

The Italian Unknown Soldier

The myth of the war dead, in Italy, found its highest expression in the monument to the Unknown Soldier, which soon became the symbol of the sacrifice of the whole community and the supreme symbol of all war cemeteries scattered along the front lines. To seal the sacrifice of so many Italians of the years of the conflict in 1919 was decreed the recurrence of 4 November as a national moment of remember.

The Unknown Soldier is an Italian soldier who died in World War I, whose body has not been identified, which is buried inside of the "Vittoriano" in Rome.

The tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a symbol that represents all the fallen Italian soldiers and the missing in the war.

Major General Giulio Douhet (was also an [air power](#) theorist.), was the first who proposed in Italy to honor the Italian war dead with a monument dedicated to the Unknown Soldier in Rome writing his propose in an article in 1920 on the periodical "Duty". Namely on 24 August 1920 he proposed, along the lines of what had happened in other European countries that had taken part in the conflict and where fortunes were various "memorials", to create also in Italy a monument to soldiers killed in the conflict and remained free of identity.

In his article Douhet proposed as a burial place the Pantheon, where there were the tombs of the Savoy and of Raffaello Sanzio and Annibale Carracci. This idea was picked up by Mr Cesare Maria De Vecchi, who presented it to the Chamber of Deputies, in 1921, a bill aimed at building design, also in Italy, of a monument dedicated to all Italian war dead soldiers.

The proposal, to bury the Unknown Soldier in Phanteon was refused: when the law of the Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously on the "Burial of the remains of an unknown soldier" instead chose the Victorian, handing the monument a new solemn and respected role. The law was later passed by parliament on August 4, 1921.

The then Minister of Luigi Gasparotto Guerra then ordered him to collect eleven bodies of soldiers and to choose one to be buried in Rome. The aim was appointed a committee of six soldiers, chosen so that all the army hierarchy were represented: a general, a colonel, a lieutenant and a sergeant mutilated decorated with a gold medal, a corporal and a private soldier decorated with a silver medal.

For the search of the remains, the commission traveled to the areas where the major battles had taken place. They were visited Bush, Dolomites, the highlands, Monte Grappa, Montello, the Lower Piave, Cadore, Gorizia, basso Isonzo, Mount St. Michael and Castagnevizza Karst.

The collection of bodies took place both in the military cemeteries made during or immediately after the war, is digging in battle sites in correspondence of crosses or symbols that indicated a likely burial. The commission was asked that the bodies chosen did not show any sign of recognition, but to have belonged to Italian soldiers. Why they were also discarded cases where a helmet or insignia could bring to a regiment. Each choice body was placed inside a wooden coffin, in such a way that it was impossible to distinguish one from another. The bodies were recently gathered at a time: the first six were transported in Udine October 13th, 1921 and exhibited at the Castle; October 18 he added a seventh, and all were moved to Gorizia, then gathered October 21 in the Church of St. Ignatius was also found when the eighth. On October 27, they reached all eleven the Basilica of Aquileia, where a state funeral and the ceremony of choice were celebrated. The choice of the body was entrusted to Mary Bergamas, mother of Antonio Bergamas lieutenant of the 138th regiment of the brigade Barletta., Volunteer to Gradisca d'Isonzo Austro-Hungarian army who had defected to join the Italian and that he died in battle without his body was never found.

The body of the soldier was chosen on 28 October 1921 in the Basilica of Aquileia. Maria Bergamas was conducted in front of eleven lined coffins. After passing in front of some of them, failed to complete the survey: shouting his son's name, suddenly she slumped to the ground in front of what became the chosen body. The coffin was then placed on the base of a cannon and placed on a railway hearse after being escorted by some veterans decorated with the gold medal for military valor. The other ten corpses remained in Aquileia were buried in the war cemetery that surrounds the Roman temple, in the ten unknown soldiers tomb where years later he was also buried the same Maria Bergamas, symbol of all the mothers who had lost their children because of war.

The journey to Rome began on October 29, 1921. The train, driven by a steam engine, passed to very moderate speed for the stations of Udine, Treviso, Venice, Padua, Rovigo, Ferrara, Bologna, Pistoia, Prato, Florence, Arezzo, Chiusi and Orvieto, to allow people to honor the passage of the corpse. He arrived in Rome on November 2 and was exposed in the Santa Maria degli Angeli basilica until 4 in the morning when it was carried in procession to the Altar of the Fatherland, where he was buried in the presence of King Vittorio Emanuele III. The flags of all the regiments of the Italian armed forces and representatives of the combatants, widows and mothers of the fallen, with King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy on his head, welcomed the arrival of the body moving to meet the Unknown Soldier. The body was buried with solemn ceremony at the Altar of the Fatherland 4 November 1921 on the occasion of National Unity Day and Armed Forces. It was at first placed on the outside, under the statue of the goddess Roma. He was then transferred to the crypt inside the Altar, where it still stands.