

A BRIEF HISTORY

OF

ITALY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Pre-Roman Times	1
III. Roman Republic.....	1
IV. Empire.....	2
V. Julius Caesar	3
VI. Augustus	4
VII. The Fall of Rome	5
VIII. Middle Ages.....	5
IX. Renaissance.....	6
X Moving Toward the Modern Era	7
XI Risorgimento and The Kingdom of Italy	8
XII A Liberal State	9
XIII World War I	10
XIV Mussolini and Fascism.....	11
XV World War II.....	12
XVI A Constitutional Republic	13
XVII Modern Day Italy	14
XVIII Sources and Acknowledgment.....	16

I - Introduction

A “Brief History of Italy?” Isn’t that impossible? Well, sort of, so we’ve kept it very general to provide the reader with merely a survey. Though Italy is really a new nation only coming into being in 1861, the geographical area we now refer to as Italy has had a long, rich, and diverse history. This survey will take you through pre-Roman times with the Greeks and Etruscans to the Roman Republic, Roman Empire, and the fall of Rome. Italy then broke into various republics, city-states, and kingdoms, being subjected to outside control and invasions by Muslims, Normans, Germans, French, Spanish, and Austrians and, incidentally, creating a nightmare for historians and you. Italy was finally united in 1861 becoming the Kingdom of Italy and then becoming a constitutional republic in 1946. Italians have always been loyal to family, town, region, and church, and have never thought much of central authority. Italy consists of the geographical size of the states of Florida and Georgia combined. It has 20 regions (which we would think of as states) and 94 provinces (which we would think of as counties). Interestingly enough, five of the regions have greater autonomy than the remaining fifteen, but that’s a story for another essay.

II - Pre-Roman Times

Various groups initially populated the Italian Peninsula. Mycenaeans (from Greece) and Phoenicians (from what is now Lebanon, Syria, and Israel) came from the Mediterranean Sea area. Latins came from the north through the Alps. Greeks especially dominated the Adriatic Sea area and Sicily. Etruscan civilization developed around 800 B.C. in central Italy, but its height was 650 to 450 B.C. Etruscans were really quite advanced, developing their own alphabet and initiating the use of chariots and the toga, with their kings eventually ruling Rome.

III - Roman Republic

As mythology has it, Rome was found in the year 753 B.C. by Romulus, who overtook his brother Remus and built Rome. Again, as mythology has it, Rhea Silvia and the god Mars had these twin sons, Romulus and Remus, who were suckled by a she-wolf and raised by a shepherd. A line of kings supposedly began with Romulus.

In 509 B.C. the Etruscan King Tarquin The Proud was expelled by the Romans and a republic developed. Class conflict followed from 494 B.C. to 287 B.C. known as the “

Struggle of the Orders.” Plebeians, the lower Roman class, demanded rights from the dominant Patrician Aristocracy, and eventually received concessions. A written legal code, The Twelve Tables written in bronze hanging in the Forum, was developed in 450 B.C. setting forth individual rights.

The first serious external conflict occurred against a coalition of neighboring Latin cities known as the War of the Latin League. After a major Roman victory, an alliance was reached with the Latins in 496 B.C. From the 400's B.C. forward, Romans fought regularly with various groups. It defeated the Etruscan City of Veii. It fought the Gauls. Latin tribes revolted in the Samnite Wars with Rome prevailing. It took control of the Greek cities in the 200 B.C.'s. By 260 B.C., the Romans were in control of the entire peninsula, but provided generous treaties to the defeated resulting in prosperity and military alliances.

The day-to-day administration of the government was managed by Magistrates who were elected by people's assemblies. Two Consuls, the important Magistrates, were chosen as the heads of state. The real political power, however, remained with the Senate, as a Senatorial oligarchy, which actually governed Rome. The Senators served for life.

As military conquests continued, economic expansion and social change occurred. Public buildings, roads, and aqueducts were constructed. Taxes were levied. The middle class expanded. Coins were printed. Slave labor grew rapidly. Rome was on the move!

