



Interview with Antonio Marzo

Carabinieri's protection of our environmental heritage on display in New York: true Italian excellence

by Umberto Mucci

For me, the Carabinieri Corps has always been a symbol of the respect owed to the Italian institutions: and I am not the only one in Italy to believe so. It is always a pleasure, therefore, to be able to host a Cara-

biniere on We the Italians.

This very welcome occasion is thanks to an exhibition that will be hosted by the UN Secretariate building in New York in May, describing

the achievements and merits of the Carabinieri Corps in protecting our environmental heritage. I welcome with pleasure and gratitude General Antonio Marzo, Commander of the Carabinieri's Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units.

General Marzo, welcome to We the Italians. The first question concerns you personally: in your long and prestigious career, which contacts did you have with the United States of America?

During my professional life, in the various positions I have held in the territory or at the Carabinieri General Headquarters, I have had the opportunity to work with American military organizations and colleagues on several occasions, to the extent that we have even become friends, as is to be expected among people belonging to different countries but with the same matrix of values and culture.

I am also delighted to be in the United States for the first time, and in particular in New York City where, in addition to representing the Ca-



rabinieri Corps at the United Nations headquarters and publicizing its commitment to defending Italy's territory, biodiversity and natural beauty, I also have the personal opportunity to retrace the life of my paternal grandfather who emigrated to the US for work in the early 20th century, living in this city for about 20 years.

I must confess that, personally, the Carabinieri Corps has always been the Italian institution that commands my utmost respect and gratitude. If you were to describe the Carabinieri to our Italian American readers and explain why they are different from other institutions, what words would you choose?

The Carabinieri Corps is 'the People's Corps'. A popular institution, which has always recruited its personnel among the ordinary people, rooted in the Italian history and tradition since before the Italian Nation was formed, which the Cara-



binieri have, moreover, contributed to the birth and growth, even with heroic sacrifices, and of which today constitutes one of the most important factors of cohesion and identity recognition.

In addition to all cities, the Carabinieri are in fact the only national institution to be widely present, with their reassuring action of proximity to the people and their needs, in small towns, in ancient country villages and, for some years now, with the annexation of the State Forestry Corps and the establishment of the Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units, also in areas with little human presence, in Nature Reserves and National Parks, where our great heritage of biodiversity is preserved, which the Carabinieri have the task of protecting and increasing, in fulfilment of a delicate and exciting mission now validated by our Constitution.

You are at the head of the Carabinieri's Comando Unità Forestali Ambientali e Agroalimentari (Carabinieri Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units), which boasts a centuries-long commitment to nature protection and conservation. How does your group operate, and how vast is the Italian heritage it protects?

The Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units (CUFA) represents today, in terms of staffing



levels and number and kind of specialized units, a unique institution worldwide, dedicated to a strategic mission such as the protection of a primary interest for the wellbeing and safety of the entire community, also due to the wide horizontal and transnational dimension in which the perception of the dangers connected to the violent deterioration of environmental conditions is concretely manifested. With its approximately 7,000 military personnel, to which more than 1,300 civilian workers must be added, the Command of Forestry, Environ-





mental and Agrifood Units operates in the four operational sectors of Forest and Parks Protection, Biodiversity Protection, Environmental Protection and Agri-food Protection.

Within the Forest and Parks Protection Command there is also the Nucleo Informativo Antincendio

Boschivo, NIAB (Intelligence Center for Forests Firefighting) for statistical and criminal analysis and technical-scientific-operational support to the 83 Nuclei Investigativi di Polizia Ambientale - NIPAAF (Investigative Centers of Environmental Police), and a Forest Fire Task Force of 45 military personnel on 12/24-hour opera-

tional readiness. The incisiveness of the CUFA's operational set-up, and the consequent perception of safety that it gives back to the community, is determined by the action of the Environmental Protection and Agri-food Protection departments, but above all by the capabilities expressed by the Biodiversity Protection Command, which, with its 28 departments located throughout the country, manages 20 state-owned areas and 130 state nature reserves: an ideal green backbone, extending over 130.000 hectares, which, from Aspromonte to Tarvisio, preserves the distillate of the country's protected areas and represents a unique and coherent management model.

Added to this valuable activity is the capillary and incisive action of the 950 Forestry and Park Stations, which work alongside the territorial Carabinieri to achieve that proximity that represents a bulwark against the spread of tampering and environmental crimes, capable not only of countering and reducing their negative effects, but also of an intelligent and far-sighted action of prevention, developed with numerous training and information initiatives in favor of Schools, Associations and Public Administrations, and

with the systematic intensification of training programs of the new Carabinieri Forestali of every role on the various issues concerning the protection of the environment.

With regard to the propensity to develop new operational methodologies, I would like to emphasize how the Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units, thanks to the institutional synergies consolidated in the Defense-Security sector, has launched a program for monitoring spectral anomalies, the Smart Forest Monitoring, with the aim of creating an advanced satellite system to detect environmental anomalies in real time and determine the immediate intervention of the most appropriate units throughout the country. The project was also presented at the World Forestry Congress held in Seoul (South Korea) from May 2 to 6 last year, where the commitment to defending forests and the high level of technology achieved by the Carabinieri was recognized.

Next May 22, as every year, we celebrate World Biodiversity Day. What are the most unique features of Italian excellence in this field?





Italy, due to its particular geographical conformation and climate conditions, is the country with the highest concentration of biodiversity in Europe. This unique natural heritage is home to particularly diverse and complex ecosystems where a large number of rare and endangered plant and animal species find refuge.

