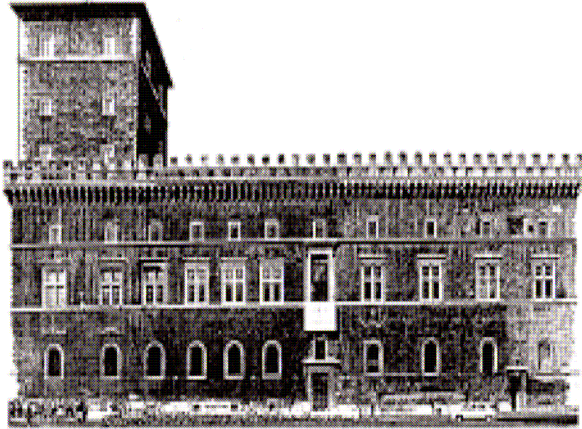




## Chapter 2 Grand Council



Palazzo Venezia with Mussolini's balcony in the centre

From its very earliest days of Aeneas and Romulus the Eternal City has been the site for many of civilization's important and historical meetings of Popes, Emperors, Kings, Generals, Statesmen, and various other rankings of men who have come to Rome to plan their nation's future and well-being and some for private gain.

One of the great meetings of Rome was on Christmas Day in the year 800 when Pope Leo III met with Charlemagne, Charles the Great, and crowned him Charles I, King of the Franks as the King and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This was the Papacy's first sharing of temporal power.

The Grand Council of Fascism held in the Palazzo Venezia in the early evening of Saturday July 24, 1943 was another meeting that held great and importance for Rome, Italy and the world. By the early morning hours of July 25<sup>th</sup> the entire history of Italy's first Fascist Régime was condemned to death. Some saw the meeting as a rescheduling of the roles played by the King and the Prime Minister of Italy, but others not in attendance knew what had happened that night at the Palazzo Venezia. The entire history of Rome, Italy, Europe, and the Western World had been changed forever.

The Palazzo Venezia was built in the center of Rome in 1455 as a residence and office for the Venetian Cardinal Pietro Barbo, who later became Pope Paul II. It has been used as a papal residence and later as the Venetian Embassy to Rome. Since 1916 it has been the property of the Italian State and was used by Benito Mussolini as his office and headquarters who also used its prominent location in Rome to regularly address the Italian people from its central balcony.