

Italy in World War 2

When Hitler attacked France in 1940, Italy joined the war on Germany's side. Mussolini's strategic goal was to control the Mediterranean Sea. Fascist Italy invaded **Greece and Egypt**. At the time Egypt was controlled by Britain.

But Italian armed forces were not up to the task, and Nazi Germany had to send forces to assist them. Combined Italian and German forces were defeated by the British at the **Battle of El Alamein**. Meanwhile the US had entered the war. US forces landed in Morocco. Italian and German forces were surrounded and driven out of North Africa. Allied forces then conquered the island of **Sicily** before advancing into **Southern Italy** itself.

US, British, Soviet and French forces were known as **the Allies** in World War 2. In July 1943, with the Allied forces landing in Sicily and dropping bombs on Rome, Mussolini's regime collapsed. His own supporters, including the king, turned against him and went over to the Allies. He was kicked out of power and imprisoned on top of a mountain.

Meanwhile German forces fully occupied northern Italy and dug in to resist the Allied advance. Fierce fighting raged across Italy. In September 1943 Nazi Germany sent skilled soldiers to raid the mountaintop prison and rescue Mussolini. Mussolini was then placed in charge of a new state called the Italian Social Republic, also known as the Saló Republic. This state was in reality a puppet of the German forces in Northern Italy.

Even as the Allies advanced northward, civil war raged inside the borders of Mussolini's 'Italian Social Republic.' **Partisans** (resistance fighters, most of them socialists and communists) attacked German soldiers and supporters of Mussolini.

In April 1945, the final days of the war in Europe, Mussolini tried to flee to Switzerland with his mistress. They were captured by partisans and shot dead. Their bodies were hung on display in a city centre. This was the end of fascist rule in Italy. After the war the monarchy, which had supported fascism, was abolished and Italy became a republic.

