1944 the Allies are 10 km from Cologne, where I am hospitalized by mistake in a civil hospital, in quarantine for real dysentery and simulated ailments. My mates on the 15th are cleared from the Straflager, as dangerous witnesses, with a "*death march*" with the SS in line not to leave alive in allied hands! Who collapses exhausted is loaded in turn by his companions on a cart, amidst the furious screams of the Germans, as on a "monatti's cart". Fortunately, in the end we don't know- they will be dead! In the evening, a bonfire will burn the Straflager documents to erase its existence! The next day, I find myself free in the hospital, in no man's land, between the Allies stranded in Aachen and the military Germans withdrew across the Rhine, then the SS recaptured me and I paradoxically fake sick (malaria!) between lazarettos and camps, always refusing to work. I travel 350 km in a month, on trucks and civil trains, with the personal escort of a soldier and once up to a marshal! What did it mean to have such special attention from the Nazis to a second lieutenant? As in all armies, there are always those who manage to avoid the front by applying bureaucracy!

WIETZENDORF AND MY 2nd and 3rd LIBERATION!

However, on 14 October 1944, considered recalcitrant by the Nazis, I crossed the gates of the Of 83 in Wietzendorf, marshalling yard for officers destined for work and where my comrades had preceded me in Cologne, no longer civilian deportees but reclassified IMI. But the other Italian officers thought me a voluntary worker, they isolate me in a shack of "traitors" and only after 10 days I was able to reunite with my of Cologne, Then for six months I managed not to be ordered to work, but I was wasting away to the point that in March '45 I crawled on all fours, in the counts I was supported by my companions who, unbeknownst to me, round up my ration at their expense in vain because the doctors were now giving me a few weeks of hope of life!

The allies advance and on 12 April the German command abandons us, entrusting us to 30 guards and one captain"! We stormed the French Red Cross warehouses and plunged into a continuous meal of 24 hours: "*I'm dying but with a full stomach !*", I said, what happened to two companions! Meanwhile, the tanks allies advance without firing so as not to hit us, then on the 16th a Canadian major declares us free, caught by a tricolor stitched up in the night from the shreds in which it was divided so that it did not fall into no enemy! But shortly after, the fanatical boys of the Hitlerjüngend win us back and hang the capi- German for not exterminating us, with the guards and the weapons of the camp, then they put on guns and bazooka to the barbed wire turning us into human guinea pigs! Finally, on the 22nd, with a 6-hour truce we can reach the Allies, but my liberation march is dramatic, I was sick and it lasted not 6 but 12 hours to cover, last of the column, 12 km: supported by Ezio Dall'Oro to whom I owe my life, two seconds each step... In the end I made it and it was my personal victory over the third big last definitive Reich!

"MOM RETURN!" AND THEREAFTER ...

After months of unnerving waiting on August 26, already reported missing in Italy, I hugged my mother, sister and godmother again, apologizing to them for making them cry for two years, but because of the teachings of my mom! I talked for half an hour and then was silent for 35 years, with everyone, in self-defence by trauma and disappointed. The comrades of the Poli, who were graduates from Salò, told me: "*Nice fool! If you signed eat, you did not get sick, you graduated, employed and married and if you really wanted you joined the partisans at last. But who made you do it?*". Could they be right?

Quarrel in the District: not having completed the six months of barracks provided for by the regulations for officers of first appointment, although with 29 months of **naia** and imprisonment, they want to keep me in the army to grade of sergeant! It's a stab! **Noise** and in the end the compromise: I will be "second lieutenant a life "but for 5 years available with the prohibition to move, work and marry without authorization e finally in 1950 they dismiss me, I get employed and I get married!

Then after 30 years, I retired, rediscovered our buried history and I dedicated myself to its recovery. however, a fight against windmills and to testify it in schools. But a story that I relive as though it was not mine but learned from a double of the same name because when we in the camps crossed the last gate with the body we left shreds of our soul snagged in the barbed wire!

