

# **A LOYOLA ROME STUDENT'S GUIDE TO WORLD WAR II IN ROME & ITALY**

By  
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Loyola University Rome Center 1968-69

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## DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Guide to World War II in Italy and Rome is dedicated to those who served the Allied cause in the Italian War of Liberation 1943-45. Of special remembrance are the five Loyolans who, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, “gave the last full measure of devotion” on Italian soil: John J. Burke, John L. Carmody, Kenneth E. Krucks, Thomas A. McKitrick and Dean P. Reinert.

John Felice, founder and guiding light of the Loyola Rome Center for thirty years and whose name was given to the Campus in 2004, was an intelligence officer in the British Eighth Army seconded to the American 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 47<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Light) in preparation for the invasions of Sicily and the Italian mainland. John, who first inspired this Guide, passed away in January 2008, having lived the life of a great man.

Another who served was the author's uncle, Edward O'Connor. Anxious to catch up with his older brother, the author's father, Philip J., who was serving in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific, found himself part of a 5-inch gun crew aboard the light cruiser *USS Philadelphia*. Before his nineteenth birthday, Eddie O'Connor participated in the invasion of Sicily, the landing at Salerno, the *sbarco* at Anzio-Nettuno followed by four months of daily missions from Naples to shell German forces besieging the beachhead, and the invasion of Southern France. The *Philadelphia*, which the Germans repeatedly claimed to have sunk, acquired the nickname *Galloping Ghost of the Sicilian Coast*. On liberty he saw the destruction in Naples and -- a kid from Queens, New York, was able to see a Rome preserved.

This Guide is also dedicated to Terry Barnich, the author's close friend and colleague for twenty years and his officemate in the US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. Terry was killed in Fallujah, Iraq on Memorial Day 2009 while on reconstruction mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He exemplified the unselfish tradition of American citizens who leave all behind to serve their country in a time of trouble.

The late Charles O'Reilly, Professor Emeritus of Loyola University, who taught in Rome, and, inspired by his stateside Army service with Italian prisoners of war, wrote of the role of Italian Royal forces following the armistice of 1943 in *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation 1943-1945*. Dan Beach, a professor at Dominican University and form the Rome class of 1968-69, researched the Italo Balbo story in this Guide. Kathy Young, Loyola University archivist graciously provided access to material essential to telling the story of the five Loyolans lost in Italy. Also gracious with their time and recollections were Ken Krucks, nephew and namesake of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Krucks, and family members of PFC Burke, his sister, Mary Burns and his nephew, Roger Kiley. Phyllis Burns of the Catholic Cemeteries of Chicago provided invaluable guidance as well. While the Guide provides few specific citations, all of the books mentioned were relied upon. Most are available in the JFRC library.

Finally, Dr. Rosario Bentivegna of Rome graciously spent time with John Felice and the author in January 2006 to provide insight into his role as a leader of the deadly anti-German action in Rome's Via Rasella in March 1944.

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### **WHY A WORLD WAR II GUIDE FOR LOYOLA STUDENTS?**

The Loyola Rome Center owes its existence to the experiences of a young British Army intelligence officer in World War II. John Felice, a native of Malta, then Britain's imperial anchor in the Mediterranean, entered the British Army along with 36 other young men who had just taken the university entrance exam together. John was one of just two to survive the War.

Serving with the British Eighth Army in North Africa, John was assigned as a liaison intelligence officer with the U.S Army Air Corps 47<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Light) in preparation for the invasion of Sicily that followed the successful North African campaign. John had never met Americans before and found his Yank counterparts to have little of the sophistication that characterized the university-age Europeans familiar to John. After the ousting of the Italian and German forces from Sicily in July and August 1943, John and his American colleagues were able to relax a bit. John took the Americans to such places as the Greek ruins in Agrigento in western Sicily. The Americans unabashedly marveled at the ancient sites and asked questions from the viewpoint of people from a new culture rather than from one many centuries old. John remembers that these young men were "like sponges" soaking up every bit of information.

After the War, John Felice eventually decided that his life's mission would be to introduce young Americans to Europe so that as young "sponges" they could have an experience of a lifetime – living in and learning about Europe without having to fight a war.

### **THE BIRTH OF THE ROME CENTER**

It was in the private dining room of Italian President Giovanni Gronchi in August 1961 that the idea of a permanent Loyola Rome Center was born. By then a Jesuit teaching at Loyola University in Chicago, John Felice had taken a group of teachers enrolled in a graduate program in comparative education to visit the Quirinal Palace, the residence of the President of the Italian Republic and, before the 1870 unification of Italy, the home of the popes. Invited a few days later for a private lunch with the President, John was surprised when a third person unexpectedly appeared. It was the glamorous and famous Clare Booth Luce. A former U.S. Ambassador to Italy (1953-56) and member of Congress from Connecticut, Mrs. Luce was a well known feature reporter, novelist and playwright and the wife of Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune* and *Sports Illustrated* magazines. During the conversation, Ambassador Luce advanced her belief that both the United States and Italy needed a permanent American university study abroad program centered in Rome. John seized the moment and asked President Gronchi for help from the Italian government. Within weeks Loyola was offered exclusive use of one of the buildings that had been constructed for the 1960 Rome Olympics. By January 1962, John Felice was directing 85 students in the first semester of overseas study at the Loyola Rome Center that soon became the pre-eminent American study program in Italy.

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The John Felice Rome Center of Loyola University has occupied four different campuses over four decades. The first site was in the Olympic Village in the Foro Italico which is one of the major displays of Fascist style architecture and was once called Foro Mussolini. Just twenty years before, John Felice had been planning a very different sort of “invasion” than he was leading in 1962 with his small army of pioneering American students.

### THE DESIGN OF THE GUIDE

The World War II Guide for Loyola Rome Students is intended to help make the unique Loyola Rome experience more memorable. It can help connect students not merely to the broader past of Italy in world history but also to the experiences of relatives who lived through World War II.

The Guide directs the user to sites that are easily accessible, near places that will normally be visited by Loyola students during their time in Italy and that can help to convey some sense of the times and places history was made. The Guide:

- urges the student to put on the shoes (or boots) of other young people six decades ago who helped make history in the most personal ways possible;
- invites the student to revisit the strategic and high-level tactical decisions made by political and military leaders on both sides;
- challenges the user to contemplate some of the inescapable moral choices forced on people by war;
- provides travel directions and makes a few suggestions for good meals along the way;
- supplies some “amazing facts” the user can drop at opportune moments in the future; and
- notes some books, films and websites of interest to those wishing to pursue the topic.

### LOYOLANS IN THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

On November 24, 1946, in Madonna della Strada Chapel on the campus of Loyola University, a memorial service recognized the ultimate sacrifice made during World War II by 109 young men who had once attended Loyola University or Loyola Academy High School, at that time both located on the Lake Shore campus. Among this stunning toll of lives cut short, were five who died in Italy in 1944-45, three infantrymen and two airmen.

#### *FATHER FINNEGAN’S SCRAPBOOK & LOYOLA MEDICAL SCHOOL’S HISTORIC ARMY GH-108*

*Father William Finnegan of Loyola’s Jesuit faculty meticulously maintained a scrapbook of photos, newspaper clippings and letters from Loyolans serving during the war and is now kept in the University archives. Beyond the thousands of individual Loyolans who were in the service, Loyola University Medical School staffed the largest single unit of its kind ever assembled by U.S. Forces, Army General Hospital 108. Originally formed in 1918 for World War I, GH-108 was reactivated in 1943 with an ultimate complement of 50 doctors and dentists from Loyola, 105 nurses from affiliated nursing school programs in the Chicago area and over 500 enlisted men. The rush of volunteers was such that almost all unit non-coms were Loyolans as well. Requiring 15 boxcars to move its 1,000 beds and medical equipment, GH-108 took over Beaujon Hospital in Paris immediately after the city’s liberation in August 1944. The motto of GH-108 was “Pro Deo et Patria” – For God and Country. For more information, see [http://www.med-dept.com/unit\\_histories/108\\_gen\\_hosp.php](http://www.med-dept.com/unit_histories/108_gen_hosp.php)*

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Every life given, lost, taken is that of a real person with unique experiences, hopes and a circle of loved ones. If these five young Loyolans had lived they might have had children and grandchildren who attended the Rome Center. It cannot be said too often that the fallen have given all of their tomorrows for our today.

*PFC John Joseph Burke – January 30, 1944*

John Burke (3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalion – Darby's Rangers), who had previously served in the U.S. Navy, was killed near Cisterna in a famous and tragic mission by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalions and elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Recon Troop, 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment to outflank German forces hemming in the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead established less than a week before. Of the 767 men who worked their way up the Mussolini Canal and Pantano Ditch on the night of January 29-30 believing they were had not been detected, only 6 made it back to American lines. The Rangers were ambushed and fought back tenaciously with small arms against tanks and heavy weapons until they ran out of ammunition. More than 400 were taken prisoner. Burke's Lieutenant, William Loring Newnan, wrote to Burke's family on August 31, 1944:

“John was killed along with two others attempting to silence a machine gun on our left flank. Endeavoring to knock out the same gun, I came on his body along with that of Winezettle and another chap I failed to recognize under the stress. Later in the prison camp of Fara Sabina I checked with my 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. MacCullen and platoon Sgt. Taylor as to fatalities in the company. Those were Winezettle, DeFranco and Burke.

John Burke is buried at the American Military Cemetery in Nettuno (Plot C - Row 6 - Grave 9), as is his fellow Ranger, PFC Philip DeFranco (Plot F, Row 14, Grave 47).

*2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Dean Phillip Reinert -- May 17, 1944*

Dean Reinert (97<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 82<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force) died near Sterapone in the crash of the P-38 fighter plane he was piloting as part of a mission to attack German aircraft at the Villafranca and Ghedi airfields (Ghedi is better known now as Aviano, a key U.S. Air Force installation). The after action report by the squadron intelligence office states dryly: “Lt. Reinert crashed and burned at friendly field, pilot died.” Dean Reinert is buried at All Saints Cemetery in Des Plaines, Illinois (Grave 4 - Lot S6 29 - Block 3 - Section 10).

### *ONE RANGER'S STORY*

*The assault on the German machine gun in which John Burke was killed and his lieutenant was captured was recounted by T/5 James P. O'Reilly in Carlo D'Este's book "Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome." Newnan "...had a lot of guts. He was a little fellow with big thick glasses. But boy he loved a fight...He broke his glasses when he jumped the machine-gun nest with only his pistol. With his glasses broken he couldn't see worth a damn. That's how he was captured. He never would send his men where he wouldn't go. And there was never a place, however hot, that he would hesitate at going." After escaping from a POW camp, Lt. Bill Newnan made his way to Rome over several weeks of perilous travel and connected with the safe-house operation of the Scarlett Pimpernel of the Vatican, Msgr. Hugh O'Flaherty, covered elsewhere in this Guide. Several of the incidents cited in that section of the Guide, while drawn from other publications, originated with Newnan's own recounting of his experiences. Once home in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, Newnan's matter-of-fact recollections were published by the University of Michigan Press in "Escape from Italy." After a long life and marriage, Newnan passed away in 2009.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Kenneth Elmer Krucks – September 26, 1944*

An attorney and graduate of Loyola College and of the Law School, Ken Krucks (349<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 88<sup>th</sup> Division) was killed in the extraordinary week-long effort by the U.S. Fifth Army to achieve a pre-winter collapse of the German's defensive Gothic Line that ran the width of the Boot along the southern edge of the Apennines north of Florence and Pisa. Ken Krucks is buried at Oakridge Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois (Section 15, Lot 440, Space, Lot 3).

*1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John Leo Carmody – February 16, 1945*

### **MISSIONE 139**

*The crash of the two B-24s on Mt. Belepeit has long been a topic of interest around nearby Chiusaforte where the village priest at the time and several townspeople persuaded the German garrison commander to let them go look for survivors. The events of February 16, 1945 and the aftermath are covered in detail by Fabio Stergluc. Enzo Vinci and Fabio Orlando in their 2010 book "Missione 139: Gente di Montagna e Aviatori Americani, Una Storia di Guerra del 1945 in Friuli." John Carmody's photo from Father Finnegan's wartime scrapbook appears in the book.*

John Carmody (829<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 485<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force) was one of three navigators in the lead plane for a formation of 36 B-24 bombers in a major raid against the jet-engine factory in the Bavarian city of Regensburg, Germany. While over the Alps during the return to their base near Venosa in Southern Italy, Carmody's mission command plane collided with another after one or both were hit by German anti-aircraft fire, causing both to crash. Several crew members from the two planes survived, including one airman who survived after his chute failed to open and he fell several thousand feet into deep snow, perhaps saved by updrafts. They became prisoners of the Germans. John Carmody, whose remains and those of his colleagues were recovered months after the German surrender, is buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois (Grave 4 - Lot N11- Block 5 - Section 22)

### **THE BLUE DEVILS**

*The Blue Devils, as the 88<sup>th</sup> was known, was regarded by the Germans in Italy as one of the toughest units they faced. In "The Blue Devils in Italy: A History of the 88<sup>th</sup> Division Infantry Division in World War II," published in 1947, James P. Delaney characterized the fall 1944 effort to breach the Gothic Line this way: "Wherever and whenever 88<sup>th</sup> men gather in the years to come, the inevitable bull sessions will swing to that Gothic Line drive. Each veteran and survivor has his own personal tale of horror, his own nightmare of those forty-four days and nights which blended together in one long drawn-out hell."*

*PFC Thomas Anthony McKitrick – March 24, 1945*

Thomas McKitrick (Company L, 85<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division) was killed near Pra del Bianco just six weeks before VE-Day as the Fifth Army was forcing the final German collapse in Northern Italy. The official history of the 85<sup>th</sup> suggests that McKitrick and two other soldiers were killed or wounded and had to be left behind by their comrades, with their bodies recovered by a patrol the following night:

“A patrol of 11 men led by Lt. Putnam was sent out at 2000, 23 March, by Company L to investigate enemy activity reported last night along the road to Serra Sarzana. While checking houses at Point 781 (612269), they were engaged in a sharp firefight by enemy forces. The enemy sprayed the entire area with small arms, mortar fire and grenades. One member of the patrol was killed; two were wounded and had to be left behind...A strong combat patrol of 36 men from Company L, led by Lt. Putnam, went out at 2300, 24 March, to take PWs and retrieve the casualties left behind by the L Company patrol the night before at Point 781. The patrol was heavily supported by prepared artillery and mortar fire. The patrol reached an observation and rendezvous point at 614268, from which they observed the buildings at Point 781. At 0105, the patrol moved under the cover of a heavy box barrage and counter mortar and artillery fire to a jump-off point at 61272696. Enemy digging was heard at buildings 763 (616270) and artillery

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was dropped on them. At 0130, the patrol attacked the buildings at 781 with German Panzerfausts, grenades, mortars and rifles. Stiff enemy resistance was overcome by wiping them out. An estimated 11 enemy were killed. One PW was taken but died of wounds on the way back. Enemy were from the 3rd Company, Pioneer Battalion, 334th Division. The patrol withdrew and more artillery was dropped in, starting fires. Pfc. Roeder was missing, believed killed by a direct mortar hit from an enemy mortar; one man slightly wounded. Two bodies of the three left behind the night before were recovered.”

### *The Randomness & Vagaries of War*

*Another soldier in the 85<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Lt. Robert Dole, was severely injured three weeks later in the same general area in which PFC McKitrick was killed. He recovered and went on to become a U.S. Senator from Kansas and the Republican candidate for President in 1996.*

Thomas McKitrick is buried at Queen of Heaven Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois (Grave 1- Lot 36 - Block 14 - Section 14).

## WORLD WAR II IN ITALY: THE BIG PICTURE

To understand the Twentieth Century, one must understand World War II. To understand the war, one must appreciate the role played by Italy. World War II was the climactic event of the Twentieth Century with everything beforehand leading to it and everything afterward flowing from it. Italy was the crucible for that War. Fascism was born in Italy in the chaotic aftermath of World War I. By 1922 Benito Mussolini had seized power with a political ideology rooted in an odd combination of nationalistic appeal for a revival of the Roman Empire, a fascination with the *avant garde* in the art and philosophy of the day and a glorification of violence as a purifying act that conferred political legitimacy.

Arguably, the first European shots of World War II were fired in 1935 in Italy's conquest of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), at the time the only independent, un-colonized country in Africa. The Italian aggression in Africa made clear the weakness of the League of Nations and the indecisiveness of the Western democracies. Just as Italy started Europe down the road toward World War II, Italy's surrender in September 1943 marked the beginning of the War's end.

The Italian experience reveals the political, cultural, military and social complexities of the War and of that era. Italy was also a harbinger of the tensions associated with the Cold War that characterized much of the second half of the Twentieth Century – the struggle between the Western liberal tradition of individual liberty and consent of the governed on the one hand and on the other hand extremist ideology that subsumes the individual into the collective and in which coercion trumps free choice. Also, the War along with the massive emigration of Italians to America in the first half of the Twentieth Century has created a complicated but enduringly close relationship between America and Italy.

Two excellent accounts of the overall Italian campaign are *War in Italy: A Brutal Story* by Richard Lamb and *Sideshow War: The Italian Campaign 1943-1945* by George F. Botjer.

