

THE VALUE OF A COMMUNITY

THIENE – SILVER MEDAL FOR MILITARY VALOUR

A long-awaited recognition

The City of Thiene, already awarded the War Merit Cross in recognition of the role it played and the sacrifices it endured during the First World War (1915–1918), has now also received the prestigious Silver Medal for Military Valour for its contribution to the Liberation Struggle between September 1943 and May 1945. The request for this recognition dates back to 1994 and was subsequently updated and strengthened thanks to the new documentation made available in more recent years.

In this latest reopening of the process for awarding Military Valour honours, Thiene is the only city in the Veneto region to have been recognised, thus joining other towns in the Province—such as Vicenza, Bassano del Grappa, Asiago, Schio, Valdagno, Valdastico and Crespadoro—within the framework of honours linked to the Resistance.

A recognition granted so long after the end of the war might at first appear difficult to understand; however, precisely because of its uniqueness and the long process that preceded it, it offers an opportunity and a valuable stimulus to explore and rediscover the history of the City and its territory within the broader context of twentieth-century events.



Thiene, 5 August 1945. Naming of the main square after Giacomo Chilesotti.
Paolo Zamboni Archive

The Partisan Resistance

The term *Resistance* refers to the political and military movements which, after the 8th September 1943, opposed Nazism and Fascism in Italy as part of the wider Liberation War, contributing to the fall of the Italian Social Republic and the defeat of the Third Reich in the country.

In this context, Thiene became a key hub of the Resistance in the northern part of the province of Vicenza, connected to partisan groups operating in the hills and foothill valleys, such as the Mazzini Brigade and the Mameli Brigade. From this experience some leading figures emerged such as those of Giacomo Chilesotti, Rinaldo Arnaldi and Francesco Zaltron, who were all killed in action and awarded the Gold Medal for Military Valour. In addition to these figures, the decisive contribution of young partisan women - including Maria "Mary" Arnaldi, Leda Scalabrin and Maria Erminia Gecchele - must also be considered, as well as the civic and cultural commitment of individuals who later became honorary citizens of the City, such as Monsignor Antonio Zannoni, "Mary" Arnaldi herself and Luigi Meneghello.

What the Medal for Military Valour means

In recent decades, local historians have paid particular attention to the history of the Resistance, also through systematic work collecting and enhancing oral testimonies. On the one hand, many individuals who had previously never spoken, towards the end of their lives chose to share their experiences; on the other, scholars have increasingly recognised this period of Italian history as a decisive turning point, during which the founding values of republican democracy were consolidated.

Within this framework, the Medal for Military Valour awarded to Thiene represents a recognition to the whole civic community and surrounding territory, not only for the sacrifice of those who fell, deportees, internees, forced labourers, women (many of whom served as couriers), and the civilian population, but also for the City's ability to transform the experience of the Resistance into a lasting commitment at an institutional and constitutional level within the new Republic.



“Mary” Arnaldi, an active member of the Mazzini Brigade and the Monte Ortigara Division, receives the Bronze Medal for Military Valour on 7 September 1947. Thiene Photographic Society Archive

What it means to receive the Medal for Military Valour

After decades in which the Tricolour Flag and the National Anthem had been largely confined to sporting events, or the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Italian Unification helped restore their value, recognising them as symbols which allowed to transcend old political divisions and became shared emblems of national unity, so today we are witnessing a rediscovery of local “small homelands” with their distinctive symbols, foremost among them the Gonfalon, the official banner of the local authority.

The Medal for Military Valour, affixed to the gonfalon of our City, helps to strengthen the sense of civic belonging and responsibility in promoting democratic values, as it visibly recalls the dignity, history and shared ideals of the community it represents.

