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Reconstruction of Sicily and a Model for Positive Peace

To truly get out of war and re-establish peace, collaboration and community are essential. The Allied powers, through valiant and well intentioned efforts, managed to pierce through Sicily, an immense fortress on an isolated island, blocking passage to the rest of Fascist Italy. This effort essentially broke Italy out of the fascist regime they were locked into. Once holding Sicily, the Allies had to find a way to keep the island from turning back to the arms of Mussolini. This text will highlight how Sicily's democracy was re-established through the Allies' efforts. Additionally, the model of reconstruction discussed will also be re-examined to see how it could fit into other conflicts, and how other nations would be able to rebuild themselves under this model and obtain positive peace.

Italy joined the Axis powers on October 25th, 1936. When Hitler had invaded Poland in the autumn of 1939, Italy would soon begin invading their neighbors, France, Greece, Albania and British African colonies. All would turn around for Mussolini, however, in 1943- during the Invasion of Sicily- an invasion that would eventually lead to the downfall of Mussolini and his dictatorship, once and for all. Something that is particular about the Allied Invasion of Sicily, also known as "Operation Husky", is the fact that the terrain on Sicily is not ideal for battle- it's mountainous terrain posed a heavy disadvantage to the invading Allied troops, composed mainly

of troops from the US and the United Kingdom. When the Allies had gained their victory against the Axis powers over Sicily, they continued advancing forth onto mainland Italy while establishing a democracy in Sicily. The island was a sort of experiment- a first try at a sort of reconstruction that had never been attempted before. The Allies soon got to work, specifically the British and the Americans. Created in January of 1943, the Allied Military Government was established, with a goal to help Sicilians, keep the terror of Fascism out of their sights and let positive peace prevail (Brown).

Because Fascism's entire ideology revolves around the refusal of peace, it was essential for the AMG to reintroduce law and order back into Sicilian society. Their first order of business was to relieve Italian military officers from their duties serving in civil governance, getting rid of the old fascist, militaristic way of ruling. They would then begin to restore Italy's freedom, reforming it in order to sustain peace. Sicilians were eager to help, as they were tired of their government and of the ruthlessness of war (Brown). Americans would bring in American-Italians to help govern the AMG, the British forces supplying personnel who had previously served in government in North Africa, but it was the Italian-Americans in particular who would play a crucial role in the operation, as this was their native country after all (Brown). They had knowledge of the people, their behaviors, cultures and were ready to help their fellow *fratelli* and *sorelli* (brothers and sisters). This government would also be responsible for the food crisis, helping with shortages and getting the Sicilian community back on track. Law and order would be maintained by specially trained CAPOs, an acronym of Civil Affairs Police Officers, to train the *Carabinieri*, a national police force loyal to the monarchy (Arma Dei Carabinieri).

When it came to finally putting this all into motion, there would have to be an effort to encourage civil and military cooperation. As the mission began, Churchill and Roosevelt would make their address to the country; “The time has now come for you, the Italian people to consult your own self-respect and your own interests and your own desire for a restoration of national dignity, security and peace. The time has come for you to decide whether Italians shall die for Mussolini and Hitler – or live for Italy and for civilization”(Brown). This message struck a chord with the people of Sicily, and they began to regard the Allied powers as liberators, not occupiers. With welcoming arms, they shared wine and began looking forward to a new Italy, built on cooperation between civilians and military forces.

Italians began to barter with the American and British troops, trading honestly and helping Italy’s economy build back up. The Allies would also help rebuild factories, highways as well as railroads faster than originally thought possible due to the collaboration between the citizens and allies. Ports were repaired and restored, which began bringing in more tons of produce than the port of New York at the time (*Critical Past*)! The food shortage was saved by the flour imports mixed with local ingenuity, as bakeries quickly churned out food for the population. This sort of collaboration brought a sense of comradeship between the two groups, making working together easier and getting the country back on track.

The rebuilding effort was also a major success. Offered wages and a promise to help reconstruct their country (*Critical Past*), Sicilians eagerly threw themselves at the opportunity. Italians worked hard alongside American soldiers, deepening their sense of solidarity through their shared reconstruction work. Englishmen worked with Indian soldiers as well, blowing up the shelled wreckage caused by German bombardments (*Critical Past*). All citizens of Sicily

would help clean the streets- Men, women, children as well. It was safe to say that the reconstruction effort was a major success.

As the Allies captured more of Italy's territory from the Axis, they would continue introducing the same model of government to the newly acquired regions, stretching the rebuilding and democratization effort to more people. This successful model of reconstruction would be copied and executed even better than the first, particularly in France.

When touching the subject of reconstruction, countries should be very aware that they must not intervene too much. In post-conflict regions, the local governments should be able to, through self-determination, regroup and rebuild their government. Countries should keep in mind that they should not overstep in the reconstruction process, as it may infringe on the nation's sovereignty. When talking about Post-Conflict Economic Reconstruction, the definition that comes to mind is "the consolidation of peace and security and the attainment of sustainable socio-economic development in a war-shattered country"(Tzifakis). To achieve this, we need positive peace. Johan Galtung describes the distinctions between positive and negative peace. Negative peace would be the absence of violent conflicts- but not conflict in general, whereas positive peace would be establishing democracy with the total absence of violence, systemic changes and improvement of society as a whole (Singh Grewal).

Something of note is the reason why the Italians in Sicily were able to reconstruct their society so successfully. I propose my main thesis- the Allied Military Government succeeded because the island natives played a key part in the reconstruction effort. Additionally, the

Italian-Americans flown into Sicily had already significant knowledge of their culture and heritage- they were a crucial intermediary between the Allied forces and the civilians. This is how the two groups managed to communicate, seeing as the Italian and English languages and cultures are very different.

Applying it to a different nation would require meticulous planning and a deep understanding of the country's history. Without this knowledge, the process of reconstruction could backfire, instilling negative peace instead of positive one, seeing as their society wouldn't have actually changed, instead just slightly modified with previous wars left unaccounted for. It is estimated that "57 percent of all countries that suffered from one civil war [between 1945-2009] experienced at least one conflict thereafter"(Walter), which only shows that this is why the reconstruction process is so crucial. Another finding is that "High Positive Peace countries are more likely to maintain stability, adapt and recover from shocks as they overcome challenges" (Institute for Economics and Peace), which would be difficult for a nation who has reconstructed itself without accounting for the delicate historical intricacies. Civilians may revert to the same conflict when their country is faced with a challenge or controversy, restarting and lighting tensions anew. From these two facts, we can deduce that a post-conflict nation is more likely to relapse when there is no positive peace established within their reconstruction effort.

In conclusion, the Allied Military Government was successful in their reconstruction due to their attention to detail. By recruiting Italian-Americans familiar with their home country, their history was not ignored and therefore could communicate effectively and reinstate order. We must never forget the history and mistakes humanity has made in the past, as well as previous

accomplishments. The AMG also was successful due to the willful cooperation of the civilians and their self-determination. The Allies knew when not to overstep and chose to work together with the Sicilians rather than for them. All of this amounted to the creation of a positive peace, as systems truly changed from their former fascist state.

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