## THE ITALIAN WAR OF LIBERATION: IN RETROSPECT

The War in Italy, more so than for other major WWII Allied initiatives, remains the subject of intense controversy. (See *From Rome to Baghdad*, a commentary by the Guide's author on parallels between the Italian Campaign and the Campaign in Iraq in the June 4, 2004 edition of TechCentralStation at <http://www.techcentralstation.com> (TCS Archives). Historians debate the wisdom of the entire campaign and whether the Germans or the Allies more fully realized their goals on the "Boot" once the issue was joined. Italians remain divided to this day over the role and effectiveness of the Resistance. Opinions about Mussolini himself remain more diverse than might be expected – more so now perhaps than in the first three decades following the War when even the mention of his name, though not exactly taboo, was rarely a subject for polite company. The significance of World War II is reflected in the fact that the holiday in Italy that April 25, marking the day organized Resistance elements entered Milan on the heels of the fleeing German Army, is a national holiday called Liberation Day.

Questions remain to this day:

- Should Sicily and Italy have been ignored altogether and the island of Sardinia taken as a better place for launching Allied air strikes into Europe?
- Having chosen to invade the mainland, could the Allies have boldly landed near Rome, cut off the German units in the south in mid-1943 and forced an earlier end to the war?
- Were enough German resources drawn into Italy to make a difference for the liberation of France and the Red Army's progress on the Eastern Front?
- Did the Allied campaign in Italy lack sufficient troops, equipment and supplies needed for the mission assigned by the political leaders and the supreme command?
- Did the differences between Churchill and Roosevelt over the strategic importance of Italy and the political significance of the campaign degrade the effort?
- Was the leadership of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring superior to that of the Allies under British Field Marshal Harold Alexander and American General Mark Clark or did the Allies manage, through determined effort and economy of force, to dislodge the Germans with far less than the numerical superiority considered essential for an attacking army?
- Did the competition among Allied commanders to be the first into Rome blow the opportunity to trap the bulk of the German Army south of Rome, letting the Germans escape to fight again along the Gothic Line north of Florence?
- How important was the Italian Resistance and what were the roles of the various Italian political factions, including the communists?
- Could the Royal Italian forces and Italian POWs held by the Allies have been put to far better use as co-belligerents in the Italian campaign?
- Were there some honorable or at least redeeming moments in Mussolini's behavior after Hitler installed him as leader of the puppet regime of the "Saló Republic?"
- While ordinary Italians and the Vatican saved thousands of Italian Jews from the Holocaust, how much more could have been done?
- Under the circumstances, was the Allied command justified in destroying the historic Benedictine Abbey of Montecassino?

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There should be no controversy on several points however. First, the fighting in Italy was some of the most difficult encountered by Allied forces in the European Theater even though the Italian Campaign was ultimately secondary to the drive across France and Germany.

Second, while German units were extremely effective on the front and often fought with great honor, German forces in Italy were also guilty of war crimes, instances of which rivaled those carried out in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. These massive crimes were not solely the responsibility of a few bad apples at the top. Many Germans participated with enthusiasm.

Third, the Italian people and Italian military personnel suffered enormously in the War. Approximately 350,000 civilians were killed, primarily in the period following the September 1943 surrender, and as many as 300,000 military personnel lost their lives, mainly in North Africa and in the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union. Also, in the two weeks following the Armistice, many Italian soldiers were killed in Italy and on the various islands of the Mediterranean by the Germans with whom they had been garrisoned. The novel, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, by Louis De Bernieres and the 2001 film of the same name with Nicholas Cage and Penelope Cruz, dramatized the infamous events on the Greek island of Cephalonia. It has been estimated that as many as 600,000 Italian soldiers were taken into captivity and slave labor in Germany. And at least a fourth of all Italian Jews were deported to the death camps. Several hundred thousand other Italians were forcibly transported to Germany as slave laborers.

### **WORLD WAR II IN ROME**

The German Army occupied Rome in early September 1943 when the Royal government, headed by Marshal Pietro Badoglio under King Victor Emmanuel III, announced a secretly negotiated armistice with the Allies. The Eternal City was liberated by Allied troops on June 4, 1944. Declared an "open city" by the Germans, Rome was spared the destruction visited on Naples just over a year before. While overshadowed in the history books by the momentous events two days later on the Normandy coast in France, June 4, 1944 remains a memorable day for Romans.

Six decades after the Armistice and the German occupation one can find many streets, buildings and monuments that can still evoke a sense of the War years and the lead-up to the War.

### **Fascism, Mussolini and the Lead-Up to World War II**

Fascism arose out of the chaos and bitterness in Europe following World War I. Italy had been on the Allied side and had suffered greatly as it contributed to the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was World War I that first welded Italians together in a national identity – fully five decades after the Risorgimento that unified Italy as a single political entity. (Visit the Risorgimento Museum underneath the Vittorio Emanuele Monument -- the "Wedding Cake" -- for more on this part of the story).

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Benito Mussolini, a former school teacher, World War I veteran and one-time editor of a socialist newspaper, seized the moment. Using organized force in 1922 against a weakened and discredited parliamentary system (the fabled “March on Rome”), Mussolini prompted the Italian King to offer him the premiership and the opportunity to form a government.

Mussolini, called himself *Il Duce*, “The Leader,” a gimmick Hitler would rip-off when he called himself “*Der Führer*.” His Fascist ideology was a mish-mash of nationalism, socialism and appeals to notions of lost imperial glory. In 1914 Italy renounced its treaty with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thrown in its lot with France, Britain and Russia and, eventually, America. But in the post-war treaty negotiations Italy was largely denied the empire it desired in Africa. Mussolini promised to set that right. (The *fascies* were wooden rods bundled with an axe that were symbols of authority in ancient Rome. The epithet “fascist” is often tossed about today, customarily by people who have little idea of what Fascism and a Fascist really were.)

Two peculiar features of the Fascist ideology were its unabashed advocacy of violence as self-legitimizing and purifying and its close association with the *avant garde* in art and architecture. Fascism’s physical remnants, to a great degree, are *art deco* public buildings throughout Italy and some genuinely interesting examples of propaganda poster art, a form that remains popular in Europe today. In an age before television and with only rudimentary radio and motion pictures, Fascism used architecture and the graphic arts to convey its message of *faux* Roman Imperialism and Futurism. Mussolini attempted a shotgun marriage between *art deco* and “retro-Roman Imperialism.” Examples can be found all over Rome such as the local court building adorned with a dozen identical busts of a helmeted Mussolini (on the corner near the Rome Termini where Via Varese meets Piazza Indipendenza.

### *Foro Italico (Foro Mussolini)*

Perhaps more than any other place, Foro Italico, first called Foro Mussolini, reflects the Fascist effort to align itself with the lost glories of the Roman Empire while claiming that it was looking to the future. Located across the Tiber north of central of Rome, Foro Mussolini was inaugurated in 1932 as a sports center. The massive Olympic Stadium, now home field for the Roma and Lazio soccer teams, and two smaller fields evoke the ancient Roman circuses. It was intended to be nothing less than Mussolini’s Forum, just as there were Forums of Caesar, Augustus and Trajan. Foro Italico even has an obelisk, in the fashion of ancient war booty obelisks scattered around Rome, with Mussolini Dux (“Leader”) carved on it. The site was used for the 1960 Olympics and one of its buildings, the red CIVIS center, was an Olympic Village dormitory and the original campus of the Loyola Rome Center. The most prominent office building in the Foro Italico is the Italian Foreign Ministry.

*Buses #911 and #48 both go from Monte Mario to the foot of the mountain and Foro Italico. Bus #911 runs from the Monte Mario commuter rail station with various stops including on the Via Igea and at Piazza Walter Rossi not far from Loyola’s Via Massimi Campus and just in front of the second Loyola Rome Campus at Via della Camilluccia 180. Bus #48 also stops in Via Igea*

### *E.U.R. (Esposizione Universale di Roma)*

EUR was originally intended as the site of a planned 1942 world exposition to showcase Italy's progress in Fascism's twentieth year. EUR, the city within a city, had to wait until well after the War for completion and to host a world exposition, with Fascism a bad aftertaste. EUR also was a site for water events in the 1960 Olympics. While the architecture of EUR seems pretty bland now, at the time it was part of a consistent message from Mussolini that Fascism and Il Duce were moving Italy to the forefront of human progress. Most guides to Rome will provide details about the various things to do and see in EUR, including a massive scale model of ancient Rome (Museo della Civiltá Romana) and the modern church of Saints Peter and Paul. EUR is the site of a number of major government ministries. Despite its current use, EUR stands for the fact that while claiming to lead Italy into the future, Mussolini, with his bungling and weakness of character, ultimately overreached and led the Italian people into a disgraceful alliance with Hitler and a devastating war.

*The Metropolitana subway B Red Line has two convenient EUR stations, Marconi/Palaspport and Fermi. The main thoroughfare passing near EUR, Via Cristoforo Colombo (Christopher Columbus), was called Via Imperiale (Imperial Road) during the Fascist era.*

### *Piazza Augusto Imperatore*

The Piazza Augusto Imperatore is centered on the Tomb of Augustus. On the west side is the *Ara Pacis* commemorating the *Pax Romana* under Augustus, reconstructed in 1938 at the height of Fascist power just prior to the War. Fittingly, in Mussolini's view, the Piazza is the site of public buildings in the Fascist monumental style. At every opportunity, Mussolini sought to identify himself and his regime with the symbols of the Roman imperial past.

*The #913 bus from Monte Mario that can be caught close to the Via Massimi campus terminates at Piazza Augusto Imperatore on the east bank of the Tiber.*

### *Via dei Fori Imperiali*

This grand concourse, was originally named Via del Impero (Empire Way) by Mussolini when he had it built as a parade route from the Colosseum to Piazza Venezia. While seeking to identify with Imperial Rome, Mussolini managed to destroy and pave over quite a bit of the unexcavated archeological treasures in the area. On the walls on the south side of the boulevard toward its west end are large marble maps of the expansion of the ancient Roman Empire. The marble maps still on the wall were installed by Mussolini. The one that is missing depicted the "modern" Roman Empire under Fascism, with Albania, various Aegean islands, Libya, Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia as under Italy's dominion. That map was taken down by American GIs following the Liberation of Rome. A smaller version of this marble map remains in place over the doorway of a pharmacy in downtown Padova (Padua.)

### *Palazzo Venezia: Mussolini's Balcony*

It was from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia facing the Piazza that Mussolini would give fiery speeches to cheering crowds. Much of what he said often made little sense, wrapped as it was in slogans and obscure notions of the inchoate Fascist ideology. Yet, millions of Italians – and many non-Italians – were held spellbound by the pure theater of it all. Mussolini capitalized on the Italian love for "la bella figura" – a good look. Mussolini would speak to his core supporters, the Blackshirts, originally made up of unemployed and embittered veterans of the Great War, of which there was no shortage. Hitler also relied on German veterans to form his Brownshirts

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(Stormtroopers). Even Britain recruited men of the “lost generation” as the infamous Black n’ Tans to do the dirty work in the vain effort to put down rebellion in Ireland after the World War .

Mussolini’s February 23, 1941 speech from the balcony to his Blackshirts on the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his formation of the first *Fasci di Combattimento* reflects all of the pomposity and denial of reality that characterized Mussolini’s long control of Italy. (The English translation of his speech that appeared in *The New York Times* the following day can be found at (<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410223a.html>)). Mussolini acknowledged a string of Italian defeats in North Africa and Greece and the sinking of much of his fleet at Taranto (at the instep of the boot) from a torpedo air attack by the British Navy. That attack would ultimately be the unfortunate inspiration for the Japanese sneak attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. While denying the obvious downward slide of Italy, Mussolini went on to tie Italy more closely than ever to Germany. Mussolini, once Hitler’s model and mentor, had become Hitler’s lapdog. On June 4, 1944, a little over three years later, thousands of Italians and Allied troops would jam Piazza Venezia celebrating the Liberation of Rome.

### *Ostiense Railroad Station*

Trains to Lido di Ostia, depart from Stazione Ostiense, one of the first major projects under Mussolini. The station’s opening in 1924 was a major event as Mussolini delivered a much desired amenity to the working people of Rome who could now easily and cheaply traverse the 30 km (18 miles) from Rome to the seaside. Such projects were key to achieving a period of consensus and acceptance of his iron rule even by those Italians unmoved by his dreams of imperial glory or unconvinced by his crackpot philosophy. Stazione Ostiense is one of the earliest examples of Fascist architecture.

*The B Red Line subway Piramide Cestia station (named for the Pyramid of Cestius across the street from the Ostiense Station) connects directly into the Ostiense Station and the Lido di Ostia trains, which are part of the same Metropolitana transit system.*

### *Ponte Matteotti – A Political Assassination*

Imagine the reaction in the United States if the press secretary to the President or to the Speaker of the House led a group of thugs in kidnapping the leader of the minority party in Congress, murdered him and left his body in the woods outside Washington to be found a couple of months later. And what if the perpetrators then used the uproar over the killing to justify closing down the press, banning opposition parties and forcing corporations and unions into common organizations (with strikes banned)? On June 10, 1924, that is what began to happen in Italy on June 10, 1924. Mussolini had been premier for only a year and a half when he faced elections. While he maintained a parliamentary persona at that time, the Fascist street gangs ratcheted up violence and intimidation as vote-gathering tools. Giacomo Matteotti, leader of the Socialist Party in Parliament, delivered a vigorous denunciation of Fascist tactics and called the elections a sham. Rather than firing back with their own speeches and criticism, the Fascists simply kidnapped Matteotti as he left home in Via Mancini for Parliament. They killed him and dumped his body in a shallow grave in a forest outside Rome. The leader of the kidnappers was Mussolini’s press officer. While the truth was murky at the time, Matteotti’s murder was a sensation and many middle class and business people who had believed they could get along with Mussolini began to realize they’d

*Lepanto and Flaminio/Piazza del Popolo subway stops on the A Blue Line are both reasonably close to the Matteotti Bridge.*

made a mistake. The opposition demanded an investigation and there was trouble in the streets. In a move that Hitler would imitate when he used the burning of the Reichstag nine years later as a pretext for seizing total power, Mussolini used a crime committed by his own henchman as an excuse to eliminate the opposition. All of Mussolini's dictatorial tendencies came to the fore.

Ponte Giacomo Matteotti is the bridge that connects the east side of the Tiber near the Naval Ministry to the west side of the Tiber at Piazza Cinque Giornate and Viale delle Milizie. It was built as a Fascist project in 1929 and called Ponte Littorio (named for the marshy area south of Rome drained by Mussolini to fight malaria and to create new farmland). The bridge was re-named in honor of Matteotti after the War. Just down river from the bridge, on the short stretch of the east bank of the Lungotevere called Arnaldo da Brescia where the abduction took place, is a striking memorial to Matteotti.

*Amazing Fact: Finzi Takes the Fall*

The man who eventually took the political fall for Mussolini in the Matteotti murder was one Aldo Finzi, a Fascist, and at the time an undersecretary of the Home Affairs Ministry. Finzi, a Jew, would be among those murdered at the Ardeatine caves in 1944 in reprisal for the partisan attack on German police in the Via Rasella. Ironically, having seen the light, Finzi had been caught providing supplies to a group of escaped Russian POWs active in the Resistance.

*A Tale of Two Villas*

On the northeast side of Rome are two Villas of note in the story of Italy in World War II, Villa Ada (Savoia) and Villa Torlonia. Both are now parks owned by the City Of Rome. The larger Villa Ada, otherwise known now and in the past as Villa Savoia, was the "in town" residence of the House of Savoy, the Italian royal family that was forced out by popular referendum in 1946 (12 million voting for a Republic and 10 million voting for a constitutional monarchy). Male heirs to the throne were banned from ever setting foot in Italy – a prohibition lifted only in February 2002. The House of Savoy, specifically King Victor Emmanuel III, grandson of his namesake who was the focus of Italian unity at the end of the Risorgimento in 1870, had undermined the family's credibility as a unifying force by accepting the Mussolini's iron rule within two years of inviting Mussolini to form a government in 1922. The King did not turn on Il Duce until Mussolini was deposed on July 24, 1943 by his own Fascist Grand Council (sort of a Cabinet and party central committee rolled into one). It was at Villa Savoia the next day, after a meeting with the King, that Mussolini was arrested. Unfortunately, the King's display of decisiveness did not become a habit with him for the remainder of the War as the Royal Armed Forces assisted the Allies against the Germans. He was barely a presence, pretty much sitting out the War of Liberation in the temporary Italian capital of Brindisi on the heel of the Boot.

In keeping with popular opinion, the King kept his promise to abdicate in favor of his son once Rome was liberated. Umberto II would be the last King of Italy. King Victor may have had any number of opportunities to salvage the liberal democracy that had been developing in Italy after 1870, but never took them. Perhaps he was taken in along with many other Italians by Mussolini's promise of restored imperial glory. After all, moving up from "King" to "Emperor" has often been a fatal attraction throughout history.

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Mussolini had moved into the Villa Torlonia only after having spent the first nine years of his premiership in rented rooms Palazzo Tittoni in the Via Rasella. (See the section of this guide on the partisan attack in Via Rasella in 1944.) He had wanted to bring his family down from his home area in Emilia-Romagna. Il Duce paid 1 lira per year as rent for Villa Torlonia, which is now a City park like Villa Ada. The American Army occupied the Villa immediately after the Liberation and used it as its Rome headquarters until 1947 and, according to a sign in the grounds surrounding the mansion, severely damaged the building. Starting in 1978 the City of Rome began a slow process of restoring the building in which Mussolini and his family lived. It is now an art museum and contains a number of artifacts from Mussolini's residence there, including his bed. Six decades after Mussolini was forced from power, the Italian people feel his Rome residence can be seen as history rather than as a dilapidated embarrassment. The main entrance to the park is in Via Nomentana and there is an auxiliary entrance in Via Lazzaro Spallanzani. There are several interesting buildings in the park and a small museum of ancient sculpture. Villa Torlonia is also the site of a first century Jewish catacomb that may have served as a model for those created by the early Christians to bury their dead.

