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History: The World War II Liberation of Rome from German Occupation

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June 4, 1944 marks the end of the German occupation of Rome, the city with a 2500-year history that represents the birthplace of Western civilization, originally named after its first king, Romulus. Once it was known as the Eternal City, where emperors quickly came to realize that investments in the common good, as opposed to private interests, made them and their city greater. For much of its history, Rome was also the capital of the world as well as the Papal States. The Eternal city also became a centre of art, music, literature, and cultural development, as it was the birthplace of the Baroque styles of painting and architecture as well as an important location for the Renaissance period.

Today, Rome is more than just a leading tourist destination on account of its culture, history, and archaeological remnants; it is also the focus of interest of academics and researchers from a number of diverse disciplines including history, politics, philosophy, archeology, engineering, and art. For centuries, Rome witnessed many bloody and horrific battles, the last of which being World War II (1939-45). During the Second World War, this city was coveted by both the Allied and the Axis forces.

Italy ended up with two separate governments over the course of the Second World War. The first, at the onset of the war, was headed by Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) and was allied with the Axis forces, whose main actors also included Germany and Japan. The second, towards the conclusion of the war, was led by Marshal Pietro Badoglio (1871-1956) and was a supporter of the Allied Forces headed by the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Mussolini, known as the modern Caesar on account of his imperial ambitions, was appointed by King Victor Emmanuel III in order to prevent a communist revolution in Italy; as such, he agreed to a non-military alliance with Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany in October 1936, which came to be known as the Rome-Berlin Axis. A full alliance with Germany was eventually established with the signing of the Pact of Steel in 1939. Eventually, the Axis alliance was officially established with the signing of the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan in 1940.

At one point during the Second World War, the U.S. and Great Britain, the principal Allied powers, had the intention to invade Italy in order to gain control over the Mediterranean Sea, which would contribute to the defeat Germany. This plan was discussed by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Casablanca Conference during January 14 – 24, 1943; Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) was also invited to the conference, but was unable to attend on account of the fierce battles taking place between the Red Army and German forces at that time. At the end of the Casablanca conference, it was decided that invading Sicily that would essentially bring down Mussolini, which, in turn, would reduce the burden on the Red Army at the Eastern Front.

The invasion of Sicily began on July 10, 1943, with direct participation on the part of soldiers from Algeria, Canada, France, India, Morocco, Poland, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S. among the Allied Forces. Subsequently, on July 24, 1943, Prime Minister Mussolini was arrested. After the ousting of their fascist dictator, the Italian government, under the leadership Marshal Pietro Badoglio, engaged in secret meetings with the Allies in order to negotiate a treaty of surrender. Consequently, Italy became an official member of the Allied Forces in September 1943; the Allies hoped that this development would bring about the fall of Rome by the end of that year. However, these aspirations were not realized, as the German occupation persisted until June 1944.

During the German occupation, Italians were subjected to the brutality of the Gestapo. In his book, *The Battle for Rome: The Germans, the Allies, the Partisans, and the Pope September 1943 – June 1944* (2004), Robert Katz detailed how the Germans massacred hundreds of Roman citizens while Pope Pius XII remained silent in the Vatican. Katz attributed the Pope's silence in the face of these atrocities to his worldview, which regarded the Soviet Union and communism as greater threats to Christianity than Nazism. Thus, there was no protest from Pope Pius XII when the Germans entered Rome on account of his belief that the world had to be protected from the communist threat, represented by the Soviet Union.

Rome was liberated from Nazi occupation by the Allied forces under the command of General Mark W. Clark's (1896-1984) of the Fifth U.S. Army, on June 4, 1944. This was an important defeat inflicted by the Allies, as, according to President Roosevelt, it confirmed that Allied forces were firmly on the road to victory in spite of the fact that the Germans were not decisively defeated as of yet. After the capture of Rome, Allied Forces progressively advanced into Northern Italy. Subsequently, determined efforts on the part of the Allies resulted in their advance to Turin in 1945, concluding with the final defeat of the combined German forces on May 2, 1945, two days after the fall of Berlin.

An examination of the occupation and liberation of Rome during Second World War, as well as present and past military occupations around the world, demonstrates that Machiavelli was correct when, in *Discourses on Livy* (1517), he stated that “all cities and all peoples there still exist, and have always existed, the same desires and passions. Thus, it is an easy matter for him [anyone] who carefully examines past events to foresee future events in a republic and to apply the remedies employed by the ancients, or, if old remedies cannot be found, to devise new ones based upon the similarity of the events. But since these matters are neglected or not understood by those who read, or, if understood, remain unknown to those who govern, the result is that the same problems always exist in every era.”

The seizure of Rome by the Nazis during World War II shows that governors and politicians have always neglecting the lessons learned from catastrophic man-made events of the past that had resulted in devastating outcomes for nature and human beings. Since the conclusion of the Second World War, the 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed a number of major military operations, including the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1961-1973), the first (1991) and second (2003 – 2010) Gulf Wars, Afghanistan (2001—2014), and, most recently, the intervention against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, ISIS, or Daesh) (2014 to present). These wars have brought catastrophic outcomes to millions of people; unfortunately, politicians tend to be the primary beneficiaries of wars, thus, they have no incentive to examine atrocities of the past events so as to prevent them from occurring in the future.

According to the views Machiavelli put forth in *Discourses on Livy*, wars of the 20th and 21st centuries did not constitute “fight from necessity”; rather they represented “fight from ambition” on the part of corporations and politicians. He elaborated that “fight from ambition; which is so powerful in human breasts, that it never leaves them no matter to what rank they rise. The reason is that nature has so created men that they are able to desire everything but are not able to attain everything: so that the desire being always greater than the acquisition, there results discontent with the possession and little satisfaction to themselves from it. From this arises the changes in their fortunes; for as men desire, some to have more, some in fear of losing their acquisition, there ensues enmity and war, from which results the ruin of that province and the elevation of another.”

Based on Machiavelli's logic in Discourses on Livy (1517), Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin were all ambitious. The world was saved from their ambitions by: first, liberating Italy from fascist Primer Minister Mussolini on July 24, 1943; subsequently, liberating Rome from German occupation in June 1944; and, finally, liberating the world from the Axis forces on May 2, 1945.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world's nations have been divided into two distinct groups: "democratic countries", also known as "open societies", and their official enemies in the form of "anti-democratic countries", which are led by "totalitarian and oppressive regimes". This system of carving the world along virtuous and evil lines has been thoroughly exploited by ambitious corporations and politicians as a means of legitimizing and justifying their own evil actions that have resulted in unprecedented economic and social inequality, injustice, conflicts, misery, and irreversible environmental problems.