IV - Empire

The Punic Wars, also known as the Phoenician Wars, were a series of three wars between Rome and Carthage, which was situated in North Africa. The first began in 264 B.C. in Sicily when Carthage attempted to protect itself from Roman expansion. Rome won a decisive naval battle in 241 B.C. and took control of not only Sicily, but Sardinia. Carthage recovered and invaded Spain. Carthagian General Hannibal then invaded Italy with troops and elephants, resulting in one Roman loss after another. But Rome counterattacked and in 204 B.C. Roman General Scipio invaded North Africa resulting in a victory at Zama. Carthage was subjected to severe peace terms. The third and final Punic War began in 149 B.C., which again resulted in Roman victory and Carthage being completely destroyed in 146 B.C. Macedonia became a province after three wars. Spain was subjugated. Rome took control of North Africa

and Syria. It acquired Gaul in 118 B.C. and Egypt in 31 B.C. This expansion resulted in the largest and longest lasting territorial empire in the history of the world.

The middle class continued to grow. Businessmen, merchants, and bankers developed. Economic, social, and cultural change was rapid. However, numerous domestic upheavals also occurred. Tensions developed between conservatives and reformers, resulting in Civil War. Tiberius Gracchus in 133 B.C. won election as a tribune and promoted reform. That very year he was attacked by a mob and killed. Ten years later his brother Gaius Gracchus picked up where Tiberius left off, but in 121 B.C. he too was killed along with 3,000 of his supporters. Slave revolts also occurred. In 72 B.C. Roman soldiers eventually subdued the largest slave revolt led by Spartacus, who was killed along with 6,000 of his followers. The “Social Wars” occurred between 91 and 88 B.C. because of Rome’s refusal to share power and political rights with its Italian allies. Citizenship was eventually granted to all Italians south of the Po River.

V - Julius Caesar

Various generals began building private armies, most notably were Marius, Sulla, and Pompey. An individual by the name of Julius Caesar also developed an army. Marius became Consul, but died in 86 B.C. from natural causes. Sulla fought and gained control of Rome creating a dictatorship, but eventually restored the Republic and retired. Pompey also began fighting for control. Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus finally joined forces as a partnership and created what became known as the First Triumvirate in 60 B.C. This alliance began to crumble when Crassus died in 53 B.C., and Pompey was granted extraordinary powers from the Senate. Caesar, disgruntled, in 49 B.C. marched his own forces crossing the Rubicon River from Gaul to Rome defeating Pompey. Caesar kept his momentum and proceeded beyond Rome annexing additional territory for Rome. In the year 46 B.C., the Senate reluctantly proclaimed him dictator for a ten year period. Two years later, Caesar was proclaimed dictator for life. Caesar’s ambition and his determination to reshape Rome frightened the Senatorial Aristocracy who began conspiring against him. On the Ides of March (March 15) 44 B.C., a group of conspirators led by Cassias and Brutus stabbed Caesar to death. Instead of restoring the Republic, thirteen more years of Civil War resulted.

VI - Augustus

Julius Caesar's friend and colleague Mark Antony claimed to be Caesar's successor. However, Caesar's 18 year old great nephew and adopted son Octavian challenged that claim and assembled 3,000 of Caesar's troops. Cicero, former Consul and Rome's most famous orator, opposed Antony. After losing a battle in the Civil War, Antony initially fled Italy. Thereafter, in 43 B.C., Octavian, Antony, and one of Caesar's commander's Lepidus created the Second Triumvirate and formalized a five year agreement to stabilize Roman politics. Three hundred potential opponents, including Cicero, were assassinated. Caesar's assassins were pursued and Cassias and Brutus committed suicide in 42 B.C. at the Battle of Phillipi. Antony traveled to Egypt and there met Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. Cleopatra had been Caesar's mistress and had even accompanied him to Rome. Tensions began to grow between Antony and Octavian. In 36 B.C., Antony married Cleopatra, though he was already married to Octavian's sister. In 32 B.C., Octavian terminated the Triumvirate and brought grievances to the Senate against Antony, who was removed from power by the Senate. Octavian declared war on Cleopatra, and prevailed in 31 B.C. in the Battle of Actium in the Adriatic Sea. Antony and Cleopatra fled to Egypt, but the next year they committed suicide as Octavian invaded Egypt, making it a Roman province.