*The main entrance to Villa Ada is on Via Salaria and can be reached in a variety of ways. One way is by Tram Lines 19, 19B & 30 that can be picked up at the Policlinico subway stop on the Metropolitana B Red Line. The Tram Lines crosses Via Salaria near the entrance to Villa Ada/Savoia. Villa Ada is popular with runners and joggers and there are equipped exercise stops along the running paths. It is also used as a concert venue in the summers. Not far from the Policlinico B Red Line subway stop is Villa Torlonia with its main entrance on Via Nomentana. (There is another Villa Torlonia not far away to the west and not to be confused with Mussolini's Villa.)*

Just two weeks before Mussolini's arrest, the Allies had invaded Sicily and were on Italian soil for the first time. The Italian and German armies were being pushed toward the straits of Messina and back to the toe of the Boot. Just a week before Mussolini's fall, a devastating Allied bombing raid on the railroad marshalling yards of Rome, just a few miles from Villa Torlonia itself, had killed about 3000 Roman civilians and injured many more. With the inevitable loss of the war now obvious and in an action totally unexpected by Hitler, Mussolini and the Allies, the Fascist Grand Council dumped Mussolini as party leader in a vote orchestrated by his own son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano. Ciano, a man many expected to be "Il Duce's" successor, would be executed for treason by Mussolini seven months later after a trial by kangaroo court.

At the Villa Savoia meeting, the King dismissed Mussolini as head of the government and appointed in his place the commander of the 1935 Ethiopian conquest, Field Marshal Pietro Badoglio. After muttering that, "My ruin is complete," Mussolini left the meeting and stood in the driveway looking for his car. No car. He was arrested and promptly moved to confinement on Isola Ponza, an island off the western coast of the Boot. He was then moved from place to place. On September 12 Mussolini would be "rescued" in a daring German commando glider assault on his "prison" at the Campo Imperatore ski resort/hotel in Gran Sasso east of Rome (2 Euros to visit Il Duce's room from which he viewed the landings). Hitler then installed Mussolini as head of a puppet regime called the Italian Social Republic with its capital the small town of Salo' in far northern Italy. Thus, the man who had been Hitler's inspiration became his servant and puppet.

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### *Palazzo Braschi – From Renaissance Palace to Torture Palace*

At the southwest corner of Piazza Navona is the Palazzo Braschi that once served as the Fascist Party national headquarters. The building was increasingly used as a sort of “clubhouse” for a gang of Fascist enforcers who would bring anti-fascists there for torture sessions and often murder. In late November 1943, the German military and the Italian police raided the Palazzo and arrested a number of the gang leaders and sent them north for confinement. The gang had operated unilaterally and may have been seen by the Germans as a wild card in the deck when the situation in Rome was already hard to predict. For several years after the War Palazzo Braschi was home to hundreds of homeless War refugees. By the time squatters were evicted in 1949 many of the Palazzo's artistic treasures and rooms had been destroyed. Palazzo Braschi has been restored as the Museum of the City of Rome – the place where the Eternal City's post-Renaissance story is told.

*Make time for the good life that Romans cherish. Try lunch or dinner at Trattoria Gino & Pietro at Via Governo Vecchio 106 nearby. The perfect Roman meal can include strozzapreti all'amatriciana (“strangled priest” pasta with Rome's favorite sauce – sautéed onions, guanciale (bacon), pepper, tomatoes) and abbacchio allo scottadito (“little lamb chops of the burnt fingers”). Or just make straight for dessert at Tre Scalini, the famous ice cream shop in Piazza Navona, and share a whipped-cream-slathered chocolate “tartufo” with someone.*

### *Amazing Fact: Chicago's Own Fascist Monument*

When visiting the excavated ruins of the ancient Roman port of Ostia Antica near Lido di Ostia, be sure to go see something that isn't there. About 200 meters outside the Porta Marina (SeaGate), there is the “prospetto a mare” (SeaView) in front of the Edificio con Opus Sectile. There are only seven columns when there should be eight. The eighth column, the missing one, is just a few feet off Chicago's Lakefront bike path, just a hundred yards from the south end zone of Soldier Field where the Chicago Bears play football (about 16<sup>th</sup> Street between the stadium and Burnham Harbor). The column, resting on a pedestal, was a gift to the people of Chicago from Benito Mussolini to commemorate the highly publicized visit of a squadron of 24 Italian Navy seaplanes in 1933 as part of the Italian contribution to Chicago's Century of Progress World Exposition. Italy was a leader in aviation development in the first third of the century and the 6,065 mile flight in only 49 hours was proof.

Balbo and his squadron were a sensation in Chicago, staying at the Drake Hotel and being feted throughout the city at dinners and ceremonies and greeted by Illinois Governor Henry Horner who referred to the “illustrious Premier Benito Mussolini.” Balbo received an honorary doctoral degree from Loyola at a grand banquet the University gave in his honor. The inscription on Balbo's Loyola degree read, “General Italo Balbo, minister of aeronautics of Italy, writer, statesman, and explorer of the air; hero of the Fascist march upon Rome and leader of the first squadron formation from Rome to Rio de Janeiro, South America.” No one imagined that just ten years later former Loyola students would be fighting and dying on Italian soil to destroy Fascism.

The column was placed in front of the Italian Pavilion, now gone, of course. About two miles away from the column, just north of the Chicago Hilton Hotel on South Michigan Avenue where 7<sup>th</sup> street would be, is a street named “Balbo” in honor of the famed leader of the squadron. Italo Balbo was a committed Fascist, having risen from leading a gang of thugs who would beat and kill political opponents to being the man behind Italy's development of its air power. On the return of the squadron to Italy the seaplanes landed at Lido di Ostia to huge crowds that had come to the beachfront town by way of the train from the Ostiense station in Rome. After his triumphal flights to South America and to Chicago, Balbo was named Pro-Consul of Italian Libya. Because of his fame, his friendship with the Italian Crown Prince Umberto and his skepticism about the Ethiopian War, Mussolini resented him. Balbo was killed on June 28, 1940, shortly after Italy's entry into the War against Britain and France, shot down over the Gulf of Tobruk off the Libyan coast by anti-aircraft fire from nervous gunners on an Italian cruiser. Conspiracy minded Italians believe that Mussolini had Balbo killed. More likely, the fog of war produced an “own goal.”

Not only does Chicago have what may be the only open-air public monument in America with genuine ancient Roman parts but perhaps the only unabashed Fascist monument in America. The now hard-to-read pedestal inscriptions in Italian and English are in typically pompous Mussolini style. (See the *Ostia Past* website page for more information and photos see the Ostia website at <http://www.ostia-antica.org/past/chicago.htm>)

THIS COLUMN TWENTY CENTURIES OLD  
ERECTED ON THE SHORES OF OSTIA PORT OF IMPERIAL ROME TO SAFEGUARD THE FORTUNES  
AND VICTORIES OF THE ROMAN TRIREMES\*  
FASCIST ITALY BY COMMAND OF BENITO MUSSOLINI  
PRESENTS TO CHICAGO  
A MEMORIAL SYMBOL EXTOLLING THE ATLANTIC SQUADRON LED BY BALBO  
THAT WITH ROMAN DARING FLEW ACROSS THE OCEAN  
IN THE ELEVENTH YEAR  
OF THE FASCIST ERA

\*Tribremes were the basic ship of the Roman Navy – with the rowers and a drummer to keep them in rhythm.

## The Resistance & The Germans In Rome

Most of the armed resistance to Mussolini and the Germans following the Armistice in early September 1943 took place outside of Rome. In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, resistance fighters were generally referred to as “partisans” (partigiani). Because Rome was the occupied capital of Italy and an enormous psychological symbol in the War, every German casualty inflicted by the Resistance in Rome was amplified. By necessity, the bulk of German forces were deployed at the front against the Allies or near likely coastal invasion zones. Forces in the City were at the minimum needed to keep control. The overall German commander in Italy, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, maintained his headquarters in Frascati in the Alban Hills south of Rome, a town famed for its white wine and that would be largely destroyed by Allied bombing. The church in the central piazza still shows some effects of the bombing.

From the moment of the Italian surrender, the people of Rome were awaiting their day of liberation by the Allies. Hatred for the Germans was intense in Rome, exacerbated by constant looting and arbitrary edicts. It is important to understand how important the “myth” of the Resistance is to Italy. It is not that the Resistance is a made-up story or blown out of proportion to its actual contribution to the Liberation. But, seduced by Mussolini, badly led and ruled throughout the Fascist era and humiliated at every turn during the War, the Italian people needed some way of their own to restore their honor. The Resistance has served as a kind of second “unification myth” for Italy, a way for all Italians to take pride in the re-foundation of their country. The Resistance was a Second Risorgimento.

It is important to remember that even today the story of the Resistance is a highly political one and that Italians have many different views of it. After the War, the Italian Communist Party, through deft public relations management, was able to lay claim to more credit than the facts justified, both in terms of the role of the Communists in the Resistance and the importance of the Resistance in Italy's liberation. Be sure not to take anything at face value about the Resistance since the events of over 60 years ago are still being interpreted very much in light of current events in Italy.

ANPI, the Italian National Partisan Association, (L'Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia) has a fabulous website (in Italian) that covers an amazing number of topics (<http://www.anpi.it/>).

The volunteers and researchers may be able to tell you, for instance, precisely where on Monte Mario near the Loyola campus, one of the most successful partisan attacks on the Germans was carried out.

*The national headquarters of ANPI is located at Via degli Scipioni 271 (parallel to Viale Giulio Cesare). The telephone numbers are 06-3211949 and 06-3212807. Nearby are the A Blue Line Ottaviano and Lepanto subway stations in the Prati neighborhood on the west side of the Tiber. The local Rome chapter of ANPI is at Via di S. Crisogono 47, a short street running just south off Viale di Trastevere where several tram and bus lines run. The food recommendation for Trastevere is the best simple lunch you will ever have. At Da Lucia in Via Mattonato have carciofi alla romana (artichokes Roman style) and spaghetti alla gricia (pancetta, pepper and oil) with mineral water or some local white wine.*

The birthday of the modern Italian military is considered to be the September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943 defense of Rome. Since that time, according to the “myth” of the Second Risorgimento, the Italian military has been an instrument of a free and democratic nation. This has been borne out in the exemplary role of the Italian military in support of free elections and the defense of democracy through NATO and the roles of the Italian military and Carabinieri in Afghanistan and Iraq.

*Porta San Paolo (St. Paul Gate) – Modern Rome's Alamo*

For several days in early September 1943, thousands of armed civilian volunteers joined with thousands of Italian soldiers and police to defend Rome. The Germans had rushed to occupy Rome immediately after the September 8, 1943 surprise announcement of an Armistice by the government, six weeks following Mussolini's arrest. The first engagement in Rome between German and Italian forces was at the Magliana Bridge (Ponte Magliana) that connects EUR to the west bank of the Tiber. The Germans entered Rome at several of the ancient gates. The focal point of the struggle for Rome was near the Ostiense Railroad Station and Porta San Paolo, the ancient southern gate to Rome. The Germans were able to quickly crack Italian defenses in all of Rome by September 12<sup>th</sup>, due partly to vastly superior fire power and armor as well as to the threat to destroy Rome as they had the cities of Eastern Europe.

*The Piramide subway station on the B Red Line is under the Ostiense Train Station just outside Porta San Paolo. Also a number of buses run to the area.*

The Porta San Paolo today remains to many Romans something akin to what the hallowed ground of the Alamo is to Texans. At Porta San Paolo, an estimated 10,000 Roman civilians turned out armed with pistols, hunting rifles, weapons abandoned by Italian military units and knives and clubs. Coming from south of Rome in advance of the Germans were Italian Army elements of the Sardinian Grenadiers (Granatieri di Sardegna), the Montebello Lancers (Lancieri di Montebello), the Sassari Artillery, and the Dragoons of the Genoa Cavalry. They were joined by the Ariete Division that had already bested the Germans at Lake Bracciano north of Rome and had rapidly redeployed, first to the airfield at Tivoli and then to the south side of Rome.

A lack of planning by the Allies and extremely poor leadership by the Badoglio government and the Italian Supreme Command undermined the efforts to mount a defense. Also, several Italian division commanders ordered their troops to stand aside for the German march toward Rome. Porta San Paolo should be an important place to Americans as well. The Italians who fought the Germans at Porta San Paolo and other entrances to Rome forced Kesselring to divert several German divisions that would otherwise have been committed to repel the Allied landings at Salerno south of Naples that began at dawn on September 9. The Allies were in a precarious position and the German troops who were putting down the Rome Resistance might have made the difference. If the Allies had been rolled back into the sea at Salerno, the strategic, political and psychological impact would have been disastrous for the Allied cause.

Inside the same ancient wall that had been built to protect Rome against barbarians of earlier times, is the Resistance of September 8<sup>th</sup> Park (Parco della Resistenza di 8 Settembre) and just outside the gate is Partisans Square (Piazza dei Partigiani). Connecting the two is Viale Cave Ardeatine, in memory of the martyrs of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre that followed the Via Rasella bombing. The memorial marker in the Park inside the gate is striking in that it honors the hundreds of thousand of Italian dead from the various categories of casualties, including resistance fighters and military personnel serving alongside the Allies or those who died as German prisoners. Outside the gate are memorials mounted on the ancient Roman wall honoring, among others, the legendary First Special Service Force of Americans and Canadians who were among the first to enter Rome. Farther southwest of St. Paul's Gate and inside the walls is the impressive British Commonwealth Cemetery with its entrance in Via Zabaglia. (Across Via Zabaglia is the famous Protestant Cemetery where Keats and Shelley are buried.)

The Park and the Piazza are customarily the site of events commemorating the Defense of Rome around September 8 each year. Young Americans who attend such events will see the aging veterans of the defense of Rome. It will not be long, of course, before there are no longer any living participants of that struggle.

### *The German Headquarters in Rome: Via Veneto*

The German Army commandant of Rome operated from a number of buildings at the top of the Via Veneto across from the Villa Borghese. The residence and the initial working quarters for the top German officers was the Hotel Excelsior in Via Veneto. Then, as now, the Excelsior was one of Rome's most exclusive and luxurious hotels. Interestingly, the street itself, on which the American Embassy is now located, is named for the great Italian victory against the Austrians in World War I that avenged the terrible defeat at Caporetto and helped bring the Great War to an end. In the same general area are three other buildings used by the Germans. The German Military Tribunal operated from Via Lucullo 7. Via Lucullo is an extension of the Via Toscana and is near the foot of Via Bissolati and Santa Susana Church, the "American" parish of Rome. The Via Lucullo building is now home to the Embassy of Zimbabwe and a training program in audiovisual arts. Close by, and not by mere coincidence, is the former site of Via Romagna 38 that had been the Pensione Jaccarino that was used by the Nazis and Fascists as a detention and torture center for Resistance fighters and Allied prisoners. Across the Corso d'Italia that runs along the old Roman wall was the Pensione Santa Caterina at Via Po 2 a bit to the west of the Galleria Borghese, that was also used as a detention and interrogation facility.

*A good starting point for visiting this area is the Barberini subway stop on the A Blue Line which is also quite close to the Via Rasella, a site that has its own section in this Guide. (Unrelated to World War II but a "must see" in its own right is the "Capuchin cemetery" in the lower part of the church of Santa Maria della Concezione just outside the Barberini station.)*

### *Gestapo Headquarters: Now the Liberation Museum in Via Tasso*

Just a short walk from the Basilica of St. John in Lateran, is a "must see," the infamous building at Via Tasso 145 & 155 that served as the Nazi Gestapo (Secret State Police or SD) Headquarters. Operating from this location, Hitler's most fanatical followers enforced political loyalty in the armed forces, sought out Resistance fighters and relentlessly rounded up Jews. Today, the building is the Museum of the Liberation of Rome (Museo Storico della Liberazione di Roma <http://www.viatasso.eu/>). This museum preserves cells that had held up to 350 people and other reminders of the atrocities committed by the Nazis in Italy. Etched on the walls of some cells are the still visible last messages of prisoners. Displays in other rooms are dedicated to various aspects of the Occupation, Resistance and Liberation. The two great basilicas in the immediate area, St. John in Lateran (San Giovanni in Laterano) and St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) are extra-territorial properties of the Vatican and were supposedly immune from search and trespass by German or Italian authorities. Both basilicas ended up giving refuge to a large number of Resistance leaders, political fugitives and Allied escapers – 800 in the Lateran alone.

*Pensione Oltremare: Home of Banda Koch*

Close to Rome's main train station and just down the street from the Museo Nazionale Romano at Via Principe Amedeo 2 (at Via Viminale) is the building that once housed the Pensione Oltremare, a detention and torture facility run by the Fascist political police headed by an Italo-German named Pietro Koch. The Banda Koch (Koch's Gang) operated so blatantly that eventually, because so many neighbors could hear the screams of the torture victims coming from the Oltremare, Koch moved his operations to the Pensione Jaccarino at Via Romagna 38 (a few blocks off the Via Veneto and since replaced by a large office building). Koch's mistress would pen poems rhapsodically recounting the torture in the Oltremare. Just before the Liberation, Koch would seek safety for his wife and mother from Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty (see the section in this Guide on the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican) in return for freeing some Allied and Resistance prisoners. Wounded north of Rome, Koch was left at a hospital near Lake Bracciano by some of his colleagues and was then captured.. He was tried and executed shortly afterwards, as was Pietro Caruso, the Fascist police chief of Rome.

