

# **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. He followed his older brother, the author's father, Philip J., into the U.S. Navy. Philip served in the South Pacific while Ed crewed on a 5-inch gun 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*. Two boys from Queens, New York City, joined the Navy and saw the world.

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

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*. Dr. Dan Beach of Dominican University and the JFRC class of 1968-69, researched the Italo Balbo story in this Guide. Loyola Chicago archivist Kathy Young and Phyllis Burns of Catholic Cemeteries of Chicago graciously provided guidance essential for the stories of the five Loyolans lost in Italy. Gracious with time and recollections have been Ken and William Krucks, nephews of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Krucks, Mary Burns and Roger Kiley, sister and nephew of PFC Burke, Phil Hottinger, nephew of Lt. Reinert, Patricia McNichols, cousin of Pvt. McKitrick, and Marybethe Hirth Kelly, niece of Lt. John Carmody. Jerry Whiting and Fabio Stergulc have been of special help in providing details of the last mission of Lt. Carmody. Carlo Perinelli and Stefano London of Cisterna, Italy and Col. Emory Dockery (USAF, Ret.) of the General Darby Foundation have provided details of the battle at Isola Bella in which PFC Burke was killed. Finally, the late 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.

While the Guide provides few specific citations, all of the books mentioned were relied upon. Most are available in the JFRC library.

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

Loyola Chicago's John Felice Rome Center (JFRC) 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. Few survived 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 recalled that these young men were "like sponges" soaking up every bit of information.

After the War, John Felice eventually decided that part of 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**

The idea of a permanent Loyola Rome Center was born in the private dining room of Italian President Giovanni Gronchi in August 1961. John Felice, then a Jesuit teaching at Loyola University in Chicago, 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 Boothe 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 lunch, Ambassador Luce suggested 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 a building that had been constructed for the 1960 Rome Olympics. By January 1962, John Felice was directing 85 students in a pioneering program that would become the pre-eminent American study program in Italy.

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JFRC has occupied four different campuses over four decades. The first site was in the Olympic Village in the Foro Italico, site of 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 JFRC students is intended to help make the unique Loyola Rome experience even more memorable. Students can connect 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 JFRC students during their time in Italy and that can help to convey some sense of the times and places history was made. The Guide:

- helps students to put on the shoes (or boots) of other young people from a bygone era 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 war’s inescapable moral choices;
- 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
- suggests 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 of Chicago, 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 those of 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 photos, newspaper clippings and letters in a scrapbook keeping track of hundreds of Loyolans serving in the armed forces. It is preserved in Loyola’s digital archives at <http://content.library.luc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coll41/id/9041>. 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 liberation of the City of Light in August 1944. The motto of GH-108 was “Pro Deo et Patria” – For God and Country. For more information, see <https://www.med-dept.com/unit-histories/108th-general-hospital/>*

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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 often enough 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 outside the village of Isola Bella near Cisterna in a famous and tragic mission by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalions and elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Recon Troop, 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Seeking to outflank German forces hemming in the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead established less than a week before and to interdict the Appian Highway and the main north-south rail line, men of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalions worked their way quietly up the Mussolini Canal and Pantano Ditch on the night of January 29-30. At dawn they were engaged by a large German formation that had moved into the area during the night. The Rangers fought back tenaciously with small arms against tanks and heavy weapons until they ran out of ammunition, reportedly having killed a large number of the enemy. Determined and repeated efforts by 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion to reach the trapped 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> failed. While conditions prevented an authoritative determination of casualties in the operation, best estimates are that more than 60 were KIA and about 100 wounded. Initially, only 6 were reported to have made it back to American lines, but others escaped and evaded back to friendly lines over the next few days and weeks. More than 500 Rangers were taken prisoner and then marched through the streets of Rome for the benefit of a Nazi propaganda film that can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDs5mljMvWA>.

Burke's platoon commander, 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 Weinezettel 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 Weinzettel, DeFranco and Burke.

John Burke is buried at the American Military Cemetery in Nettuno (Plot C - Row 6 - Grave 9), as is PFC Philip DeFranco (Plot F, Row 14, Grave 47). At entrance of Via dei Rangers in Isola Bella is monument memorializing the men, Americans and Germans, who fought there.

### *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 Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican, Msgr. Hugh O'Flaherty, covered elsewhere in this Guide. Several of the incidents cited in that section of this 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 in Italy," available at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015019044455;view=1up;seq=9>. After a long life and marriage, Newnan passed away in 2009*

Intelligence failures and other causes that contributed to the failure of the Cisterna mission are analyzed in "The Ranger Force at Cisterna," a U.S. Army Command and General Staff College master's thesis by Jeff R. Stewart at <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/2601664/the-ranger-force-at-the-battle-of-cisterna-dtic>. Also see "Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II" by Michael King, Army Combat Studies Institute, June 1985, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/download/esipubs/king.pdf>.

*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." Reinert's letters home lamented the sorry condition of the Italian people and his efforts to avoid firing on civilians on the roads. Dean Reinert is buried at All Saints Cemetery in Des Plaines, Illinois (Grave 4 - Lot S6 29 - Block 3 - Section 10).

*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 effort by the U.S. Fifth Army to achieve a pre-winter breakthrough. The German Gothic Line 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).

#### *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."*

#### *MISSIONE 139*

*The crash of two B-24s on Mt. Belepait 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 look for survivors and to bury the dead. 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.*

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

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 Liberator 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 near Chiusaforte just inside the Italian border. Several crew members from the two planes survived, including one airman who was blown out of the pane

without a chute and fell several thousand feet, saved by updrafts and the deep snow. The survivors became prisoners of the Germans. John Carmody's remains and those of his colleagues would not be recovered until several months after the German surrender. In a May 1946 letter to the Army, Carmody's mother wrote, "I hope and pray that you will be able to give

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me the exact location of my darling boy's grave." In late 1948, John Carmody was buried at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois (Grave 4 - Lot N11- Block 5 - Section 22).

*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 in the Pra del Bianco Valley 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 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 area of operations in which PFC McKitrick was killed. After a long recovery, he went on to a career that included serving as U.S. Senator from Kansas and nomination as 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 arts 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 other major WWII Allied initiatives, remains controversial. 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 for Italy is that April 25, Liberation Day, is a major national holiday, marking the day that organized Resistance elements entered Milan on the heels of the fleeing German Army. (See *From Rome to Baghdad*, a June 4, 2004 commentary by the Guide's author on parallels between the Italian Campaign and the U.S. led Operation Iraqi Freedom at [http://www.ideasinactiontv.com/tcs\\_daily/2004/06/from-rome-to-baghdad.html](http://www.ideasinactiontv.com/tcs_daily/2004/06/from-rome-to-baghdad.html).)