Octavian, or Augustus as he became known, consolidated his power and Civil War ended. Augustus reigned for 44 years and restructured the Roman Empire while maintaining a facade of republican institutions. He established a firm grip on power and began reforming Roman administration while expanding alliances. He built and repaired temples, theaters, roads, aqueducts, drainage systems, and generally modernized the city. He "found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble." He created a professional army. Augustus' extended period of peace became known as Pax Romana. He died at the age of 76 in 14 A.D.

Tiberius succeeded his stepfather Augustus, but no longer carried on the pretense that there was a Republic. He died in 37 A.D. and was succeeded by Caligula who was assassinated in 41 A.D. and was succeeded by Claudis who died in 54 A.D. Nero became emperor and during his reign, Rome burned in 31 A.D. At age 30, Nero committed suicide. Some of the

emperors who followed were Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus. The Colosseum was completed in 80 A.D. Advances continued in building style with the invention of poured concrete used in combination of the arch dome and vault. Frequent wars with Parthia were draining.

VII - The Fall of Rome

Commodus was murdered in 192 A.D. and some historians call this period the *start* of the “Fall of the Roman Empire” in the *west*. It is stated “in the west” because Rome was eventually divided into two halves, the western half ruled from Rome and the eastern Byzantine portion ruled from Constantinople, today’s Istanbul, which retained its basic strength until overrun by the Ottoman Turks in the 15th Century A.D. In the 3rd Century, A.D., Rome’s strength was drained by fighting two fronts simultaneously, the Persian Wars and invasions by Germanic tribes.

Two exceptional Roman emperors reorganized the empire and restored order. Diocletian took power in 284 A.D. and reorganized and expanded the army, and initiated fiscal and monetary reforms. The Empire, as noted, was divided in East and West halves in 286. He retired in 305 and Constantine claimed power in 306. In 312, he introduced a policy of official religious tolerance and in 313 legalized Christianity. Though Constantine reunited the Empire, he moved the capital in 330 to Constantinople in the eastern Roman Empire, which later became known as Byzantine. Italy gradually diminished to the level of a mere province, and was practically abandoned by subsequent emperors to be controlled by a succession of Germanic tribal leaders. The empire split once again in 394 and was never again ruled by one leader. In 410 Visigoth invaders took Rome marking the end of Roman control in Italy. The Vandals took Carthage in 439. By 476, the Germanic invasion was complete.

VIII - Middle Ages

With the fall of Rome, fragmentation and foreign invasion occurred. The peninsula we now know as Italy would not become united as a single economic and political entity again until 1861. From this era to the 1800's is a complicated phase of Italian history. Cities, not a centralized power, became the important political and economic units. Catholic, Byzantine, and Muslim cultures intermingled. Various kings controlled at different locations. The Pope, based in Rome, developed a powerful network which even transcended the peninsula.

Rome and Italy became Germanic. In 535 Eastern Roman Byzantine Emperor Justinian reattached Italy to the Byzantine empire, reuniting the Empire. He died in 565 and in 568 the Lombards invaded from the North, and Italy reverted to its fragmented, pre-Roman conditions. In 773 A.D. Charlemagne led his Frankish ranks into Italy and crowned himself King of the Lombards. Pope Leo III crowned him Emperor in 800 A.D., though he ruled in absentia.

In the South, there was initial continuity under Byzantine rule; however, Arabs invaded Sicily in 827 and took Palermo and Messina from the Byzantines. Expansion by the Arabs continued and by 843 they were taking sites even on the Italian mainland. Byzantine forces retaliated against the Arabs driving them out of Italy. The Arabs, like the Franks, Lombards, and Goths before them, were unsuccessful in unifying Italy.

The French-Normans invaded Sicily in 1025 and by 1091 had gained control of southern Italy from the Germans and even drove the Arabs out of Sicily, though in 1282 the Sicilians expelled the French in the famous Sicilian Vespers uprising. Certain areas, such as Naples, obtained autonomy. By 1150, many of the major cities of the north and center, including Milan, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Venice, and Rome had organized as separate communes.

