**Map of remembrance**

**Austrian garrisons in 1848**

In 1848, the Austrian army, commanded by the Major Baron Milutinovich, was composed by circa 1200 Croatian soldiers, subdivided in this way:

* Barracks of Erba - 600 soldiers
* Barracks of S. Francesco - 400 soldiers
* Barracks of S.Teresa - 200 soldiers

Besides:

* Barracks of S. Teresa - 30 hussars
* Guardhouse in Broletto - 70 soldiers
* Barracks at Fosto - 40 Police guards
* Jesus Barracks - 30 Finance Police
* District at S. Gaetano - 20 soldiers

**Cartographic base**

The map of Como used for this guide is based upon that of 1871, with only minor changes. In this map, urban interventions of Risorgimento are easily distinguishable (among them, the port initially filled with debris, then substitued with a square, and the construction of a dam outside the town), as well as the contemporary structure of the town, so that it should not be difficult to find the highlighted sites in the urban contest.

**Geography and history**

Since the years of Risorgimento, a century and a half ago, the town has changed radically, more and more times. During the time of the “Cinque Giornate di Como” and, later, of the battle of S. Fermo, for example, in the town there were neither factories, nor the railway; on the contrary, former cloisters, many of which used as barracks, were quite numerous. The majority of these buildings would disappear during the 20th century.

In the same way, the ancient port and “Pra’ Pasquée” disappeared consequently to the general reorganisation of the front of lake Como.

For all these reasons, it is not simple to have a precise idea of the urban scenery of those days, nor it is easy to find the exact places of the events.

Nowadays it is only through gravestones, commemorative monuments and toponymy that these events are remembered: it is, however, a faded memory, which often is not given even the honour of commemoration nor of a laurel wreath. The residents themselves cannot understand the bond between places and events. For this reason, too, it is important to try and bring back the memory of the Italian Unification, right in the places where it was seen emerging : find again the houses and the palaces of patriots, the public buildings which saw their acts, the streets where battles and heroic deeds were not a rarity, all the places which witnessed the enthusiasms and the ideals of an entire town.

**The birth of the Ideas of Risorgimento**

The battles of Risorgimento have developed gradually, from the diffusion of the Enlightenment culture in the second half of the 18th century and the breakout of the revolutionary ideas coming from France during the last years of the same century. On the one hand, the villas of Lario and Brianza became centres of diffusion of the new political, literary and scientific ideas; on the other hand, urban crowds were protagonists of uprisings - even clamorous and dramatic- against the constituted order. In Como, as in other places, the Tree of Liberty was raised in Piazza Duomo, and Napoleon was welcomed, but the French occupation transformed soon into an oppressive regime, characterised by heavy taxes and spoliations in the name of the Empire. The research of more liberal forms of government continued even after Napoleon’s defeat and the Restauration following the Congress of Vienna.

The actions of patriots became clandestine, and the diffusion of new ideas and materials of propaganda followed complex ways, with many precautions, from public meeting places (as Caffè Bottegone and Osteria della Cerva) to private residences. The revolutions of 1820/21 involved Como only marginally but, from 1831, Giuseppe Mazzini, exile in Switzerland, began to influence strongly the neighbourhood of Como, where clubs of “Giovine Italia” were founded.

The border mountains of Como became the way through which the exiles introduced from Switzerland the clandestine press destined to Lombardo Veneto.

This long period of incubation exploded clamorously in 1848, year which signed, in the urban uprisings, the connection between the intellectual, politicised elites and the popular classes, at because of the oppressive Austrian government.

**“Le Cinque Giornate” of 1848**

When some rumours of the tumults in Milan against the Austrians were heard, on 18th March 1848, a thick group of Comaschi gathered in front of the town hall in order to demand the formation of the Civic Guard. The representants of the council, guided by the potestà - the solicitor Tommaso Perti - took guide of the revolt, appointed a Military Committee and reached an agreement with the Austrian command, obtaining the delivery of the soldiers in the barracks. In the town funds, weapons and munitions were collected. The blacksmith Maspero repaired shotguns, aristocrats and the working class, students and clerks participated actively, but, despite the enthusiasm and the rushing of volunteers, the equipment was insufficient. Thus the aid of the refugees in Switzerland was required. During the night a group of citizens seized the military bakery (in the former cloister S. Gerolano) and sequestered bread for the troops.