Quotation from the Presidential Decree (no. 2086/2024) for the recognition of the Medal

“An extremely important urban centre in the heart of the Vicenza area, located along a crucial route of fundamental tactical importance towards the passes leading to Austria, it demonstrated from the time of the Great War its absolute dedication to the ideals of the Homeland. Firmly anti-fascist from the grim beginnings of the dictatorship, after the armistice it established one of the first National Liberation Committees, offering a most generous and tragic contribution in blood and suffering unspeakable destruction at the hands of Nazi-Fascist oppressors. In response to the brilliant and daring actions carried out by its partisans, the Nazi-Fascist reacted with cowardly and brutal reprisals, which proved useless in their vain and criminal attempt to break the unshakeable determination and the pure desire for freedom of Thiene’s people. This was expressed through active and committed support for partisan formations and collective assistance to former Allied prisoners, to those persecuted by the revived Fascist regime, to Jews and to their families.”
Thiene (Vicenza), 8 September 1943 – 28 April 1945.

(motivation published in Presidential Decree No. 2086 dated May 13, 2024, regarding the awarding of the Silver Medal for Military Valour to the Municipality of Thiene for partisan activity)



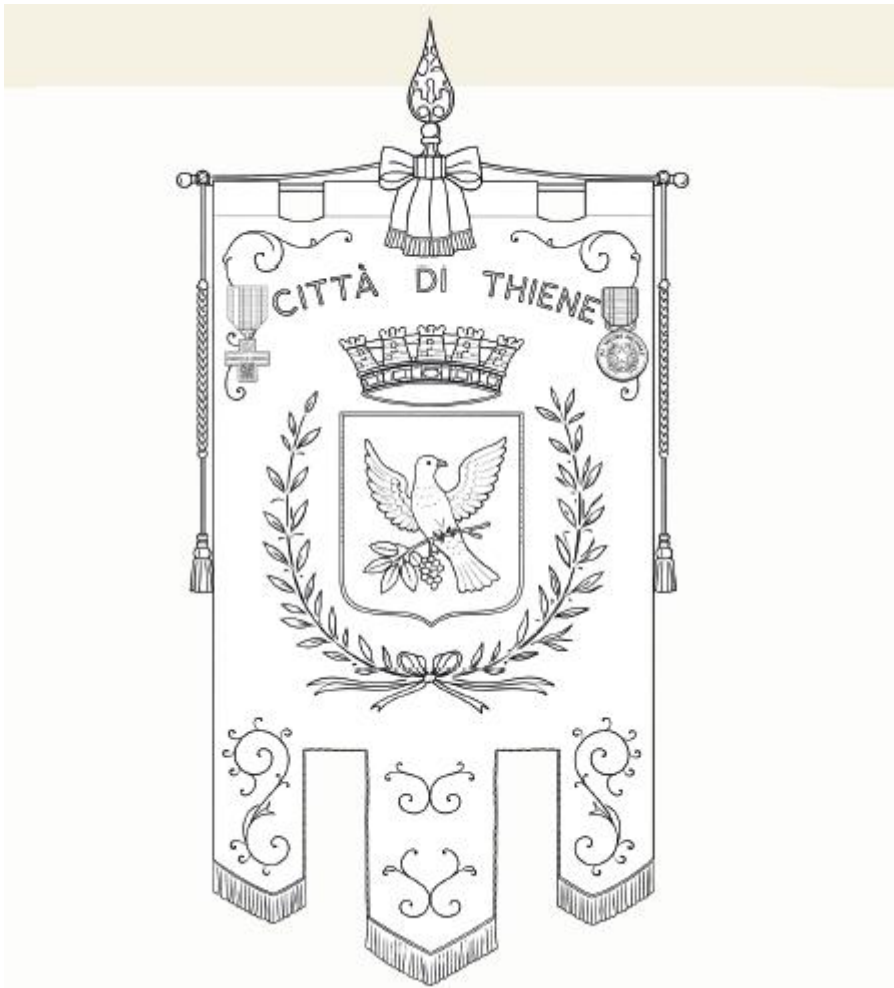
Thiene, 28 October 1945. Former prisoners of war organise a thanksgiving celebration for their return, attending a Holy Mass in suffrage for the fallen and in gratitude.

Section for children

Dear children, your City has always been a special place, because its citizens experienced the two great World Wars with deep involvement and commitment. When you are a little older, try to look through your family documents and public and private archives to discover how your great-grandparents lived in those wars!

