



Attack on Paratrooper Lieutenant Roberto Bandini, Gold Medal recipient killed at El Alamein, accused of being a “fascist hero.” But history tells a different story.

Published on 28/10/2026

Here we go again. Following the recent [accusations by journalist Antonio Mazzeo against Folgore and the commemorations marking the 84° anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein in Pistoia](#), this time the target is **Paratrooper Lieutenant Roberto Bandini, Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare, who was killed at just 25 during the Second Battle of El Alamein, on October 25, 1942.**

The controversy was raised by the **Osservatorio contro la militarizzazione delle scuole e delle università**, which on October 27, 2026 [published an article](#) entitled «**Colle di Val d'Elsa, fascist hero Bandini commemorated by institutions and schools**», challenging the initiatives organized to remember the Paratrooper in his hometown.

In the article, Bandini is repeatedly described as a «fascist» and a «colonialist.» His commemoration is portrayed as an exercise in indoctrination and a revival of the ideology of the Ventennio, with accusations also directed at the municipal administration and the [Associazione Nazionale Paracadutisti d'Italia](#).

This account deserves to be examined through the facts, before opinions.

Who Roberto Bandini really was

Roberto Bandini was born on **January 28, 1917, in Colle di Val d'Elsa**, in the province of Siena. Enrolled in the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Florence, he interrupted his studies to enlist as a volunteer at the age of 18, taking part in the Ethiopian Campaign of 1935-1936.

After returning to Italy, he was commissioned as a reserve Second Lieutenant in the Granatieri. In September 1937, he returned to East Africa with the XCVII Battaglione, where he remained until November 1939.

He subsequently served in the 3° Reggimento Granatieri, fighting on the Greek front. In October 1941, he was transferred to the **186° Reggimento Fanteria Paracadutisti della Divisione Folgore**, with which he would reach North Africa.

What he did at El Alamein is documented in the citation for the highest decoration for military valor.

El Alamein, October 25, 1942: Roberto Bandini gave his life for Italy

In October 1942, the Divisione Folgore was deployed on the southern front at El Alamein, in the Egyptian desert.

Bandini, a Lieutenant in the 186° Reggimento, **commanded a firing position on the defensive line at Point 125, Qaret el Himeimat.**

Between October 23 and 25, during the major British offensive, his position came under repeated attacks supported by artillery fire.

The citation for the **Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare**, [available on the official website of the Presidenza della Repubblica](#), states that Bandini initially succeeded in halting the enemy advance and restoring the situation with a counterattack.

Wounded for the first time, he remained in command.

When the position came under attack again, he continued fighting despite the losses suffered by his men. **Seriously wounded for a second time, he persisted in the defense.**

Hit for the third time, he fell in close-quarters hand-to-hand combat, after three days of resistance.

He was only **25 years old**.

The official citation recalls his final words:

«Forward, Folgore. Long live Italy».

This is not a fabricated legend. **It is what is stated in the citation for the decoration preserved in the archive of the Presidenza della Repubblica Italiana.**

A Medaglia d'Oro that belongs to Italian military history

The Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare awarded to Roberto Bandini recognizes the conduct of an officer who, despite being wounded repeatedly, continued to lead his men until his death.

It does not reward the aggression against Ethiopia, nor does it constitute recognition of Fascist ideology.

It recognizes a specific act of military valor that took place at El Alamein.

It is possible to condemn Fascism and the regime's wars of aggression without denying the individual courage of those who fought in those wars.

The historical judgment of a conflict's political responsibilities and that of the conduct of individual servicemen do not necessarily coincide.

Confusing them means abandoning a fundamental distinction needed to understand military history.

October 28 and the accusation of celebrating the Marcia su Roma

One of the most controversial passages in the Osservatorio's article concerns the date of the commemoration.

According to the authors, the fact that Bandini is remembered on October 28, the anniversary of the 1922 Marcia su Roma, rather than on October 25, the day of his death, would demonstrate an intention to symbolically evoke the Fascist calendar.

But the documentation tells a more complex story.

On October 28, 2000, the monument dedicated to Lieutenant Roberto Bandini was inaugurated in Colle di Val d'Elsa. In 2025, the municipality expressly marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the monument's inauguration.

There is another, even more significant element, which can be verified through reports of previous commemorations.

In 2023, Roberto Bandini was commemorated on October 25, the exact anniversary of his death.

A fact that disproves what was stated by the Osservatorio, which writes verbatim in its article: *«The event organized by the municipality and the Associazione Paracadutisti d'Italia takes place every October 28».*

October 28 is simply a date close to the anniversary of Roberto Bandini's death, also chosen for organizational reasons, in order to reconcile commitments and ensure the participation of institutions, civilian and military authorities, and the various associations involved in the commemoration.