* **Claudio Sommaruga** , born in 1920, S Lieutenant of Artillery, ex-IMI. 750/365 and former "civil political deportee" in 13 camps and one Straflager, with 12 NO to the Reich and CSR and 62 NO to civilian work in the Reich and a dishonorable trio for work., After the war, mining geologist on five continents, adjunct professor at 8 universities, geothermal expert mico international, CEE and UN, AGIP pioneer and Dean of Italian speleologists and geothermal energy in Italy and in the world.

Married for over 60 years with a son and grandchildren. After 35 years of removing the concentration camps, for 30 years it has historian of veterans' associations and witness of IMI. Your "IMI ARCHIVE" is being transferred to "Hitler's Slaves" Study Center, (Claudio Sommaruga Fund), of Cernobbio, of the ISC-Como. "Ventennio" - Born in 1920 (French mother), raised at the Fascist school from kindergarten to graduate of engineering gneria. Programmed for war: centurial leader of the "sailors-avant-gardists", "athletic patent" (1938), fencing, cycling, skiing, tennis, 6 high school and university exams of Military Culture, three years of pre-military, 4 years from "fascist university" of the GUF and 1 year of Officers School of Artillery. Mobilized on 1 August 1942, promoted on 5 September 1943 S. Lieutenant Mountain Artillery and assigned to the 121st Artillery (div. Ravenna)

Captured on 9 September by the Germans, in transit in Alexandria, ("Cento Cannoni" barracks, 11th and 121th Art. DF) without yet having sworn and without a weapon, after orders of "semblance of resistance". An evasion failed is locked up in the "citadel" of Alexandria and then transferred to Germany by deception, on 13 September, to recover nose for enlistment in the alien SS for public order service (OP) with the prospect of having to address to throw arms on the Italians. Military internship (IMI) for 20 months in Italy, Poland and Germany in 8 Lager and Straflager, 2 fortresses and 3 Laz- zaretti, In July 1944 he was politically deported with forced labor for job refusals as an "enemy of Europe", in the Straflager / AEL in Cologne (dep. Buchenwald), hired as a slave for 90/100 hours a week in the factory brica and to the field. Here he takes part with 370 young second lieutenants in a mutiny (the military strike severely punishable).

Hospitalized on August 29 for dysentery after losing 14 kilos in 25 days of work hard with fever even at 40 ° C! In the camps he opposed according to his conscience 75 "NO!" to Hitler and Mussolini, 7 of such as enlisting in the foreign Waffen SS, 5 in the RSI divisions, 62 refusals from civilian work in Polo- nia and in the Reich and one of work in Italy in the war industry (Aer. Macchi) after signature to Hitler and Mussolini. In defense of the dignity of a man downgraded to "subhuman" (Untermensch) with no name, numbered as a thing disposable and consistent with patriotic, religious and moral values, he notes in the fences a clandestine diary for future memory ("NO!", ANRP, 2001) and 60 poems as virtual escapes and to remember to be always human mo! Secret Officer's Oath, Dec 4, 1943 (St. Barbara) in St. 316 / B in Chelm in Poland, but not will be recognized in Italy because it does not regulate! Free and taken up twice by the Germans (16 September 1944 in Cologne and 16 April 1945 in Wietzendorf), it was then defined vely freed on 22 April by the Of. 83 (Wietzendorf) when he had a few weeks of hope for doctors of life through starvation; from where it reaches the allied lines in Bergen-Belsen with a dramatic 12 km in 12 hours, supported by a companion to whom he owes his life (two seconds each step!), Sick and lost 34 kg! Repatriated on August 26, 1945, he apologizes to his mother, sister and girlfriend for making them cry by choosing

