

During the Second World War, the valley of Susa played a strategic role for the presence of important infrastructure links with France - the roads of Montgenevre and Mont Cenis and the railway line Turin-Modane - and the concentration of textile industries (the cotton mills of Susa, Bussoleno, Borgone and Sant'Antonino and Sant'Ambrogio), chemical (the Nobel dynamite factory in Avigliana), metallurgical (Assa Susa and Ferriere Fiat Buttigliera Alta) and mechanical (Mooncenisio factory in Condove). Immediately after the armistice of 8 September 1943, the forts and barracks - spread over the whole territory, but only used intensively until June of 1940 during the brief conflict with France - were abandoned by the soldiers and looted by civilians, giving possibility to the local anti-fascists to get weapons, food and equipment. In those days, thousands of Alpine IV Army soldiers returned from Savoy and the Dauphiné, engaging in sporadic clashes with the Germans in Modane and the Mont Cenis and doing the first attack against the railway tunnel of Fréjus. Although the fascists had deployed groups of soldiers, SS and Republican National Guard (GNR) along the railway line, in major urban centers - Avigliana, Condove, Bussoleno, Susa - and in the upper valley, groups composed of young rebels, students and workers took to aggregate spontaneously around Meana, Mompantero, San Giorio, Bussoleno, Borgone, Condove, Sant'Antonino, Avigliana and Villardora. At the head of these groups were those partisans who would have marked the first stage of the Resistance of Valle di Susa, such as Vittorio Morone (Lieutenant Ferrero), Carlo Carli (Carli lieutenant), Walter Fontan (Walter), Felice Cima (Felice), Marcello Albertazzi (Barba) and Giuseppe Garbagnati (Garba). From the beginning, the partisan groups actually implemented coups to retrieve weapons and equipment and sabotaged telegraph lines, telephone and electricity. In doing so, they became the target of a crackdown that began with the roundup of San Giorio, though thwarted by the prompt intervention of the group of Carli. The need for organic activities of the Resistance soon led the National Liberation Committee (CLN) in Turin to put pressure on leaders of local groups so that they form a unified military command, which took place on October 17. Command, based in Villardora, with the major Egidio Liberti (Valle), the lieutenant Giancarlo Ratti, the engineer Sergio Bellone and the chaplain Father Francesco Foglia. The activity of the Command allowed the groups to multiply actions: the group of Carli attacked the Casa del Fascio in Bussoleno eliminating a spy and attacked in Avigliana a truck transporting Germans soldiers, took their weapons and used them to make a raid in Rivoli. The group of Cima sabotaged a pipeline of the hydroelectric power station of Venaus and attacked an armored convoy in Condove. These groups were supported by civilians, as shown by both the strikes in Moncenisio and Fiat both the popular participation in the funeral of Bruno Peirolo (partisan of the group Carli), the first to fall in battle in the valley. The effectiveness of these activities alarmed the fascists and forced them first to prohibit the use of motor vehicles between Rivoli and Cesana and then to impose a night curfew between Avigliana and Susa. The promising debut of a resistance that could count on about 500 militants between partisans and civilians, however, it met an abrupt halt on the night of November 27th. The car they were traveling Liberti, Cima, Albertazzi and Garbagnati, returning from a meeting, broke down near Caprie and it was intercepted by the SS, probably alerted by a denunciation. Two were killed, Garbagnati was arrested and imprisoned in Turin, Liberti escaped crossing by swimming the Dora Riparia. The shock suffered by the groups was serious, though not so as to affect the operation, Cima was replaced by Alessio Maffiodo (Alessi) and Albertazzi by Guido Bobba (Guido). On his return to the valley, Liberti called for December 8th, representatives of each group in the hamlet of Garda and made them pronounce the solemn oath to fight the enemy with all force and to victory. However, a few days later, the same Liberti was alerted about the preparation of a massive search in the valley and, supported by the CLN Turin, convinced the unified military command to temporarily dissolve the groups, dispersing the components and leaving on the field only three teams of specialists, one of saboteurs, two skiers and one of cyclists for the connections. In fact, the German attack was very violent and struck in quick succession, Condove, San Giorio, Avigliana, Borgone and finally Susa.

