

Clandestine textile workshop; there were even children sleeping in there

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All the workers, both men and women, lived in the factory, **they slept and ate in tiny rooms, together with their babies**. This was the nightmare scenario (reminiscent of nineteenth-century slavery) that was discovered in **a textile workshop in Cardano al Campo** by the team of carabinieri of the Department of Labour in Varese, who searched the area, last Thursday, together with the Labour Inspectors, the prevention technicians of the local health authority in Cardano al Campo, and the inspectors of the National Social Security Institute of Varese, with the support of the carabinieri from Gallarate and the local police of Cardano al Campo.

The preventive intelligence work carried out by the carabinieri officers allowed them to identify and monitor (also at night) the factory in question, which was housed in **an old factory shed rented by an Italian** (whose residence is part of the same unit). The situation inside the factory was extremely critical: **under the asbestos roofs, there were 48 sewing machines without safety devices**, and a run-down industrial electrical system “for which there was a high risk of electrocution”; the fire extinguishers had “expired”; there were no panic exits, and the ventilation from the old windows was insufficient.

But the worst was to be found in the **areas destined for the accommodation of the workers**, 12 Chinese immigrants, men and women, some of whom were working illegally. **Some workers slept and ate (even with their babies of only a few months)** inside a number of units built without authorisation, connected to the production department, in terrible conditions of hygiene. Other workers, in the same conditions, had found accommodation on the second floor of the building connected to the headquarters of the company, which was also owned by the Italian who lived just next door.

Together with prevention technicians of the local health authority in Cardano al Campo, the carabinieri **seized the company building, and applied seals**. Measures to stop the Chinese company from operating, because of the “illegal work”, were also taken. Two people were reported to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Busto Arsizio, in particular, the head of the company, a Chinese citizen, was reported for failing to comply with 6 points of safety (for which there is a maximum fine of €30,400); **the Italian who owns the buildings, has been reported for insulting a public officer**, which he did when the criminal investigation department applied the seals to the company. For the illegal employment, the maximum fine is €38,780, plus the sums due for unpaid social security contributions and evaded taxes (which cannot currently be

quantified). The local police headquarters in Cardano al Campo is currently carrying out technical checks on the buildings, and as a result, there will probably be additional measures (order to stop work) and fines for the failure to obtain town planning authorizations and/or certificates of habitability/use and destination of the places under examination.

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