The University for Foreigners of Siena cancels internships with the Navy: a missed opportunity in the name of prejudice

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The recent decision by the **University for Foreigners of Siena** to cancel internships with the **Italian Navy** has sparked a heated debate in the political and academic world. The Academic Senate, led by rector **Tomaso Montanari**, already known for the foibe case, justified the choice with the changed political context and an alleged "militaristic rhetoric" growing in the country. **However, this decision appears to be a serious mistake that deprives young people of an important educational opportunity and penalizes one of Italy's most internationally recognized excellences.**

Rector **Tomaso Montanari** justified the decision as an act of responsibility towards the international context, denouncing the **growing influence of the military world in universities**. He highlighted the paradox of an Italy that **reduces education funding** by over

half a billion, while **increasing military spending** by three billion, reaching **35 billion euros**. According to Montanari, **ten billion** would be allocated to "war training" programs, reinforcing his opposition to academic collaboration with the Armed Forces.

The precedent: when Montanari attacked the Day of Remembrance

Rector Tomaso Montanari is no stranger to criticism and controversy. **On the eve of the Day of Remembrance**, dedicated to the memory of the victims of the **foibe** and the **Julian-Dalmatian exodus**, the rector organized a conference titled: **“Political use of memory and fascist revanchism: the genesis of the Day of Remembrance”**. A choice that reignited debates about his role and his vision of **Italian history**.

In his speech, **Montanari** described the **Day of Remembrance** as “a historical falsification desired by the right-wing”, arguing that the celebration has become a tool of **“fascist revanchism”**. According to the rector, it is not about denying the tragedies of the **foibe**, but about denouncing the **political and instrumental use of historical memory.**

His statements prompted reactions from associations like the **National Association Venezia Giulia and Dalmatia**, which recall how the drama of the **350,000 people forced into exodus** has long been ignored by the **Italian national conscience**.

The University and the Military World: An Opportunity, not a Danger

The **Italian Navy** is a primary institution for national defense and international security. In addition to its operational missions, it plays a fundamental role in training, research, and international cooperation. The **Mare Aperto** project, in which students from the University for Foreigners of Siena participated, represented a unique experience to learn in the field values such as **discipline, teamwork, leadership, and responsibility**.

Cancelling this collaboration means not only interrupting a growth channel for young people but also depriving them of a concrete perspective of entering a highly qualified professional world.

The idea that the military world is an invasive or dangerous entity for the academic environment is an ideological and anachronistic vision. In many nations, the **Armed Forces** closely collaborate with universities to promote technological innovation, advanced training, and the enhancement of professional skills. Students involved in the Mare Aperto project would have had the opportunity to experience an educational experience in a high-level context, acquiring practical and theoretical skills useful for their future.

An ideological choice that penalizes the future

Depriving students of this opportunity sends a negative message: it fuels the idea that the military world is incompatible with culture and academic training. In reality, the **Armed Forces** are often a place of growth for young people, offering **discipline, culture, and skills** that can be applied in various professional fields. Moreover, the Navy is not only synonymous with defense but also with **humanitarian operations**, sea rescue, and environmental protection, all activities of high ethical and social value.

The University for Foreigners of Siena has preferred to orient itself towards collaborations with organizations like **Emergency and Doctors Without Borders**, excluding any relationship with the military sector. While humanitarian volunteering is undoubtedly a commendable choice, it is not in contrast with the training opportunity offered by the Navy.

The two realities can coexist, enriching the educational offer and giving young people the opportunity to freely choose the path that best suits their aspirations.

Conclusion

The decision of the University for Foreigners of Siena to interrupt internships with the Navy appears to be a mistake that deprives students of an important growth experience. The **Italian Armed Forces** represent an internationally recognized excellence and a high-level educational opportunity. Instead of closing the doors to these collaborations, universities should encourage dialogue and cooperation, offering young people a wider range of choices for their future.

Education should not be bent to ideological prejudices, but open to all realities that can enrich the cultural and professional background of Italian students.