



September 10, 1943, Alberto Bechi Luserna died: 83 years ago the sacrifice of one of the symbolic figures of the Folgore

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Eighty-three years ago, on **September 10, 1943**, in the dramatic hours following the armistice, **Lieutenant Colonel Alberto Bechi Luserna** fell at age 39 in Sardinia.

His is not merely the story of an officer decorated for Military Valor. Bechi Luserna is one of the figures who most contributed to building the identity of Italian paratroopers: commander in North Africa, protagonist of the Battle of El Alamein, writer and man of culture, Chief of Staff of the "Nembo" and a figure directly linked even to the birth of the name "**Folgore**".

Bechi Luserna and the birth of the "Folgore"

In July **1942** the parachute division was transferred to North Africa under the cover name of **185th Division "Cacciatori d'Africa"**, so as not to immediately reveal to the enemy the true

nature of the formation.

In command was General **Enrico Frattini**.

On **July 27, 1942** the formation officially assumed the designation of **185th Parachute Division "Folgore"**.

And it is precisely here that the role of Alberto Bechi Luserna emerges.

The name "Folgore" is traced back to the Latin motto "**Ex Alto Fulgor**", originally adopted by the **1st Parachute Regiment**, which with the subsequent reorganization assumed the designation of **187th Parachute Regiment**.

According to the historical tradition of the specialty, it was then **Major Alberto Bechi Luserna** who chose that formula, drawing inspiration from the words with which the chaplain of the paratroopers **Don Augusto Moglioni** had concluded a letter addressed to him.

From that "**Ex Alto Fulgor**" would then derive the name "**Folgore**" assumed by the Division. And the link with those origins has remained intact: even today "**Ex Alto Fulgor**" is the motto of the **187th Parachute Regiment "Folgore"**.

The IV Battalion and the war in the desert

Bechi Luserna had personally requested to transfer to the new specialty of paratroopers.

With the rank of Major he established and trained the **IV Parachute Battalion**, a unit in which also served officers destined to become legendary figures of the Folgore, such as **Guido Visconti di Modrone** and **Costantino Ruspoli di Poggio Suasa**.

On July 15, 1942 he reached North Africa with the Division.

In October of the same year, during the **Second Battle of El Alamein**, Bechi Luserna also assumed command of the **187th Parachute Regiment "Folgore"**, directing the defense of the northern sector of the Division, between the so-called "Mined Pocket" and the heights of **Deir el Munassib**.

The Folgore fought in extremely difficult conditions against forces vastly superior in men, armored vehicles, artillery and logistical availability.

It was in those days that the name of Italian paratroopers entered military history definitively.

For his conduct at El Alamein, Bechi Luserna received an additional **Bronze Medal for Military Valor**.

"The boys of the Folgore" and the inscription of El Alamein

Bechi Luserna was not only a commander, but also a writer and man of culture.

One of the most celebrated texts of the memory of the **Folgore at El Alamein** is linked to him. The inscription placed at the entrance of the **Italian Military Sanctuary of El Alamein** indeed draws from his writing, *The boys of the Folgore*, dedicated to the paratroopers who fell in the battle:

*Among the sands no longer deserted
here stand on guard for eternity the boys of the Folgore
the very flower of a people and of an armed Army.
Fallen for an idea, without regret, honored in the memory even of the same enemy,
they point out to Italians, in good and adverse fortune,
the path of honor and glory.
Traveler, stop and show reverence.
God of Armies,
receive the spirits of these boys in that corner of sky
that you reserve for martyrs and Heroes.*

Words that have crossed over eighty years of history and that still today welcome those who enter the Sanctuary, inextricably binding the name of **Alberto Bechi Luserna** to the memory of the paratroopers of the Folgore who fell in the Egyptian desert.

In the postwar period his writings and his diary were collected in the volume "**The boys of the Folgore**", edited by Paolo Caccia Dominioni, contributing decisively to passing down from within the experience of the Division and the memory of the Battle of El Alamein.

From Folgore to "Nembo"

After the Battle of El Alamein, Bechi Luserna was promoted to **Lieutenant Colonel**.

On **November 4, 1942**, following the Folgore's retreat, he was recalled to Italy and appointed **Chief of Staff of the 184th Parachute Division "Nembo"**.