*The A Blue Line subway stop at Manzoni is the closest to the Liberation Museum in Via Tasso and the A Blue Line stop at Piazza della Repubblica and the main subway junction at Stazione Termini are the closest to the site of Pension Oltremare.*

*The Barracks in Prati: The Murder of Teresa Gullace*

Still in use today as a barracks for the Italian Army, the complex of facilities sandwiched by Viale Giulio Cesare and Viale delle Milizie (Militia Street), was also used during the German occupation as a jail for suspected Resistance supporters. On March 3, 1944, Teresa Gullace demanded that her husband be allowed to come to a window so she could see him. A young Fascist guard, so the story goes, shot her dead. The hundreds of other women in the crowd on the Viale Giulio Cesare came close to rioting, spurred on partly by the ubiquitous Carla Capponi, a young communist Resistance fighter. In the melee, another woman was hit by a stray bullet and died on the steps of the Church of San Gioacchino, in the nearby Piazza dei Quiriti. (San Gioacchino, dating from the 800s, is a Redemptorist Order church and has a fascinating façade depicting the parts of the world to which Redemptorists have gone as missionaries.) Also, as the story goes, the Fascist was himself gunned down by Guglielmo Blasi, in front of hundreds of other Blackshirts at a Fascist meeting shortly after. Blasi later turned informant and caused the arrest of many Resistance figures. Teresa Gullace's death inspired the famous Roberto Rossellini film, *Rome, Open City* starring Academy Award winner, Anna Magnani. Magnani also starred in the wonderful *Secret of Santa Vittoria*, the humorous story of an Italian village hiding its prized cache of wine from the Germans. A school in far east Rome is named for Teresa Gullace.

*Via Rasella and Fosse Ardeatine – Resistance & Atrocity*

In the late afternoon of March 23, 1944 (the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mussolini's formation of the Fascist Party) a 156 man contingent of the "Bozen" Police unit marched three abreast up the Via Rasella toward the intersection with the Via delle Quattro Fontane (Four Fountains) near the Quirinal Palace. These police were men considered too old for the front lines and who had been recruited in the Bolzano area of Alpine Italy (Bozen in German) that had been *de facto* ceded to the Greater German Reich after the Armistice. Its large Austrian population had been acquired by Italy after World War I.

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Via Rasella runs roughly parallel to Via del Tritone that lies to the west. As the lead rank of the column of singing Tyroleans neared the top of the street in front of the Palazzo Tittoni at Via Rasella 156, a powerful bomb hidden in a City of Rome rubbish cart was detonated in their midst. Then, a number of Gappisti (Communist Resistance fighters) who had been positioned in the Via Boccaccio that crossed Via Rasella and in Via Traforo at the foot of Via Rasella detonated several purloined mortar shells and opened up with small arms. Twenty-six Bozen men were killed outright and seven more were dead of their injuries by the next morning. The street was one of absolute devastation as the surviving policemen and arriving German soldiers began shooting into many of the blown out windows along the street. One little girl looking out from a window in the Palazzo Tittoni was killed by the gunfire. Coincidentally, Mussolini had lived in a rental apartment in the Palazzo Tittoni for the first nine years of his tenure as head of government. Bullet and shrapnel holes are still visible on building façades in Via Rasella.

Within minutes, General Kurt Malzer, the German commander in Rome often called the “King of Rome,” arrived – having just polished off his usual wine centered heavy lunch at the Hotel Excelsior nearby. He ordered the buildings in the area searched and over 200 people from the neighborhood lined up against walls in the Piazza Barberini. Malzer was persuaded by cooler heads not to have all 200 people, mainly women and children, shot on the spot and the entire street blown up.

The old Catholic Scots College building in Via Rasella was searched but the Germans missed finding a store of guns and grenades left behind months before when the College, abandoned during the war by the Scots since Scotland was a belligerent in the War, had been occupied by the Italian Africa Ministry (which no longer had anything in Africa to administer) and at the time of the attack was a Franciscan-run orphanage. The Scots College re-occupied the space after the War and finally moved from the Via Rasella in the 1960s

*Via Rasella is close to the A Blue Line Barberini and Spagna subway stations. From the Piazza di Spagna station one can re-trace the steps of the Bozen police as they marched past the Spanish Steps, down Via Due Macelli and turned left up Via Rasella.*

The plan for the attack on the Bozen was born just a few blocks away from the foot of Via Rasella where a small group of Communist Resistance members in an apartment at Via Capo Le Case 18 (a building in which Risorgimento hero Giuseppe Mazzini once lived) could look out on Via Due Macelli and had a clear view of the daily Bozen police parade after passing through Piazza di Spagna on the way to Via Rasella. The Bozen would march, on a foolishly rigid schedule, south on the Via Flaminia, through Piazza del Popolo and then down the Via del Babuino (Baboon Street) and past the Piazza di Spagna and along Via Due Macelli toward Via Rasella and then back to the Macao Barracks in the Casa Pretorio military enclave just northeast of Stazione Termini.

Outraged by the bombing, Hitler at first wanted the entire neighborhood leveled and 30 to 50 Romans killed for every German dead. Ultimately, Field Marshal Kesselring approved the murder of 10 Romans for every German dead. Several local Fascist officials cooperated in selecting the 335 people who would each be shot in the back of the neck by Gestapo executioners on the outskirts of Rome. The victims were a diverse group of a few already condemned prisoners, anti-Fascists, suspected Resistance fighters, a priest, a child, several dozen Roman Jews, some petty criminals in jail on minor charges and others randomly pulled off the

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street. The Nazis in charge of the reprisal killings went to great lengths to provide a veneer of legality for the executions of some of the hostages by gaining orders from the German Military Tribunal at Via Lucullo 7. Today, the bodies of those killed lie in 335 individual tombs near the cave in which they died. Visiting the memorial in which the tombs are aligned is a stunning experience. The Fosse Ardeatine is just across the intersection from another heavily visited burial ground, the Catacombs of St. Callistus. Thus, Christian martyrs of many centuries ago and martyrs of World War II from just six decades ago lie near one another. On June 4, 2004, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Rome, President George W. Bush, the first American Head of State to visit the Fosse Ardeatine, placed a wreath as a symbol of the enduring American and Italian alliance.

Further evidence of the impact of the massacre at Fosse Ardeatine can be found in the lapide (stone memorial tablets) mounted on walls in central Rome containing names of victims from that quartiere (neighborhood). One can be found at Piazza Pia facing the Tiber on the archway of the protected elevated walkway that runs from Castel Sant'Angelo to the Vatican (the the Corridori Borgo Sant' Angelo). Just across the Ponte degli Angeli on the other side of the Tiber in Via del Banco Santo Spirito near the juncture with Corso Emmanuele II is another lapide commemorating men from that section murdered at the Fosse. Large lapide are also affixed to the façade of the Grand Synagogue of Rome memorializing the many members of the congregation murdered at Fosse Ardeatine.

*Take Bus # 218 to the intersection of Via Ardeatine and Via delle Sette Chiese. The bus can be caught at Porta San Giovanni or nearby at the Basilica of St. John in Lateran. Combine visiting the Masoleum with a visit to the Catacombs of Sts. Callistus and Domitilla. Also nearby, where Via Appia Antica and Via Ardeatine converge, is the Church of Santa Maria in Palmis or Domine Quo Vadis ("Lord, where are you going?") where St. Peter (as he fled persecution in Rome) encountered the apparition of Jesus, causing Peter to return to Rome where he endured his own crucifixion.*

The bombing in the Via Rasella extracted a price that many Italians to this day believe not worth the action against the occupying Germans. There were even some unsuccessful lawsuits against Resistance figures shortly after the War by families of several Ardeatine hostages. In more recent years, the man who was disguised as a Rome City sanitation worker in order to light the bomb fuse, a young Marxist medical student named Rosario Bentivegna, said that if the Germans had called on the bombers to surrender in trade for the hostages he might well have done so. The controversy remains so intense that as recently as early 2007 Bentivegna won a libel suit against a major Italian media outlet over a story related to the attack. After the War, Bentivegna would marry one of his collaborators in the bombing, Carla Capponi. Bentivegna and Capponi were part of a small group of highly radicalized middle-class students who saw no value in restraint and a good deal of merit in direct action. Prior to the attack in the Via Rasella, these Gappisiti had carried out a number of attacks on German forces. Capponi herself was responsible for killing a half-dozen Germans, including three when she blew up a gasoline truck in Via Claudia near the Colosseum and just a few blocks from the coal-bin basement at Via Aurelio 42 where the specifics of the Via Rasella action were plotted. (See the section on *Il Messaggero* in the Liberation portion of this Guide and the Teresa Gullace story in the Occupation Section for more on Capponi, also known by her partisan name of Elena).

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Lt. Colonel Herbert Kappler, the Gestapo Commander in Rome operating from the Gestapo Headquarters at Via Tasso 145-155 (now the Museum of the Liberation) was personally involved in all aspects of the massacre, including showing other Gestapo men how to kill the hostages with a single bullet and plying the shooters with cognac so they would carry on with the killings. Tried and convicted by an Italian court in 1947, Kappler served many years in prison in Gaeta south of Rome. He escaped from the prison hospital in 1976 with the help of his wife, his German nurse he had been allowed to marry in 1972. Kappler died of cancer in Germany a couple of years later. (See the section of this Guide on the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican for more about Kappler.)

In 1996, former Gestapo Captain Erich Priebke, a leader in the slaughter at Fosse Ardeatine, who had been living openly in Argentina until his arrest in 1994, was set free by an Italian military tribunal. On appeal by Italian prosecutors, Priebke and another Nazi, Karl Haas, were convicted in 1998. Because of their ages and health, they were given life sentences under house arrest. Haas, who died in April 2004, had gone so far as to fling himself off his hotel balcony during the trial, trying to avoid testifying against Priebke. Priebke was still alive and under a loose house arrest as of early 2011. Haas died in 2005. The trials of Kappler, Priebke and Haas illustrate the legal and moral complexities arising out of the Ardeatine atrocities. The key defense was that the executioners were acting under orders and that the reprisals were a military necessity. The accused also pointed out, probably accurately, that if they had not obeyed they would themselves have been shot. Interestingly, the key to Kappler's conviction was that he had killed 15 more people than he had been ordered to kill, 335 rather than 320. He had added ten for the SS policeman who died after he had gotten his orders. Five more, mistakenly sent to the cave in all the confusion, were shot because they were witnesses. Also, Kappler and his co-executioners had realized immediately after the killings that Kappler had legal exposure precisely on these points and none of the others would sign on to papers Kappler had offered as a way of shifting some of the blame to the group as a whole for the extra 15 murders.

Robert Katz's *Death in Rome* presents a thoroughly readable as well as comprehensive treatment of the Via Rasella attack and its aftermath. Katz provides excellent maps that are valuable in understanding the partisan assault. Katz's more recent book, *The Battle for Rome*, published to coincide with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Rome, provides new information. Both books are in the Rome Center library as is the videotape of the film based on Katz's work, *Massacre in Rome*.

### *The Carabinieri Museum – The King's Police*

The Carabinieri are not the sort of police organization familiar to Americans. They are the elite national police as well as a source of great pride to Italians. During the Fascist era, the Carabinieri (named for the carbine weapons they carried during the Risorgimento that unified Italy) remained fiercely loyal to the King. As a well-trained and reasonably well-armed paramilitary organization, the Carabinieri played a significant role in the defense of Rome. During the September defense of Rome 150 Carabinieri gave their lives. The Germans, fearing the fierce loyalty of the Carabinieri to the King and the respect in which they were held by the Italian

*Piazza del Risorgimento is just to the north of St. Peter's Square. Numerous bus and tram lines go to the Piazza near the north side of the Vatican, including buses #907, 913, 990, 991 and 999 from Monte Mario. The Ottaviano subway station on the A Blue Line is close by.*

people, disbanded the Carabinieri after the occupation began and deported many of the King's police to Germany as slave laborers and murdered others. The Carabinieri Museum at Piazza del Risorgimento 46 has traditionally devoted a room to the role of the Carabinieri in the Resistance (<http://www.carabinieri.it/Internet/Arma/Ieri/MuseoStorico/>). In more recent times, the Carabinieri have been in the vanguard of NATO forces in Afghanistan and Coalition forces in Iraq, providing training for new democratic indigenous police forces. A score of Carabinieri have given their lives in these efforts.

## **The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican**

The real story of World War II in Rome is to be found in the stories of individual courage. Six decades ago, Romans faced an occupying force that could be dislodged only by the Allies. In the meantime, people had to do what they could to survive, to resist and to bring the day of liberation closer. One of the most compelling and exciting stories is that of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, an Irish national and an official in the Holy Office at the Vatican. O'Flaherty started out the War thinking there was not a dime's worth of difference between the Germans and the British. As a young man O'Flaherty had lost good friends to the Black n' Tans as the British tried to defeat the Irish in their own war of liberation after World War I. A champion amateur golfer, accomplished boxer and *bon vivant* on the Roman social scene, O'Flaherty eventually came to regard the Nazis as the barbarians they were as he watched them deal with Rome, the Vatican and especially with the Jews. O'Flaherty, at enormous personal risk but with the *savoir faire* of the original yet only fictional Scarlet Pimpernel, operated a vast network of safe houses for on-the-run Allied military personnel ("escapers") and for many Jews, Italian and otherwise.

J. P. Gallagher's book, *The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican*, was the basis for a 1983 made-for-TV movie, *The Scarlet and Black* (available on DVD), starring the late Gregory Peck as O'Flaherty and Christopher Plummer as his Nazi nemesis, Col. Herbert Kappler. After the war, O'Flaherty was honored with numerous decorations including Commander of the British Empire and the U.S. Medal of Freedom. On the day of Rome's liberation, O'Flaherty's network was hiding nearly 4000 Allied escapers all over Rome and in the nearby suburbs and countryside. Thousands more had already been smuggled back across Allied lines before the Liberation. In addition, O'Flaherty had been instrumental in getting hundreds of Jews to safety in extra-territorial Church properties in Rome, such as the Gregorian College and numerous churches.

### *The Steps of St. Peter's and Arco delle Campane*

The steps to the left as one faces the doors to St. Peter's were Hugh O'Flaherty's lookout point. The Monsignor would stand there waiting for Allied escapers to make their way to the Arco delle Campane (Arch of the Bells) entrance to St. Peter's Basilica (where one gets tickets for the Vatican Postal Museum today). Swiss Guards and others would spirit the fugitives to O'Flaherty who would then either take them into a safe house in or near the Vatican or would give them money and assistance getting to a safe house elsewhere in the City. From his vantage point, O'Flaherty could also see the entirety of St. Peter's Square, the perimeter of which was often guarded on the outside by German soldiers. O'Flaherty could also look down the wide boulevard leading in and out of St. Peter's Square, Via della Conciliazione (Conciliation Avenue). That ceremonial roadway had been rammed through the Borgo neighborhood by

Mussolini to commemorate the historic Lateran Treaty of 1929 that normalized relations between the Italian State and the Vatican. There had been a tense peace between the two since 1870 when hundreds of Swiss Guards died defending Rome, the final redoubt of the temporal Papal States, from Garibaldi's army at the Porta Pia on the east side of Rome. No pope left the Vatican between 1870 and 1929. (A monument outside the Porta Pia memorializes the gallantry of Garibaldi's Bersaglieri troops, the soldiers famous for their double-time march who still wear the hats with the dyed-green rooster feathers. The Bersaglieri Museum is located near the Porta Pia (<http://www.bersaglieri.net/default.aspx?S=1&L=1&D=325>). The Bersaglieri have served with distinction alongside Coalition forces in Iraq.)

### *The German College and the Holy Office*

One of the many amazing facts about Hugh O'Flaherty's service during the War is that he operated his network mainly from the Collegium Teutonicum – the German College. Unlike many of the Church "colleges" in Rome that are oriented largely toward training of young clerics, the German College, situated between the southeast Vatican wall and the Holy Office, was a gathering place for the great theological intellects of Germany. O'Flaherty lived in the German College and worked a few steps away in the Holy Office (renamed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1966 and headed for many years by German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger until his election as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005). The Holy Office is the key arbiter of doctrinal matters and of the Church's teachings on faith and morals. It was poetically fitting that the Holy Office and the German College would be at the epicenter of the War's most successful rescue program for Allied personnel who were risking their lives to oppose a morally corrupt German regime. Today, the Papal Audience Hall inaugurated in 1971 is surrounded on three sides by the German College, the Holy Office and what had been the Petrine Museum (Museo Petriano). While all four buildings are just outside the Vatican wall, they are extra-territorial properties untouchable by the Italian State under the 1929 Lateran Treaty. O'Flaherty worked closely with the British delegation that was housed, along with other Allied legations during the War, in the Hospice of Santa Marta (St. Martha) within Vatican City directly behind the sacristy of St. Peter's Basilica. Santa Marta was substantially reconstructed in recent years to serve as a "hotel" to accommodate the members of the College of Cardinals when in Rome to elect new Popes or for other events. In previous conclaves the Princes of the Church slept on cots in the Sistine Chapel where the voting took place.

