



The Tricolor, Sacred Symbol of the Nation: History, Identity, and Civic Consciousness

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The Tricolor is not just a simple symbol: it is the **visual synthesis of the history, sacrifice, and identity** of the Italian people. It is the emblem under which generations of Italians have fought, suffered, built, and defended the very idea of a **Nation**.

In this context, the conference “The History of the Italian Flag in the National Unification Process” organized by the Army Military Command “Emilia-Romagna” at the Unified Army Club of Bologna takes place. An initiative that, although starting from an informative event, assumes a deeper value: that of recalling the **authentic meaning of the Tricolor as a sacred symbol of the Republic**.

General of the Army Corps retired Pietro Tornabene guided the attendees on a journey that was not only historical but also about identity. Because talking about the Tricolor means talking about Italy itself, its roots, and its evolution.

The presence of high school students from the Metropolitan City of Bologna was a central element. Transmitting the value of the flag to younger generations means **ensuring continuity to national consciousness**. The Tricolor does not belong to the past: it is a living heritage that demands to be understood, respected, and preserved.

It is no coincidence that military institutions promote these initiatives. The Italian Army, custodian of traditions and values, recognizes in the flag not only a symbol but a **moral point of reference**. Defending the Tricolor means defending the **unity, freedom, and dignity of the Country**.

The Roots of the Tricolor: Birth and Affirmation in the Unification Process

To truly understand the value of the Tricolor, it is necessary to return to its origins. The Italian flag was officially born on **January 7, 1797, in Reggio Emilia**, when the Parliament of the Cispadane Republic decreed the adoption of the green, white, and red banner on the proposal of **Giuseppe Compagnoni**, a figure considered the “father of the Tricolor.”

Initially linked to movements inspired by the French Revolution, the Tricolor originated from a military and political context: it was used to distinguish Italian units within the Napoleonic armies. However, even at this stage, the banner began to take on a deeper meaning, becoming a **symbol of freedom and national aspiration**.

The colors themselves tell a story: the green, probably derived from the uniforms of the Milanese Civic Guard; the white and red, already present in the coat of arms of the city of Milan. Over time, these colors were attributed an increasingly shared symbolic value: green as **hope**, white as **faith**, and red as **sacrifice**.

After Napoleon's fall in 1814, the Tricolor was temporarily suppressed but never disappeared from collective memory. It continued to be displayed by patriots in revolutionary movements, becoming the **distinctive sign of unification aspirations**.

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Historical evolution of the Italian Tricolor. Source: italiani.it

In 1848, during the First War of Independence, the Tricolor was adopted by the Kingdom of Sardinia and progressively became the **symbol of the struggle for unity**. With the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, it definitively assumed the role of **national flag**.

After the birth of the Republic in 1946, the Savoy coat of arms was removed, restoring the Tricolor to its essential form as a symbol of a **sovereign people**.

From a military banner to a national symbol: the Tricolor has accompanied every phase of Italian history, becoming the **visible sign of collective identity**.

The Value Today: Memory, Education, and National Spirit

In the contemporary world, the greatest risk is not the loss of symbols, but the loss of their meaning. This is precisely why initiatives like the one promoted by the Army Military Command “Emilia-Romagna” are of fundamental importance.

At the Bologna conference, the Army Military Commander “Emilia-Romagna”, **Colonel Nicola Perrone**, was present, who in his introductory speech highlighted the role of the Armed Forces in the **dissemination of the culture of Defense** and in the **civic education of younger generations**. A commitment that translates into concrete activities capable of bringing citizens closer to the founding values of the Republic.

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General C.A. (ret.) Tornabene with Col. Perrone. Source: Italian Army.

The Tricolor is not an object to be displayed only at official celebrations. It is a **living symbol** that requires awareness. It represents a **common hope** capable of uniting Italians beyond differences.

Educating young people to respect the flag means educating them to citizenship. It means transmitting the **sense of belonging**, the value of sacrifice, and respect for institutions. The history of the Tricolor teaches that national unity is not a given, but a **conquest built over time**.

The Armed Forces, in this context, play an essential role not only on the operational level but also culturally. Through dissemination activities, they contribute to **keeping historical memory alive** and strengthening the bond between the State and citizens.

The Tricolor, therefore, remains a **fixed point**. Not only a symbol of the Republic but a concrete representation of what unites Italians beyond differences.

And precisely for this reason, the Tricolor is not just a flag: it is a **heritage to honor, defend, and pass on**.

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