Questions remain to this day:

- Should Sicily and Italy have been ignored altogether and the islands of Sardinia and Corsica used as better places for launching Allied air strikes into Europe while avoiding the sustained and costly ground operations against the Germans on the Italian mainland?
- 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?



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- 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 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?

There should be no controversy on several points. 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 military 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. In the two weeks following the Armistice, many Italian soldiers were killed by Germans on various Mediterranean islands where they were co-garrisoned. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, Louis De Bernieres' novel and the 2001 film with Nicholas Cage and Penelope Cruz, dramatized the infamous events on the Greek island of Cephalonia. About 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 less than a year before. While overshadowed by the momentous events two days later on the Normandy coast in France, June 4, 1944 remains a memorable day for Romans.

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

Fascism arose out of the chaos and bitterness following World War I. 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. (For more on this part of the story, visit the Risorgimento Museum underneath the Vittorio Emanuele Monument -- the “Wedding Cake” – the resting place of Italy’s Unknown Soldier). In 1914 Italy had renounced its treaty with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later threw in its lot with France, Britain and Russia and, eventually, America. Italy suffered greatly as it contributed to the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but in the post-war treaty negotiations Italy was largely denied the empire it desired in Africa.

Benito Mussolini promised to set things right. A former school teacher, World War I veteran and one-time editor of a socialist newspaper, he seized the moment, creating the Fascist Party. His Fascist ideology was a mish-mash of nationalism, socialism and appeals to notions of lost imperial glory. (The *fasces* were wooden rods bundled with an axe that were symbols of authority in ancient Rome. The epithet “fascist” is tossed about today, usually by people who have little idea of what Fascism and a Fascist really were.)

Mussolini, called himself *Il Duce*, “The Leader,” a gimmick Hitler would imitate when he called himself “*Der Führer*.” Using an organized show of 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.

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 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 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 a modernistic obelisk, in the fashion of ancient war booty obelisks scattered around Rome, with *Mussolini Dux* ("Leader") carved on it. Nearby monoliths and mosaics tell the story of the rise and fall of the Fascist regime and exalt Il Duce. The site was used for the 1960 Olympics. One of its buildings, the red CIVIS center, an Olympic Village dormitory, was the original campus of the Loyola Rome Center. Another, for water sports, houses Mussolini's personal swimming pool, decorated with mosaics of fish, amphibians and other watery creatures. It is now used for children's swimming lessons. The most prominent office building in the Foro Italico is the Italian Foreign Ministry.

*Bus #911 goes to Foro Italico and Stadio Olimpico from Monte Mario at stops in Via Igea and at Piazza Walter Rossi, not far from the JFRC Via Massimi campus and just across the street from a former Loyola Rome campus at Via della Camilluccia 180.*

### *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 Civiltà 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.

*There are four Metropolitana subway B Blue Line stations serving the EUR area: Marco, Magliana, Palasport 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 exemplar public buildings in the Fascist monumental style, complete with lengthy wall inscriptions. Mussolini identified himself and his regime with the symbols of the Roman imperial past.

*The #913 bus from Monte Mario that runs near the JFRC campus terminates at Piazza Augusto Imperatore on the Tiber's east bank.*

*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 four large marble maps of the expansion of the ancient Roman Empire. The marble maps still on the wall were installed by Mussolini. A fifth map depicting the "New Roman Empire" that included Albania, various Aegean islands, Libya, Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia was removed in 1944 and believed destroyed by the Allies. Although recently located, plans for re-installation have not been realized. A smaller version of this fifth marble map remains in place in Piazza delle Erbe in downtown Padova (Padua).

*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 in 1934 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, in part, "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 less than a decade later Loyolans 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."

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

Mussolini’s February 23, 1941 speech from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia 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 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.

### *Porta San Paolo – Lido di Ostia Railroad Station*

Trains to Lido di Ostia, depart from Stazione Porta San Paolo, 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. Porta San Paolo is one of the earliest examples of Fascist architecture. The nearby Ostiense Station was built in 1938 in conjunction with the planned visit of Adolf Hitler to Rome.

*The Metropolitana subway B Blue Line Piramide Cestia station (named for the Pyramid of Cestius across the street) connects directly into the Porta San Paolo station from which Metropolitan system trains depart to the beaches at Lido di Ostia*

### *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 opposition 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)?

Mussolini had been premier for only a year and a half when he faced elections in 1924. While he maintained a parliamentary persona at that time, his 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 these tactics, calling the elections a sham. Rather than firing back with their own speeches, the Fascists kidnapped Matteotti as he left home in Via Mancini for Parliament on the morning of June 10, 1924. 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 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 henchmen as an excuse to eliminate the opposition. Mussolini's dictatorial tendencies emerged.

Ponte Giacomo Matteotti is the bridge connecting the east side of the Tiber near the Naval Ministry to the west side at Piazza Cinque Giornate and Viale delle Milizie. It was built as a Fascist project in 1929 called Ponte Littorio, referring to the Fascist symbol of the bound wooden rods and axe. 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.

*The Metropolitana subway A Red Line Lepanto and Flaminio stations are reasonably close to the Matteotti Bridge.*

*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. The vote was relatively close with 12.7 million voting for a Republic and 10.7 million voting for a constitutional monarchy. Males of the royal family 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 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

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Savoia the next day, after a meeting with the King, that Mussolini was arrested. Unfortunately, the King's 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, 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.

Mussolini had moved into the Villa Torlonia only after having spent the first seven years of his premiership in rented rooms in the Palazzo Tittoni in Via Rasella. (See the section of this Guide on the partisan attack in Via Rasella in 1944.) Relocating his family in late 1929 from his home

area in Emilia-Romagna, Il Duce paid 1 lira per year as rent for Villa Torlonia. The American Army occupied the Villa immediately after the Liberation and used it as its Rome headquarters until 1947. According to a sign on the grounds, the Americans severely damaged the building. Starting in 1978 the City of Rome began a slow process of restoring the building and the grounds of the Villa. It is now an art museum and contains a number of artifacts from Mussolini's residence there, including a recreation of his bedroom. His war time bunker is also on the premises. Seven decades after Mussolini was forced from power, the Italian people feel his Rome residence can be seen as history rather than as a dilapidated

*The main entrance to Villa Ada is on Via Salaria and can be reached in a variety of ways. One is by Tram Lines 19, 19B & 30 that can be picked up at the Policlinico subway stop on the Metropolitana B Blue Line. The Tram Lines cross 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 subway stop is Villa Torlonia with its main entrance on Via Nomentana. (There is another Villa Torlonia nearby to the west, not to be confused with Mussolini's Villa.)*

embarrassment. The main entrance to the park is in Via Nomentana and there is an auxiliary entrance in Via Lazzaro Spallanzani. There is a small museum of ancient sculpture in the park. 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.