the way to the Lager according to conscience, to the way home against conscience. (War cross of merit, certificate of "Patriot", Freedom fighter and volunteer ...) Married, one son and three grandchildren. Profession: Chemical engineering graduate and graduate cum laude in Geology (1950). In over 40 years he has seen located or operated in 53 countries on five continents as a volcanologist, mining, oil tanker and geothermal engineer. AGIP pioneer and executive, Exploration Manager (Southern Italy, then North Africa and Indian Ocean, direct-king of companies in Libya and Tunisia. Dean of Italian speleologists and geothermalists of the world, professional, EEC and UN expert, professor of geothermal in Italy and abroad (8 universities). After 35 years of removing the memory of the concentration camps as self-defense from trauma, he has recovered it for 30 years me historical researcher of veterans' associations, but depersonalized as an experience of others! Historical researcher, columnist and memorialist of IMI, author and editor of numerous publications silent or online, some presented to the Chamber, the Senate and President Ciampi, including a bibliography of IMI ("Not to forget", ANEI-Brescia, 2001) and a reasoned memorial ("NO!", ANRP, Rome, 2001). Has assisted several dozen undergraduates and witnessed to several thousand high school students, as well as their grandparents, wanted far away in the camps, they fought to give them freedom and democracy too. His "IMI ARCHIVE" is in transfer to the "Slaves of Hitler" Study Center ("Claudio Sommaruga" Fund) of the "ISC-Como".

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8 September 1943 - 26 August 1945

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The main camps of the IMI

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Inspection of the fence: the sentries were ordered to fire from the turrets on IMIs that approached him!

(photo by V. Vialli)

ATTEMPTS TO CLOSE ACCOUNTS TO ANCHOR ONE HISTORY IN SPANNE, DERIVED AND MISKNOWN. IMI

TENTATIVI DI QUADRARE I CONTI PER ANCORARE UNA STORIA A SPANNE, ALLA DERIVA E MISCONOSCIUTA.

I.M.I. ("Internati Militari Italiani" e prigionieri (KGF))

Composizione (luglio 1944, optanti esclusi)

Generali 209

Uff, superiori e anziani 3.000

Ufficiali inferiori 23.000

Sottufficiali 16.000
 Graduati e Soldati 594.000
 Cappellani 230
 Sanitari (medici, infermieri) 773 (1.1.45, max. 1002 (1.12.43)
 Civili militarizzati 863
 Civili in Lager civili 2667 (2154 da estero (diplomatici e familiari)
 + 340 ferrovieri da Italia)
 ----- 640.229 (dopo le opzioni Reich/RSI, autunno/inverno
 1943/44 (42.000 combattenti.+ 34.000 ausiliari)
 Provenienza
 Italia (e Francia) 196.000
 Francia 32.000
 Balcani/Grecia 411.000
 Germania e terr. Or. 1.000
 ----- 640.000 (luglio 1944, “prima della civilizzazione” e dopo le
 prime
 opzioni Reich/RSI (42.000 combattenti.+ 34.000 ausiliari)
 Origine: ITALIA (calcolata in base alle origini dei caduti)
 Nord (52%) 372.000
 Centro (22%) 158.000
 Sud e Isole (26%) 186.000
 (100%) ----- 716.000 (prima delle opzioni)
 Distribuzione (non optanti alla liberazione (apr. 1945)
 Germania, Austria, Polonia
 Cecoslovacchia 500.000
 Italia, Francia, Balcani ca 100.000
 arrotondamenti 13.000
 ----- 613.000 (dopo le opzioni, apr. 1945)
 (ARCHIVIO IMI, C. Sommaruga, 2005)
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 I numeri sono aridi, ma quelli dei Lager
 nascondono il dolore dell’ uomo...
 SITUAZIONI IMI – (1943 / 1945) (valori arrotondati)
 INIZIALE (dic. 1943) 716.000
 INTERMEDIA. (ago. 1944, prima della “civilizzazione”)
 cifra corrente in letteratura, esclusi 73.000 optanti (combattenti
 e ausiliari lavoratori volontari 643.000
 FINALE. (mag. 1945). (non considerati 103.000 optanti (combattenti e
 ausiliari), 2500 militari non IMI in KZ, 1000 militari internati dai romeni
 - IMI ancora nei Lager (14.000 ufficiali, ordinanze,
 lavoratori (Bau Btl, inabli) e negli Arb-Btl (28.000) 41.000