The bond between the two great units was extremely close.

Nembo represented the continuation of the experience gained with Folgore and brought together men, traditions, and units formed during the major expansion of Italian paratroops.

When **September 8, 1943** arrived, Nembo was deployed in Sardinia, mainly in the Campidano area.

The announcement of the armistice plunged the Italian Armed Forces into one of the most difficult situations in their history.

Uncertain orders, isolated units, Germans who until the day before were allies and now potentially enemies.

A dramatic crisis also opened within "Nembo".

The XII Battalion Decides to Follow the Germans

The **XII Battalion**, commanded by Major **Mario Rizzatti**, together with an Artillery Battery, decided to leave the Division and join the German forces of the **90th Panzergrenadier**, who were withdrawing across Sardinia toward Corsica.

The Commander of Nembo, General **Ercole Ronco**, attempted to bring the units back under Italian discipline.

Bechi Luserna, however, decided to do something more.

He went **personally** to meet the men who had abandoned the Division.

An extremely risky choice, made in hours when no one could really know what direction the country would take and when the fronts were forming in the chaos following the armistice.

Accompanying him was a small escort of Carabinieri.

The Last Journey to Macomer

On September 10, Bechi Luserna headed toward **Macomer** in an attempt to reach the unit and convince the paratroopers to return to the ranks.

His intention was clear: to recall the men to the oath they had taken and prevent them from continuing with the German forces headed toward Corsica.

Near **Borore**, the vehicle in which he was traveling was stopped at a checkpoint.

A harsh confrontation followed.

During the altercation, Bechi Luserna was mortally struck by a burst of machine-gun fire. In the incident, one of the Carabinieri in his escort also died.

Thus ended, at only 39 years old, the life of one of the most representative officers of Italian military paratroopers.

The Body Thrown into the Strait of Bonifacio

The affair did not end with his death.

The officer's body was transported toward northern Sardinia and subsequently thrown into the sea in the **Strait of Bonifacio**, off Santa Teresa Gallura.

In that area, in the place now remembered as **Punta Bechi**, a granite cross was later erected in his memory.

A place that still today physically links Sardinia to the history of the Folgore officer.

The Gold Medal for Military Valor

To the memory of Alberto Bechi Luserna, the **Gold Medal for Military Valor** was granted.

The official citation remembers an officer of elevated moral and intellectual qualities, decorated for valor on multiple occasions, who faced with the defection of one of his own units decided to reach it personally with a reduced escort.

Even when confronted with weapons, Bechi did not give up his attempt to lead the men back to duty:

Officer of elevated moral and intellectual qualities, decorated for valor on multiple occasions, chief of staff of a parachute division, at the time of the armistice, faithful to the oath taken and animated only by inexhaustible faith and complete dedication to the

Fatherland, he unhesitatingly assumed, against German intrigues and abuses, his new position in combat.

Having learned that one of his dependent units, incited by some troublemakers, had sided with the Germans, he proceeded, with a small escort and through an area threatened by enemy armored vehicles, to that unit itself to recall them to duty.

Confronted with weapons in hand by the most ardent instigators of the seditious movement, he did not desist from his noble intent, until, struck down, he fell among those he had attempted to lead back to the path of duty and honor. Thus he crowned, with the conscious sacrifice of his life, his existence as a valiant soldier, continuator of a glorious family tradition of heroism.

— Sardinia, September 10, 1943.

83 years later

Today, **September 10, 2026**, exactly **83 years** have passed since the death of Alberto Bechi Luserna.

But his name continues to live in the history of Italian paratroopers.

It is linked to the birth of the Folgore, to the motto **“Ex Alto Fulgor”**, to the IV Battalion, to the 187th Regiment, to the Battle of El Alamein, to the “Nembo” Division and to the tragedy of September 8.

It is also linked to the words with which he wanted to tell the story of his men, those **“boys of the Folgore”** whom he had commanded in the desert.

Soldier, commander and writer, Alberto Bechi Luserna thus represents one of the threads that unite the birth of the paratrooper specialty, the legend of El Alamein and the dramatic choices that Italy had to face in September 1943.

Eighty-three years later, his name remains part of the history of the **Folgore**.