At the same time, the fascists began to reinforce their garrisons along the railroad and in urban centers, deploying ten thousand men at the end of January 1944. Despite this difficult moment, the team of saboteurs led by Bellone and Father Foglia was able to use the three tons of explosives, previously stolen from the deposit of Dynamite Nobel factory, to damage the bridge of Perosa, between Rosta and Alpignano, and to destroy the viaduct Arnodera, upstream Meana, causing the disruption of rail transit until March. In early January, after that Ratti had left the valley for connection with the Allies, the partisan commanders met to plan the reorganization of groups. However, the situation had become very unfavorable for the local Resistance: January 10th Liberti was arrested in Val di Viù and had to be replaced in the unified military command by Major Edward Franzini (Tibaldé); 11th Father Foglia was arrested in Turin and then deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp; 21st, after a denunciation, Carli was blocked and shot from GNR in Avigliana; 22nd Bellone luckily escaped capture at Sant' Ambrogio and had to leave the valley; 24th, Fontan, who had assumed command of the group of Carli, fell victim to an ambush at the toll rail of Bruzolo. After the almost complete annihilation of the first the partisans, the Spring saw violent raids, especially furious in the area of Lys Pass, where numerous partisans had wintered attempting to reorganize themselves, having a continuous influx of young people refusing the the call and workers who were trying to escape hard labour or deportation to concentration camps in Germany. More structured groups were born around the Lys: the 17th Garibaldi Brigade "Felice Cima" commanded by Alessio Maffiodo, along the watershed with the Sangone valley, the 41st Brigade Garibaldi "Carlo Carli" led by Eugene Fassino (Genio), upstream of Bussoleno and San Giorio, the 42nd Garibaldi Brigade "Walter Fontan" conducted by Alessandro Ciamei (Falco), between Meana and the Mont Cenis, the Fourth Division-Giustizia e Libertà "Stellina - Duccio Galimberti" led by Giulio Bolaffi (Aldo Laghi), in the upper valley, the Divisione Autonoma "Chisone" led by Maggiorino Marcellin (Bluter). In particular, the "Walter Fontan" turned out even now too large and had to be dismantled in early June, giving rise to 115th Garibaldi Brigade "Bruno Peirolo", operating in Val Clarea, and the 114th Brigade Garibaldi "Marcello Albertazzi" deployed upstream of Borgone. In mid-June, the general strike declared by the CLN of Northern Italy against the threatened transfer of industrial plants under the direct German control was supported by the workers of Fiat-Ferriere, Officine Moncenisio and Assa. Just to support the struggle of the workers and at the same time make less effective the Nazi repression, the partisan of Canavese and Val Chisone planned a common offensive for the night between the 26th and 27th of June. In the context of this plan, "Felice Cima" attacked the German garrison of the castle of Rivoli, but was repulsed and forced to retreat by the arrival of an armored convoy from Turin; "Carlo Carli" attacked before the plant of Valloja (Dynamite Nobel) and then the train station of Avigliana, but the arrival of an armored train forced her to fall back and leave in the hands of the enemy commander Fassino wounded; "Walter Fontan" attacked the garrison of Bussoleno, causing 15 dead, 8 wounded and 22 prisoners in the Nazi-Fascists, before having to withdraw to the arrival of tanks and armored cars. The first reprisal hit first civilians, many houses torched, hundreds of arrests followed by deportation in most of the municipalities of the valley, and then partisans, with heavy raids. On July 2th, the fascists attacked "Felice Cima" at Lys pass, with a pincer movement from the side of Susa that forced the partisans to retreat outnumbered and less armed; the brigade suffered 6 killed in combat and 26 massacred after capture, while the bulk of the forces was dispersed and returned to their bases only several days later. On July 8th, it was the turn of "Walter Fontan", deployed in the valley of the river Prebech and attacked from Bussoleno with a pincer maneuver yet; however, the partisans rejected the fascist parti of GNR at Balmafal pasture, causing 21 deaths, 50 wounded, and 2 prisoners. The last area to be raked was the upper valley, where the Nazi attack began July 17th and lasted until August 10th: the positions of the division "Chisone" were attacked at mounts Triplex and Genevris and losses were numerous for both parties, but in the end the fighters of Marcellin had to retreat into France through Clapier pass. Only in mid-August, while in the urban areas of the valley was born the CLN who coordinated the civil anti-fascist, the partisan forces were able to regain the initiative. Garibaldi Brigades of the valley were grouped into

