



Antonio Mazzeo's accusation: "In Pistoia, myths, legends, narratives and values of the fascist-war ideology of the Ventennio." Nothing could be further from the truth. Here is why.

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There is a fundamental difference, which should be clear to anyone involved in history and journalism, between commemorating the sacrifice of men who fell in war and glorifying the political regime that sought and fought that war.

A distinction that appears to escape **journalist Antonio Mazzeo**, author of an article entitled «**From Pistoia to Milan, it is time for the Parà and the fascist myth of El Alamein**», in which the commemoration of the 84th anniversary of the Battle of El-Alamein, held on October 23 in Pistoia, is portrayed as an opportunity to dust off the ideology of the Ventennio.

In his article, Mazzeo goes so far as to call the remarks by the Undersecretary of Defense, Senator Isabella Rauti, and the Chief of Staff of the Italian Army, Lieutenant General Carmine Masiello, «ranting,» **attributing an alleged para-fascist and warmongering drift to the elite units of the Armed Forces.**

A serious accusation, which deserves an equally clear response—one based on the facts.

The Paratroopers of Divisione Folgore who faced British forces in the Egyptian desert in the fall of 1942 were Italian servicemen. Many were very young. They fought under extremely difficult conditions, and hundreds of them lost their lives.

Remembering their courage, discipline, and sacrifice does not amount to endorsing fascism, just as paying tribute to those who fell in a war **does not mean sharing the political reasons that caused it.**

The Italian Armed Forces preserve the memory of their fallen through ceremonies, anniversaries, and traditions spanning different historical periods and conflicts. It is a military memory that now belongs to the institutions of the Republic and must **be viewed in light of the Constitution.**

Folgore also fought to liberate Italy from Nazi-fascism

There is a chapter in the history of Italian Paratroopers that makes **the attempt to trace the entire Folgore tradition back to fascist ideology** particularly untenable.

It is the chapter of the War of Liberation, in which Italian parachute units took part, fighting alongside the Allies against German forces.

One of the most significant episodes was **Operazione Herring**, conducted on the night of April 20-21, 1945, when **226 Italian Paratroopers from Squadrone da Ricognizione Folgore**, known as Squadrone F, and Centuria Nembo were airdropped into the Po Valley.

The mission aimed to infiltrate behind German lines, conduct reconnaissance and sabotage operations, and facilitate the advance of Allied forces, contributing to the liberation of the national territory.

It was one of the most important operations in the history of Italian military parachuting and claimed the lives of several men.

It is Esercito Italiano itself that commemorates that feat each year, through the 185^o Reggimento Paracadutisti Ricognizione Acquisizione Obiettivi Folgore, heir to the traditions of Squadrone F. **In April 2026 as well, on the occasion of the 81^o anniversary, the unit commemorated the protagonists and the 33 Fallen of Operazione Herring.**

Here, then, is an essential historical fact: the same Esercito Italiano that on October 23 remembers the Paracadutisti who fell at El-Alamein, in April pays tribute to the Paracadutisti who fought to liberate Italy from Nazi occupation.

Where is the contradiction?

There is none, if one understands that military commemoration is not a retrospective referendum on ideologies, but recognition of the service, courage, and sacrifice of men.

The history of Folgore does not end in 1942. It spans September 8, 1943, the Guerra di Liberazione, the birth of the Republic, and more than eighty years of service to democratic institutions.

Reducing all this to alleged fascist nostalgia means ignoring a fundamental part of its history.

Paola Del Din, the partisan who is Honorary President of ANPd'I

Should further proof be needed of how inappropriate it is to automatically associate the tradition of Italian Paracadutisti with fascism, it would be enough to recall an extraordinary figure: **Paola Del Din, Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare per la Resistenza**, the first Italian woman to make a wartime military parachute jump and, above all, **Honorary President of the Associazione Nazionale Paracadutisti d'Italia.**

Known during the Resistenza by the nom de guerre Renata, **Paola Del Din took part in the struggle against the Nazi-Fascist occupation**, carrying out dangerous liaison missions with Allied forces.

On April 9, 1945, she was air-dropped into Friuli to complete a delicate mission. Despite the injuries she sustained during the landing, she was able to continue with her assignment. For the courage she displayed, she was awarded the Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare.

Today, that same woman is one of the foremost moral figures of ANPd'I.

And this is not merely a ceremonial recognition. **Paola Del Din is remembered and honored every year by ANPd'I**, testifying to the deep respect and affection the Association holds for one of the most significant figures of the Italian Resistenza.

On August 22, 2023, on the occasion of her 100th birthday, Paola Del Din celebrated this extraordinary milestone at the Sezione ANPd'I Nord Friuli, surrounded by Paratroopers from every era and generation, gathered to pay tribute to their Honorary President.

A bond renewed year after year. On August 22, 2026, on the occasion of her 103rd birthday, the National President of ANPDI, **Raider Paratrooper Lieutenant General Marco Bertolini**, sent her an official message of congratulations on behalf of all the Association's Paratroopers, recognizing her as a source of inspiration.

It is therefore legitimate to ask: how can a military specialty that every year honors a leading figure of the Resistance, awarded Italy's highest military honor precisely for fighting Nazism and Fascism, be indiscriminately accused of fascist nostalgia?