### *Bernini's Left-Side Colonnade & Monastery of Santa Monica*

The Swiss Guards are not mere decoration or tourist attractions. They are sworn as solemnly to protect the Pope with their own lives as are the U.S. Secret Service bodyguards to protect the President. During the War, many were also avid participants in Monsignor O'Flaherty's network. On one occasion Rome's Gestapo commander, Herbert Kappler, sent two plain clothes agents into St. Peter's itself to find and kill O'Flaherty. They were spotted and firmly escorted out of St. Peter's by several non-uniformed Swiss Guards and down the steps and across St. Peter's Square. All the while they were watched by German soldiers stationed beyond the Piazza perimeter. As soon as the Swiss Guards got the two Gestapo men into an area protected from view by Bernini's beautifully symmetrical columns near the Holy Office, they beat the Germans to within an inch of their lives and tossed them back into Italy. Also near the left side Colonnade is the Augustinian Monastery of Santa Monica at Via Paolo VI 25. O'Flaherty's

mission began on the spur of the moment when the Swiss Guards turned away from the Vatican gates 14 British soldiers who had found their way into Rome from the countryside. O'Flaherty happened to see them milling about in Piazza San Pietro, obviously with nowhere to go. The Monsignor took them to the Monastery of Santa Monica and arranged for them to stay a few days until he was able to hide them in a Carabinieri barracks. Unfortunately, all 14 were recaptured when the Germans disbanded the Carabinieri after the occupation of Rome. O'Flaherty also used to send Allied escapers under the cover of the Colonnade, so they could not be seen, to get civilian clothes they could change into near the door of the Monastery.

### *Palazzo Doria Pamphili*

On the Via del Corso, just north of Piazza Venezia, is the Palace of the Doria Pamphili family, housing one of the world's great privately owned art museums. It is also the site of one of the most remarkable O'Flaherty adventures. O'Flaherty had gone to the Palazzo to confer with Prince Filippo Doria Pamphili and to pick up funds for support of the network. The Prince was an anti-fascist and a friend of the Monsignor. The Gestapo Commander Kappler had kept the Palazzo under surveillance and was informed that O'Flaherty had entered. When the Prince and O'Flaherty heard the Germans bursting into the Palazzo, O'Flaherty fled to the basement. Just as it seemed there was no way out and everyone would be at least imprisoned, if not shot, fate stepped in. At that moment the Palazzo's winter coal supply was being delivered. Seeing the coal coming down the chute, O'Flaherty got the attention of one of the two coal men and persuaded him to come down the chute. With a loaned jacket and bag of coal from the coal man, who was happy to take a bite out of the Germans, O'Flaherty sauntered through the Palazzo's inner courtyard out to the coal truck in the alleyway and past a line of SS men who stepped far back from him in fear of getting coal dust on their uniforms. O'Flaherty went to the nearest Church to clean up before going back to the Vatican. Kappler was enraged. Apparently the Germans never wondered why a coal man was *leaving* the courtyard with a bag of coal.

*Since food is the key to the perfect Roman day, be sure to honor the coalman (il carbonaio) who saved Hugh O'Flaherty and his network by making straight for Ristorante La Carbonara, in the nearby famous and beautiful Campo dei Fiori. Its signature dish, spaghetti alla carbonara – bacon and eggs Italian style in the manner of the coalman is one of Rome's favorite pasta dishes.*

### *Network Safe Houses*

There were hundreds of homes, churches and Catholic clerical colleges that were part of the network hiding Allied escapers and Jews from the Germans. There were also thousands of neighbors, local green grocers, butchers, bakers and mailmen who knew what was going on and either actively helped or quietly maintained the needed security. There were relatively few cases of betrayal and Italian police at all levels often either refused to round up fugitives or simply pretended to bungle the job – with the Germans, prepared by their low opinion of the Italians, believing the bungling to be real. Interestingly, the greater security risks tended to come from O'Flaherty himself, who was amazingly trusting and from the Allied escapers themselves.

Contrary to what one might expect to have been the case, the escapers had a tendency to tempt fate by going to restaurants, cafes, the opera and sight-seeing. Being young, they often opted to enjoy the temptations of Rome, even in the austerity of the occupation. In one case, a British flier got his Italian female companion at the opera to ask the new German army commander in Rome for his autograph (which, as the story goes, may have been used later for forged

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documents). Fascist controlled newspapers complained about the open defiance by Allied soldiers. The Fascist editor of *Il Messaggero* wrote an outraged editorial after dining at a top Roman restaurant and found himself surrounded by British escapers enjoying themselves. The local German commandant went so far as to order the closing of many of Rome's best restaurants and clubs that were being patronized by the "escapers." At one point, O'Flaherty limited the allowances for Allied escapers in order to discourage them from going out on the town or buying wine for loud parties in their safe houses. Some American escapers would try to extend their stays in Rome before being smuggled back to Allied lines. If they were behind enemy lines for more than a month, they could be rotated home while if they showed up before a month had elapsed they went back into the Big Show. And there was romance in Rome. The daughter of one of the most active safe house operators, Mrs. Chevalier, married a British escaper after the war – with O'Flaherty consecrating the union.

Rome's side streets hold all sorts of surprises, will bring one into contact with streets where there are buildings that once served as safe houses for Allied escapers and others:

- Vicolo Domenico Cellini (across Corso Vittorio Emanuele from Chiesa Nuova;
- Via Firenze (near the Piazza della Repubblica) where a safe house was revealed by an informant and Allied escapers captured;
- The North American College, a seminary mainly for U.S. and Canadian seminarians now on the Janiculum Hill near the Vatican, was in Casa Santa Maria near the Trevi Fountain during the War. During the occupation it sheltered 15 Italian-American medical students who had been stranded in Italy in December 1941 after Pearl Harbor. They lived there on the condition that they could not leave until the Liberation and that they would avoid all contact with the seminary students, who included several Japanese and German students, so as not to violate security or expose the seminarians to liability.
- Via del Impero (now Via dei Fori Imperiali) where one of the few houses was that of Mrs. Chevalier, O'Flaherty's most fearless safe house provider;
- The escapers also knew how to show a girl a good time. In Via Scialoja near Piazza del Popolo was the home of Renzo & Adrienne Lucidi, members of O'Flaherty's network. A young British officer on a date with a genuine local Roman princess took refuge there when two Germans chased and shot at him. The couple had been partying at Casino della Rosa in Umberto Park (Villa Borghese). Gestapo chief Kappler was a regular patron as was American Lt. Bill Newnan. On a date at the Casino, Newnan had to overcome the urge to steal the Lüggers Gestapo diners had left hanging in the checkroom.
- Allied escapers were housed in many cases along with others on the run. For example, the seminary building behind the Pope's own parish church as the bishop of Rome, St. John in Lateran (San Giovanni in Laterano), was filled to the brim with 800 top Resistance leaders, Jews and Allied escapers.

### *Amazing Fact: Amazing Grace*

During his time running the escapers network, O'Flaherty's nemesis had been Colonel Herbert Kappler, the lead executioner at the Ardeatine massacre following the Via Rasella bombing. Kappler would have killed O'Flaherty if he could have caught him with the goods. The Ardeatine massacre included five of O'Flaherty's network helpers. For many years after his conviction and life sentence, Kappler had but one visitor. Every month Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty came to see Kappler. The upshot was that in 1959 Kappler was baptized into the Catholic Church by O'Flaherty's hand. Despite all of his honors and service to both the Church and to the Allied nations, Hugh O'Flaherty wanted but one thing as he grew older -- to return to County Kerry, Ireland. He was buried in November 1963 in the Daniel O'Connell Cemetery in Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry.

## The Jews of Rome: Oppression And Survival

On September 27, 1943 Nazi officers led by Lt. Col. Kappler offered the Jews of Rome a deal. In exchange for 50 kilos of gold they would be spared the taking of 300 hostages by the Germans who had seized Rome earlier in the month. Knowing that he could not collect the needed amount within the Jewish community in the required 36 hours, the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, appealed to his friend, Pope Pius XII, who, along with some of the noble families of Rome, supplied a significant portion of the ransom. Within a month, of course, the Germans had reneged and began the round up of all 8000 Roman Jews on October 16, 1943. While the estimates understandably vary, the basic fact is that about 1300-1500 people were eventually arrested and deported to the death camps. Of the 1041 reportedly shipped to Auschwitz in mid-October, just 15 survived the war. The majority of Roman and Italian Jews were able to avoid arrest and almost certain death, perhaps as many as 85% in Rome, due largely to the active resistance to the round-up by many thousands of Italians.

While it is true that in 1938 Mussolini had aped some of Hitler's racial laws by imposing humiliating discrimination on Italian Jews, the Italian people had little taste for such things. After the 1870 unification of Italy, Jews had largely assimilated into Italian society and economic life. In addition to the nearly 500 Jews who were hidden on the Vatican grounds, over 4000 more were hidden in convents, monasteries, seminaries and churches until liberation. For the most part they remained safe in these extra-territorial church properties. In some cases, however, the Germans violated Church sovereignty. One example was the capture of six Jews being hidden by the priests at San Paolo Fuori le Mura (St. Paul Outside the Walls).

Girogio Bassani's book *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini*, made into a successful 1971 film and the books of the late Primo Levi provide a compelling descriptions of these events. Memorial services on or about October 16 mark the anniversary of the round-up. Participating in such a memorial is an opportunity to establish a personal connection to the Holocaust, a monstrous crime against humanity and one of the hallmark events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Soon there will be no actual survivors of the Holocaust to testify to that crime.

### *The Ghetto*

In 1555 Pope Paul IV, ordered that all of Rome's Jews, about 3000 at that time, would be obliged to observe a curfew and always be inside the confines of the "Ghetto" by nightfall when the gates would be shut tight. Even today, the remains of the hinges that once held the gates can be seen protruding from the walls at the perimeter of the Ghetto. The Jews of Rome, for many years restricted to certain occupations such as rag collection, lending and street vending, were emancipated by the Royal unification government after the taking of Rome in 1870 and the limitation of the Pope's temporal power to Vatican City. The Jews of Rome, while holding on to their faith and traditions, nonetheless assimilated rather quickly into Roman life, with the first mayor of Rome after Italian unification being Jewish. Imagine the tension and the fear in the days leading up to the round-up on October 16, 1943 after days of rumors and warnings from friendly quarters.

*The basic boundaries of the old Ghetto, still regarded as the home of Rome's Jews, are the River Tiber to the south, Via Arenula on the west, Via Botteghe Oscure on the north and Teatro di Marcello on the east. The Ghetto still has several restaurants worth visiting where the traditional Jewish cuisine of Rome such as *carciofi alla giudea* (artichokes Jewish style) is served.*

### *The Grand Synagogue of Rome*

Located on the Tiber on the Lungotevere Cenci at the edge of the Ghetto, the main Synagogue of Rome is the center of Jewish life in Rome. It was here that the Nazis seized the congregation's membership lists making the round-up easier. On the façade of the temple are lapide honoring the memory of the many members of the congregation murdered in the Via Rasella reprisal at Fosse Ardeatine. A visit to the Synagogue, which is in the Orthodox Jewish tradition, and the adjoining museum are well worth the time. In the museum, for instance, are receipts that the Nazis gave to the Jews of Rome for the gold ransom demanded of them and other documents related to the later round-up and deportations. Also in the museum are religious articles that the community had managed to hide from marauding Nazis.

### *The Military College (Collegio Militare)*

Northwest across the Tiber from the Grand Synagogue is the Italian Military College, currently housing the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (Centro Alti Studi per la Difesa). This is where the arrested Jews of Rome were held in deplorable conditions by the Germans. A number of Christian Italians were caught up in the dragnet and were, for the most part, released before over 1000 Jews were sent in cattle cars to the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. There is a plaque (lapide) on the outer wall of the College (along the Lungotevere Gianicolense and Lungotevere Lungara) that commemorates this dark chapter in Italian history. The Center library on Piazza della Rovere is open to the public for those interested in access to a more comprehensive collection of materials on the subjects addressed in this Guide (<http://www.difesa.it/NR/exeres/3C304C47-843E-4DC6-8F82-67D07305952C.htm>).

Farther south on the Tiber, in Trastevere, is the famous Regina Coeli jail of Rome (named for a church, Queen of Heaven, that was once behind the jail) that was used by the Germans to detain suspected Resistance fighters and Allied escapers captured in Rome, as well as regular criminals. It is here that Popes have traditionally come at Christmastime to bless the prisoners, providing an example of one of the seven corporal works of mercy, visiting those imprisoned.

### *San Bartolomeo: Chicago's Parish—The Church of Big Shoulders*

By tradition, every member of the College of Cardinals is titular pastor of a parish in Rome. The first electors of the bishop of Rome (The Pope), were the parish priests of Rome. San Bartolomeo all'Isola Church (St. Bartholomew of the Island) belongs to the Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago, Francis George. San Bartolomeo is on the Tiberina Island that is connected to the Ghetto on the east bank of the Tiber by Ponte Cestio and to Trastevere on the west by Ponte Fabricio. It was across these ancient, now pedestrian, bridges that more than a thousand Roman Jews were herded by their German captors on their way from the Ghetto to the Collegio Militare before being taken to Auschwitz. The priests, brothers and nuns in the religious complex on Isola Tiberina did not merely watch their fellow Romans marched into captivity. After the closing of the main Synagogue across the Tiber prior to the round-up, the pastor offered San Bartolomeo for what turned out to be the last Sabbath gathering of Rome's Jews until the Liberation. And upon Liberation, hundreds of Jews sheltered in the confines of the church and other buildings were able to come out from hiding.

*Amazing Fact: Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli*

When Rome's Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli was faced with the extortion demand of the Nazis for 50 kilos of gold in trade for the lives of 300 Jews, Rabbi Zolli turned to his friend Pope Pius XII for help in supplementing the gold he was able to collect from his own community. Rabbi Zolli reportedly urged the Jews of Rome to disperse as the best protection against what he believed would be the inevitable round-up. He decided to take his own family into hiding, fleeing to the Vatican itself. After the Liberation in June 1944 as the Jews of Rome emerged from the hiding places afforded them by the "righteous Gentiles" of Rome, Rabbi Zolli returned to his Synagogue. As might be expected, in addition to the relief in having survived, there were also recriminations and apparently the community rejected Rabbi Zolli's return as leader of the Jews of Rome. There was anger that Zolli had not destroyed the Synagogue register when he had the opportunity following the September gold extortion. There are reliable reports, however, that Zolli was not to blame for this and that several senior members of the congregation who had been close to the Fascist regime had insisted on preservation of the lists in the mistaken belief that no harm would come to the Jews of Rome. The Nazis were able to use the lists in their round-up. In February 1945, Rabbi Zolli and his wife were baptized into the Catholic faith. Their conversion remains a point of controversy, with some people suggesting that they can peer into Israel Zolli's soul and know why he took baptism. Zolli took as his new first (Christian) name – Eugenio – after the man who baptized him at Santa Maria degli Angeli the massive basilica next to the Baths of Diocletian at Piazza della Repubblica. That man was Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII.

In recent years there have been allegations that Pius XII was both sympathetic to the Nazis and, at a minimum, unhelpful to the Jews in their moment of great need. These charges rely for support largely on ambiguous documents subject to a variety of interpretations that are complicated by the arcane language of the Vatican and the complexities of the relationships of that time. The allegations are belied by the contemporaneous judgments of Romans – Christians and Jews alike – that the Pope and the Holy See had done much or all that was possible at that time to do. Further, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper and the only paper able to print the truth in Rome during the war, was harshly critical of Nazi policies. Certainly, the people involved at the time – especially the Nazis themselves – regarded Pope Pius XII as an enemy of the evil being perpetrated. Hitler had actually made plans to seize Vatican City and the Pope and to remove the Pope to a sort of puppet Vatican in the north. Much has been written on the subject, including several books by Sister Margherita Marchione, professor emerita at Farleigh Dickinson University, that present a vigorous, proactive defense of Pope Pius XII's actions during the War. Suffice to say that on the afternoon of June 5, the day after Liberation, the place that throngs of Romans, Allied soldiers and Jews who had been in hiding in Vatican properties went to solemnize the Liberation was Piazza San Pietro where they called upon the Pope for his blessing. (See Jane Scrivener's diary, *Inside Rome with the Germans* on this point.)

## Liberation

In the days prior to June 4, 1944, the Germans repeated their oft-stated claim that Rome was an “open city.” This time the claim was true and the Germans evacuated just ahead of the arrival of Allied forces moving in from the south (the Alban Hills and the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead). The Allies had refrained as much as possible from strategic bombing of Rome, in contrast to the damage in Naples, Torino and Genoa. The Allies were wary of the risk of hitting the Vatican (which had been hit several times either by errant Allied bombs or by Nazi planes masquerading as Allied aircraft) or other world famous buildings. Nonetheless, as many as 10,000 Romans may have died from Allied bombing following the Sicily invasion until Liberation Day. Rome was Italy's capital and the symbol of Italian unity and widespread destruction would have alienated many Italians. While Rome was a transportation hub for the movement of German forces and supplies, the city was not a major industrial center producing war materials useful to the Germans. Finally, serious bombing of Rome might have encouraged the Germans to defend or to sabotage the City rather than declare it open. This pattern would be repeated in Paris a few months later when, defying Hitler's orders, the local German commanders refused to torch Paris and instead declared it an open city.

Three highly readable accounts of the campaign to Liberate Rome are *Rome '44* by Raleigh Trevelyan, a British veteran of Anzio, *The Race for Rome* by Dan Kurzman and *The Battle for Rome* by Robert Katz.

### *French Military Cemetery (Monte Mario)*

Not far from the Loyola Rome Center is moving evidence of the price paid by the Allies for the Liberation of Rome. Just off Via della Camilluccia on the downward slope toward the Olympic Stadium is a modest cemetery for 1710 French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) soldiers, two-thirds of them Moroccans and Algerians. The cemetery is at the end of a small road, Via dei Casali di Santo Spirito adjacent to the Villa Sacra Famiglia Clinic. Most of the grave markers bear a Muslim crescent while some have crosses. All, however, bear the inscription “Mort pour le France.” Both the Germans and the Italian civilians were terrified of the North Africans, especially the Goumiers from the mountains of Morocco who were stealthy night fighters fond of using knives in creative ways. Stories of widespread rape and slaughter of Italian peasants by the Goumiers and others, reportedly prompted the Pope to communicate to the Allied command his intense wish that the FEC not be allowed into the City at Liberation. A vivid and controversial scene from the 1961 film, *Two Women*, for which Sophia Loren won the Academy Award as best actress, recalled these fears among Italians. Other memorials to the French who died to Liberate Italy can be found in the chapel in the left rear of French national church in Rome, St. Louis of the French (San Luigi dei Francesi), which is just east of the Corso del Rinascimento and Piazza Navona.