- ex IMI civilizzati (in Germania) ca 495.000
- IMI/KGF (da 2a prigionia in Russia) 11.000
- IMI/KGF (da 2a prigionia in Jugoslavia) 10.000
- ex IMI in KZ superstiti 1.000
- Malati rimpatriati con treni ospedale (giu.'44-apr.'45) 1.700

Rimpatriati (esclusi 40.000 emigranti civili infiltrati) ----- 560.000

ca

Caduti (50/57.000 secondo le fonti) (57.000 ?) 53.000 ca

Totale IMI ----- 613.000

(ARCHIVIO IMI, C. Sommaruga,

Ex IMI COLLABORATORI (come li considerano gli IMI)

COMBATTENTI (rimpatriati autunno 44)

.- x Waffen SS allogene (sett-nov 43) 17.000

- x RSI (dic 43 apr 44, con code a giu 44) 23.000

combattenti 40.000

AUSILIARI LAVORATORI * (rimpatriati a fine guerra)

. x Wehrmacht (set 43-Apr 44) 23.000

x Luftwaffe (principalmente) **

(ago 44-mar 45) 40.000

Ausiliari lavoratori volontari 63.000

=====

collaboratori 103.000

* Generalmente non inclusi, (per carità) nei veri collaboratori in quanto obbligati.

** Scelta alternativa alla “civilizzazione” e impropriamente inclusi nei 500.000 ex IMI “civilizzati” (per 2/3 volontari e per 1/3 precettati

(C. Sommaruga ARCHIVIO IMI dic. 2009

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MILITARI e IMI – CADUTI e DISPERSI.

PRIMA RESISTENZA in battaglia, giustiziati dopo cattura, nei trasporti navali

Italia settentrionale 1932 (di cui 25 giustiziati)

meridionale 1130

Italia ----- 3062

Francia/Italia 1450

Francia e Corsica 160

Francia ----- 3051 (altre fonti 2954)

Egeo 642

Cefalonia, Corfù, Zante 10096

Grecia 874

Grecia ----- 11612

Iugoslavia, Albania Balcani 14500

----- 32.225.

NEI LAGER (l'altra resistenza)

Germania, Austria, Italia

Malattia, debolezza 23.909

Uccisioni individuali 577

Eccidi di massa 2.049 *

IMI negli Stalag/Oflag 1.250

IMI in KZ (Dora e altri) 661 (Buchenwald/Dora 655, Majdanek 10?,

Deportati militari (da Italia e Rodi) 1.727 (Mauthausen 381, Dachau

1.346

Bombardamenti, incidenti 2.577

Cause belliche 2.389

Per postumi in Italia (1945/47) 2.200 (di cui 300 ospedalizzati pubblici al rimpatrio)

ex IMI lavoratori liberi 4.000 (bombardamenti, malattie, guerra)

Dispersi (fronte orientale, 1944) >200

In 2a prigionia in Russia 1.150

In 2a prigionia in Iugoslavia >1.000 ? (su 5000 morti IMI/KGF e collaboratori dei tedeschi)

----- 41.953 *

Territori occupati

Francia, Belgio, Olanda, Danimarca 1.600

Cecoslovacchia 617

Polonia 2.150

Grecia, Balcani 3.250

----- 7.600

----- 49.570 *

IMI nei trasporti navali ** (Egeo, feb.-lug. 1944) dopo immatricolazione IMI)

Naufragati o buttati a mare 6.700

Decimati (da armi da fuoco) 300

Mitragliati da Stukas tedeschi 500

----- 7.500

----- 57.070*.

----- 89.295.

* + 5,000 (?) IMI dispersi nelle discusse fosse comuni polacche: Leopoli 200/2000, Chelm (“La Padella degli Italiani”) 3122, Mnsk 200 fucilati +200

(scoppio polveriera), Treblinka (“Il treno degli italiani”) 1000, ecc.

** Imbarcati 63.000, naufragati 22.000, superstiti 7.500, affogati 13.500 (di cui 7000 IMI e 6.000 prigionieri non ancora registrati come IMI o KGF (autunno 1943)).

(ARCHIVIO INI, C. Sommaruga., 2005)