

FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA

The “Festa della Repubblica” is the Italian national holiday celebrated on June 2 each year. It commemorates the institutional referendum of June 2, 1946 when (by universal suffrage) the Italian population was called upon to decide what form of government (monarchy or republic) to give to the country after the Second World War and the fall of Fascism. After 85 years of monarchy under the House of Savoy, Italy became a Republic by a vote of 12,717,923 for and 10,719,284 against. The monarchs of the House of Savoy, who had ruled a united Italy since the Risorgimento, were deposed and exiled. This is one of the most important Italian national holidays which, like July 4th in the United States (*Independence Day*) and July 14th in France (*Storming of the Bastille*), celebrates the birth of the nation.



June 2, 1946.

Prior to the foundation of the Republic of Italy in 1946, the Italian national day was the first Sunday in June, celebrating the anniversary of the granting of the Statuto Albertino in 1848 (*see below*). Until 1977, this was also the date of the celebrations for the 1946 establishment of the Republic. The June 2 date for it became official in 2000.

HISTORY



Victor Emmanuel II,
the first King of the united Italy.

The Statuto Albertino (the Albertine Statute), was the constitution that Charles Albert of Sardinia conceded to the Kingdom of Sardinia in Italy on March 4, 1848. The Statuto was proclaimed solely because of concern at the revolutionary insurrections that were then taking place in Italy, along with those in France, the German kingdoms, and the Austrian empire during 1848. Charles Albert was only following the example of other Italian rulers as they all tried to respond to the agitators in their own territories, but the Statuto Albertino was the only constitution among the Italian city-states to survive the repression that followed the First War of Independence against Austria (1848–1849). Charles Albert was forced to abdicate following the two humiliating defeats at the hands of Austria in this war. He was succeeded by his son Victor Emmanuel II.

When Victor Emmanuel II became the King of Italy following the Risorgimento, the Statuto became the constitution of the unified Kingdom of Italy. Technically, it remained the basis of the legal system, although it suffered deep modifications, especially during the Fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini (who ruled with the tacit approval of Victor Emmanuel III), following his “March on Rome” in 1922. Mussolini used the Statuto as both a symbol of legitimacy for his Fascist government and as a symbol of Italian unity under that government. It was never formally abrogated until the popular referendum of 1946 that dissolved the Kingdom of Italy and replaced it with the Republic of Italy.



Via dei Fori Imperiali in Rome during the military parade on June 2, 1951 (from the top of the Vittoriano).

In June 1948, the first military parade was conducted in Via dei Fori Imperiali in Rome to celebrate the birth of the new Republic. In 1949, after the entry of Italy into NATO, 10 more parades were conducted in different cities, such as Pordenone, Latina and L’Aquila. In 1950, the parade was featured for the first time in the protocol of official celebrations. This protocol provides for the ceremonial laying of a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Vittoriano. In 1961, on the hundredth anniversary of Risorgimento, it was also conducted in Turin and Florence, the first capitals of unified Italy. In 1965 a group of flags which were used in The Great War was paraded to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the entry of Italy into the First World War. These flags, kept in The Vittoriano, were placed in command of Colonel Alberto Li Gobbi who was awarded with a gold medal for valor during the Second World War.



Altare della Patria, Rome.

Even though the primary parade is in Rome, many Italian cities celebrate Republic Day as well. All over the world, Italian embassies hold celebrations with the Head of State of the host country invited as special guest. Heads of State from all over the world send congratulations to the President of the Republic.

Today, an official ceremony takes place, consisting of the deposition of a laurel wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, placed inside the Altare della Patria (the Vittoriano) in Rome. This is followed by a grand



military parade held in central Rome, presided over by the President of the Italian Republic in his role as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The Prime Minister, formally known as the President of the Council of Ministers, and other high officers of state also attend. The parade begins when the Corazzieri Squadron of the Carabinieri arrives, either mounted or dismounted, at the Presidential grandstand at the Via dei Fori Imperiali with the President of Italy, and the honors are paid via the Italian Army Band playing the first stanza of *Il Canto degli Italiani*, after which

the squadron departs. The parade proper itself then starts with the Carabinieri Central Band striking up [*La Fedelissima*](#) ([click here to hear it](#)) its official march, leading the parade proper with the parade commander, his staff and escort, followed by the National Colors of the Italian Armed Forces, standards of the regions of Italy and veterans associations. Following them are company-sized formations of Italian Armed Forces units, military bands and members of the Red Cross, Polizia di Stato, the Penitentiary Police Corps, State Firefighters Corps and the State Forestry Corps, and ending with the Rome City Police.

The celebration continues during the afternoon with the opening to the public of the Palazzo del Quirinale Gardens, the official residence of the President of the Italian Republic. Concerts also take place, performed by the bands of the Italian Armed Forces, of the Carabinieri, of the Guardia di Finanza, of the Polizia Penitenziaria (Penitentiary Police) and of the Corpo Forestale dello Stato (State Forestry Department) to name several. In true Italian fashion, musical concerts play an important and popular role in the celebration.

All in all, the celebration of the Festa della Repubblica is one of great popularity and civic pride among all Italians.

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from: www.timeanddate.com, Wikipedia, and <http://italian.about.com/od/italianculture/a/festa-della-repubblica-italiana.htm>.