During the First World War, Thiene was close to the battle zones and served as a strategic point of reference. During the Second World War, once again, Thiene was very important: in the spring of 1944, the Mazzini Brigade was founded in the Episcopal College (now the Palazzo Cornaggia complex). Together with other partisan brigades, it fought against the Nazi-Fascist regime to achieve freedom and democracy.

Here is the Gonfalon of Thiene, with the Medal: colour the picture



EVENT PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2026

81st Anniversary of Liberation

in collaboration with the Municipality of Zanè

PROGRAMME

In Thiene

9.30 am – Piazza A. Ferrarin: assembly, flag-raising and formation of the procession

10.00 am – Cathedral: Holy Mass

10.45 am – Piazza G. Chilesotti: laying of a laurel wreath at the War Memorial, greeting by the Mayor of the Youth City Council, Jacopo Croin, and speech by the Mayor, Gianantonio Michelusi

In Zanè

12.00 am – Piazzale A. Moro: laying of a laurel wreath at the War Memorial, greeting by the Mayor of the Youth City Council, Sveva Cesaro, and speech by the Mayor, Alberto Busin

SUNDAY 26 APRIL 2026

Ceremony for the awarding of the Silver Medal for Military Valour to the City of Thiene for the active role played in the Liberation Struggle

Programme

10.30 am – Piazza G. Chilesotti: assembly and formation

11.00 am – Official speech by Professor Emeritus of Contemporary History at the University of Padua, Carlo Fumian

Greeting by the Mayor, Gianantonio Michelusi

Reading of the quotation from the Presidential Decree by the President of the City Council, Andrea Zorzan

Affixing of the Silver Medal for Military Valour to the City Gonfalon by the Prefect of Vicenza, Filippo Romano

Blessing by the Parish Priest, Don Giovanni Baldo

Performance by the Lusiana Band

12.00 am – End of the ceremony

Armed Forces, veterans' and Resistance associations, and schools are invited to participate with banners and wide representation.

In case of bad weather, the ceremony on 26 April will take place in the municipal sports hall in Via San Gaetano, 33.

CULTURAL AND COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS

SATURDAY 18 APRIL 2026

6.00 pm – Sala Meneghello, Via Corradini 89 – Thiene

Opening of the historical photographic exhibition:

“The Resistance in Thiene and around it: from German occupation to Liberation”

(municipal archive and private collections)

Opening hours:

Mon 10.00–12.00; Sat & Sun 10.00–12.00 and 15.00–18.00

Exhibition period: 18 April – 3 May - Free admission

SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2026

8.45 pm – Municipal Theatre, Viale Bassani 18 – Thiene

My Name is Mariano

A play inspired by the life of Mariano Bonato, an eighteen-year-old student and martyr of the Resistance in Thiene, performed by the La Zonta Theatre Company - Free admission

MONDAY 27 APRIL 2026

3.00 pm – Piazzale del Bosco: **unveiling of a plaque** in memory of partisans Peppino Lorusso and Mario Novielli, organised by the Friends of the Resistance (ANPI and AVL Thiene)

Civic pilgrimage from Sandrigo to Sarcedo

4.00 pm – Monument in Via Roma, Sandrigo: remembrance of commanders Chilesotti, Carli and Andreetto

Then in Dueville at the Arnaldi family tomb, concluding in Sarcedo at the memorial stones of Alfredo Fabris, Alfredo Talin, Giuseppe Canale, Lino Missaggia and Mariano Bonato

Organised by the Friends of the Resistance (ANPI and AVL Thiene)

For information: amicidellaresistenzathiene@gmail.com

TUESDAY 5 MAY 2026

5.30 pm – Meeting Room, Palazzo Cornaggia, Via Corradini 89 – Thiene

Presentation of the book:

“The Resistance in Vicenza: Studies and Research” (Cierre Edizioni, 2025)

Marina Cenzon, Director of ISTREVI and editor, talks with Ferdinando Offelli

Introduction by Stefano Fracasso, President of ISTREVI - Free admission