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 marshaling 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 his father-in-law'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, placed in an ambulance to conceal his removal from the palace grounds 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 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.

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

At the southwest corner of Piazza Navona is Palazzo Braschi that once served as the Fascist Party national headquarters. Following the German occupation of Rome in early September it was increasingly used for a time as a “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 the Palazzo’s artistic treasures and rooms had been destroyed. Palazzo Braschi has been restored as the Museum of the City of Rome telling the Eternal City’s post-Renaissance story.

*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.*

### **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), a name derived from the word for a long-shafted pike or bladed weapon widely used in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. 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 of 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 differing views of it. After the War, the Italian Communist Party, through deft public relations management, laid 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. Do not take anything at face value about the Resistance since the events of seven decades ago are still being interpreted in light of subsequent and current events in Italy.

ANPI, the Italian National Partisan Association, (L'Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia) has a 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 JFRC, 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 on the west bank of the Tiber (parallel to Viale Giulio Cesare near the Lepanto subway station). The local Rome chapter of ANPI is at Via San Francesco di Sales 5 a street running west from Via della Lungara in Trastevere. The food recommendation for Trastevere is the best simple lunch you will ever have. At Da Lucia in Vicolo del Mattonato #2 have carciofi alla romana (artichokes Roman style) and spaghetti alla gricia (pancetta, pepper and oil) with mineral water or some local white wine.*

### *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) connecting 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 southern gate. The Germans cracked 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 Blue Line is under the Porta San Paolo Roma-Lido di Ostia Train Station. Also a number of buses run to the area. Nearby is the major Ostiense rail station.*

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 ancient wall 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, named memory of the martyrs of the Fosse Ardeatine massacre that followed the Via Rasella bombing – replacing its prior name of Via Adolph Hitler. The memorial marker in the Park inside the gate is striking in that it honors the hundreds of thousands 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 Piazza customarily host commemorations of the Defense of Rome around September 8 each year, where the few remaining veterans of the defense of Rome are honored. The birthday of the modern Italian military is considered to be the September 8, 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.

### *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 were three other buildings used by the Germans. The German Military

*A good starting point for visiting this area is the Barberini subway stop on the A Red 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.)*

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. Close by is Via Romagna 38 where a lapide commemorates that the Pensione Jaccarino once occupying that location was used by the Nazis and Fascists as a detention and torture center for Resistance fighters and Allied prisoners. Across the Corso d’Italia along the old Roman wall was the Pensione Santa Caterina at Via Po 2, also a detention facility, now housing rental vacation apartments.

*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, the Holocaust, 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 Red 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 Pensione 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. A lapide on a wall at the northeast

corner of the intersection of Viale Giulio Cesare and Via Alberto dalla Chiesa memorializes the death of Teresa Gullace on March 3, 1944. She had demanded that her husband be allowed to come to a window so she could see him, and a young Fascist guard, so the story goes, shot her dead. Hundreds of other women in the crowd 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 with 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 eastern 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) the 156 men of 11<sup>th</sup> Company 3<sup>rd</sup> SS Battalion "Bozen" Police unit marched three abreast up Via Rasella toward the intersection with the Via delle Quattro Fontane (Four Fountains) near Piazza Barberini and the Quirinal Palace. These policemen, considered too old for the front lines, had been recruited in the Bolzano (Bozen in German) area of Alpine Italy that had been *de facto* ceded to the Greater German Reich after the Italian armistice with the Allies. Its large Austrian population had been acquired by Italy after World War I.

As the lead rank of the column of singing Tyroleans neared the top of the street in front of the Palazzo Tittoni, a powerful bomb hidden in a City of Rome rubbish cart outside Palazzo Tittoni at Via Rasella 156 was detonated in their midst. Then, a number of Gappisti (Communist Resistance fighters) who had been positioned near the foot of Via Rasella in the small cross-streets of Via Boccaccio and Via Traforo detonated several purloined mortar shells and opened up with small arms. Twenty-six Bozen men and two bystanders, one a 13 year-old boy, were killed outright and seven more SS policemen 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. A 66 year-old woman looking out from a window was killed by the gunfire and a 34 year-old man was shot to death in Via delle Quattro Fontane. Coincidentally, Mussolini had lived in rooms in Palazzo Tittoni for the first seven years of his tenure as head of government. Bullet and shrapnel holes are still visible on building façades in Via Rasella across from Palazzo Tittoni and in the intersection with Via Boccaccio and Via Traforo..

Within minutes, General Kurt Mälzer, the German commander in Rome, often called the "King of Rome," arrived – having polished off his usual wine-centered heavy lunch at the Hotel Excelsior. He ordered the buildings in the area searched. Mälzer was persuaded by cooler heads to rescind his order for blowing up the entire neighborhood and the summary execution of the more than 200 people lined up against the wall of Palazzo Barberini, including women and children.

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The old Catholic Scots College that fronts on Via delle Quattro Fontane 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). At the time of the attack it was a Franciscan orphanage. If the weapons had been found the sisters may have been executed. The Scots College re-occupied the space after the War, finally moving from the site in the 1960s. The large Scots College inscription remains on the façade.

*Via Rasella is near the A Red 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. Birreria Albrecht at Via Rasella 52, a terrific restaurant hangout for JFRC students over the decades, is situated at the small cross streets where the partisan students hid before attacking the rear of the SS Bozen Police column. You can linger over lunch while contemplating the stunning events of March 1943, observing the shrapnel holes in the walls that remain to this day.*

Directly across the street from the Scots College is a lapide on the wall of the Palazzo Barberini memorializing men from Via Rasella who were killed in reprisal at Fosse Ardeatine. The son of one man, Celestino Frasca, still lives in Via Rasella where he resided at two years of age in 1944 when the bomb went off and the horror began.

The plan for the attack on the SS Bozen was born just a few blocks away from the foot of Via Rasella. 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. The Bozen would march, on a foolishly rigid schedule, south on Via Flaminia, through Piazza del Popolo and then down 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 Castro Pretorio military enclave just northeast of Stazione Termini.

