

## The Charter of Chivasso

### *Introduction*

The present “Declaration of the representatives of the Alpine populations”, better known as the Charter of Chivasso, was drawn up on 19 December 1943 in Chivasso (Piedmont), during a clandestine conference organized by representatives of the Antifascist Resistance of the Alpine valleys. The small town was chosen because it was halfway between those who came from the Waldensian valleys and the Aosta Valley people, as well as easy to reach from Turin and Milan.

One of the main protagonists of the meeting was the notary Émile Chanoux from the Aosta Valley - who died a few months later in a Fascist prison

The Charter postulated for Italy the transformation into a federal and republican political system on a regional and cantonal basis. It is a fundamental document for historical autonomism, but its audacity still makes it an inspiration for a modern decentralization, a territorialism for the 21st century.

The Charter of Chivasso is dated, but certainly not dusty. His words are incredibly alive. It has the very force of an evangelical “Sermon on the Mount” for those who believe that self-government, at the lowest level permitted by history and nature, is the most humane way for humans to organize themselves politically.

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## The Charter of Chivasso

*“What the representatives of these valleys have stated, applies to all territories”  
[Émile Chanoux]*

*The Charter of Chivasso 1943  
[or Chivasso Declaration]*

We, the populations of the Alpine Valleys,

### NOTING

that the twenty years of leveling and centralizing misgovernment summarized by the brutal and boastful motto of ‘Roma Doma’, have had the following painful and significant results for our Valleys:

POLITICAL OPPRESSION, through the work of its political and administrative agents (soldiers, commissioners, prefects, federal officials, teachers), petty despots who are oblivious and ignorant of any local tradition, of which they were zealous destroyers;

ECONOMIC RUIN, through the dilapidation of forestry and agricultural assets, the ban on emigration with the hermetic closure of the borders, the effective lack of technical and financial organization of agriculture, masked by the empty display of central assistance, and the incapacity to establish a modern tourist structure, respectful of our localities, all of which are conditions that have resulted in Alpine depopulation;

DESTRUCTION OF LOCAL CULTURE, through the suppression of the fundamental language of the area, where it exists, the brutal and clumsy transformation into Italian of local names and inscriptions, the closure of schools and autonomous institutes, a cultural heritage which is also an asset for the purposes of temporary migration abroad.

### AFFIRMING

that freedom of language, like freedom of worship, is an essential condition for the protection of the human personality;

that federalism is the most suitable framework to provide the guarantees of this individual and collective right and represents the solution to the problems of small nationalities and minor ethnic groups, enabling the definitive liquidation of the historical phenomenon of irredentism, guaranteeing in a future European construct the establishment of a stable and lasting peace;

that a democratic republican regime with a regional and cantonal basis is the only guarantee against a return of the dictatorship which found in the centralized Italian monarchic state the ready-made instrument for its domination of the country; that in this democratic-federal regime the working classes must certainly see their rights safeguarded with the appropriate worker autonomy in order to prevent any capitalist return;

and that this would be faithful to the best spirit of the Risorgimento.

WE DECLARE the following.

#### POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY:

In the general framework of the next Italian State, which, economically and administratively, we hope will be organized on federalist criteria and politically on democratic principles, we seek the recognition of the right of the Alpine Valleys to form autonomous political-administrative communities of the cantonal type.

As such, they will be assured, whatever their numerical size, at least one seat in the regional and national legislative assemblies.

The exercise of local, municipal and cantonal political and administrative functions must be entrusted to elements native to the place or having stable residence there for a specific number of years which will be determined by the local assemblies.

#### AUTONOMY OF CULTURE AND SCHOOLS:

Due to their geographical position as intermediaries between different cultures, respect for their traditions and their ethnic personality, and for the advantages deriving from the knowledge of different languages, in the Alpine Valleys a particular cultural and linguistic autonomy must be fully respected and guaranteed, consisting in:

The right to use the local language, where it exists, alongside Italian in all public documents and in the local press.

The right to teach the local language in schools of all levels with the necessary guarantees in competitions so that teachers are suitable to teach it. Teaching will generally be under the control and direction of a local council.

The immediate restoration of all local names.

ECONOMIC AUTONOMY:

To facilitate the development of the mountain economy and consequently combat the depopulation of the Alpine Valleys, the following is necessary:

A comprehensive system of taxation of the industries located in the Alpine cantons [hydroelectric, mining, tourism and processing, etc.], so that a part of their profits returns to the Alpine Valleys and this regardless of whether these industries are collectivized or not.

A system of fair tax reduction that varies from area to area depending on the richness of the land and the prevalence of agriculture, forestry or pastoralism.

A rational and substantial agrarian reform including:

the unification of agricultural family ownership, which is too fragmented today, with the aim of improving business performance through land exchanges and compensation and through adequate legislation;

the technical-agricultural assistance provided by resident personnel, having, for example, teaching duties in local schools, some of whose subject matter may have agricultural relevance;

the strengthening by the local authority of economic life through free production and consumption cooperatives.

The strengthening of industry which leads to the formation of an advanced and capable working class. For this purpose, the control or administration of local businesses may also be entrusted, where necessary, to the regional or cantonal administration, even in the case of collectivist organization, of local enterprises.

The dependence of local public works on the cantonal administration and the latter's control over all services and concessions of a public nature.

We, the representatives of the Alpine Valleys, want to see these principles affirmed by the new Italian State, just as we also want them to be affirmed in the case of those Italians who are or could find themselves under foreign political domination, and we proclaim them today with the certainty that in doing so we are serving the interests and aspirations of all those who, like us, believe in the ideals of freedom and justice.

Chivasso, 19 December 1943