At the dawn of 19th, the Comaschi accomplished a second sudden attack, taking from the military armoury of Geno gunpowder and munitions, which were then hidden in the town hall, in house Pozzi (where nowadays there is the hotel Palace) and imbarked on the steamboat “Falco” at the dock of the port. Meanwhile, from the tower of Broletto, a little group of citizens unrolled the town banner. During the morning, the steamers “Veloce” and “Falco” set sail with armed citizens, led by the Marquis Pietro Rovelli, in order to raise aids from the villages of the lake. During the day two big companies of infantrymen of the regiment “Prohaska” from Mariano and Cantù reached Como and the barracks of S. Francesco. The lieutenant colonel Braumüller, who commanded them, asked the dissolution of the Civic Guard. The Comaschi resisted to the threats and signed a truce.

In the morning of the 20th a hundred volunteers from Ticino came, guided by exiles and with few gunshots, who crashed with the Austrian patrol in Villa Olmo and then entered in town. More consistent was the flow of the 500 volunteers who disembarked from the “Veloce” and the “Falco” and made themselves available to the military authorities.

The ceasefire of Como was successful and, at the news of the currently furious battles in Milan, a group of one hundred citizens decided to help the insurgents.

In Porta Torre the group intercepted and rendered prisoner an Austrian patrol coming from the Altopiano and went on later to Camerlata. At this moment, the Austrians went out from the barracks S. Francesco, pursuing the volunteers, going back up via Milano towards S. Bartolomeo, but they were hit by many roof tiles and rocks thrown from the houses and by the first shots. The Austrians with some hurt people retired in the barracks. Among the citizens of Como two dead and some wounded people are to be counted. At the same time, in the walled town, the 600 Croatians of the barracks of Erba went out heading to Porta Torre and reconnected with the rest of the imperial troops, but were received with gunshots near S. Donnino. The major Milutinovich, hurt, was abandoned on the pavement, while the soldiers returned rapidly to the barracks; helped by two Comaschi, he died in the hospital. In the battle a Bernasconi, bricklayer of Civiglio, was killed, too. In Piazza Duomo, the citizens of Como assaulted the guard house of Broletto. The Austrians fled to the “Teatro Sociale”, and went out of the town through Portello, skidding in Garzola and rendering in S. Martino. The soldiers of the barracks S. Teresa, too, head to the town, but they had to desist near Porta Sala fearing the gunshots, and the returned to Borgo Vico. In the same hours the provincial garrisons were disarmed.

Around 2 p.m. in Como, Colonel Braumüller asked another hour of ceasefire in order to find an agreement which would permit him to go out of the town with his troops; in response, the Comaschi representants asked the surrender of the officials and the disarmament of the troop, to which life and possessions were guaranteed. At 3 p.m. hostilities rose again. The insurgents reinforced the positions on the bastions and in the houses around the barracks S. Francesco (hotel Brianza, hotel Corona, seminary, “stretta del Soccorso”) and other barracks (Erba, S.Teresa). Little cannons were also put in position, and the gunfire were at times intense. Under a pouring rain the Comaschi enlightened the night with piles of timber, so as to prevent the fleet of troops.

On the 21st March, the soldiers of the barracks Erba and Santa Teresa, under siege and in difficult situation because of the leak of nourishment, surrendered; the soldiers of the garrison of Ponte Chiasso delivered themselves, too. 800 guns and the relative munitions were thus confiscated. Euphoria pushed to inconsiderate deeds: a group of citizens tried to assault the barracks S. Francesco; the answer was furious and the assault pushed back. The young Nessi, son of the owner of Osteria del Soccorso, fell. Two Comaschi repaired behind some plants were saved by a Bianchi who, protected by a mattress and an iron slab, brought them back into the ramparts. The Comaschi were convinced to have victory at hand and hoped also to help the citizens of Milan. It was made the attempt to burn to the ground the church near the barracks, reduced to warehouse of fodder and timber.