Outraged by the bombing, Hitler at first wanted the entire neighborhood leveled and 50 Romans killed for every German dead. Ultimately, Field Marshal Kesselring approved the execution of 10 Romans for every German dead. Several local Fascist officials cooperated in selecting the 335 people who would each be shot in the base of the head by Gestapo executioners on the outskirts of Rome. The victims were a diverse group – several already condemned prisoners, anti-Fascists, suspected Resistance fighters, a priest, a child, several dozen Roman Jews including the former fascist official Aldo Finzi, some petty criminals in jail on minor charges and others randomly pulled off the street. The Nazis in charge of the reprisal went to great lengths to provide a veneer of legality for the executions by gaining death warrants for some of the hostages from the German Military Tribunal at Via Lucullo 7. Today, the bodies of most of those killed lie in 335 individual tombs near the cave in which they died. Visiting the memorial is a stunning experience. 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

*Take Bus # 218 to the Fosse Ardeatine stop near 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, according to oral tradition, as he fled persecution in Rom) encountered the apparition of Jesus, causing Peter to return to Rome and his own crucifixion – upside down.*

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seven 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 various lapide (stone memorial tablets) mounted on walls in central Rome containing names of victims from that quartiere (neighborhood). One can be found on the archway of the protected elevated walkway that runs from Castel Sant'Angelo to the Vatican ( the Corridori Borgo Sant' Angelo at Piazza Pia facing the Tiber). 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 area murdered at the Fosse. Large lapide are also affixed to the façade of the Grand Synagogue of Rome memorializing members of the congregation murdered at Fosse Ardeatine.

The bombing in Via Rasella remains divisive and controversial. The attack was carried out contrary to the urgings by the Allies, the legitimate Italian government and the Vatican that the people of Rome to refrain from hostilities. The terrible price extracted by the retaliation prompted a number of unsuccessful lawsuits against Resistance figures shortly after the War by families of several of the hostages. In more recent years, the young Marxist medical student who was disguised as a Rome City sanitation worker in order to light the bomb fuse, Rosario Bentivegna, claimed that if the Germans had called on the bombers to surrender in trade for the hostages he might well have done so. That claim has been received skeptically by some. The controversy remains so intense that as recently as early 2007 Benitvegna, who died in 2012, 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, with the *noms de guerre* Paolo and Elena, 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 "Gappisti" had carried out a number of less spectacular attacks on German forces.

Carla Capponi was responsible for killing perhaps a half-dozen Germans. One was a German officer gunned down just off Via Veneto so that Capponi could take his briefcase containing important intelligence materials. Three others died when she blew up a gasoline truck in Via Claudia near the Colosseum just a few blocks from the coal-bin basement at Via Aurelio 42 where the specifics of the Via Rasella action were plotted. Capponi exemplified the important role played by women in the Resistance. (For more about Varla Capponi, see the Liberation section in this Guide on *Il Messaggero* and the Teresa Gullace story in the Occupation section. Also see an essay by Dan D'Amelio, a veteran of the U.S. Army of Occupation in Italy and former journalist and writer for CBS News, on the role of women in the Italian Resistance at [https://www.osia.org/documents/WWII\\_and\\_Italian\\_women\\_partisans.pdf](https://www.osia.org/documents/WWII_and_Italian_women_partisans.pdf).)

Lt. Colonel Herbert Kappler, the Gestapo Commander in Rome operating from 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

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military court in 1947, Kappler served many years in prison at 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. (For more about Kappler, see the section of this Guide on the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican.)

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's death at age 100 in October 2013 sparked weeks of controversy as his attorney attempted to find a place to inter his remains. After being denied burial in his hometown in Germany, in Argentina and in the German military cemetery at Pomezia, a secret location was arranged near Rome. The ABC television news "ambush" interview of Priebke in Argentina that led eventually to his extradition to Italy can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3hsI3AU88>. Just weeks prior to the massacre, Priebke had partied with a group of Italians that included, unknown to Priebke, the single American OSS agent in Rome, Peter Tompkins. (See *A Spy in Rome* by Tompkins.)

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 that were legal under the prevailing laws of land warfare at the time and were constituent with the terms of the Hague Convention. The accused also claimed that if they had not obeyed then they themselves would have been shot. Interestingly, the key to Kappler's conviction was that he had killed 15 more people than ordered, 335 rather than 320. He had added ten for an SS policeman who died overnight after he had gotten his orders. Five more, mistakenly sent to the cave in all the confusion, were shot because they were witnesses. Kappler and his colleagues had realized immediately after the killings that Kappler had legal exposure on these points and none would sign papers Kappler had offered as a way of shifting some of the blame to the group as a whole for the extra 15 murders.

*Death in Rome*, by the late Robert Katz, presents a thoroughly readable, comprehensive and still controversial 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 film based on Katz's work, *Massacre in Rome*, starring Richard Burton as Kappler, Marcello Mastroianni as a composite priest character and Leo McKern as General Mälzer.

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

The Carabinieri, named for the carbine weapons they carried during the Risorgimento that unified Italy, are the elite national police as well as a source of great pride to Italians. As a well-trained paramilitary organization, the Carabinieri played a significant role in the defense of Rome. During the September 1943 defense of Rome 150 Carabinieri gave their lives. The Germans, fearing the fierce loyalty of the

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

Carabinieri to the King and the respect in which they were held by the Italian people, disbanded the Carabinieri during the occupation and deported many to Germany as slave laborers and murdered others. The Carabinieri Museum at Piazza del Risorgimento 46 includes an exhibit devoted to the Carabinieri's role in the Resistance (<http://www.carabinieri.it/arma/ieri/museo-storico>). In more recent times, Carabinieri have been among NATO forces in Afghanistan and Coalition forces in Iraq, providing training for indigenous police forces. A score of Carabinieri have given their lives in these efforts.

## **Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican**

There are innumerable stories of individual courage as Romans faced an occupying force that could be dislodged only by the Allies. One of the most compelling stories is that of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, an Irish national and an official in the Vatican Holy Office. O'Flaherty started out thinking there was not a dime's worth of difference between the Germans and the British. As a young man O'Flaherty 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 barbarians as he watched them deal with Rome, the Vatican and especially 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* (republished as *The Scarlet and the Black*), was the basis for a 1983 made-for-TV movie, *The Scarlet and Black* starring the late Gregory Peck as O'Flaherty and Christopher Plummer as his Nazi nemesis, Col. Herbert Kappler. *The Vatican Pimpernel: The World War II Exploits of the Monsignor Who Saved over 6,500 Lives*, by former Irish parliament member Brian Fleming, was published in 2008. *A Vatican Lifeline 44* is a richly detailed 1995 account full of still findable locations by a key participant in the O'Flaherty network, William Simpson, an escaped British 8<sup>th</sup> Army officer. All are available in the JFRC library.

