

# THE ITALIAN RESISTANCE

ERASMUS + KA 2

Local Event - European Impact:  
Local History in European Context





The Italian resistance is undoubtedly one of the most important historical events in our history and it includes the political and military movements that in Italy, after the armistice of Cassibile, opposed Nazifascism in the context of the Italian liberation war.







To understand better the subject, we decided to interview Mr. Francesco Occhiogrosso, who lived the drama of war when he was a child.

Mr. Francesco today is 81 years old and he told us his own experiences and his father and grandfather's, welcoming us in his beautiful laboratory .

**01.** We started our interview with a question about our city: is there a plaque or a street in memory of someone who fought for the Resistance?

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As I recall, here in Bitetto there is only one monument, called Benedetta, in memory of the resistance fighters. Talking about streets, I can say that there are many dedicated to the soldiers who died in both World Wars: perhaps among them there are some dedicated to the Resistance fighters.



## 02. After this first general question, we went into the specific: What were the (economic) hardships, the deprivations (food, clothing, affections) or other renouncements of the civilian population during the Second World War?

The economic constraint were many:

I remember that there was the black market, or the illegal one. Unfortunately, most of the times it was necessary to resort to illegal methods to feed: there was, in fact, the ration card, a card from which they cut permits, the stamps, to receive a fixed amount of bread; when you finished the cutters you had to wait for the next month.





This card, therefore, rationed the food and unfortunately the quantities were too few... I remember that in the morning, on certain days, a gentleman used to ride his bike through the streets. On hearing it, women went out and bought the goods they needed. Other times they traveled by train to appear even small amounts of bread, risking being discovered by the police.



However, sometimes the confiscated goods were used to feed the families of policemen. As for the deprivations of food, these were many: meat was never eaten. Only on festive occasions, such as Christmas or the Feast of Our Lady, we could eat rabbits or meat. Every day we ate rice or legumes, and sometimes between us neighbors we traded cloth for food.



Also, there were many clothing privations: I remember that the shoes were used only in winter and from the Feast of the Blessed (on April 27) you walked barefoot not to consume footwear. In addition, everything was recycled, for example I slept on an old pillow of a truck because you could not even buy mattresses.





**03.**

**Our interview continues: was the sharing of food the main occasion to socialize, confront and be supportive among acquaintances?**

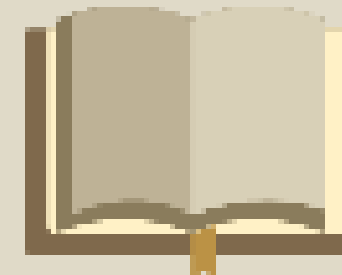
- Obviously, the atmosphere was very sad: there was nothing cheerful about thinking about your loved ones in war or the difficulties that you lived. However, women were able to establish a climate of complicity by helping themselves, sharing food or exchanging food: For example, those who were farmers shared the products of their land to receive in return money or cloth or other material bought on the black market.





**04.** At this point, we asked a very important question: Do you remember any episodes told by friends or relatives of people who gave shelter, provided food or assistance to the partisans?

• Mr. Francesco replied: "Actually, I don't think there were any. In Bitetto, the Germans were just passing through and were not intent on devastating the city. At Bitetto there was a heroic act by some people who tried to fight against the Germans to protect the city: this resistance earned Bitetto the gold medal of civil merit".





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**We were now heading towards the end of the interview; So we asked two personal questions: were there any war casualties or war invalids in your family? There are written traces of that period: postcards, letters, call to arms, clothes, medals?**

My father never went to war because he was unfit for health reasons. But I remember the story of my uncle: he is still buried under the Russian snow (this means that his uncle died while fighting in Russia). About my family: I kept some of my grandfather's medals, postcards and documents. Now all these precious memories are kept in a binder, to which I added my stories.





This concludes our interview. Talking to Mr. Francesco was very nice: he told us things that are not written in books...



an exercise book used by kids in that period: a symbol of fascist propaganda

the song of our resistance:





...and like Liliana Segre  
said.  
*"As long as you have living grandparents, ask them what it was on April 25: they will tell you better than any history book. Always be like the yellow butterfly flying over the barbed wire"*





