



**Mussolini**

**History – Leaving Cert**

**Quick Notes**

## 1.1 Mussolini's Downfall

- Intro-North Tyrol, Fiume, 2m unemployment, 500% inflation
- Rise to Power-March to Rome, Acerbo Law
- Church State Relations-Latarn Treaty (1929)
- Economy-Stefani and 4 Battles
- Corporate State-No Unions
- Other Reforms-Transport etc
- Foreign Policy-Alliances
- Spanish Civil War
- Expansion
- WWII
- Conclusion

## 1.2 Rise to Power

- Italian nationalists not happy with Paris Peace Conference after World War I and they **failed to receive North Tyrol, Dalmatia or Fiume** as promised. They also failed to receive an African colony as compensation.
- The economy of Italy was in depression-**2m unemployed**, 500% inflation. There was also tension between the Church and State as well as the failure to develop a stable democracy.
- Strikes and riots took place in cities and people feared Communism would take over.
- The government were weak and could not solve the problems.
- **Benito Mussolini**-Father was Socialist. Worked in journalism and was editor of Socialist newspaper 'Avanti' in 1912. Expelled from Socialists after advocating Italy to enter the war in 1914. After the war he called for a dictator in the country and in 1919 formed the **Fascio di Combattimento (Blackshirts)**.
- **Characteristics of Fascists**-Ultra-nationalism (colonies), totalitarianism(one party government/good of state over individual), cult of the leader (propaganda), racism, anti-communism (gained capitalist support).
- **1919**-They won **0 seats** in the general election and so Mussolini then disowned Socialism. He also conducted marches against communism and socialism. He also dropped the taxes he was going to implement and the confiscation of land off the rich-**gradual shift to the right**.
- There was also the formation of the **Squadristi**-an anti-communist force. As a result, companies such as Fiat and the banks began to support him.
- By 1922 they had won **35 seats and they had 320,000 members**.
- We then saw the **Socialist General Strike** which the Squadristi prevented a Communist takeover. The fascists were seen as the sole protectors.
- **PM De Facta** asks for Martial Law to stop the fascists but **King Victor Emmanuel II** refuses and he resigns. Mussolini then refuses to co-operate with the government until he is made PM. Emmanuel then asked him to **form a government and he become Prime Minister**.
- Mussolini then organised the **March on Rome** to celebrate in October 1922 (in which he didn't actually march and arrived by train).

### 1.3 Establishing Dictatorship

- He got off to a slow **start** with only 4 Fascist Ministers which reassured the Liberals.
- He passed the **Acerbo Law in 1923** which said the party with the most votes in the next election would get two thirds of parliament seats (a stable government) and then used violence to ensure that this was won by him. **Totalitarianism**
- He then began to put his men in **key roles** such as Minister of the Interior and Foreign Minister.
- After Socialist leader-**Matteoti** was murdered the Socialists withdrew from parliament, giving Mussolini more power.
- Mussolini set up his secret police (**OVRA**) who arrested political opponents.
- Mussolini converted the Blackshirts into a national militia.
- Mussolini then in 1926 got the right to **rule by decree**-issued over 100,000.
- Mussolini engaged in a lot of **propaganda** and controlled the media. There was a lot on Censorship and Special Courts set up to prosecute enemies. There were also **Penal Colonies** (concentration camps) set up.
- He developed a cult of personality (**Il Duce**) as propaganda. He was compared to Caesar and was never made to seem wrong.
- He used education to support his fascist regime and got the youth involved by forming the Balila.
- However, he never had full power over the king or church.

### 1.4 Church-State Relations

- Relations had been poor since 1870 and Mussolini aimed to improve this by:
- Bringing in compulsory religious education, allowing crucifixes in classrooms, introducing measures against abortion and baptising his children.
- **Pope Pius XI** now withdrew support from Catholic Popular party and backed the Fascists.
- The **Lateran Treaty** was signed in 1929 in which the pope recognised the Italian State and Italy recognised the Vatican City. Italy also paid the pope £30m in compensation for taking Rome and Catholicism was recognised as the State-religion.
- This was often seen as Mussolini's greatest success. "*Brought God to Italy and Italy to God*"
- However, friction remained when the group Catholic Action became out of control of government (**fail of a totalitarian state**) and also when the Pope condemned Mussolini for his anti-semitic legislation.