On the day of Rome's liberation, O'Flaherty's network was hiding nearly 4,000 Allied escapers all over Rome and in the nearby suburbs and countryside. Thousands more were smuggled back across Allied lines before the Liberation. O'Flaherty was instrumental in getting hundreds of Jews to safety in extra-territorial Church properties in Rome, such as the Gregorian College and numerous churches. After the war, O'Flaherty was honored with numerous decorations including Commander of the British Empire and the U.S. Medal of Freedom. Largely ignored until recent years in his native Ireland, which had remained neutral during the War, the Hugh O'Flaherty Memorial Society in late 2013 erected a statue in his honor in Killarney, County Kerry.

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

The steps to the left as one faces St. Peter's were Hugh O'Flaherty's lookout point. He would stand near the Arco delle Campane (Arch of the Bells) entrance to St. Peter's Basilica (where the ticket office for the Vatican Postal Museum is today) watching for Allied escapers making their way to Vatican territory. Swiss Guards and others would spirit the fugitives to O'Flaherty who



then 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 the steps, O'Flaherty could see the entirety of St. Peter's Square, the outside perimeter often guarded by German soldiers. O'Flaherty could look down the wide boulevard, Via della Conciliazione (Conciliation Avenue). That ceremonial roadway had been rammed through the Borgo neighborhood by Mussolini to commemorate the historic 1929 Lateran Treaty normalizing 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 and museum outside Porta Pia memorializes the gallantry of Garibaldi's Bersaglieri troops, famous for their double-time march and hats with dyed-green rooster feathers. Bersaglieri served with distinction alongside Coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan (<http://www.bersaglieri.net/museo-storico-dei-bersaglieri/>).

### *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 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. In a case of real-life poetic justice, the Holy Office and 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. 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, reconstructed in recent years, is now a "hotel" accommodating members of the College of Cardinals when in Rome to elect new Popes or for other events. It is also the residence Pope Francis shares with other clergy. 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 on the left as one faces St. Peter's, waiting Yugoslav escapers beat the Germans senseless and tossed back 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 Swiss Guards turned away 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 for 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 and arrested many after the occupation of Rome. O'Flaherty also would send Allied escapers under the cover of the Colonnade, to get civilian clothes to 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

*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 de' 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. During the day, the Campo de' Fiori market is a great place to buy spices for every sort of pasta dish and for bruschetta, the famous tomato-topped grilled bread of Rome.*

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 coalmen and persuaded him to come down the chute. With a loaned jacket and bag of coal from the coalman, 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 had not wondered why a coal man was *leaving* with a bag of coal.

### *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.

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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. Bill Simpson, a British Army officer, got his Italian female companion at the opera to ask General Mackensen, commander of the German 14<sup>th</sup> Army in Italy for his autograph for possible later use in forging 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. Embarrassed, the Germans ordered the closing of many of Rome's best restaurants and clubs that were being patronized by the "escapers." At one point, O'Flaherty limited allowances for Allied escapers 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 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, the Maltese born Henrietta Chevalier, married a British escaper after the War – with O'Flaherty consecrating the union. The couple had met when the soldier was hidden in the Chevalier apartment in Via Imperia 12, near Piazza Salerno with its still-standing large Fascist monument and a stone's throw from Villa Torlonia, Mussolini's official residence.

In many of Rome's side streets 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. A number of the medical students served in the American Army after liberation.
- The escapers also knew how to show a girl a good time. Via Scialoia 18 near Piazza del Popolo was the home of Renzo & Adrienne Lucidi (who secured General Mackensen's signature at the opera), 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 Casina delle Rose (now home Casa del Cinema in Via Marcello Mastroianni) in Umberto Park (Villa Borghese) where Gestapo chief Kappler was a regular patron as was American Army Lt. Bill Newnan. On a date there, Newnan had to overcome the urge to steal the Lüggers that Gestapo diners had left hanging in the checkroom. Coincidentally, the Via Scialoia building had also been the home of Colonel Giuseppe di Montezemolo, an heroic leader of the Resistance who was shot at Fosse Ardeatine in reprisal for the Via Rasella attack.
- Allied escapers were often housed with others on the run. For example, the seminary building behind St. John in Lateran, the Pope's parish as Bishop of Rome, was filled to

the brim with 800 top Resistance leaders, Jews and Allied escapers. The French Seminary next to Santa Chiara church near the Pantheon housed Allied escapers.

- The still-operating Hostaria del Orso at Via Soldati 25/C just down the stairs from Lungotevere Marzio near Ponte Umberto was an escaper hangout that was periodically raided in vain by the Germans.

*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, a citizen of neutral Ireland, if he could have caught him red-handed. 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 Cahersiveen, Co. Kerry. The people of County Kerry have established the Hugh O'Flaherty Society to memorialize their native son's courageous service and to campaign for official recognition by the government of the War-time neutral Republic of Ireland (<http://www.hughoflaherty.com/>).

## **The Jews of Rome: Oppression and Survival**

On September 27, 1943 Gestapo 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. The Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, was able to do the impossible and secure the gold in the brief 36 hours Kappler allowed. Within a month the Germans had reneged and began an attempt to round-up of all 8000 Roman Jews on October 16, 1943. While estimates vary, the basic fact is that about 2000 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. Miraculously, the great majority of Roman and Italian Jews avoided arrest and almost certain death, due largely to the active resistance to the round-up by many thousands of Italians. In the Ghetto and elsewhere in Rome, there are small brass plates embedded in the sidewalk outside the doorways containing the names of deportees who had lived in the building.

In 1938 Mussolini 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 hidden on the Vatican grounds, over 4000 were in convents, monasteries, seminaries and churches. In some cases, extra-territorial Church properties were violated, such as when six Jews hidden by the priests at St. Paul Outside the Walls were seized.