divisions: "Felice Cima", "Marcello Albertazzi" and "Walter Fontan" became part of III, while "Carlo Carli" - led by Rinaldo Baratta, after Fassino had been released in an exchange of prisoners and hidden in the hospital Giaveno - and "Bruno Peirola" formed the XIII. The first brigade to return to action was the "Walter Fontan" which had overtaken most of the Nazi offensive at the same time and had been reinforced by a group of railway workers of Bussoleno, so it can later make the 106th Garibaldi Brigade "Giordano Velino" fielded between Villarfocchiardo and Meana: on 17th caused the collapse of the bridge over the creek at Frangerello near Villarfocchiardo, interrupting the main road to the Montgenevre, and sabotaged a power line; on 20th attacked a truck load of Germans in Bussoleno, however, indirectly causing the cannonade of villages and the burning of the village of Bruzolo; on 23th exploded the bridge over the Dora in Borgone. The most significant action carried out in August, however, was directed against Aeronautical Fiat factory, in the outskirts of Torino. With the support of the information received from an inner partisan cell, 170 partisans of the Third Division - mostly of "Felice Cima" - penetrated the night of the 18th in the field of flight and sabotaged aircrafts, cut the telephone lines, destroyed the radio station, neutralized after two hours of hard fighting the Nazi garrison and then damaged war materials and documents projects. Finally, loaded on trucks 240 guns of various calibers, rifles of different types, ammunition and fuel tanks, and they returned to their bases. Also in August, two companies of the 26th Italian SS marched from Susa through Croce di Ferro pass, to pass in Val di Viù. Intercepted at the hamlet of Sevine by a patrol of the "Stellina - Duccio Galimberti", barricaded themselves in the houses taking hostage the families of farmers, but had to surrender to the arrival of reinforcements sent from the same division and "Walter Fontan". German officers were released, but 120 soldiers were taken prisoner and all their weapons ended up to the partisans: the incident greatly increased the prestige of Giulio Bolaffi, so as to convince a group active in the area between Savoulx and Beaulard, commanded Alberto Salmon, to join the division as the column "Franco Dusi". In early September, the steady growth of the partisan forces, which only in the valley of Susa could now count on about 2,000 men, stimulated the need for a more effective regional coordination: it was therefore constituted the Command of Military Zone IV, comprising the valleys Susa, Sangone, Chisone, Germanasca and Pellice, headed by Guermani Antonio (Tonino), assisted by partisan Osvaldo Negarville (Valerio) and Carlo Mussa Ivaldi (Carletto). The liberation of France forced the Nazi-Fascists to guard the valley with even more forces than in the past. As a result, the partisans had to manage difficult military operations, such as carrying out sabotage by "Walter Fontan" against the railway line near Chianocco on September 17th and "Carlo Carli" to the damaging of the electric lines of service of Fiat Ferriere in Buttigliera Alta and Dynamite Nobel in Avigliana on the 18th and 25th of the same month. Just "Carlo Carli" in this period was at the centre of the convulsive events: October 8th, died in a firefight with the Germans at Sant'Ambrogio Rinaldo Baratta, immediately replaced at the head of the brigade by Eugenio Fassino; on 29th, in disagreement with the command of the 13th division, divided the group passing with a hundred men to the Autonomous partisans of Sangone valley. In March, in agreement with the Allies, the CLN formed the Volunteer Corps of Freedom (CvI), for restructuring the military formations. At the local level, the measure was implemented by the military command of the fourth zone, which grouped the division Autonomous "Chisone" and the Fourth Division Giustizia Libertà "Stellina - D. Galimberti" in the 41st division unified and transformed III and XIII Garibaldi division respectively in the 42nd and 46th in the unified division. In view of the coming end of the war, the Nazi-Fascist raids intensified, affecting both civilians - 8 inhabitants of Condove were shot April 7th - both partisans - the 42nd unified division was hit in the area of the Lys Pass, where in late March suffered death of six regulars and the capture of two, and upstream of Condove, where on April 18th 16 partisans were killed -. In mid-April, in anticipation of the German retreat of the Fourth Military Command area planned measures to prevent the sabotage of roads and industrial plants, providing in particular the protection of the hydroelectric plants of the Gran Scala Venaus, Mompantero, Chiomonte and Susa. Just this precaution would have the merit of limiting the damage to the destruction of road bridges in Cesana, Oulx, Bardonecchia and Exilles and of

electrical system in Chiomonte, Oulx and Bardonecchia. During the uprising, while the 42nd and the 46th Division marched on Turin and occupied the neighborhoods. In these same days, some French detachments went down to Susa, trying to take a leading role in the liberation of the territory so as to prepare for future annexation. The French soldiers implemented an effective propaganda and did not disdain to carry out provocations, such as the removal of the flags near the Italian border. The tension with the forces of resistance reached its peak June 23rd, when a bomb in Susa provoked the death of two French and the wounding of many others, and dropped only with the pronouncement of the allied commands that put an end to disputes regarding the boundary alpine Western.