The Medieval German or Holy Roman Empire (neither holy nor Roman nor an empire) in 1152 regained control of Northern Italy. In defense, many of the northern communes formed a coalition known as the Lombard League and counterattacked, retaining autonomy. German intervention nevertheless continued resulting in a war between various German emperors and the Pope that lasted almost three decades. The Germans were eventually defeated.

IX - Renaissance

The Renaissance (beginning in Italy, and more specifically Florence) is known for development in art, architecture, banking, science, exploration, and political philosophy. Poet Dante Alighieri helped Italy focus upon a single language with his 1320 epic Divine Comedy. German intervention collapsed and the Italian cities in the north and center exercised complete autonomy. The only widespread influence was exercised by the Pope in Rome. One of the most famous family names at this time was the Medici, who brought Florence to the height of its power in international banking, commerce, and Renaissance culture. The most famous Medici was “Lorenzo the Magnificent,” who ruled Florence from 1469 to 1492. Another famous name from this period was Niccolo Machivelli (1469-1527), the father of politics, who wrote

The Prince. Two other famous names were Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) and Leonardo DaVinci (1452-1519). Brunelleschi designed and constructed the famous Duomo in Florence. The plague, or the “Black Death,” devastated Italy and much of Europe during the 1300's. Renaissance states (actually city-states) competed and negotiated against each other. Oftentimes, they went to war. The city-states which dominated were Milan, Venice, Florence, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Naples. Constantinople (Eastern Roman Empire) fell in 1453 and the Turkish Empire defeated Venice.

In 1454, these five dominant city-states achieved political stability by formally agreeing to maintain separate spheres of influence. The fear of the Ottoman Turks brought cooperation. The French invaded in 1494 terminating the Medici reign. Incidentally, this is when the famous (some say deranged) preacher Savonarola lead a campaign condemning the alleged decadence of Florence. He was eventually killed. The French began their battles against the Habsburg Empire (the Austrian royal family) which controlled Austria, Spain, Netherlands, parts of Germany, and parts of Italy, with the Hapsburgs retaliating in 1522. The city-states lost their independent status. Finally, the French withdrew, but its invasion opened the door for two centuries of foreign occupation and confusion.

X - Moving Toward the Modern Era

By the mid-16th century, Spain had taken control of Sicily, Naples, Sardinia, and Lombard. The Medici were restored to power in Florence. Venice, Genoa, and Lucca remained republics. Spain basically dominated the entire peninsula. A Catholic Counter-Reformation resulted in severe repression in 16th century Italy. Galileo was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1633 for maintaining that the earth revolved around the sun.

By the first half of the 17th century, the Austrians had begun largely displacing the Spanish, but France, again, invaded in 1792, shortly after one of the most famous revolutions in history, the French Revolution of 1789. The new French Revolutionary Government attempted to expand the French borders to protect its First Republic from counterattack by anti-republican monarchies. In 1796, a young French General by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte crossed the Alps, moving into Northern Italy winning a series of victories forcing a treaty with Austria in 1797. Napoleon began to immediately reorganize the Italian peninsula, forced the Pope into exile, and imposed a highly centralized government. After Napoleon's defeat, Metternich,

Austria's Hapsburg foreign minister, reorganized Europe and reinstalled the monarchs, with Metternich maintaining control of most of the peninsula and restoring the Pope's power in the Papal States. The Italians had a single foe to focus upon, Austria. Rebellions erupted in several locations in the 1820's and 1830's, but were crushed by Austrian troops.

XI - Risorgimento and The Kingdom of Italy

Giuseppe Mazzini was one of the first names to surface regarding unification, who wanted to fight for independence from the foreign forces *and* unite Italy, with his ultimate goal being a democratic republic. Insurrections, however, failed. Others argued for a rejuvenated Papacy reconciling Church and State. Others argued for a monarchy. Others quite frankly didn't care. Several Italian revolutionary disturbances occurred in 1848, and in Austria, Foreign Minister Metternich fled into exile due to revolution in Vienna. The Hapsburg (Austrian) Empire was in chaos.