Giorgio Bassani's book, *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini*, about the slow destruction of a prominent and assimilated Jewish family in the late Fascist era was made into a successful 1971 film. The books of the late Primo Levi provide 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 all of Rome's Jews, about 3000 at that time, to observe a curfew and to always be inside the confines of the "Ghetto" by nightfall when the gates would be shut tight. The remnants of the hinges and the stone anchors that once held the gates can be seen protruding from the walls at several locations on

*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 dei Funari 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 perimeter of the Ghetto such as in Via della Reginella. The Jews of Rome, long restricted to occupations such as rag collection, lending and street vending, were emancipated by the Royal unification government after the taking of Rome in 1870 limited 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. Brass plates embedded in sidewalks in the Ghetto mark homes of Roman Jews lost to the War. Just 150 meters from Largo 16 Ottobre 1943, where more than a 1,000 Jewish Romans were herded together by the Nazis for deportation and death, is Palazzo Lovatelli in Via Montanara, which served as an operations center for Peter Tompkins, the sole American OSS agent in Rome prior to the Liberation.

### *The Grand Synagogue of Rome*

Located near 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. There is also one memorializing those killed in World War I and in the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia and intervention in the Spanish Civil War. A visit to the Synagogue, which is in the Orthodox Jewish tradition, and the adjoining museum is 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, before deportation to Auschwitz. A number of Jews who had converted to Catholicism were caught up

in the dragnet and, after protests from Pius XII, were, for the most part, released. 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 is open to the public ([http://www.difesa.it/SMD\\_/CASD/biblio/Pagine/default.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/SMD_/CASD/biblio/Pagine/default.aspx)).

Farther south on the Tiber in Trastevere is Regina Coeli jail of Rome (named for a church, Queen of Heaven, that was once located behind the jail). In addition to serving as the Rome city jail, it was used by the Germans to detain suspected Resistance fighters and Allied escapers captured in Rome. It is here that Popes have traditionally come at Christmastime to bless the prisoners, performing 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. 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 spans, 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. After the closing of the Grand Synagogue prior to the round-up, the pastor offered San Bartolomeo for what turned out to be the last Sabbath gatherings of Rome's Jews until the Liberation. The priests, brothers and nuns in the religious complex on Isola Tiberina did not merely watch their fellow Romans marched into captivity. After Liberation, hundreds of Jews sheltered in the confines of the church and other buildings were able to come out from hiding.

## **Liberation**

In the days prior to June 4, 1944, the Germans repeated their oft-stated claim that Rome was an "open city," off-limits to military activities. This time it was largely true. 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, several thousand Romans died from a limited number of Allied bombing missions 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 German forces and supplies, the city was not an industrial center producing war materials. 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, German commanders refused to torch Paris and instead declared it an open city. 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)*

On Monte Mario is evidence of the price paid by the Allies for the Liberation of Rome. Just off Via della Camilluccia, immediately before the downward sloping Via dei Colli della Farnesina toward the Olympic Stadium, is a modest cemetery for 1710 French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) soldiers, two-thirds of them Moroccans and Algerians. It is at the end of a small road, Via dei Casali di Santo Spirito, adjacent to the Villa Sacra Famiglia Clinic (<http://www.060608.it/it/cultura-e-svago/beni-culturali/beni-architettonici-e-storici/cimitero-militare-francese-a-monte-mario.html>). Most of the grave markers of enlisted men bear a Muslim crescent while those of the officers have crosses. All 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 colonials 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 French who died to liberate Italy can be found 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.

*Bus #911 stops near the French Cemetery at the intersection of Via della Camilluccia and Via dei Colli Farnesina. It is open daily 8am-4pm, Saturday until 1pm. 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 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 bombed Rome, targeting 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 3,000 killed and perhaps about 10,000 injured in the July air raid alone) and damage to non-targeted structures. The Basilica of San Lorenzo outside the Walls that graces the main entrance to Rome’s Campo Verano cemetery was severely damaged. The bombing also upturned hundreds of graves in the cemetery along with the elaborate grave stones so cherished by the Romans. The Germans would later use 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 to closely resemble the centuries old original. A statue of Pius XII is 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 Occupation from the Vatican where he worked in the Library. De Gasperi served eight times as Prime Minister 1945-53.

*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 Blue 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.*

*Amazing Fact: Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli*

When Rome's Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli was faced with a Nazi extortion demand for 50 kilos of gold in return for refraining from deporting 300 Jews to concentration camps, he turned to his friend Pope Pius XII for help in supplementing the gold, though that help proved unneeded. 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 credible 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 controversial, with some 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. The debate was originally ignited not by historical research but by a 1963 German play, *The Deputy*. Charges of Pius XII's complicity or inaction rely for support largely on ambiguous documents subject to a variety of interpretations complicated by the arcane language of the Vatican and the complexities of the relationships of that time. The late Robert Katz argued in his books that Pius XII likely could have prevented the massacre at Fosse Ardeatine. The Pacelli family has lost lawsuits against Katz in Italian courts. Katz's take on the litigation as well as post-war Italian history can be found at his website, *The Boot*, at [http://theboot.it/home\\_2009.htm](http://theboot.it/home_2009.htm).

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 may well have planned to seize Vatican City and the Pope and to remove the Pope to a sort of puppet Vatican in Lichtenstein. Much has been written on the subject, including several books by Sister Margherita Marchione, professor emeritus 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.)



*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 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 is one of the first stops for any young person coming to Rome for the first time. This has been so for two centuries, 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. One evening in early June 1944, Piazza di Spagna was full of young Americans who had just Liberated Rome. Some, in weariness, simply fell asleep in the streets and even in the Piazza's famous, dry at the time, boat fountain. Just hours before, long columns of retreating Germans traversed 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 fled north along Via Salaria (the Salt Road) and Via Flaminia. In a few places the Germans shot up the neighborhoods as they left. A few Germans were shot by Romans. American troops found two Germans lying dead in the doorway of All Saints, the Anglican 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. She kept a diary 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 the night of June 3-4, 1943 (<https://ia802604.us.archive.org/4/items/insideromewithge007032mbp/insideromewithge007032mbp.pdf>).

...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 Corso Umberto (Via del Corso). The diary vividly describes the arrival of the Allies.

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

...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.

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 advancing army than capturing a bridge intact. And there is nothing more important to a retreating army than destroying those 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) at 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 and in which Loyolan Lt. Ken Krucks served, 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. Ponte Milvio nearby is at the same Tiber crossing as the ancient Milvian Bridge where Constantine won the battle to be emperor in 312 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 (formed originally from the Texas and Oklahoma 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, a unique collection of American and Canadian cowboys, lumberjacks, convicts, adventurers and professional soldiers. The 1968 film of the same name starred William Holden and Cliff Robertson.

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 military *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 famed cartoonist, told the GIs' story through his characters, the weary infantrymen Willie and Joe. The late Andy Rooney, long-time *60 Minutes* commentator, first wrote for *Stars & Stripes*. *Il Messaggero* returned after the War.