On the morning of the 22nd, the Austrians, weakened by the leak of nourishment and by the determination of the Comaschi, hung the white flag and abandoned the barracks S. Francesco; the soldiers surrendered without establishing any conditions. The act of defeat was signed in the town hall; with weapons and equipment, the flag of the regiment “Prohaska” was found, the only flag of the battle to have been lost by the Austrians in the war of 1848-49. The “”Cinque giornate di Como cost to the citizens of Como 7 dead and 15 wounded people.

On 23rd March, the communal representation proclaimed the provisory Government, exalting Italy. Their first measure was the reduction of the tax on salt. The prisoners were shut in S. Giacomo. In April they were trasferred on the Isola Comacina, then to Pavia and Alessandria, used as exchange for prisoners.

**From 1848 to 1859**

The events of 1848, which put an end to the model of absolute monarchy that reigned over Europe for forty years, are connected to the financial crisis of the Continent following the Industrial development and the birth of urban working class, phenomena which began to appear in Lombardy, too.

The experience of 1848 Republican governments lasted for few months: the abandon of Lombardy by Carlo Alberto forced them to surrender. Garibaldi, while withdrawing, passed through Como, asked to be supplied and appeared to be disposed to defend the town, but he was sent away by the preoccupied citizens. The Austrian repression was harsh, and the list of condemns and exiles grew longer and longer.

The Mazziniani in Switzerland promoted the following year an attempt of insurrection in val Chiavenna, valli Albano and Cavargna, and had its centre in val d’Intelvi. Here, groups of rebellious repelled the Austrian incursions from Argegno, but they were in the end aggressed through the Bisbino. Andrea Brenta’s gunshot, and that of his mates at S. Carpoforo, put an end to the brief season of revolt, animated by the spirit of Risorgimento but unfortunately characterised by great political and military weakness.

**The battle of San Fermo and 1859**

Ten years after the working-class revolts of 1848-49, the Piemonte of the House of Savoy, after having ensured the political support of republicans and France, began to prepare to wage war against Austria. In the same time, Cavour made pressure upon the great landowners of Lombardo Veneto, for example the Count Cesare Giulini - “Milanese”, but with extended proprieties in the neighbourhood of Como -, so that they convinced the peasants to go to Piemonte and enlist in the army. The Comasco and the Varesotto, where clubs inspired by the ideas of Mazzini were particularly active, were the principal centres of recruitment. After having reached the Canton Ticino through the ways of smuggling, the volunteers were let enter in the Savoy reign through the western shore of Lago Maggiore. Nearly 600 young Comaschi joined up the troops of Piemonte. The majority of them were set into the 3.500 “Cacciatori delle Alpi”, who were under Garibaldi’s commandment. War broke out on 29th April 1859. Austrians occupied Biella and Vercelli and then reached the Dora Baltea. “Piemontesi” and French people reacted and won on 20th May 1859 in Montebello. At that point, Garibaldi, with the “Cacciatori delle Alpi”, entered into action: in the night between 22nd and 23rd May passed the Ticino, disembarked at Sesto Calende and on the following night he got into Varese under a pouring rain and with the joyful cries of the population.

