June 2nd: History and Values of Italy's Parade

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Since its first edition in 1948, the June 2nd Parade has represented one of the most solemn and symbolic moments in the life of the Italian Republic. Celebrating the birth of the republican state has meant, from the beginning, reaffirming the commitment to the founding values of the Constitution: freedom, democracy, and peaceful coexistence. Values hard-won and solemnly preserved over time, also through the symbolic language of the Armed Forces.

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1948: the birth of the parade and the assumption of command

The first Parade took place just two years after the June 2nd, 1946 referendum. In front of the Altare della Patria, an impressive interforce deployment paid homage to the young Republic. The President of the Republic, Luigi Einaudi, in receiving the salute of the Flags of the deployed Units, symbolically assumed – as provided by art. 87 of the Constitution – the command of the Armed Forces. A ceremony that also visually sealed the continuity between State and Defense.

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That first parade, strictly static, featured nine regiments among Army, Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri, Bersaglieri of the 3rd regiment, artillery, tanks, and mounted soldiers. A clear signal

of unity and national rebirth.

Evolutions and historical moments: the parade over the years

Already in 1949, the year of Italy's entry into NATO, the celebration took on a broader dimension: ten Italian cities simultaneously hosted military ceremonies, from Pordenone to Latina, from L'Aquila to other symbolic locations.

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In 1950, the parade was for the first time included in the official program of the Republic Day, becoming since then an integral part of the celebrations. In 1961, on the occasion of the centenary of Italy's Unification, parallel parades were also held in Turin and Florence, symbolic capitals of the Risorgimento.

In 1965, fifty years after Italy's entry into the First World War, the banners of the dissolved Units that had fought in the Great War also paraded. In 1975, for the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, the Flag Groups of the regular and irregular formations of the Resistance appeared, along with the Banners of the cities decorated with the Gold Medal for Military Valor.

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Suspensions, resumptions, and new traditions

The parade was first interrupted in 1976 due to the earthquake in Friuli: instead of the parade, a wreath was laid at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The following year, in 1977, a ceremony was still held in Piazza Venezia, with a Brigade made up of 43 companies representing all the Armed Forces and State Corps.

From 1978 to 1982, reasons related to austerity led to a suspension of the event. It was only in 1983 that the parade was reinstated, this time along the Aventine – Porta San Paolo route, on the first Sunday of June.

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Since 2016, the ceremony has been enriched with a new symbolic gesture: it is the Mayors, representing the over 8,000 Italian municipalities, who open the parade, emphasizing the link between local institutions and the Republic.

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed the suspension of public celebrations. However, starting from 2022, the parade on Via dei Fori Imperiali returned to being the heart of the June 2nd celebrations, restoring to the citizens that collective moment of pride, memory, and national identity.