*Il Messaggero* played a role in the Via Rasella 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 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 officer 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 would be

the carcasses of Mussolini and his colleagues in Milan the following April. 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. 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 the 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 many areas, countryside, small towns and larger cities, yet left many untouched. 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 worked the west coast of the Boot, starting with the 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. The only World War II Italian military cemetery is south of Cassino at Monte Lungo, site of the first and extremely costly engagement of the reformed Italian Army against the Germans. 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 the late 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. Most infamous were Gustav in the south just north of Naples and Gothic north of Florence and south of Bologna. The slaughter associated with these dug-in positions, built largely with slave labor, was reminiscent of the trench warfare of the Great War of 1914-18. After taking Naples on October 1, 1943, the Allies tried for months to break through the Gustav Line. 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 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 missed routing the Germans completely. Not until early 1945 was the Gothic Line broken.

Much of Italy was a battleground. Any farm house, with its thick walls, could be a German gun position. Any hilltop could be an observation post. Villages and towns were often destroyed completely as the Allies pushed the Germans out. While many communities retain centuries old buildings and character, many others are characterized by unattractive 50's and 60s style quickie construction. These are often towns that suffered extensive war damage. Piazzas, neighborhood streets and churches throughout Italy bear 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).

### **Three Must Sees: Two American Cemeteries & Montecassino**

The American Cemeteries at Nettuno (Anzio) and south of Florence are not cases of "if you've seen one you've seen 'em all." There is no more compelling and enduring an experience. The author vividly recalls looking down from a road above the Florence cemetery in the spring of 1969 – taken there by an Italian who had served as an officer 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. Montecassino Abbey seems to sum up the War in Italy. It 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 Allies' attempt in late January 1944 to end-run the Gustav Line anchored in the hills around Montecassino is still debated by historians and military experts. Although the Germans were taken by surprise and the port of Anzio seized undamaged, the time spent consolidating the beachhead and bringing in needed men and equipment allowed the Germans to mount a defense and counter-attack. In mid-February the Germans came close to making Anzio another Dunkirk, falling short by a hair's breadth. Stalemate prevailed until late May. 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 and found themselves paraded through Piazza Venezia and up Via del Corso and Via del Tritone in a modern Nazi version of the ancient march of the war captives through the streets of Rome. (See *Anzio: The Bid for Rome* by Christopher Hibbert for a detailed description, with many excellent maps of the military operations at the beachhead.)

*Anzio can be reached several ways. One is by taking the Metropolitana B Blue 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.*

German and Allied positions were so close that soldiers could sing along with one another 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 Hollywood star. Versions of the song in various languages, including a rendition by the chorus of the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzergrenadier Division are at <http://ingeb.org/garb/lmarleen.html>. The UK Ministry of Information produced a film-short immediately after the War, *The True Story of Lili Marlene*, <https://archive.org/details/TrueStoryOfLiliMarlene>.

*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 (Medium), whose successor unit is the current 77<sup>th</sup> Armor Regiment ("Steel Tigers") that has served in Iraq. The Sherman DD sank in the Gulf of Salerno during a July 1044 training exercise for the invasion of Southern France, with the loss of the driver, Tech 4<sup>th</sup> Class Walter J. Kumecki of Hamtramck, Michigan (Plot J Row 13 Grave 53 Sicily-Rome Cemetery Nettuno). Several pavilions recount the Italian Campaign with audio-visual special effects that replicate the terrifying experiences of war. Other pavilions focus on agricultural and toys of the era. Piana delle Orme is at Via Migliara 43, 5 in Borgo Faiti 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*

- Anzio-Nettuno can be a one-day affair, including a seafood lunch or dinner with a view of the harbor that was reconstructed from pre-war postcard photos. A full weekend of visits to Anzio-Nettuno and Montecassino in southern Lazio is a worthwhile option.
- Both the American (Nettuno) and British Commonwealth (Anzio) cemeteries are just a kilometer from their respective local train stations, easily reached by taxi or on foot.
- At the American cemetery, there are 7,860 headstones (Latin crosses and Stars of David) marking the resting places of 7,861 Americans, including 23 sets of brothers who rest in adjoining graves, 17 women and two children. There are also large marble insets recounting the course of the Italian campaign from Sicily to Rome during which these men and memorializing 3,095 missing in action.
- 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; Plot C Row 12 Grave 13;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/antolak.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/antolak.html)
  - Robert Waugh; Plot H Row 13 Grave 37;  
[http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/waugh.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/waugh.html)
- Three graves near that of Sgt. Antolak are those of Loyolan PFC John Burke (Plot C Row 6 Grave 7), Ellen Ainsworth, an Army nurse and recipient of the Silver Star (Plot C Row

11 Grave 22) and CPT Henry T. Waskow (Plot G Row 6 Grave 3, whose death was the subject of famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle's most well-known frontline column (<http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/36division/archives/sanpiet/ernie.htm>).

- Anzio and Nettuno each have their own museums dedicated to the Allied landings. Both are close to the local train stations connecting with Rome, with Nettuno's museum housed in the historical Forte Sangallo, The Nettuno museum website is at <http://anzionettuno.info/turismo.asp?idturismo=60> and Anzio (<http://www.sbarcodianzio.it/index.php?lang=en>).
- 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, near the Highway 148 Via Pontina exit for Pomezia, is the massive German cemetery, where 27,487 soldiers who lie six to each headstone (<http://www.volksbund.de/kriegsgraeberstaette/pomezia.html>).

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

Little Nettuno has one of the best baseball parks and fast-pitch 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 Italy. Once called the Nettuno Lions, for some inexplicable reason the team's mascot was Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians. The Italian Baseball Federation website is at <http://www.fibs.it/en/>.

*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.

Cisterna, Aprilia (the Factory), Campoleone, Isola Bella and others villages were focal points of extraordinarily violent action. Many Germans 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 knives. At dawn, short of their objective, the Rangers were engaged by a large German force. By the end of the day, having fought with little more than grenades and

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small arms, the Rangers inflicted heavy casualties on the German Panzer units before being overwhelmed. See this Guide's section on Loyolan PFC John Burke for details.

Beneath the Palazzo Caetani in Cisterna are enormous man-made caves where thousands of local residents took shelter during the five-month siege. Cisterna, which prides itself as the kiwi fruit capital of the world. Cisterna is the home of the Italian cowboys called "butteri," who once bested Wild Bill Cody in a contest of cowboy skills. Cisterna is the sister city of Fort Smith, Arkansas, the hometown of William O. Darby, the commander of the Rangers, after whom a local technical high school is named.