King Carlo Alberto of Piedmont, a northern Italian Region (one of the current twenty states), though intervening against the Austrians, was also concerned about Mazzini's goal for a republic. Accordingly, Piedmont's Count Cavour urged King Alberto to take charge of the situation, to lean toward reunification but away from a republic, but King Alberto was defeated by the Austrians and his son Vittorio Emanuele II took his place as king of Piedmont. Rome, meanwhile, through the Pope, opposed any war of liberation. Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) met in Rome with Mazzini and other independence fighters. When the initial revolutionary forces collapsed, Garibaldi turned south to rally support for a Roman Republic, but by 1849, the Austrians and the French were recovering. The Roman Republic movement was crushed and the Pope was restored. Garibaldi and Mazzini both fled. The conservative Catholic forces consisting of the Austrians, the Papacy, and the Spanish Bourbons regained control. The unification movement shifted back to Piedmont, which began serving as a counterweight between Austria and France. Cavour, now Prime Minister of Piedmont, pursued unification through diplomacy, in contrast to Mazzini's failed insurrections. In 1857, Piedmont broke diplomatic relations with Austria and turned toward France for a commitment to join against Austria. In 1859, a formal military alliance was signed between France and Piedmont, and Austria was defeated. Cavour then sponsored elections in Tuscany and Emilia (two other Italian Regions/States), bringing them into the new Kingdom of Italy with Piedmont in March of 1860.

Uprisings began in the south and in Sicily. In May 1860, Garibaldi responded, leaving Genoa and leading his “Thousand” volunteers known as the “Red Shirts” to Sicily. Garibaldi stunned the French Bourbons and proclaimed himself dictator of Sicily. Cavour feared that Garibaldi had taken the initiative and would convert Risorgimento into a democratic movement.

On September 7, 1860, Garibaldi moved into Naples. Cavour, again fearing democratic insurgency, ordered his Piedmont armies south, defeating the Pope’s army at the Papal states. On October 26, King Emanuele and Garibaldi met, with Garibaldi acknowledging the King’s authority, and accompanying the King on a victory march through Naples on November 7. The meeting between the King and Garibaldi could have easily turned to civil war; instead, in January 1861, Italy had its first election for Parliament creating the Kingdom of Italy and acknowledging Vittorio Emanuele II as Italy’s first king, though the issues of Venice, Rome, and the Papacy remained unresolved.

But Italy and Germany fought the Austrian forces, resulting in Austria ceding Venice to Italy in August 1866. Garibaldi assaulted Rome and the Catholic French returned to protect the Pope, but Prussia decisively defeated France, opening the City of Rome to occupation by Italian troops on September 20, 1870. Risorgimento was complete. The Italian government, originally in Turin, was relocated from Florence to Rome. The Vatican prohibited Catholics from participating in Italian national politics condemning the new government. The Pope declared himself a “prisoner in the Vatican.” In addition to the touchy issue of the Papacy, the new nation faced widespread poverty, corruption, and economic underdevelopment, with the South’s situation being even worse, known as the “Southern Question.” Confusion reigned in the South with armed bands seizing control of entire towns, finally being stopped by the Italian army in what was known as the Brigands’ War.

XII - A Liberal State

In 1876, the government of the Right lost a vote forcing new elections which were won by the Left. Social and economic reforms progressed. The Italian Socialist Party was formed in 1892, but dissolved by Prime Minister Crispi, who was concerned about Marxism and Anarchism. In foreign affairs, Italy joined the Triple Alliance in 1882 with Germany and, ironically enough, Italy’s adversary Austria. This was the age of colonies and Crispi, wanting

to be a world power, sought to acquire Ethiopia, but was defeated by the Ethiopians in 1896 losing over 5,000 Italian troops, resulting in a shocking national humiliation. Crispi resigned. In 1900, an Italian Anarchist from New York assassinated King Umberto.