The mayor commemorating Bandini is not from the right

The political and institutional context also deserves attention.

The Osservatorio article expressly refers to the presence of the mayor of Colle di Val d'Elsa, **Piero Pii**, at the commemorations dedicated to Lieutenant Roberto Bandini.

Piero Pii was elected in June 2024 with **52.54% of the runoff vote**, supported by the civic lists *Colle Domani*, *Piero Pii Sindaco*, and *Su per Colle*, with political backing from **Italia Viva**, **Azione**, and **Movimento 5 Stelle**.

The center-right, represented by Fratelli d'Italia, Forza Italia, and Lega, instead supported its own candidate, Angela Bargi, and is in opposition to the municipal administration.

The mayor taking part in the commemoration of Medaglia d'Oro Roberto Bandini **is therefore not from the right**, but from a civic coalition supported by political forces of different leanings.

The memory of Roberto Bandini has been upheld by city institutions and veterans' associations through administrations of different political orientations.

To attribute a purpose of fascist nostalgia to this continuity of commemoration is to construct an accusation with no basis whatsoever.

The scholarship and students: remembering history does not mean indoctrinating

The Osservatorio also criticizes schools' participation in the commemorations and [the scholarship dedicated to Roberto Bandini](#), claiming that these initiatives constitute a form of militarist indoctrination.

The 2025 edition, organized by the Pro Loco in collaboration with the ANPd'I provincial section of Siena and under the patronage of the Municipality, was aimed at young people between the ages of 14 and 20.

Participants were asked to produce an audiovisual project, with **complete freedom of language and style**, on Bandini, the Battle of El Alamein, and the reasons for his Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare.

Where is the indoctrination?

Studying the life of a serviceman, reconstructing his experiences, and examining the grounds for a Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare does not mean engaging in political propaganda, but learning about a chapter of Italian history.

A school that seriously addresses the past must be able to recount both the responsibilities of fascism and colonial wars **and the individual stories of the men who lived and fought during that period, without confusing judgment of political regimes with recognition of personal valor.**

Reducing every initiative dedicated to a fallen serviceman of the Second World War to an alleged fascist propaganda operation means **replacing historical inquiry with ideological prejudice.**

Folgore and the memory of its fallen

The story of Roberto Bandini is part of the history of the Folgore Division, whose Paratroopers fought at El Alamein in the autumn of 1942.

A history that belongs to the Italian Armed Forces and is now safeguarded by the Army of the Republic.

After all, the history of the paratrooper branch did not end with the war in the Egyptian desert.

After the Armistice of September 8, 1943, **Italian Paratrooper units also fought alongside the Allies against German forces**, contributing to the War of Liberation.

Among the most significant episodes was **Operation Herring**, in April 1945, which saw Italian Paratroopers airdropped behind German lines to help liberate the national territory.

The same Italian Army that remembers Bandini and the fallen of El Alamein also commemorates those who fought against Nazifascism.

There is no contradiction, if one understands that **military remembrance does not require adherence to the ideologies of the governments under which the fallen served.**

Roberto Bandini deserves to be remembered for what he did

Roberto Bandini did not choose the war in which he died, but he chose to serve as a soldier and then as a Paratrooper.

The Italian Republic safeguards the memory of Roberto Bandini through the award of the Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare. The 186th Reggimento Paracadutisti Folgore, now a unit of the Italian Army and the Brigata Paracadutisti Folgore, carries on the traditions of those men within the framework of democratic institutions and the Constitution.

History does not need to erase the political responsibilities of an era in order to recognize the sacrifice of individuals.

Nor should it—must it—be necessary to erase a soldier's courage in order to distance oneself from the regime under which he lived.

Roberto Bandini was 25 when he fell heroically at El Alamein. His story, like that of all Folgore, deserves to be told without reducing it to a political label.

Sources:

- [Presidenza della Repubblica – Roberto Bandini, Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare](#)
- [Associazione Nazionale Combattenti Guerra di Liberazione – Biography of Roberto Bandini](#)
- [Osservatorio contro la militarizzazione delle scuole e delle università – Article of October 27, 2026](#)
- [Comune di Colle di Val d'Elsa – Celebration of the monument's 25th anniversary](#)
- [Istituto del Nastro Azzurro – Commemoration of October 25, 2023](#)
- [ANPd'I – Commemoration of October 28, 2025](#)
- [Comune di Colle di Val d'Elsa – Candidates and lists for the 2024 local elections](#)
- [BrigataFolgore.net – Response to Antonio Mazzeo's accusations regarding the Pistoia commemorations](#)