Paola Del Din's story demonstrates that **the Maroon Beret is not the preserve of an ideology**. It is the symbol of a military specialty and a tradition that has endured the divisions of Italian history and has ultimately identified with the values of the Republic.

The history of ANPDI: founded to unite, not divide

The history of the **Associazione Nazionale Paracadutisti d'Italia (A.N.P.d'I.)**, guardian of the traditions, memory and values of Folgore and the entire Parachute Specialty, deserves closer examination in order to understand how, even through the deep divisions of the Second World War, it was possible to rediscover a shared identity, overcoming ideological divisions in the name of esprit de corps, national reconciliation and loyalty to republican institutions.

Its origins date back to the immediate postwar period. On January 11, 1946, the Associazione Paracadutisti Italiani (API) was established in Rome. Through subsequent organizational

transformations, it would become today's ANPd'I.

In a country deeply marked by the Second World War, **those veterans chose to come together around a shared military identity.**

Among them were men who had fought on different fronts and who, after September 8, 1943, had made opposing choices.

This does not mean erasing responsibility for the different choices made during the war, nor does it mean equating Fascism and the Resistance historically or politically.

It means recognizing that, once the conflict had ended, **men from even dramatically opposing experiences could come together in a military association within the framework of the institutions of the new Italian Republic.**

Reconciliation does not require rewriting history. **It requires knowing it, respecting it, and not turning every commemoration into a new arena for ideological conflict.**

President Mattarella's words: El-Alamein and the War of Liberation belong to the same national memory

There is also an element that takes on particular significance in light of the controversy surrounding the Pistoia celebrations.

On October 24, 2026, the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, [sent an official message](#) to the National President of ANPd'I, General Marco Bertolini, on the occasion of the Festa della Specialità and the National Gathering.

In his address, the Head of State recalled the valor demonstrated by the Paratroopers on the African front, their participation in the Guerra di Liberazione, and Operation Herring.

Not two competing memories, but chapters of a military history that spans the past and today finds its reference point in the values of the Constitution.

Mattarella also expressed the Republic's gratitude to the women and men who wear the Maroon Beret, for their service to national security and their constitutional loyalty.

This is precisely the purpose of military commemorations: to remember history, honor the Fallen, and pass on to new generations the values of service, responsibility, and belonging to democratic institutions.

To assign a fascist connotation to all this means ignoring the significance that the Republic itself recognizes in those traditions.

From El-Alamein to Milan: two issues that should not be confused

In Mazzeo's remarks, criticism of the commemorations in Pistoia is ultimately linked to the recent deployment of Folgore Paratroopers in Milan as part of Operation Strade Sicure.

In this case as well, however, it is necessary to distinguish between profoundly different issues.

It is entirely legitimate to debate the appropriateness of using highly trained units for surveillance duties and support to urban security. Reservations may be raised about the effectiveness of this type of operation, the operational constraints placed on military personnel, and the use of specialized personnel for tasks that do not match their primary training.

These are serious questions that deserve an equally serious discussion.

But turning a discussion about the use of the Armed Forces into a generalized ideological accusation against their personnel is something else entirely.

Paratroopers do not independently decide where they are deployed. **They answer to the chain of command and to the orders of the competent authorities, in full compliance with the laws of the State.**

This was the case in 1982, when Folgore took part in its first international mission in Lebanon, under the Presidency of the Republic of **partisan Sandro Pertini**. And it remains the case today, in operations conducted on national territory as well as in missions abroad, in the service of democratic institutions, regardless of the political orientation of successive governments.

Describing their deployment in Milan as a «war against minors» means resorting to a polemical image that finds no basis in the nature, objectives, or legal framework of the operation.

Above all, **there is no proven link between commemorating the Fallen of El-Alamein and any alleged intention by Folgore units to pursue political or ideological objectives.**

Security policy decisions can and must be debated. **The professional dignity of the service members called upon to carry them out should not, and must not, become the target of unsubstantiated collective accusations.**

Respect for history is not nostalgia

The Battle of El-Alamein was fought in the context of a war also willed by the fascist regime. That is an incontrovertible historical fact.

But it is equally true that thousands of Italian soldiers fought and lost their lives in that conflict, leaving subsequent generations a testament to human and military sacrifice that deserves to be remembered, **without this implying any endorsement of the political reasons that led to the war.**

The Italian Army commemorates its Fallen because it preserves their memory, not because it lays claim to the ideologies of the governments under which they served.

The Armed Force remembers El-Alamein, but it also remembers Squadrone F, Nembo, and the Paratroopers who contributed to the Liberation. The military association preserves the traditions of the branch and recognizes as its Honorary President a leading figure of the Resistance awarded the Gold Medal for Military Valor.

It is a complex history, marked by heroism, tragedy, divisions, and reconstruction. **A history that cannot be reduced to a political label.**

Journalism has the right, and at times the duty, to criticize institutions, government decisions, and even the way military ceremonies are conducted. **But it should do so by distinguishing historical responsibilities from individuals, ideologies from traditions, and opinions from facts.**

Because remembering a fallen soldier does not mean celebrating war. Recognizing their courage does not mean sharing their cause. And honoring the Paratroopers of El-Alamein does not mean being fascist.

It means, more simply, knowing history and respecting those who paid its highest price.