*Buses #911 and #48 stop near the French Cemetery at the intersection of Via della Camilluccia and Via dei Colli Farnesina. Bus #990 connects to both #911 and #48 in Via Igea at Piazza Walter Rossi. The French Cemetery is open until 2pm Saturdays and Sunday. It is also an easy walk from the old Rome Center campus at Via della Camilluccia 180 near Via Igea/Piazza Walter Rossi. Between the French Cemetery and the old Camilluccia Campus is the Embassy of Iraq at 355 – once Villa Petacci, the home of Mussolini's mistress, Claretta Petacci. She would die with him at War's end just a mile short of the Swiss border. In the 1950s, the house was as a restaurant whose clientele, attracted by its somewhat lurid past, included such luminaries as Bess Truman, the former First Lady..*

*Allied Bombing: Tiburtina, San Lorenzo and Rome's Cemetery*

On July 17 and August 13, 1943, the Allies launched air bombardments on Rome itself. The targets of the raid were the railroad marshaling yards to the east and north of Termini Station, with special emphasis on Stazione Tiburtina. The Germans were using Rome's train network to move men and supplies to the south. Given the technology of the day and *modus operandi* for strategic bombing, it was not surprising that there were civilian casualties (about 3000 killed and perhaps about 10,000 injured in the July air raid alone) and damage to non-targeted structures.

One of the badly damaged structures was the Basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le Mura (San Lorenzo outside the Walls), the magnificent church gracing the main entrance to Rome's Campo Verano cemetery. The bombing also upturned hundreds of graves in the cemetery along with their elaborate grave stones so cherished by the Romans. The Germans would later use part of Campo Verano for ammunition storage and would destroy more graves as the ordnance was blown up before the retreat in June 1944. The façade of San Lorenzo was reconstructed after the War. The amazing thing is that to the untrained eye the façade would seem to be the original one hundreds of years old. There is a statue of Pius XII in Piazza San Lorenzo erected in gratitude for his visit to the neighborhood immediately after the raid. In the reconstructed foyer of the basilica is the tomb of Alcide de Gasperi, a founding father of the Italian Republic, who organized the Christian Democratic Party during the German occupation from inside the Vatican where he worked in the Library. De Gasperi served eight successive times as Prime Minister 1945-1953.

*The perfect day to visit Campo Verano is November 2, All Souls Day, when Romans turn out in large numbers to pay respect to their departed relatives and friends and to decorate their graves. The closest subway stop is Policlinico on the B Red Line, just a modest walk down Viale Regina Elena past the medical center and Rome City University campus from the Basilica. Tram lines 19, 19B and 30 (which passes by the Colosseum) also run to San Lorenzo.*

*Castro Pretorio: The Macao Barracks*

To the west of the Policlinico medical center in the direction of Stazione Termini is the Castro Pretorio (ancient headquarters of the Praetorian Guard of the emperors), often called the "Macao Barracks" during the War (so named by the Jesuits in honor of the Portuguese Jesuit outpost near Hong Kong). The Macao Barracks, bombed by the Allies and sabotaged by the Germans as they retreated, is still a key military installation. It was to the Macao Barracks that the Bozen SS police were headed when attacked in the Via Rasella and where Romans were ordered to bring their cars for confiscation by the Germans. Later, even bicycles were banned due to their use in "ride-by" killings of Germans and Fascists. Some creative Romans attached third wheels to the bikes, thus turning them into tricycles and therefore in compliance with the no-bikes order.

*From Piazza di Spagna to Piazza del Popolo: Path of Retreat*

The Spanish Steps at Piazza di Spagna are certain to be one of the first stops for any young person coming to Rome for the first time. This has been so for well over a century, whether it was young literary figures such as Shelley and Byron memorialized by a museum and tea house next to the Spanish Steps or the hippies (and Rome Center students) of the late 1960s. Six decades ago, Piazza di Spagna was full of young Americans in the evening of June 4, 1944, the day they helped liberate Rome. Some, in their weariness, simply fell asleep in the streets and a

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few in the Piazza's famous boat fountain. Just hours before, the area had seen long columns of retreating Germans passing up the nearby streets toward Piazza del Popolo (and past Santa Maria del Popolo with its famously vivid Caravaggio paintings of the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* and *Conversion of St. Paul* inside). The Germans then fled north mainly along the Via Salaria (the Salt Road) and the Via Flaminia. In a few places the Germans shot up the neighborhoods as they left. And a few Germans were apparently shot by Romans. For example, after the retreat, American troops found two Germans lying dead in the doorway of the English church in Via del Babuino.

A young American nun stranded in Rome during the War lived in a convent near Via Veneto and worked in the Vatican – and kept a diary of the Occupation, published as *Inside Rome with the Germans* in 1945 under the pen name Jane Scrivener. Mother Mary St. Luke of the Society of the Holy Child (born Jessie Lynch in Brooklyn) described the German exodus on the night of June 3-4, 1943.

...with admirable restraint, the Romans looked on, spectators of the reverse of what they had seen in September: the boot was on the other leg, the wheel had gone full circle, and the defeated Huns were escaping in disorder. Along Corso Umberto (*now Via del Corso*), Via del Babuino, Via Ripetta, Corso d'Italia and above all on the Via Flaminia crowds stood on the pavements, sat on the steps of churches or in the doorways of palaces or at the tables of the few cafes that were still open. The Germans went on, wild-eyed, unshaven, unkempt, on foot, in stolen cars, in horse drawn vehicles, even in carts belonging to the street cleaning department. There was no attempt at military formation...They were frightened.

Shortly afterwards, advance units of the U.S. Fifth Army rolled through the Piazza Venezia and up Via del Corso. The Scrivener diary contains a vivid account of the arrival of the Allies, including such gems as

...from the direction of Porta Pia, came a burst of wild cheering. The Allies had entered Rome. The sound of cheering followed the line of Via Venti Settembre as far as Piazza Venezia. After that the whole town came to life.

Fifth Army men arrived in Piazza Risorgimento while German stragglers still occupied the heights of Monte Mario. Some came in along Via Ardeatina and entered at Porta San Paolo; from Via Casilina and Via Prenestina they came through Porta Maggiore; from the Appian Way by Porta San Giovanni, as the Huns came in September. Finally, from Via Appia Antica they entered through Porta San Sebastiano.

After breakfast (June 5) two of us went out on business. Approaching Via Veneto was like stepping from a sullen world of pain, fear, suspicion, concealment and misery into a brave, gay, world of high achievement courage, confidence and chivalry. British and American flags floated in the wind, in the brilliant setting of that wide thoroughfare alive with Allied soldiers. Two long lines of American infantry were marching up either side of the roadway, toward Porta Pinciana.

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The Scots piped themselves down Via Nazionale to Piazza Venezia, where they gave a concert, amid howls of enthusiasm. Italians who had never seen kilts before admired 'the charming little skirts' they wore...American soldiers hoisted a big Italian flag on the balcony of Palazzo Venezia, the famous balcony whence the Duce used to harangue the assembled multitudes.

When the gathering (for the papal blessing on the afternoon of June 5) broke up it seemed as if the whole Fifth Army had mingled informally with the whole of the Roman population."

### *The Tiber Bridges*

Nothing is as important to an Army on the offense than capturing a bridge intact and there is nothing more important to a retreating army than burning the bridges behind them. But the situation in Rome was more complicated. Kesselring had reached an agreement with the Vatican and the Allies that in return for Allied commitments not to bomb Rome or to hit the retreating Germans and for restraint by the Resistance in ambushing German columns in the City, the Germans would not destroy Rome's bridges – from the oldest, Ponte Fabricio (62 B.C.) and Ponte Cestio (46 B.C.) that connect the Tiberina Island with the Ghetto and Trastevere on either side of the river, to the newest, Ponte Flaminio (1940) to Foro Mussolini, now Foro Italico.

The number one mission of the advance units of the U.S. 88<sup>th</sup> Blue Devils Infantry Division, the all-draftee division that was the first to enter Rome, was to seize the Ponte Duca d'Aosta and the Ponte Milvio on the north side of the City – the bridges to the Foro Mussolini. The modern Ponte Milvio is at the same crossing of the Tiber as the ancient Milvian Bridge where Constantine won the battle to be emperor in 313 A.D, and as a result installed Christianity as the religion of the empire.

The 88<sup>th</sup> had entered Rome along the Via Prenestina. The 85<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division came into Rome on Via Tuscolana and went straight for Ponte Cavour connecting the historic city center with the Vatican. Generally, the Germans had left most of the bridges undefended. However, on the afternoon of June 4<sup>th</sup>, First Special Service Force, attached to the 36<sup>th</sup> Division (Texas National Guard) lost their commander's driver and had to kill three Germans and take 12 prisoners at the Margherita Bridge (connecting Piazza del Popolo area with the Prati neighborhood north of the Vatican). (See *The Devil's Brigade* by Robert Adelman and Colonel George Walton for the full story of First Special Service Force, an amazing collection of American and Canadian cowboys, convicts, adventurers and professional soldiers. The 1968 film of the same name, starring William Holden, is available on DVD.)

Farther south on the Tiber, Americans died at Ponte Sublicio that connects the Testaccio neighborhood on the east bank of the river with the Porta Portese area on the west – where Rome's flea market is. The flea market first grew up during the War as a way for people to sell their possessions for cash to buy scarce food and for the exchange of other goods that had found their way there through the black market.

*From Il Messaggero to Stars & Stripes*

The most popular daily newspaper in Rome today is the broadsheet *Il Messaggero* which is published from its offices in Via del Tritone where Via Due Macelli intersects and becomes Via Traforo. Until the day of Rome's Liberation, however, *Il Messaggero* was a mouthpiece for the Fascist regime – as were many other papers under the control of Mussolini and the occupying Germans. Fittingly, by the afternoon of June 6, 1944, the staff of the American forces' *Stars & Stripes* newspaper had taken over the offices and the printing presses in order to churn out a daily paper for Allied troops. *Stars & Stripes* was very much the enlisted man's paper that strove to tell the truth as best it could under wartime conditions and launched the careers of many American journalists. Bill Mauldin, the great cartoonist, told the GIs' story through his characters the weary infantrymen Willie and Joe. Andy Rooney, the *60 Minutes* commentator, first wrote for *Stars & Stripes*. *Il Messaggero* got the offices back when the War ended.

*Il Messaggero* played an inadvertent role in the Via Rasella partisan bomb attack that took place just around the corner and up the street. Carla Capponi ("Elena"), assigned to watch for the approaching Germans, had aroused the suspicions of two plain clothes guards for the paper who then followed her and tried to question her as she walked up the Via Rasella. They came close to foiling the bombing. After the explosion she turned to shoot them both but by that time they were fleeing the bomb scene. Just two weeks before, she had shot a German in the back near Via Veneto and had stolen his briefcase.

*Palazzo di Giustizia: The Lynching of Donato Carretta*

On September, 18, 1944, police arrived at the Palace of Justice (Palazzo di Giustizia) that lies near Castel Sant'Angelo between Piazza Cavour and the Tiber River. They were escorting the star witness in the war crimes case against Pietro Caruso, the hated Fascist police chief of Rome during the occupation. A woman in the large crowd that had gathered for the trial recognized Donato Carretta, the former warden of Rome's Regina Coeli jail where her husband had died. The crowd seized Carretta, beat him and tried to force a tram driver to run his train over Carretta. (Trams used to run in the streets around Piazza Cavour.) The crowd then dragged Carretta down the stairway to the riverbank and threw him in, where he was beaten with oars until he was dead. The crowd, having been interfered with only minimally by Carretta's police guards, hauled the body to the jail south along the west bank of the Tiber and strung it up by the heels, as had been the carcasses of Mussolini and his colleague in Milan a few months before.. What the crowd could not have known at the time was that as the lead jailer of Regina Coeli, Carretta had been active on behalf of the Resistance in facilitating message exchanges for prisoners and had arranged for many prisoner escapes and releases, including those of Allied soldiers. Ironically, Carretta had opposed Caruso's order to remove prisoners from Regina Coeli to be murdered at the Fosse Ardeatine. Relatives of Ardeatine victims were among the crowd that lynched Carretta. Among the prisoners Carretta allowed to escape was Socialist Party leader Giuseppe Saragat. In 1969, the Rome Center class attended a reception in the Quirinal Palace hosted by President of the Italian Republic -- Giuseppe Saragat.

## WORLD WAR II OUTSIDE ROME

The War traveled up the Boot of Italy from the July 10, 1943 invasion of Sicily to the surrender of a weary, defeated German Army in the far north of Italy on April 25, 1945, just days before Hitler's suicide and just two weeks before VE-Day (Victory in Europe Day) May 8. The War in Italy devastated much of the countryside and any number of small towns and larger cities. This Guide identifies a few sites that are either easily accessible to students living in Rome or that will be close to other sites that students may visit as a "routine" part of studying in Italy.

The British and Canadians moved up the eastern coast of the Boot along the Adriatic. The Americans mainly worked the west coast of the Boot, starting with the major landings at Salerno on September 9, 1943 and at Anzio on January 22, 1944. Between the two coasts, where much of the worst fighting in the south took place, there were units from many of the Allied countries: U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand (including native Maori units), South Africa, India (including the famous Gurkhas), Free French (largely from Morocco, Algeria and other African colonies), Poland and Brazil. In addition, there were thousands of Italians organized into a variety of Royal Army units operating under U.S. and British command, but mainly confined to logistical and support roles. For the most complete treatment of the role of the Italian military in the War of Liberation following the September 1943 Armistice, see *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation 1943-1945* by retired Loyola professor Charles O'Reilly.

The Germans established a series of prepared defensive "Lines" bearing such names as Caesar, Hitler, Winter, Arno, Green, Rome, Switch and Reinhard. The two most infamous were the Gustav in the south, just north of Naples and Gothic to the north of Florence and south of Bologna. The slaughter associated with these dug-in positions, built in large part with slave labor, was reminiscent of the trench warfare of the Great War of 1914-18. After the taking of Naples on October 1, 1943 and the Liberation of Rome June 4, 1944, the Allies repeatedly tried for months to break through the Gustav Line that ran from sea to sea roughly north of the line dividing the regions of Lazio and Campania. The big prizes were Via Casilina (Highway 6) that ran through the Liri River Valley north to Rome and the Appian Way (Highway 7) that ran closer to the western coast. The Allies needed to get out of the hills and into flat areas suitable for massed armor to rush toward Rome. After the Liberation of Rome and the rapid push north to Florence, the Allies barely missed routing the Germans completely and had to struggle through the winter and spring to punch through the Gothic Line north of the Arno River running roughly from La Spezia to Rimini.

Much of Italy was a battleground. Any farm house, with its thick walls, could be a German gun position and any hilltop could be an observation point. Small villages and towns were often destroyed completely as the Allies pushed the Germans out. In contrast to the many communities that retain centuries old buildings and character, many others are characterized largely by unattractive 50's and 60s style quickie construction. These are often the towns that suffered extensive war damage. Be on the lookout in town and village piazzas and churches throughout Italy for plaques and other memorials to the experience of the War. Tip-off Italian words, in addition to the dates on the "lapide" (plaques) to look for are "caduti" (the fallen), "guerra mondiale" (world war), "resistenza" (resistance), "partigiani" (partisans), "soldati" (soldiers) "tedeschi" (Germans), "alleati" (Allies) and "patria" (fatherland).

## The Three Must Sees: Anzio-Nettuno, Florence American Cemetery & Montecassino

The American Cemeteries at Anzio-Nettuno and just south of Florence don't fall into the category of "if you've seen one you've seen 'em all." There is no more compelling and enduring an experience than visiting these memorials. More than three decades after the fact, the author of this Guide vividly recalls looking down from a road above the Florence cemetery – taken there by an Italian who had served in the Italian army during the war. With tears in his eyes, he was thanking *us* – Americans not yet born when the young men of our parents' generation buried below gave the last full measure of devotion. The two cemeteries are easy to get to and the Florence cemetery, at least, is on the way to or from another trip you are bound to take. And the Anzio-Nettuno area and cemeteries are a short train or bus trip from Rome. Montecassino is the place that seems to somehow sum up the War in Italy -- and will take you from the 6<sup>th</sup> century beginning of monastic life in Europe through to the post-War reconstruction.

### *Anzio-Nettuno: Operation Shingle*

The attempt by the Allies in late January 1944 to end-run the Gustav Line that was anchored in the hills around Montecassino remains controversial to this day. Although the Germans were taken totally by surprise and the port of Anzio was seized undamaged, the time spent consolidating the beachhead and bringing in needed men and equipment gave the Germans time to mount a defense that bottled up the Allies until the breakout in early May 1944. In mid-February the Germans came close to making Anzio another Dunkirk, falling short by a hair's breadth. A stalemate settled in for the next three months. Anzio and neighboring Nettuno (Neptune), whose populations had already been forced out by the Germans, were devastated, as was much of the area leading inland to the Alban Hills. The landing was timed to coincide with a frontal assault on the Gustav Line and to trap the Germans and liberate Rome in one fell swoop. But it took four more months to accomplish the mission and the Germans were able to largely escape entrapment. During the stalemate thousands of Allied troops fell into German hands as prisoners of war and found themselves paraded through Piazza Venezia and up Via del Corso and Via del Tritone in a modern-day Nazi version of the ancient march of the war captives through the streets of Rome.