Vittorio Emanuele III inherited the throne upon the death of his father in 1900. Giollitti, five-time Prime Minister, addressed a series of problems with progressive reforms. Industry developed. The main industrial-commercial sites were Milan, Turin, and Genoa. Fiat was formed. The Bank of Italy was created. The standard of living in northern Italy approached European levels, but the gap with the South continued and even deepened. Working conditions were regulated. Nationalism rose, but so did socialism. Arts and sciences progressed. The Roman Catholic Church continued to dominate. A sense of national identity still did not yet exist.

Giollitti's government declared a costly war on the Ottoman Empire in September 1911, invading and annexing Libya. The Left-Wing Socialist Party continued to attack the government through the newspaper Avanti. Its young editor was Socialist Benito Mussolini (1883 - 1945).

XIII - World War I

Britain, France, and Russia formed the Triple Entente to counter the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. There was a great deal of indecision in Italy as to whether or not it should be involved in any war and, if so, on which side. Italian nationalists viewed Austria as the adversary due to Italy's quest for bordering territory. In July, 1914, Austria declared war against Serbia due to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. Italy continued to remain neutral. Though the Italian Socialist Party maintained its traditional position of international neutrality, Benito Mussolini, one of its most prominent members, opposed neutrality. He was shortly thereafter thrown out of the Socialist Party and launched his own newspaper promoting intervention on the side of Britain, France, and Russia. Italy entered the war on that side, having been promised territory, but was unprepared militarily and industrially, and with the support of only a minority of its population. It hadn't even yet recovered from its campaign in Libya. In May 1915, Italy invaded Austria costing over 200,000 Italian lives. A year later, Austria launched its offensive against Italy which resulted in the Caporetto disaster in October

1917, a panicked retreat of over 700,000 Italian troops. Italy eventually regained its lost territory (and lost pride) and the Austrian Empire collapsed.

XIV - Mussolini and Fascism

World War I left over one-half million Italians dead, political instability, a devastated economy, and disappointment regarding Italy's lack of territorial rewards for its sacrifices.

Prime Minister Orlando arrived at the Paris Peace Conference hoping to claim its spoils of victory. The United States, Great Britain, and France rejected Italy's position and the Italian delegation walked out. In light of the devastation, economic and political instability, malaise, and violence, the Italian Socialists leaned toward a soviet-style revolution. These were the "Red Years" of 1919 - 1920. In the meantime, on the opposite end of the political spectrum, a new, militant movement appeared known as the Fascists, dispensing intimidation and violent retribution, primarily against Socialists. The Fascists won backing from an insecure middle class and even financial backing from the industrialists fearing an Italian Bolshevik revolution. Mussolini rose to the top of the Fascist movement, which had paramilitary squads known as "Blackshirts."

Prime Minister Giolitti, again back in power, attempted to play the two extremes, the Fascists and the Socialists, against each other to restore order. Mussolini, as a Fascist, was elected to the Chamber of Deputies. The far Left, the Italian Communist Party, split from the Socialist party, with Italy now having two parties to the Left. Mussolini's Fascist party promoted a conservative pro-business, nationalist agenda, cutting taxes and diminishing the role of government. While the Socialists called for general strikes, which would result in chaos, Mussolini promised order. In October 1922, Fascist party leaders drafted a plan for a "March on Rome." King Vittorio Emanuele III refused to declare marshal law and instead turned to Benito Mussolini to head the government as the new Prime Minister, Italy's youngest at 39. The "March on Rome" marked an end to the Italian "Liberal State" and the beginning of the Fascist rule, destroying constitutional government. Mussolini consolidated his powers while encouraging "Blackshirt" violence. He banned strikes, lock outs, and non-fascist unions. He drove the Socialists out of power. One government leader "disappeared" after voicing criticisms from parliament floor. Mussolini cracked down on the press. He survived

assassination attempts. Parliament altered the constitution by giving the King its control over the Prime Minister and Cabinet, with Mussolini now only having to answer to the King. Mussolini, known as “Il Duce” (leader in Latin), outlawed organized political opposition and abolished local governments. In 1935, he invaded and defeated Ethiopia, redressing Italy’s earlier humiliation, and declared an empire.