On 27th May, after having repelled the previous day a heavy Austrian attack during which 18 Cacciatori delle Alpi died, Garibaldi moved towards Como. The imperial troops made a front which extended from San Fermo to Olgiate Comasco. Having attracted the attentions of Austrians towards the plane with a diversionary maneuver, Garibaldi moved with the majority of the army towards Cavallasca. The assault at Colle San Fermo, where the Austrians had their camp, was directed with an army of bladed weapon, aided by an operation from the sides of the hill which vanquished the defendants and made them flee towards Camerlata. Among the “Cacciatori delle Alpi” there were 13 dead. One of them was the captain Carlo De Cristoforis, who guided the first assault of the hill, and a Comasco (Agostino Dell’Orto, son of the baker of Cernobbio). In the late afternoon, Garibaldi’s men warded off the Austrian attempt to go to Valfresca, reached the “convalle” and defeated the austrian forces in Prà Pasquée. Hence the Austrians abandoned the town. After having passed Borgo Vico, the “Cacciatori delle Alpi” entered in the town through Porta Sala; the happy citizens welcomed the liberators and healed them in piazza Volta, where a camp was settled. Garibaldi, guest of marquis Rovelli, confiscated four ships in order to collect weapons and munitions on the lake and from Valtellina.

The next day, having left a little defence in Como, he directed again towards Vares, occupied once more by the imperial troops guided by the general Urban, who, after having bombed the town, threatened heavy retaliations. Como felt to be without any defence and feared the Austrian return. The authorities and the citizens who were politically exposed fleed from the town. Garibaldi, once failed the attack in Laveno and without having the possibility of attack Urban in Varese, on 2nd June returned to Como and transferred all the Austrian prisoners and the Italian wounded people to Gravedona. The situation was tense, but the evolution of war and the passage from Ticino of the army of Piemonte and France concentrated in that zone the Austrian troops of high Lombardy. The “francopiemontese” victory in Magenta of 4th June, battle where the lingered Urban did not arrive on time, forced the imperial troops to withdraw and was decisive. The 8th June, Vittorio Emanuele II and Napoleon III entered in Milan. The Austrians, who took shelter in the quadrilateral in defence of Veneto, would not return any more in Lombardy.

**The completion of National Unity**

The participation of the “lariano” territory in the movement of Risorgimento kept on even after the events got away from Como.

14 people from the Comasco joined the deed of the Mille, and hundreds were the ones who followed in the subsequent months during the campaign which arrived to Naples.

Even in 1866, Como and Varese were the provinces with the major number of volunteers who engaged with Garibaldi in the Third War of Indipendence. 500 Comaschi followed him fighting at Bazzecca until Trentino. The dream of Rodolfo Balzarotti and Amatore Ronchetti, who died at Mentana the following year, was Republican, so as that of the contingent of Como committed in actions of guerrilla war in the Pontific State with the uniform of Garibaldi, in a time when Roman question was still irresolute.

**The main characters**

In more than 50 years of battles, cospiracies, uprisings, political debates and cultural and logistic preparation, many people, in Como and in its territory, dedicated much of their energy to the ideal of Risorgimento.

At the beginning, the main entertainer of the movement of national emancipation belonged to the aristocracy. The figure of the Comasco Luigi Porro Lambertenghi was remarkable. He was entertainer and financier of the “Circolo Carbonaro Milanese”, maker as entrepreneur of the process of Industrialisation, forced to years of exile in order to escape to the arrest which did not spare Silvio Pellico, preceptor of his two children, and other adepts, among them the Belagino Alfredo Rezia, enclosed for many years at the Spielberg and in Tirolo. The failed revolt of 1830-31, which cost in Modena the life of Ciro Menotti, forced the marquis Rosales, close collaborator to Mazzini and with ample proprieties in the neighbourhood of Olgiate and in Brianza, to reach him in Switzerland, from where a vigorous, but unfortunate, cospiracy activity was brought forth. Central for all the events of the Italian Risorgimento is Cristina Trivulzio, the separated wife of Emilio Belgiojoso; after a long – but very active – Parisian exile, she concluded his life on Lake Como, in a villa not so distant from the Pliniana, propriety of the husband. Many houses and villas, during the period of conspiracy, took up the role of centres of organisation, recruitment and sorting of clandestine materials, which in great part came in from the near swiss border.

The solicitor Tommaso Perti, podestà of Como during the Cinque Giornate of 1848 and organiser of those days, belonged to the highest bourgeois class, so as the professor Giuseppe Brambilla, to whom a series of patriotic articles on the “Repubblicano della Svizzera” cost a condemnation of ten years from the Austrians.