The Colli Albani (Alban Hills) were the original objective of the Anzio-Nettuno landing forces in order to cut Via Appia (Highway 7) and Via Casilina (Highway 6) as German escape routes. Albano, Velletri, Valmontone, Lanuvio and Frattocchie are today pleasant places attracting tourists. 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 there 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 began crossing the Arno on August 12. The rising in Florence, while not of major military significance, such an action was necessary for the Florentines and Italians. Florentine history is one of periodic rebellions against oppressive rulers. Florence, 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 "lapide" memorials to "caduti" of the Second World War. A plaque at the main post office, Palazzo delle Poste e dei Telegrafi, in Via Pellicceria (Furrier Street just off Piazza della Repubblica), honors 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 partigiani killed by



the Germans in fighting at that spot. One lapide at Via delle Masse 38 commemorates both the soldiers of the Great War and the partigiani of the Second World War. 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. Wolf had worked tirelessly and at great personal risk to gain 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. Dr. Wolf's story is told in *The Consul of Florence* by David Tutaev.

*The Florence American Cemetery*

*“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 4,402 Americans who died in the Italian campaign during the push from Rome to the Alps between June 1944 and late April 1945. Also memorialized are 1,409 missing in action. There are two Medal of Honor recipients interred there and another, whose body could not be recovered, is memorialized on the Wall.

- 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 8 miles south of central Florence 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, a JFRC group trip to Florence can include a side trip to the cemetery.

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 saving and destruction of Italy’s artistic heritage, the role of the Church, and the politics of war. Numerous books have been written about Montecassino. Getting past the town of Cassino, only about 80 miles southeast of Rome, meant entry into the flatlands in the Liri River valley, by now called Purple Heart Valley by the GIs, where Allied armor could move rapidly north on Highway 6 to join up with a breakout from the Anzio beachhead and to liberate the Eternal City.

*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.*

Just a few miles from Cassino is Sant’Angelo in Theodice, a village that was the focal point of the costly failed attempt January 21-22, 1944 by the 143<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 36<sup>th</sup> Division to “cross the Rapido.” A monument in the village memorializing the sacrifice of the Texans. The view from the village illustrates the advantage held by the German defenders. A few miles south of Cassino is San Pietro Infine, the only town in Italy that has remained as it was when destroyed during the War. *The Battle of San Pietro*, the groundbreaking documentary filmed by John Huston during the American attacks during the middle two weeks of December 1943 on the hillside village overlooking Highway 6, the path through the Mignano Gap to the Liri Valley. San Pietro’s museum commemorates the battle that is documented in Huston’s film that can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyry93GfMbl>. Two recent books cover this part of the Italian Campaign, *Crossing the Rapido: A Tragedy of World War II* by Duane Schultz and *A Death in San Pietro: The Untold Story of Ernie Pyle, John Huston and the Fight for Purple Heart Valley* by Tim Brady.

### *Helpful Hints*

- It is best to visit Montecassino Abbey 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. (<http://www.montecassino.it/>).
- 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

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or by bus as part of a JFRC 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 before or after Mass for a visit to the museum in the Abbey where you can see some of the artifacts saved because the Germans had cooperated in transporting 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 by artillery day-in and day-out. 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 as a condition for 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. The controversy over the destruction of Montecassino continues. A number of books in the Rome Center library address the four battles of Cassino.
- 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 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 \$1,000 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 directly from American sources 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. Compared to the Allied cemeteries, the German cemetery is massive, with over 20,000 interred. And, the Germans have buried their fallen with a single headstone for as many as six. 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 with gleaming white markers is oriented toward the individual with attention to stated religious faith and home state. The British cemetery, also providing individual resting places, is careful to list the fallen by their units on large stone insets, with many units having long histories in localities at home. 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 other cemeteries. While the others seem to welcome the sun, the German cemetery near Cassino, designed in concentric circles on a shaded hillside, is shielded from it.
- Near Cassino’s 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 region of Lazio. The famous and controversial Italian film, for which Sophia Loren won the Academy Award in 1961, was called *Two Women* in English but *La Ciociara* in the original Italian. It is the story of a woman and her daughter leaving German occupied Rome (the San Lorenzo quarter) seeking safety in the countryside of southern Lazio. Today’s town of Cassino is centered several hundred meters from the original. Every structure in Cassino was destroyed, with the rubble serving as cover for a devastating German ambushes 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 received 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*

Pisa, as the western anchor of the Pisa-Rimini Line established by the Germans after the Liberation of Rome, the city could not be spared Allied bombing. 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, 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.” Wayward bombs from Allied planes hit the Campo Santo, setting fires that melted the lead roof, inflicting horrific damage to the beautiful murals adorning the interior walls. Visit the restoration center across near 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 Milano 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 feet 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. 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 1,000 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 & Salerno-Paestum*

Most visitors to the Naples area 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. Seven decades 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 pot city of Salerno. The British landed along the ten-mile stretch of beaches south of Salerno. To the northwest, as Italy juts out into the sea, are the villages of Maiori and Minori, next door neighbors of the famed town of Amalfi, taken by U.S. Rangers. 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 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;
- all tunnels were caved in and sealed; and
- flour mills were collapsed,

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. Also in 1943, Mt. Vesuvio erupted.

### *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. The formal surrender of one million German troops forces in Italy was taken here in May 1945 as well.

## **Versilia: Italian Liberation and the American Civil Rights Movement**

### *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, whose units were commanded by African-American officers.

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 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.

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 customarily served in all-black construction or logistical units commanded by white officers (such as the famous Red Ball Express trucking group that helped keep front line troops supplied in France).

During the winter 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 Far Pacific. 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. Thousands of Japanese-Americans from the Pacific Coast, including many who eventually served with the 442<sup>nd</sup> 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 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 a Half Century 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 embedded 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 local campaign to erect the statue was led by Americo Bugliani, husband of former JFRC 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 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 the first non-Nisei commander of an American Legion post in Chicago near Wrigley Field 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 [http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations\\_1940\\_wwii/munemori\\_sadao.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/citations_1940_wwii/munemori_sadao.html) .

### *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 local and refugee 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 accidentally or 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 innocents 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 1,800 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 Don Lazzeri, named in honor of a priest killed by the Germans for his Resistance activities, 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

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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 John Felice 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. In 2014, Phil was the recipient of Loyola University's John Felice Award in recognition of his assistance to Loyola's John Felice Rome Center. Since 2005, O'Connor and James Centner (JFRC1966-67) a retired Naval officer and West Point history instructor, have conducted World War II study trips for JFRC.