In 1929, Mussolini reached an agreement with the Vatican known as the “Lateran Accords.” The Roman Catholic Church won guarantees of autonomy for the Vatican State, finally “normalizing” the relationship between Italy and the Papal States for the first time ever.

XV - World War II

Hitler acquired power in Germany in 1933. Italy, concerned about Nazi ambition, turned initially toward France and England. However, after Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the League of Nations imposed sanctions against Italy. In response, Mussolini’s relationship with England and France was strained and he therefore leaned toward Germany. After the Ethiopian war, Mussolini turned his support to the pro-fascist rebel forces of Franco in the Spanish Civil War against the Spanish republican government. In 1939, Franco prevailed.

Italy withdrew from the League of Nations further separating it from the European Western democracies. Hitler took Austria and thereafter part of Czechoslovakia in 1938. Italy occupied Albania and in 1939 became a formal ally of Germany. Germany invaded Poland, resulting in Britain and France declaring war on Germany. World War II had begun. Germany invaded Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg and drove deeply into France. On June 10, Italy declared war on France and Britain, and attempted to capture the Suez Canal, but the British drove the Italians back into its Libyan colony. On October 28, 1940, Mussolini ordered an invasion of Greece, but within mere days, the Greeks drove the Italian forces into full retreat, with Hitler rushing to rescue the Italian forces bogged down in Albania. Hitler invaded Russia, with Mussolini supporting the invasion with 200,000 Italian troops. Japan struck Pearl Harbor. Mussolini declared war on the United States.

On July 10, 1943, the Allied forces invaded Sicily. Mussolini’s solid support began to slip. The Allies bombed Naples and Rome. The Fascist Grand Council, along with

Mussolini's son-in-law Ciano, voted to remove Mussolini from power and Mussolini was arrested. Hitler, outraged, rushed German troops to defend (and attack) Italy. On September 8, the Italian government announced an armistice with the Allies, and the King fled the ensuing German attack. On September 12, German commandos rescued Mussolini from prison and the Italian Saló Republic was created by Mussolini in North Italy. Hard core Fascists began executing opponents, including Mussolini's son-in-law Ciano. By September 1943, Allied forces had landed south of Rome and in October took Naples. Rome was fully liberated in June of 1944. King Vittorio Emanuele abdicated in favor of his son Umberto. On April 27, Mussolini and his mistress Claretta Petacci were executed with their bodies displayed in Milan. By May of 1945, the last German troops surrendered in Italy.

XVI - A Constitutional Republic

Italian Partisan fighters contributed significantly to liberating Italy. Though most parties contributed, the Left (Italian Communists and Italian Socialists) dominated the northern Partisan movement, known as "The Wind from the North," but American economic influence, Allied military occupation of Italy, and the powerful Catholic Church offset the Left's ability to control. The Americans were afraid that the Italian Communist Party had direct links with Moscow. The political setting in Italy had become polarized with the Communists on the left and the Catholics on the right, reflecting world-wide Cold War tensions.

On June 2, 1946, the Italians voted in favor of a Republic, rejecting the Monarchy formed in 1861. A bicameral legislature was to be elected by universal suffrage with a republic consisting of regional (twenty state) governments. Members of the Legislature were to be allocated according to proportional representation. A weak presidency was created and an independent court system was developed. The two branches of the legislature are known as the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. In this multi-party system, a majority must be constructed by negotiations among the parties, to select a Prime Minister.

The Republic's first election was in April 1948. The Christian Democrats, supported by the Vatican and the United States, won a convincing victory establishing itself as Italy's ruling party up to only very recent times. The Socialist Party was now considered a minor party with the Communist Party emerging as the dominant opposition party to the Christian Democrats.

Italy's economic recovery (1950-1958) was known as the "Economic Miracle," with Italy being a beneficiary of American Cold War economic assistance. In 1963, a coalition was formed between the Socialist party and the Christian Democratic party, with Aldo Moro forming a government with a Socialist deputy prime minister. Militant strikes occurred in the north in 1969 known as the "Hot Autumn." Campaigns of terrorism, the "Years of Lead," conducted by both the extreme Right and extreme Left (Red Brigades) lasted through the 1970's. In 1973, the Communist party committed itself to the democratic process, accepting NATO, and tilting away from Moscow. Abductions and executions of well-known public figures occurred during the '70's. In 1978, Moro was kidnaped and killed. By the '80's calm was restored in politics, though inflation was over 21%. As the decade proceeded, economic growth was restored and Socialist Craxi became Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987. Italy became the fifth largest economy in the world, surpassing Great Britain.

