

Rome Recalls Surrender and 1943 Battle For Italy

United Press International ROME (UPI) — They cheered and wept with joy that day in London and New York. The date was Sept. 8, 1943. The newspapers broke out the big, black type and radio announcers everywhere gave the tidings:

"Italy surrenders!"

But in Rome, Florence, Naples and hundreds of other towns and villages along the Italian peninsula, there was apprehension.

"What will they do now?" The people asked as they sat by their radios or gathered in the piazzas.

"They" — the Germans — gave the answer swiftly.

Within hours, Rome was occupied. King Victor Emanuel III and the government of Marshal Pietro Badoglio were in flight. Adolph Hitler began marshaling fresh divisions to pour down through the Brenner Pass to meet the new crisis.

Italy had surrendered. Now the battle for Italy began.

It was to go on for another 20 months and cost 350,000 Allied casualties alone. But that day 20 years ago was, nonetheless, a turning point in World War II.

Link Snaps

The first link in the Axis chain had snapped. At a crucial moment, Hitler was forced to divert troops from his hard-pressed Eastern front to do battle elsewhere. The way to Normandy was paved.

Psychologically, the blow was immense. Everywhere, people sensed that this was the beginning of the end.

The event that led up to Sept. 8, 1943, had begun two months earlier with the fall of Fascism and the imprisonment of Benito Mussolini, the formation of the Badoglio government and the Allied landings in Sicily.

Danes Protest Film On Christine Keeler

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (UPI) — Nearly 50,000 Danes have signed a protest against the filming in Denmark of Christine Keeler's life "because it may spoil the character of our children," the newspaper Politiken said today.

Since Sept. 5, about 300 persons have collected the signatures. They will work another week before applying to the government for a ban on the film making, it said.

Miss Keeler is a London party girl whose illicit love affair with British War Minister John Profumo led to his resignation and set off a scandal which nearly toppled Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's government.



TWENTY YEARS AGO — Celebration of the demonstrators, taken in 1943 from a newsreel of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini is film. The demonstrators are riding through shown in this photograph of shouting, waving Rome's Via Nazionale. (UPI)

In late July, the Italians made secret contact with the Allies to sound them out about the possible terms of an armistice. Weeks of cloak-and-dagger operations ranging from Rome to Madrid to Lisbon to a tiny village in Sicily were to follow before that would finally be effected.

The problem at all times was to avoid tipping the hand of the Italians to the Germans, poised everywhere along the peninsula with 16 well-equipped divisions.

The key man in the operation for the Italians was Gen. Giuseppe Castellano, charged by Badoglio with making personal contacts with the Allies and trying to secure the best terms possible for Italy.

Castellano, using a false passport, left Rome by train Aug. 12 for Lisbon. The train made an unscheduled stop of several hours at Madrid, and Castellano took advantage of this to make contact with the British Ambassador, Samuel Hoare.

He told Hoare that Italy not only was ready to break with the Germans, but also was prepared to join the war on the side of the Allies.

As Castellano continued on his way to Lisbon, Hoare telegraphed to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, then meeting in Canada, to tell them what the Italians had proposed.

Castellano arrived in Lisbon Aug. 17 and made secret contact with the British Ambassa-

dor Sir R. Campbell. It was necessary to act with caution because Lisbon was full of German spies.

Two days later, the Italian consul at Lisbon received a note from the British Embassy saying: "Mr. Du Bois is expected this evening at 10:30."

It was the signal that the negotiations were to begin.

Castellano went to the embassy and met a group of Anglo-American officials headed by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's personal representative, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith. Bedell Smith began by reading the Allies conditions for an armistice.

Castellano replied that he was not authorized to discuss armistice terms, but only the terms of a military agreement.

Allies Suspicious

This surprised the Allied officials, and aroused their suspicions. The talks seemed about to bog down. But Churchill and Roosevelt meanwhile had received Hoare's telegram, and they immediately drew up and sent to Lisbon the so-called "Document of Quebec," offering military assistance to Italy as soon as the Italians had given concrete proof of their collaboration with the Allies.

On Aug. 31, the Allies sent a secret message to Castellano instructing him to go to Sicily. Castellano left immediately, carrying a message from the Badoglio government saying Italy could sign an armistice only if it were announced after Allied troops had landed on the peninsula in sufficient strength to keep Rome and the rest of

the nation from falling into German hands.

Bedell Smith, who met Castellano at the Allied command post at Cassibile — a village just below Syracuse on the Southeast Sicilian coast — told him the Italian terms were unacceptable.

Although he didn't spell this out, the Allies faced a severe shortage of landing craft necessary to invade all along the Italian coast. Their battle plan thus called for taking Italy the hard way — landing in the south and fighting their way up the rugged peninsula.

Castellano told Bedell Smith that at the least the Allies should land a parachute division and an armored division at Rome to keep the Germans from capturing the King and the Badoglio government and setting up a puppet Fascist regime.

Allies Agree

The Allies finally agreed to send a parachute division and 100 anti-tank weapons.

Castellano returned to Rome and reported to Badoglio on Sept. 1. After an indecisive cabinet meeting, Badoglio went to see the King. That afternoon, the King decided to accept the surrender and sent a coded telegram to Rome explaining what was affirmative.

Then a strange series of developments — comic in any other circumstances — set in. Castellano returned to Sicily on Sept. 2 and the Allies greeted him, thinking he was authorized to sign the armistice. But government officials in Rome had

believed their telegram was sufficient to put the armistice into effect, and had given him no such authorization.

Castellano quickly sent a telegram to Rome explaining what must be done, but no answer was forthcoming.

Accept Terms

At 2 p.m. the next day, a telegram arrived from Rome saying that the telegram sent on Sept. 1 contained "implicit acceptance" of the armistice terms. Nothing was said about

authorizing Castellano to sign. Then at 5 p.m. a telegram arrived from Badoglio, cancelling the one sent three hours earlier and authorizing Castellano to sign.

Bedell Smith went to Castellano's tent to notify him of this, and escorted him to the mess tent. There Castellano found Eisenhower standing before a long table, with the British General Strong, American General Lowell Rooks and two other Allied officials beside him.

The ceremony was short. Bedell Smith handed Castellano three copies of the armistice

and the Italian signed first. Then Bedell Smith signed for Eisenhower.

It was 5:15 in the afternoon of Sept. 3, 1943. Eisenhower stepped forward and shook Castellano's hand.

At that moment, Allied troops were pouring onto the beaches of Calabria in the toe of the Italian Boot, and meeting little resistance. Five days later, on Sept. 8, Eisenhower announced the armistice to the world. In accordance with the armistice terms, Badoglio then announced it in Rome and the Italian radio carried his words to the nation.

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