*Anzio can be reached several ways. One is by taking the Metropolitana B Red Line subway to the EUR Fermi stop and catching an express bus to downtown Anzio. Check with COTRAL, the Lazio provincial bus company, for bus times and routes. There are also trains to Anzio-Nettuno.*

The four month period of the landing, the siege, the breakout and the Liberation of Rome have been written about extensively. (See *Anzio: The Bid for Rome* by Christopher Hibbert for a detailed description, with many excellent maps of the military operations at the beachhead.)

German and Allied positions were so close that soldiers could easily sing along with one another, in their own lyrics, to the most popular song of the day, *Lili Marlene*. Originally a German pop tune, *Lili Marlene* became so popular with the British in North Africa that the marvelous British torch singer Vera Lynn recorded it, as did Marlene Dietrich, the anti-Nazi German actress who had become a famous Hollywood star. A website devoted to this famous song, with versions from a wide range of performers and in various languages, including a post-War rendition by the chorus of the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzergrenadier Division, can be found at <http://ingeb.org/garb/lmarleen.html>.

*Amazing Fact: The Best World War II Museum in the World*

Piana delle Orme Historical Museum near the town of Latina (formerly Littorio, a model town built by Mussolini as part of the draining of the Pontine Marshes), may have the largest collection of World War II military equipment in the world, recovered from battlefields in Italy and North Africa. One item is a Sherman DD Tank designed for amphibious landings recovered just a few years ago from the Gulf of Salerno and restored. The tank was part of the 753<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion, whose successor unit is the 77<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment (“Steel Tigers”) that has served in Iraq. Several pavilions recount the Italian Campaign, all to a background of audio-visual special effects that seek to replicate the terrifying experiences of war. Other pavilions have agricultural and other exhibits. Piana delle Orme is at Via Migliara 43,5 in Borgo Fauti just off Road 156 that connects the Appian Way (Hwy 7) and the Via Pontina (Hwy 148). The museum is in the direction of Latina from the Frosinone exit on the A1 Autostrada. The website is <http://www.pianadelleorme.it/>

## Helpful Hints

- Both the American (Nettuno) and British (Anzio) cemeteries are easily reached from the train station by taxi, bus, or foot as are the two local museums commemorating the landing and the Liberation. In addition to the 7860 headstones (Latin crosses and Stars of David) marking the resting places of 7861 Americans (two brothers lie side by side in a single grave), there is a set of large marble insets recounting the course of the Italian campaign from Sicily to Rome during which these men and so many others were lost.
- There are two Medal of Honor recipients interred at Nettuno, whose locations at the cemetery and website link to their Medal of Honor citations follow:
  - Sylvester Antolak; C-12-13;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/antolak.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/antolak.html)
  - Robert Waugh; H-13-37;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/baugh.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/baugh.html)
- The Anzio museum is in Via di Villa Adele. Weblinks are: [http://utenti.lycos.it/Museo\\_Sbarco\\_Anzio/italiano.htm](http://utenti.lycos.it/Museo_Sbarco_Anzio/italiano.htm) and <http://www.anzio.net/davedere/sbarco.htm>
- The Nettuno museum is at Via della Vittoria #2 and the telephone number is 06/9803620.
- A trip to Anzio can be a one-day affair including a terrific seafood lunch in a trattoria with a view of the harbor that was reconstructed from postcard photos after the War. Another option is to combine a visit to Anzio-Nettuno with a group bus trip that includes Montecassino in the southern reaches of Lazio Region.
- The port of Anzio and “Yellow” Beach on the southern edge of Anzio in the direction of Nettuno were taken by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> U.S Ranger Battalions. “Peter” Beach, about 10 km up the coast was the landing zone for the British 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. A couple of kilometers south of Nettuno is the “X-Ray” Beach landing zone of the American 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (which in 2003 was in the vanguard of Coalition forces in Iraq).
- Between Rome and Anzio-Nettuno, off the Autostrada at the Pontina exit for Pomezia, is the massive German cemetery, where lie 27,423 soldiers, three to a grave.

*Amazing Fact: Don't Bother Asking about the Local Soccer Team*

Little Nettuno has one of the best baseball parks and baseball teams in Italy. Baseball was introduced to Nettuno as GIs played ball under the threat of artillery shells landing on second base. After the War, at an American base in Nettuno, GIs organized local teams and from that day on Nettuno has had one of the winningest team in a vibrant Italian baseball league. The Nettuno Lions website is at <http://www.nettunobaseball.net/>. While called the Nettuno Lions, for some inexplicable reason in past times the team's mascot was Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians.

*Colli Albani & the Littorio: For the REAL Students of World War II*

A car or charter bus is needed for an adequate tour of the Littorio area that comprised the bloody four-month battleground surrounding the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead on three sides and the intermediary objective of the forces in the beachhead, the Alban Hills. Intrepid and prepared visitors will find the trip worthwhile. Several books available in the Rome Center library describe, in detail, with maps, the intense struggle in the area. The Littorio had once largely been the north end of the Pontine Marshes that had been drained by Mussolini as part of a public works program to create jobs and new farmland for migrants from the north of Italy.

The towns of Cisterna, Aprilia (the Factory), Campoleone, Isola Bella and others, some just wide spots in the road, were all focal points of extraordinarily violent action. So bad, in fact, that many German POWs at Anzio complained that they would have preferred to be back on the Russian front where they had previously served. One of the most dramatic incidents occurred on January 28-29, when American Army Rangers (Darby's Rangers) set out to take Cisterna, the town where St. Paul met his Christian confederates from Rome as he prepared to enter the city. Moving quietly up the Fossa di Pantano canal (the Ditch) that was a feeder to the much larger Mussolini Canal (now called Mascarello Canal), the Rangers killed a number of Germans with their knives, not knowing that they were headed into an ambush. By the end of the next day, relying on little more than grenades and small arms, the Rangers inflicted heavy casualties on the German Panzer units they faced. Of the 767 men of all ranks who started out, only 6 men made it back to the American lines. Those not killed had been captured.

The Colli Albani had been the original objective of the Anzio-Nettuno landing forces as a means of cutting Via Appia (Highway 7) and Via Casilina (Highway 6). Albano, Velletri, Valmontone, Lanuvio and Frattocchie are today pleasant places attracting tourists. But in early 1944 they were the prizes in a high stakes game. The Pope's summer residence of Castel Gandolfo in the Alban Hills was filled with refugees, including Jews on the run. Unfortunately, in bombing related to the Anzio breakout, large numbers of nuns and refugees were killed within the papal grounds of Castel Gandolfo. In Albano is a memorial to the resistance fighters.

*Florence: Kicking out the Germans*

Florence holds a special place in the story of the Italian Resistance, engaging the Germans in open combat in the streets for a longer period than any other city. On the morning of August 11, 1944, after the tolling of La Campana del Popolo (the people's bell) in Palazzo Vecchio, every church bell in Florence began to sound and thousands of Florentines rose up to push the Germans out ahead of the advancing Allies. After 48 hours of fighting, the Germans and their fascist allies were forced out of the city proper. Allied forces would begin crossing the Arno on August 12. While the rising in Florence may not have made a critical contribution to freeing the city and concluding the War, such an action was necessary for the Florentines and for all Italians. The history of Florence was one of periodic rebellions against oppressive rulers. Florentines, whose native son, Dante, gave Italy its modern common language, had the opportunity to help restore the nation's honor. Two decades of Fascism had gone terribly wrong. Italy had been humiliated on the battlefields of Greece, North Africa and Sicily. And for a year Florence had been under the German thumb. Florence would give the Germans a swift kick as they left by the back door. Although the city was spared massive destruction, the retreating Germans believed it necessary to blow up all but one of the bridges across the Arno, including Ponte Santa Trinita', the 1569 masterpiece some called the most beautiful bridge in the world, that was just downstream from the famed Ponte Vecchio. The Ponte Vecchio, too fragile to support tanks, was saved when the Germans chose to blow up the buildings on either side of the bridge in order to stall the Allies. Upstream from Ponte Vecchio, Ponte alle Grazie, dating from 1237, was also lost.

In the streets of Florence, there are several "lapide" memorials to the "caduti" of the Second World War -- the Liberation and the partigiani. There is a plaque at the main post office, Palazzo delle Poste e dei Telegrafi, in Via Pellicceria (Leather Street just off Piazza della Repubblica), in memory of the many employees of the postal system lost during the War either as soldiers or on the job. At Via dei Bastoni 3, just under the Piazzale Michelangelo overlook of the City across the Arno, a plaque memorializes a number of partigiani killed by the Germans in fighting at that spot. One that commemorates both the soldiers of the Great War and the partigiani of the Second World War is at Via delle Masse 38. Finally, at Via delle Cinque Vie 4, there is a lapide in tribute to a number of partigiani shot by the Germans in 1944.

*Amazing Fact: The Friendly Enemy*

On March 25, 1955, nearly ten years after the Liberation of Florence, the Mayor of Florence presented Honorary Citizenship and Freedom of the City to Dr. Gerhard Wolf, the German diplomatic consul in Florence during the war years. Wolf had worked tirelessly and at great personal risk to gain the release of hostages held by the SS and to save Florence from destruction. The Mayor told Dr. Wolf of that "through your efforts on behalf of the people of Florence, among them Florentines of Jewish origin, the most unjustly persecuted of all, you became part of the spirit and history of our city." Sadly, Dr. Wolf did not succeed in saving Ponte Santa Trinita', the bridge he had fallen in love with. The full story of Dr. Wolf is told in *The Consul of Florence* by David Tutaev.

### *The American Cemetery in Florence*

*“And when those conflicts were over, what did we do?...the only land we ever asked for was enough land to bury our dead.” -- U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell (14 February 2002)*

The American Cemetery near Florence is the final resting place for 4402 American soldiers and sailors who died in the Italian campaign during the push from Rome to the Alps between June 1944 and late April 1945. There are two Medal of Honor recipients interred there and another, whose body could not be recovered, is memorialized on the Wall. Their names, locations at the cemetery and links to their Medal of Honor citations follow:

- Addison E. Baker; Wall;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/baker\\_addison.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/baker_addison.html)
- Roy Harmon; A-4-37;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/harmon.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/harmon.html)
- George Keathly; D-11-26;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/keathley.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/keathley.html)

The cemetery is just 7.5 miles south of Florence city on the Via Cassia/Via Senese (Highway 2 to Siena). The ancient road enters Florence at the Porta Romana and then veers right into the Via Romana past the Pitti Palace and across the Ponte Vecchio into the heart of Florence. The Certosa exit off the Autostrada is nearby, only 2 miles north of the cemetery. There is frequent SITA (intercity) bus service to the cemetery along the Via Cassia/Via Senese from Piazza Santa Maria Novella across from the Florence train station. The bus will stop just outside the “Cimitero Americano” on request. Don’t hesitate to ask. The bus driver or someone on the bus will be happy to help. The design of the cemetery is similar to that at Nettuno, with large marble insets telling the story of the Italian Campaign. If you are planning a weekend train trip to Florence it is easy to fit in a morning side trip by hopping on the bus. Alternatively, if you are participating in a Rome Center group bus trip to Florence a side trip on the way up or back can be easily arranged.

Quite near to the cemetery is the small town of Impruneta, what had been a beautiful “daughter-township” of Florence. On the night of July 28-29, 1944, American bombers largely destroyed the town and its Renaissance Basilica. Unfortunately, intelligence had incorrectly advised that Impruneta contained a significant German contingent.

### *Montecassino: The Controversy Continues*

The destruction of the ancient Benedictine Monastery of Montecassino by Allied bombers on February 15, 1944, remains the single most controversial decision of the Italian campaign, overshadowing arguably more important issues such as the choice of taking Rome rather than cutting off the German retreat or landing at Salerno rather than farther north, even above Rome. This may be so because the Battle of Montecassino seems to sum up the entire Italian campaign – bullheadedness, bravery, civilian tragedy, both the

*Montecassino is in most southern part of Lazio Region, just north of the Campania Region containing the city of Naples. It is about 140 km south of Loyola's Monte Mario campus in Rome on Via Casilina, Highway 6 (and just off the A1 Autostrada). The town of Cassino is on the main rail line to Naples.*

saving and destruction of Italy's artistic heritage, the role of the Church, and the politics of war. Numerous books have been written that deal with Montecassino. Getting past the town of Cassino meant entry into the flatlands in the Liri River valley where Allied armor could move rapidly north on Highway 6 the fewer than 100 miles to the center of Rome.

### Helpful Hints:

- The Montecassino Abbey website is [http://www.officine.it/montecassino/main\\_e.htm](http://www.officine.it/montecassino/main_e.htm).
- Go on a Sunday in order to attend the High Mass sung in Gregorian chant. Masses are at 9am, 10:30am and Noon. In the intimacy of the Abbey chapel, you will be transported back many centuries to the time when the Abbey, founded by St. Benedict himself in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, had evolved into the insulated repository and protector of Europe's art, letters and music. It is an experience that will stay with you all of your days.
- The two best ways of getting to Cassino, the town at the base of the mountain after which the Abbey's mountain is named, is either an express train from Stazione Termini in Rome or by bus as part of a Rome Center bus trip. If going by train, either leave on the early morning train Sunday and arrive in time for the 10:30am Mass or go on Saturday and stay over in Cassino. Taxis are available at the Cassino train station. The taxi can take you to the Abbey in time for Mass and will return at a pre-arranged time to bring you back to town and to the British and German cemeteries.
- Allow enough time after Mass for an immediate visit to the museum in the Abbey where you can see some of the artifacts saved because the Germans had transported them for safekeeping by the Vatican in Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome. There are also photos taken before, during and after the bombing.
- Check the weather reports and try to go to Montecassino on a clear day since it is the view from the Abbey and the view of the Abbey from the valley that will illustrate the dilemma facing the Allies. Take binoculars if you have them. The Germans claimed (subsequently largely proven) that they were not using the Abbey itself as an observation position to direct artillery fire on the Allies, although they were positioned right up to the Abbey walls. Put yourself in the boots of an Allied soldier in the valley being pounded day in and day out. The bottom line is that General Freyberg, the New Zealander in charge on the Valley floor, insisted, against the wishes of his superiors, that bombing the Abbey was essential for troop morale and was a condition for the New Zealanders staying on the frontline. Freyberg had the authority to remove his troops and was prepared to do so if his wishes were not carried out. In the sixty years since the bombing, the full story has not become clear. A number of books in the Rome Center library address the four battles of Cassino and the controversy at the time and later. A short outline of the struggle for the Montecassino and environs can be found at <http://www.mindspring.com/~gif212/historyb.htm>
- From the veranda of the Abbey, look out on the haunting Polish cemetery on the downward slope of the mountain from which the Poles succeeded in taking the demolished Abbey three months after the bombing. On the way down from Montecassino stop to visit the cemetery that is in the shape of a cross. Buried with his men, years later, is the Polish General Wladyslaw Anders. Having been dispossessed of their own country by both the Germans and Russians and released from prison by the Russians to fight with the Western Allies in Italy, the Poles saw the Germans as very personal enemies. The honor of taking the Abbey after horrendous losses was dulled

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somewhat by the fact that the Germans had managed to evacuate before the Poles prevailed. On the Sunday after taking the Abbey, the Poles attended Mass in the ruins and came up with \$1000 in the Sunday collection for the reconstruction of the Abbey.

- Look closely at the Abbey and its construction. It is new. But old. By the time of its consecration by Pope John XXIII on October 25, 1964, the Abbey had been largely rebuilt, as closely as possible to the original. Funds for the restoration were supplied primarily by the Vatican and the Italian State. Unfortunately, little support was solicited or came from American sources directly since the wounds were still too fresh for some.
- Arrange with the taxi driver or on the Rome Center bus to visit both the British Cemetery that is in Cassino proper and the German cemetery on the outskirts of town near the regional Italian prison. From the British cemetery, look up at the Abbey and consider what your own thoughts might have been that day if you saw your bombers taking down the Abbey. Then, have the taxi driver take you to the German cemetery. Compared to the Allied cemeteries, the German one is massive, with over 20,000 men interred. And, the Germans have buried their fallen three or more to a grave. Shocking as well, but obvious on reflection, is that so many are unknown. An army in retreat has little opportunity to deal with their dead, often having to leave them to the enemy. The Allies would have had scant information for “graves registration” of enemy casualties.
- Consider what various cemeteries may say about the “national characters” of the belligerent nations. The American cemetery is understated and oriented toward the individual with attention to stated religious faith and home state. The British, while providing individual resting places, is careful as well to list the fallen by their units on large stone insets, with many units having long histories in localities at home. The French cemetery, incongruously perhaps to the American eye, engraves on the headstones of its North African colonial troops, “Mort pour la France.” The Polish cemetery is, as much as anything, a political as well as religious statement that seems to echo the role that Poland’s fierce loyalty to the Catholic faith would play as the catalyst for Liberation from communism nearly five decades after these Poles gave their lives. At the front of the Polish Cemetery is the inscription “We Polish soldiers for our freedom and yours have given our souls to God, our bodies to the soil of Italy, and our hearts to Poland.” As for the Germans, the air of sadness and loss seems to exceed that of the others. While the other cemeteries seem to welcome the sun, the German cemetery near Cassino is shielded from it. Designed in concentric circles, what one might think of as German orderliness, seems to catch one in a never-ending cycle.
- Before catching the train back to Rome, you can grab a quick meal in Cassino town. Near the train station is some of the best pizza ever. If visiting a trattoria, make sure at least one in the group orders spaghetti alla ciociara. Ciociara is the word for the area and for the people of the rural areas of the region of Lazio. The famous Italian film, for which the great Sophia Loren won the Academy Award in 1961, was called *Two Women* in English but *La Ciociara* in the original Italian. An extremely controversial movie at the time, it is the story of a woman trying to get her daughter out of German occupied Rome (the San Lorenzo quarter) to the expected safety of the countryside in her home area of southern Lazio. Downtown Cassino is quite plain and there is no evidence of Old Italy. The current town of Cassino is actually centered several hundred meters from the original. The Germans destroyed every structure in Cassino and used the rubble as cover for a devastating ambush of Allied troops.

