The Italian Campaign
1943-1945

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Background

- After defeating the Axis forces in North Africa, the Allies again moved into the European mainland
- British and American forces agreed that an invasion of Italy would be the next logical step
- Their goal was that the invasion of Sicily would lead to the fall of Mussolini
- Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, believed that they would be attacking "the soft underbelly of Europe" (Axelrod).
The Italian Campaign’s key European battles aimed to weaken Axis opposition by gaining control of the Mediterranean and other surrounding territories, effectively securing access to air bases necessary in the aerial fight against the Axis powers, significantly weakening Germany’s power and leading to their defeat in Italy.
Allied Goals of the Invasion of Italy

- Expand control over the Mediterranean
- Open a second front on the mainland of Europe
  - To relieve pressure on the Soviets
  - Provide air bases closer to bombing targets

(Bolte)
Logic Behind Backing

- Winston Churchill, British prime minister, fully backed campaign due to wanting a united front in the Mediterranean

- Americans, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower, thought that battles such as Operation Overlord should take precedence

(Axelrod)
Logic Behind Backing Continued...

- Joseph Stalin ultimately backed the campaign with the motivation that the attacks in Italy would distract the Germans from the Soviet front and France.

- Overall, Churchill’s logic won over (Axelrod)
1943
July 10-
Allies entered Italy on the south coast of Sicily. (Axelrod)

July 22-
Axis forces started to evacuate Sicily. This allowed the US forces to move to Palermo. (Axelrod)

July 25-
The Fascist Grand Council overthrew Mussolini and was later arrested after being replaced by Maresciallo d'Italia Pietro Badoglio. (Benito)
1943

August 17-  
Axis troops moved toward the Straits of Messina in order to evacuate to the Italian mainland. The evacuation was complete on August 17. (Axelrod)

September 3-  
British forces crossed the strait of Messina. British troops planned to land at Taranto and Allied troops moved toward Salerno. (Axelrod)

(Italian Campaign Timeline)
1943
1943-1944

September 8-12 -
Hitler moves 16
German divisions into
Italy, during armistice “distraction”, and
takes control over Italy
and most of its army
and navy. (Bolte)

September 8-
Badoglio signs an
armistice with the
Allied troops. (Benito)
1943-1944 Continued...

September 12-
Mussolini is rescued by
German commandos and
was then installed as
head of the Italian Social
Republic (RSI) in
northern Italy. (Bolte)

September 28-
Germans withdrew and
established the Gustav
Line, a defensive zone in
the West. (Axelrod)
1943-1944
1944

May 11-
After three unsuccessful attacks, the Allies attacked between Cassino and the sea. The Allied forces broke through the Gustav Line after a week. (Axelrod)

May 23- June 4-
Allies that were in the town of Anzio moved toward Rome instead of stopping the German retreat. The Allied troops arrived in Rome on June 4, while the Germans were able to completely retreat. (Axelrod)
1945

April 21-
The Allies slowly advanced toward the Gothic Line, another German defence. On April 9, British forces attacked in the east with American forces in the East. The attacks moved toward Bologna, causing its fall on April 21. (Axelrod)

April 25-
The Fifth army and Eighth army met at Finale nell’Emilia after eliminating the last German forces. (Bolte)

April 26-
The Allies captured Verona. (Axelrod)
1945
April 28-
Mussolini joined the
German retreat, but was
then captured by Italian
officers. Mussolini was
executed on April 28.
(Axelrod)

April 29-
Germans surrendered
and agreed to cessation
of hostilities on May 2.
(Italian Campaign
Timeline)
Successes of the Italian Campaign and Analysis

- Allies reconquered the Mediterranean
- Reconquered Northwestern Europe
- Drew tension away from Soviet and French fronts
- Drove Germany out of Italy, successfully weakening their power

The overall goal the Allies wanted was to successfully stop the Axis powers (mainly Germany) from reaching the Soviet and French fronts. This goal was accomplished by utilizing all of the different countries in the Allied powers well, to effectively weaken Germany.