The ecosystems present in Italy are therefore home to an enormous variability of animal plant species, thanks to the great variety of environments present: from the warm coasts of southern Sicily, where sub-Saharan species are common, to the Apennine and Alpine ranges

where it is not difficult to encounter micro-ecosystems with Arctic species.

This is an enormous richness, environmental, genetic, naturalistic, but also cultural and social: because the variability of ecosystems in many areas of the country is associated with a multiplicity of cultures, customs and local habits where human life in harmony with nature is, and always has been, unquestionably normal long before the concept of sustainability was introduced.

This environmental and cultural variability determines an enormous agro-biodiversity that, as we know,

is the most important in the world, in terms of quantity but above all in terms of quality. This national heritage, precisely because of its extraordinary value, must be the subject of special and renewed protection, also in the light of the recent and important amendment of Articles 9 and 41 of our Constitution, which place the protection of the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, especially in the interest of future generations, among the founding values of our legal system.

To celebrate World Biodiversity Day, the Command you lead has created an installation that will be displayed at the UN Glass Palace in New York. Please give us more details about the partners, timing and content of this initiative

May is the month in which World Biodiversity Day is celebrated and, on this occasion, the Carabinieri Corps wants to raise public awareness of the extraordinary wealth of biodiversity found throughout Italy and of the indispensable need to preserve its integrity.

As part of environmental diplomacy initiatives aimed at promoting Italy's commitment to protecting the environment, the Command of Forestry, Environmental and Agrifood Units, under the coordination of the Permanent Representation of Italy to the United Nations, in collaboration with the Italian Air Force, Leonardo and Telespazio Companies, will hold an exhibition on the activities of this Command to be held in New York from May 8 to 18 at the UN Secretariate Building, in prepara-





tion for World Biodiversity Day.

The exhibition will tell the story of the Carabinieri's centuries-long commitment to the protection and conservation of nature and will highlight, in particular, CUFA's commitment to the protection and conservation of biodiversity. Through an imaginative journey through Italy's extraordinary natural environments, it will also be possible to get to know its most remote secrets and appreciate the commitment and skills deployed by the Carabinieri to defend our country's precious natural treasures.

I read that the installation was realized with the aid of cutting-edge technology and interactive media of great emotional impact, desi-





igned entirely by Micromegas, a leading Italian company in institutional and corporate communication. Can you tell us more?

The idea behind the installation is to take the visitor inside a virtual forest. With the aid of cutting-edge audiovisual technologies and highly interactive computer supports of great emotional impact, it will be possible to discover the enormous wealth of Italian biodiversity exploding in its many forms and colors, where every sound, every tree, every living form are fragments of the heritage that we have the task of preserving for future gene-

rations. A conceptual forest that sums up all the facets and extraordinary places that must be guarded and preserved.

Particular attention will also be paid to the involvement and participation of visitors, for whom short thematic meetings with organized groups or particular stakeholders can be planned thanks to special structures integrated into the installation. It is a forest of wonders, a dynamic museum that puts us in touch with the hidden corners of Italy and shows us how the Carabinieri Corps is committed, through its dedicated branches spread

throughout the country, to preserving this priceless heritage.

Italian biodiversity explodes in its many forms and colors; every sound, every tree, every living form are fragments of the heritage that we must preserve and improve. It is for this noble objective that we have designed this exhibition to consolidate, in the consciousness of all those who visit it, the awareness of the need to continue, through knowledge, on the difficult road of defending and conserving nature. Particular attention was also paid to the materials with which the installation was made. The timber, belonging to four different species (beech, fir, ash and oak) comes from plants that died of natural causes within the nature reserves managed by the Carabinieri for biodiversity. This wood continues to represent an important carbon sink. In fact, the entire structure weighs about 3,200 kg and represents a reservoir of about 6,500 kg of CO₂.

Surely innovative for events of this type was then the idea of calculating the carbon footprint and, above all, the related neutralization measures, the evaluation of which was entrusted to the University of Tuscia. In short, the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) system was used to calculate the carbon dioxide equivalent that all phases of the exhibition's realization have produced

and will produce.

Following this study, possible forms of mitigation, necessary to reduce the carbon footprint generated to zero, were then evaluated, which include the adoption of interventions that could lead to the absorption of an equal amount of carbon dioxide.

As is well known, one of the most widespread and certainly most efficient forms of mitigation is the planting of trees in areas without vegetation. Therefore, in order to make the exhibition Carbon Free, the planting of approximately 5500 trees was estimated to be sufficient. To this end, the Biodiversity Group has already identified more than 6,000 plants of different species, produced by its own forest nurseries in Pieve Santo Stefano (Tuscany) and Peri (Veneto), which will be planted next autumn in already identified areas managed by the Carabinieri Biodiversity Grouping.

These plants will allow the carbon dioxide produced by the event to be absorbed in one year while producing a positive balance for the rest of their lives. The trees planted will, in fact, form new forest structures that, in addition to continuing to absorb carbon dioxide for the rest of their lives, will produce all the other positive effects that a forest can determine, first

and foremost the improvement of biodiversity.

For a project of this magnitude, we chose Micromegas Comunicazione, a private independent operator, a leader in Europe in the area of Event Management and integrated communication. Its core-business is the design, implementation and management of major institutional, corporate, financial and marketing events. An Italian excellence that also produces projects, servi-

ces and digital platforms with high added value, offering its national and international clients the development of innovative content and technologies in all areas of multi-channel communication. The company, which holds numerous quality certifications according to the ISO standard, has offices in Rome and Milan and is the curator of the Italian Biodiversity Keepers exhibition on behalf of the Carabinieri Corps.