*Amazing Fact: "The Madonna of Montecassino and Brooklyn"*

Decades after the destruction of the Abbey, artifacts saved from the rubble were still being returned by both German and Allied personnel. A painting saved from the ruins by a German soldier now hangs in the Abbey and in 1985 the Abbey saw the return of a two-foot tall marble statue of the Madonna that a young American merchant mariner had salvaged shortly after the Poles took the Abbey. The statue accompanied him on three crossings of the Atlantic and during the Normandy D-Day invasion as he sailed on the Liberty ship, SS Cotton Mather. Ironically Cotton Mather was the minister of Old North Church in Boston and the quintessential Puritan who would have been appalled that a Catholic statue of the Virgin Mary was the "protector" of the ship named after him. The statue graced St. Patrick's convent in Brooklyn for forty years after the war until the Dominican sisters there were able to return it.

*Pisa*

As the western anchor of the Pisa-Rimini Line established by the Germans after the Liberation of Rome, the Allies could barely avoid bombing runs against targets in Pisa. When visiting the fabled Leaning Tower and the Duomo there, you will see how close that wonder of the world came to being a victim of the War. Adjacent to the Duomo and the Baptistery is the Campo Santo which was the burial ground of the moneyed families of Pisa when that City was a great sea and trading power. The soil in the Campo Santo had been brought from the Holy Land during the Crusades so that wealthy Pisans could be laid to rest in the same earth that Jesus had walked upon – hence Campo Santo – "holy field." But wayward bombs from Allied planes landed on the roof of the Campo Santo, setting fires that melted the lead roof and doing horrific damage to the beautiful murals adorning the interior walls. Be sure to visit the restoration center across the street from the Campo Santo to see the drawings that were beneath the frescoes, so many of which were destroyed in the fire following the bombing.

*Milano*

Milano remained in the grip of the Germans until the last days of the War, even as Mussolini, Milano's Cardinal Archbishop Schuster, Milano's partisan leadership and the local German commanders negotiated on ways to either save the City or themselves. Milano had suffered substantial bomb damage during the War as an industrial center. Two places in Milan are of special interest. Many people visit and marvel at the beauty of Leonard da Vinci's *Last Supper* in the Church and Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie on the edge of downtown without realizing how close it came to being lost to the War. While allied bombs intended for other targets destroyed much of the church, the great painting was miraculously spared, protected by sandbags that had been piled up around it. Also seriously damaged were Ospedale Maggiore, Palazzo Marino and the church of San Ambrogio. At the other side of the downtown area from Santa Maria is the Piazzale Loreto. An otherwise non-descript urban roundabout, Piazzale Loreto was where the bodies of Mussolini, his mistress Claretta Petacci and several fascists were hung by their heels at a gasoline station after having been shot by partigiani (at Mezzegra on the western shore of Lake Como just south of Tremezzo). The bodies were beaten and spat upon by angry Milanese at the same gasoline station where a number of hostages had been shot by the Germans just a few months before. The film and photos of the desecration of Mussolini's body – a purging of Italy's love affair with Il Duce -- are among the most well known of the War.

### *Genoa: The Lucky Bomb*

In the Cathedral of San Lorenzo in Genoa (Genova), birthplace of Christopher Columbus, there is something that tourists and regular congregants alike rub for good luck. It is the unexploded Lucky Bomb dropped by a British bomber in early 1941. Some other important structures were not so lucky. Genoa was one of the Italian cities most heavily damaged by Allied bombing in the War because of its importance as one of Italy's largest ports and its location in the German occupation zone until the very end of the War. Palazzo di San Giorgio, Palazzo Serra Campanella, the opera house Teatro Carlo Felice and the churches Santissima Annunziata del Visitato and San Stefano were all badly damaged. But Genova also holds the distinction of having beaten the Germans at their own game. Partisans in the city, in heavy fighting in April 1945, were able to take 1000 German soldiers captive. The partisans saved the city from massive sabotage and slaughter by assuring that every last German "hostage" would be shot unless the retreating Germans left Genoa in peace. It worked.

The price paid by the Genovesi during the War is memorialized on various lapidi in the streets of the city. For example, in Piazza Romagnosi in the Marassi quarter a lapide in the courtyard of a school recalls the murder of a young Gappisti woman called "Partigiano Joan" (Paglia Marcello).

### *Naples & The Amalfi Coast*

Today, most of us think of Naples as a city to avoid. Most visitors go straight to the nearby areas of the ancient and petrified cities of Pompeii and Herculeneum and the modern vacation spots of Sorrento, Positano and the stunning (but terrifying) Amalfi coast. Six decades ago ago, Naples and the areas immediately south were a killing ground. While the Allied invasion of the Boot south of Naples has been called the Salerno landing (Operation Avalanche), the Allied beachhead covered a much broader area. The southern anchor of the assault was the landing of VI Corps' U.S. 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Texans) at Paestum beach (a site with ancient Greek ruins) about 20 miles south of the coastal city of Salerno. The British landed along the ten-mile stretch of beaches just south of Salerno. To the west, as Italy juts out into the sea, are the villages of Maiori and Minori, next door neighbors of the famed town of Amalfi, that were taken by U.S. Ranger Battalions. Near Maiori, the little church of San Domenico was turned into a field hospital for wounded GIs where medics and nuns worked feverishly to deal with the casualty load. For a full account of the Salerno landings and the aftermath, see *Operation Avalanche* by Des Hickey and Gus Smith.

Naples has never fully recovered from the destruction wrought by the War. In addition to the Allied bombing, for four days near the end of September 1943 the city was in the grip of guerrilla attacks by the Neapolitan Resistance and reprisals by the Germans. The Germans adopted a scorched earth policy in Naples that, among other things, was a message to both the Allies and the Italians that every Italian city would be at risk of substantial German sabotage. German explosives basically returned Naples to a pre-industrial state:

- core facilities of the water and sewage systems were blown up;
- public transit tracks were ripped up and bus rolling stock stolen;
- the telephone exchanges were destroyed;
- the grand hotels were demolished;

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- all tunnels were caved in and sealed;
- flour mills were collapsed; and
- in a reprise of Nazi book burnings, the University of Naples, founded in 1224, was destroyed and priceless manuscripts and books soaked with gasoline and set afire.

Also heavily damaged were the churches of Monte Oliveto, San Filippo Neri, Santa Chiara and San Eligio. Imagine any great American city recovering from such concerted destruction.

As if Allied bombing and the widespread destruction of Naples by German sappers was not enough to cope with, the Neapolitans in 1943 had to put up with one of those pesky eruptions of Mt. Vesuvio that comes along every few centuries or so.

### *Caserta – Royal Palace & Allied HQ*

The House of Savoy may not have been the House of Windsor but from a housing standpoint they never played second fiddle. The massive Royal Palace of the Savoy Family in Caserta, 75 km south of Montecassino and 50 km north of Naples on the A1 Autostrada, is open to the public as a museum today. (The next stop of the express train from Rome to Cassino is Caserta.) From the Fall of 1943 until the end of the War, the Palace was the Headquarters of Supreme Allied Command in Italy. It was here that the final amended Armistice agreement between Italy and the Allies was signed.

## **Versilia: Italian Liberation And The American Civil Rights Movement**

### *The 92<sup>nd</sup> Division: The Buffalo Soldiers*

Wars bring change. In addition to assuring freedom and democracy in Western Europe and setting the stage for the Cold War and the eventual demise of European communism, World War II also helped fuel the American civil rights movement of the late 1940s through the 1960s. During the War, the American armed forces for the most part remained segregated, with black citizens often relegated to serving their country in jobs considered menial and in all-black units commanded by white officers. A notable exception to this was the famous Tuskegee Airmen. At the same time, thousands of Japanese-Americans from the Pacific Coast were interned in relocation camps out of fear of spies and sabotage following the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. President Roosevelt and California Governor Earl Warren (later Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court) believed the relocation to be a necessity. While not especially controversial at the time, that decision would later be largely discredited.

The area called Versilia, northwest of Lucca, was a focal point of the Allied effort to break the Gothic Line from the Fall of 1944 into the Spring of 1945. And, in retrospect, it was emblematic of a revolution developing in American society that would be spurred on by the War. Young African-Americans and Japanese-Americans who had served honorably and loyally would no longer be willing to accept second class citizenship in a country that had dedicated so much treasure and blood to eradicating regimes in Europe and Japan that were in great part predicated on notions of racial superiority and the institutionalization of the rankest forms of discrimination.

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The experiences of the American 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division (Buffalo Soldiers) in freeing the Versilia area reflect the deep tensions in American society at a time of legalized racial segregation.. Lucca, with Europe's most beautiful and intact medieval wall, was liberated in mid-September 1944 by a largely African-American infantry division, with mainly black junior officers and mainly white senior officers. The 92<sup>nd</sup> moved swiftly to liberate the coastal plain northwest of Lucca running up to the Gothic Line that began south of the port of La Spezia (the headquarters port of today's Italian Navy). The 92<sup>nd</sup> was the only black combat division in an Army in which blacks mainly served in all-black construction or logistical units (such as the famous Red Ball Express trucking group that helped keep front line troops supplied in France).

During the winter, however, disaster struck the 92<sup>nd</sup>. In the face of heavy and unrelenting counterattacks by the Germans down the Serchio River Valley north of Lucca, the 92<sup>nd</sup> fell short. In spite of numerous acts of individual heroism, the 92<sup>nd</sup> folded in a number of key sectors. At the time, with a viewpoint rooted in the prejudices of the day, the poor performance of the 92<sup>nd</sup> was attributed by many to the racial make-up of the division. Interestingly, General Mark Clark, the American commander in the Italian campaign, hit the mark when he wrote after the War that the problems of the 92<sup>nd</sup> were not to be found in the inferiority of its men but in the inferior training and leadership provided them as well as in the low expectations when soldiers are relegated to second class citizenship and yet called upon to be first class fighters.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it may seem obvious to us that a military unit organized around the concept of second class citizenship and racial inferiority and officered by men who, in the main, bought into these ideas, would perform below standards. But this was not so self-evident to many people in 1944. The performance of African-American soldiers, sailors and Marines since President Truman's military integration orders in the late 1940s certainly validated General Clark's view about the source of the 92<sup>nd</sup>'s problems. In the post-War era, nearly a million young African-American veterans returned home with the experience of having helped free an enslaved Europe and a feudal Japan. They were no longer willing to tolerate anything other than their own liberation – liberation that would be achieved through the non-violent means of the civil rights movement. For a full rendering of the story of the Buffalo Soldiers, see Daniel K. Gilbran's *The 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and the Italian Campaign in World War II*.

### *The Nisei 442: "Go for Broke"*

After the near collapse of the 92<sup>nd</sup>, the Division was reconstituted in anticipation of the springtime assault on the Gothic Line. Brought back to Italy to join the new 92<sup>nd</sup> was what would be the most decorated Army unit of the War – the Nisei 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team. Nisei are second generation Americans of Japanese descent – those whose parents had been born in Japan. Made up of young Japanese-Americans, many of whom had joined the service from the relocation camps, the 442, with its Hawaiian motto, "Go for broke," was out to prove something. Their job in the Versilia area, anchored by the town of Pietrasanta, was to assault the dug-in Germans on the Gothic line in the Alpi Apuane mountains that rise up swiftly just a few miles in from Pietrasanta and the other towns along the coastal plain. The new 92<sup>nd</sup>, black, white and Japanese-American would crack through the Gothic Line in the spring and would chase the collapsing Germans all the way north toward the Alps until the late April surrender. Like the African-American soldiers with whom they served in the 92<sup>nd</sup>, the Nisei would return home to an America that they would help change for the better.

*The Royal Italian Army: Muleskinners*

A trip into upper Versilia from Pietrasanta brings an immediate appreciation that Allied superiority in armor and other vehicular equipment was no advantage in cracking the Gothic Line. In order to move supplies into the field through impossible terrain, the Army called in a unit of 600 Italian enlisted men and a dozen or so American officers and enlisted men to manage a continuous stream of mules and horses requisitioned from farms all over central Italy. These pack animals and the Italian muleskinners saved the day. For the definitive study of the role for the Italian military after the Armistice see former Rome Center professor Charles O'Reilly's *Forgotten Battles: Italy's War of Liberation 1943-1945*.

*Pietrasanta: Telling the Truth 50 Years Later*

This Guide has made the point that the War and the roles played by various elements in the struggle can still be points of controversy in Italy today. In the atrium of the city hall of beautiful Pietrasanta, a coastal town lying just a few miles from the mountains into which the Germans had dug the Gustav Line, is a lapide that basically recalls the Liberation of the area by the partisans and Allied troops in September 1944. But just on the edge of town in a small park is a statue that presents a different take on the Liberation of Versilia. The statue was inspired by Americo Bugliani, husband of former Rome Center director Ann Bugliani.

Americo lived through the six-month ordeal of the Liberation of all of Versilia. As an 11 year old, he was the man of the house, his older brother taken to Germany as a slave laborer and his father in America separated from his family by the War. Americo was born an American citizen due to his father having acquired U.S. citizenship through service in the American Army in World War I and during his several stays working in the States. Americo could not forget a young Nisei, Paul Sakamoto, who had had given him the prized gifts of a toothbrush, toothpaste and a woolen Army dress cap. Fifty years later, Americo reunited with Sakamoto in Hawaii. In the meantime, Americo would himself serve in the American Army after emigrating to the U.S., later becoming commander of a local American Legion post in Chicago that was the Nisei post.

When Americo learned of the new lapide in the Pietrasanta city hall, he bluntly informed the left wing Mayor of Pietrasanta that the plaque did not tell the full story of the Liberation of all of Versilia, which had come only in the early Spring of 1945, not in September of 1944. Americo wanted to tell the story of the Americans who had befriended him and had shared their Hershey bars with him before they went off to break the Gothic Line. Americo's way of telling that story was to lead the effort to erect a bronze statue of Private Sadao Munemori, the first Japanese-American awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Private Munemori, known as "Spud," died near Seravezza in Versilia. After single handedly destroying two German machine gun emplacements, Munemori threw himself on a German grenade, saving several of his comrades. Private Munemori's story, his Medal of Honor citation and photos of the Pietrasants memorial can be viewed at [http://www.rogere442.net/KIA's/ALL\\_KIAS/Munemori%20Sadao.pdf](http://www.rogere442.net/KIA's/ALL_KIAS/Munemori%20Sadao.pdf).

*Sant'Anna di Stazzema:*

A few miles from Pietrasanta is the mountain village of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, where there began on August 12, 1944 a series of atrocities. The Resistance had been active in the area and Kesselring had given free rein to local commanders to use virtually any means they chose to take reprisals. A Waffen SS unit rounded up the people of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, which by that time consisted almost exclusively of women, children and elderly men. Young and middle-aged men had taken to the woods, joined the Resistance or had already been Shanghaied for labor in Germany. It has been reported that among the 360 bodies were those of several SS men who may well have been killed by their colleagues for refusing to partake in the murders. The SS then moved on to the village of Valla where they killed 107 more and San Terenzo where 53 more hostages were dispatched. Across the Appenines, numerous other villages were put to the sword, the culmination of the rampage taking place around Monte Sole and the town of Marzabotto southwest of Bologna where SS and Fascists murdered over 1800 people and burned farms and villages. The rationale was always the same: the local people were harboring partisans and mass reprisal would dissuade the Resistance from constant attacks on the German rear as they tried to hold the Gothic Line.

Sant'Anna di Stazzema has a small Museum of the Resistance in Piazza in Don Lazzeri as well as a memorial to the victims (<http://www.santannadistazzema.org/sezioni/IL%20MUSEO/>). Sant'Anna di Stazzema is the setting for a much acclaimed novel by James McBride, *Miracle at St. Anna* that was brought to film in 2008 by Spike Lee. McBride's story, inspired by an actual incident following the massacre, is about a black American soldier from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Division and a little Italian boy who survived the massacre.

The story of the reign of terror across a swath of north central Italy near the Gothic Line is presented in overall context by Richard Lamb in his book *War in Italy: A Brutal Story*. The massacre at Marzabotto is recounted in painful detail by Jack Olsen in *Silence on Monte Sole* in which Olsen also tells the story of the way of life of the peasants in that part of Italy.

## **EPILOGUE**

Your time as a Loyola Rome Center student is the opportunity of a lifetime. If taken full advantage of, you will expand your horizons and acquire memories and knowledge that will endure. Learning about World War II on the ground where it happened will be a part of your experience that could not otherwise be duplicated.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Philip R. O'Connor, a 1968-69 Rome Center alumnus and graduate of Loyola Chicago, earned his M.A and Ph.D. in political science from Northwestern University. He has served as Director of the Illinois Department of Insurance, Chairman of the Illinois Commerce Commission and as a Member of the Illinois State Board of Elections. From March 2007 to March 2008 he served in the U.S. Embassy, Baghdad as an advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity. Phil has an energy and insurance consulting business in Chicago and continues to work on electricity issues in Iraq.