XVI - Modern Day Italy

In the early '90's, the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War had been won by the West. The Italian Communist Party moderated and became known as the Democratic Party of the Left. The Christian Democrat Party which had been the opposition to the Communist Party lost substantial support. A new party known as the Northern League developed, condemning corruption and calling for Northern Italy to separate itself from the south and form the new nation of Padania. Though Socialist Amato was prime minister in 1992, the Socialist Party virtually disappeared in 1993.

Long-standing webs of bribes, a scandal known as "Tangentopoli," were discovered. Numerous members of Parliament were involved. In 1994, Craxi fled to Tunisia to avoid arrest.

Referendums in 1991 and 1993 replaced the Parliamentary proportional system introducing a new winner-take-all form of election in local government and three-fourths of the elections in Parliament. In foreign policy, Italy was aligned with the United States and has been a member of NATO since 1949, and a member of European Economic Community since 1957. In 1998, Italy gained admission to the European Monetary Union. As the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats disappeared, two new coalitions appeared, the Center-Left and the Center-Right. In March 2001, Prime Minister Amato dissolved Parliament. The resulting

election pitted former Rome Mayor Rutelli against former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of the Forza Italia Party. On May 15, 2001, Berlusconi and his coalition won a resounding victory, and has been strongly pro-American.

Italy boasts unprecedented material prosperity and has moved toward a secular commercialized culture replacing its agricultural Catholic culture. Italy, having always been family oriented, now has the lowest birth rate in the industrialized world. Corruption and organized crime remain a huge problem. Tax evasion and an underground economy continue to plague the nation. The influences of church, family, and localism remain powerful, especially in the south, but the “Southern Problem” remains. Women have moved into the labor market and by 1980, became one-third of the work force. Soccer has surpassed cycling as the favorite Italian sport. American culture has made a huge impact on Italian culture.

In the half century after unification, approximately 13 million Italians left the country, mostly to North and South America. They say in Sicily that there are probably more Sicilians in the U.S. than in Sicily. After World War II, emigration once again exploded but this time Italians headed for Switzerland, France, and Germany. Southern Italian men moved to northern Italian cities.

Divorce rates remain well below other nations and the family persists as the dominant element of social life. Divorce was legalized in 1970, gender equality was legislated in 1975, and abortion was legalized in 1978. Economic and political power still remain largely in the hands of men and the Catholic Church continues to serve its traditional role.

The Mafia remains a problem in southern Italy. Though there have been huge inroads against the Mafia, the 1992 murders of two judges by massive bombs demonstrated the Mafia is still a power.

Italy is a mixed world. It has become an economic power and a close ally of the United States. It has advanced industry, yet culturally, the Italian traditions, for which Italy is known, remain. Problems persist, but progress is being made. The trip has been fascinating. Italy's history has been a long winding complex road and its future will certainly be no different.

XVIII - Sources and Acknowledgment

The above essay represents data accumulated from several sources. The primary source utilized is “The History of Italy” written by Charles L. Killinger (2002), but the following sources were also consulted and analyzed in preparing this essay: “History of the World,” J. M. Roberts (1976); “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,” Paul Kennedy (1985); “The Romans,” Karl Christ (1984); “The Roman Empire,” Chester G. Starr (1982); “Columbia History of the World,” John A. Garraty and Peter Gay (1972); “The Oxford History of Italy,” George Holmes (1997); “The Sicilian Vespers,” Steven Runciman (1958); “Contemporary Italy,” Donald Sassoon (1986); “Concise History of Italy,” Christopher Duggan (1994); and “Mussolini,” R.J.B. Bosworth (2002). A special thanks to my editor-son, Dustin Fregiato.