

## OPERATION "HUSKY" 1943

During the Second World War, the conquest of Sicily by the allied troops changed the fate of the conflict. The leaders of France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America had, in fact, met in Casablanca between 14<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January 1943 in order to find a stratagem to turn upside down the war, given that four years had now passed since the invasion of Poland. This meeting ended with the decision to start from the weakest area of Europe: Italy, and in particular, Sicily.

Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1943, the allied troops landed in Sicily by means of floating bridges - the same as the future Normandy landings (D-day) - with tens of thousands of men, 7,000 vehicles and 900 guns, starting, thus, to the liberation of the Italian peninsula from Nazi-fascism. But this conquest was not, as appears in many history books, a real victory for the Italians.

From some testimonies, the American General George Smith Patton urged his men, the majority of whom were "virgins" to the use of weapons, with the following words: "Kill, kill, and kill some more" and many more.

These words resulted in completely arbitrary and unjustified massacres, violence and rapes, of which, unfortunately, mostly the Italian civilian population was victim of. In two days, the allies had ascended half of the region, but there were considerably conflicting sources on how the Italians behaved when the Anglo-Americans arrived.

There are those who argue that the Italians threw their weapons at the sight of the allies because they knew that they would have no mercy, while it is also said that they opposed them up to the point of fighting. Despite everything, it is certain that the mafia played a crucial role in this operation. Without its help, the ascent of the peninsula and the landing in Sicily would not have proved so easy and fast for the allies. In fact, the conquest of the island alone lasted only 38 days, after which there was a radical change in the life of civilians. The Americans brought not only chocolate bars and cigarettes, but a social and economic upheaval. Freedom of the press was reintroduced, banks reopened, and food began to be rationed and distributed to all the population. For the Sicilians we can say that the war was finally over, and that peace had arrived, even if obtained at a high price: hundreds of civilians abused and killed, limited freedom and the return of a strong mafia influence. There was also a notable economic revival, especially thanks to the Marshall Plan which was carried out later, between 1947 and 1952, which helped the industrialization of the island.

But what did this intervention by the mafia and the behavior of the Sicilians really mean? Let's dig deeper.

There can be different interpretations and it will never be possible to know exactly what would have happened if everything had gone differently, but we can observe and analyze the historical traces of these events. After four years of war and with a world conflict behind its back, the population simply wanted peace: a free world, in which there was no constant hatred and the daily fear of losing their lives. Families had been divided, decimated and destroyed. Perhaps the Italians were simply too tired both of a regime as oppressive and suffocating as fascism, and of this incessant and pounding war. On the other hand, however, the Americans, thanks to their continuous mission - persistent even today - to "fight to bring democracy" were so indelible that even today we can see the effects of the infamous landing in Sicily in July 1943: the presence of numerous American military bases scattered around the peninsula, starting from the North to the South. Furthermore, as already mentioned above, the "Husky Operation" had unfortunately also encouraged the local mafia, almost legitimizing it. This cannot be considered as a positive fact because, even today, we continue incessantly to fight this silent enemy, very widespread and rooted within the foundations of Italy; a disease that causes numerous victims every year, together with considerable economic damage.

Without a shadow of a doubt, above all, peace is almost never obtained without sacrifices or consequences, and sadly, without some any conflicts and wars. This has been the history of our humanity for the past decades. Ultimately, we believe that it is always worth the suffering and fighting in order to obtain peace, because there will never be anything greater to fight for; without it, you would not have the certainty of being able to preserve the important parts of life that the human race really cares about: family, friends, brotherhood, humanity. As a whole, we have the right to live happily, united with each other with peace and prosperity.

“You will find peace not by trying to escape your problems, but by confronting them courageously. You will find peace not in denial, but in victory.” —J. Donald Walters