Luigi Dottesio was a victim of Austrian repression during the Restoration period following the uprisings of 1848. Principal organiser of the border crossing of materials coming from the Helvetica Typography of Capolago, close to the Swiss border; arrested in Maslianico, he was hanged in Venice in 1851 in place St. Mark, due to a quite heavy sentence which the young emperor did not cancel by his grace, perhaps because he wanted to punish the town which some months before had welcomed him rather coldly.

For all these years, and until the battle of San Fermo, the activity of organisation and cospiracy continued. In its center there were the representatives of the families of ancient nobility, as the Rovelli, the Olginati, the De Orchi (Luisa De Orchi was a fervent garibaldina and tireless sustainer of the national cause) and of the middle class of early fortune (Elena Casati, in her house of Via Diaz, held a lounge which was one of the most important places of Risorgimento Comasco).

High schools remained central, too, both the lay (the Liceo) and the religious ones (the Collegio Gallio and the Seminary). Press organs had also a fundamental role. Among them is to be remembered the “Corriere del Lario”, founded in 1850 by the Bresciano Annibale Cressoni, fervent supporter of ideas of Risorgimento and tireless entertainer of the popular culture (his is the idea of the theatre Cressoni in the town centre).

**The places of remembrance**

The first concrete sign to preserve and hand down the memory of the national Risorgimento was, in 1859, some days after the battle of San Fermo fought on 27th May, the appointing to Garibaldi to the street where he travelled while entering in the town. Ten years later, in the new town hall and in the cemetery, the gravestones to remember the dead in the different phases of the battle of Risorgimento were solemnly inaugurated: the dead of the “Cinque Giornate of 1848”, the people who were shot at S. Carpoforo the following year, Luigi Dottesio hung in Venice in 1851, the dead in the battle of San Fermo. But the hero of these moments was above all Garibaldi: the monument in San Fermo, nowadays known as “Della Battaglia”, was dedicated to him in 1873, as two other commemorative plaque in the town, situated in the places which saw him guest. One is in “piazza Volta”, on the facade of Palace Rovelli, where is conserved even the bed where the general rest after the battle of 1859; the other is on the facade of “Palazzo Olginati”, where he was host in 1866, during the Third War of Indipendence. In 1822, in the aftermath of the death of the hero of the two worlds, it was at once thought to honour him with a worthy monument. The charge was given to the great verista sculptor Vincenzo Vela, Ticinese of birth but Torinese of formation, and above all volunteer in Como in the days of 1848. Inaugurated in 1889, the monument was a not rhetorical homage to the general, wo was represented standing, thoughtful, with his sword drawn but in position of rest; in the monument, which was put in piazza Vittoria, not much far from the barracks of S. Francesco which had seen the surrender of Austrian soldiers in 1848, is summarised also the memory of the Cinque Giornate Comasche, after that the funds collected for the commemorative plaque on Porta Torre were directed to the new homage of Garibaldi: it was for this reason that the surrender of the battalion Prohaska is represented in the bas relief on the basement of the statue. The position of the monument will then be changed after the World War II, and the statue, which originally looked towards the heights of San Fermo, turned of 180°.

In 1931, to the will of Carlotta Olginati, the Palace Olginati, where Garibaldi was hosted in 1866, was given to the Comune di Como, with the constraint to make it a museum dedicated to the history of Risorgimento. The collection of the museum was inaugurated the following year, at the presence of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s son, Ricciotti; many historical memories are still preserved nowadays, included the two paintings representing the defeat of the Austrians, made by Francesco Capiaghi, and Captain Carlo de Cristoforis’ death, work of Sebastiano De Albertis. Furthermore, there is Garibaldi’s bust carved by Pietro Clerici.

The last monumental homage to the Risorgimento dates of 1960, with the inauguration of Giuseppe Mazzini’s bust, in the homonymous square.