

# AD 1798

## **The Pope Dragged from Rome: February 20, 1798**

This newly purged French government enacted measures against royalists and the Church...The Directory tried to stamp out Sunday as a holy day, persecuting those who observed it. Such measures eventually stirred up revolts in Belgium, where the Directory outlawed six thousand priests. In France, Brittany, Anjou, Maine, and Normandy rose in revolt. But the directors wanted nothing less than to overthrow the papacy...

Since Napoleon had recently returned to Paris, the Directory ordered its new commander in Italy, Louis-Alexandre Berthier, to march against Rome and avenge the death of Duphot. Berthier and 15,000 soldiers moved into the Papal States unopposed and, on February 10, 1798, encamped outside the walls of Rome. Three days later, Berthier entered the city and took Pope Pius VI prisoner.

Berthier demanded that the pope abandon his temporal authority over Rome and the Papal States and leave Rome itself for good. Pius replied that his authority had come to him from God, and he could not justly abandon it. Berthier resorted to force. He declared the pope deposed and proclaimed Rome a republic. The 80-year old Pius was banished from the city, and on February 20, 1798, French soldiers dragged him from Rome.

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