### 1.5 Corporate State

- This is the perfect example of **totalitarianism**.
- Mussolini set up the **Ministry of Corporations** and divided up the economy into 22 and dissolved trade unions.

- No strikes/lockouts were allowed, it gave more power to Mussolini in terms of control and deciding on wages.
- Wages on average fell by 10% but better social welfare came about as a result.
- It helped prevent the collapse of the economy during Mussolini's time in power.

## 1.6 The Economy

- Mussolini began by appointed **Alberto di Stefani (1922-1925)** as the Minister of Finance who cut government spending and reduced unemployment. He also offered tax breaks to attract foreign capital.
- Mussolini then fired him and brought in a policy of **protectionism**.
- Mussolini then organised a series of battles to help the economy.
- **Battle for Grain**-Doubled production between 1925 and 1929 but less efficient farmers survived due to protectionism.
- **Battle for Land**-Most successful-drained the Potine Marshes and settled people from the poorest regions there.
- **Battle for the Lira**-Mussolini revalued the lira in 1926 and became stronger abroad. However, Italian products became too expensive to foreign customers and exports fell. Mussolini then had to devalue the lira in 1936.
- **Battle for Births**-Encouraged marriage and tax incentives were given to large families. He also banned homosexuality and taxed bachelors. However, the birth rate failed to increase.
- Fascists also helped to increase electricity production, built new motorways (the autostrada) and electrified the railways.
- He also **helped education** by raising the school leaving age and building new schools-between 1922 and 1939-number of secondary schools increased by 120%.
- Finally, Mussolini had success when dealing with the Sicilian mafia due to the ruthless methods of the Fascists.

## 1.7 Foreign Policy

- Mussolini wanted to make Italy '**great, respected and feared**'.
- He began by **refusing to return Corfu** after he occupied it until he received £50m in compensation for the death of 4 Italian soldiers.
- In 1924, Mussolini then **occupied Fiume**.
- He then began to make a series of alliances with other countries.
- **Locarno Pact** with France to guarantee Germany's borders with France.
- **Kellogg-Briand Pact** which outlawed war except for self-defence.
- He formed the **Stresa Front in 1935** with Britain and France against Hitler as he feared Hitler would try to claim land Italy had acquired from Austria in his Anschluss Campaign.
- Mussolini now **invaded Abyssinia in 1936** to expand his empire at which Hitler was impressed and used the crises to occupy the Rhineland.
- League of Nations placed trading sanctions on Italy but Germany continued to trade with them.

- In 1936, Hitler and Mussolini agreed the **Rome-Berlin Axis**.
- In 1937, Italy, Japan and Germany all engaged in the **Anti-Comintern Pact**, which was Anti-Communist.
- In 1939, the **Pact of Steel** (a military alliance) was agreed between Italy and Germany.
- The two fascist dictators were then brought closer together as they both supported the Fascist Franco in the **Spanish Civil War** in which over 70,000 Italian troops were used.
- However, Italy exhausted itself militarily and economically before WWII.

## 1.8 World War II

- Mussolini backed out of WWII at the beginning as he knew he was too weak. **He broke the Pact of Steel**. At the Munich Conference he was seen as the Peacemaker.
- Once Hitler was successful in Poland and France he decided to join in the war and invaded southern France.
- Italy did very badly in the war and was defeated in North Africa where almost **400,000 troops** surrendered to the British.
- The Italian army also surrendered in Tunis in 1943.
- The allies then invaded Italy and took Sicily.
- Hitler says that *"He cost me the war"*.
- Mussolini was removed by King Victor Emmanuel II and was imprisoned as he had been Minister for War and was held responsible. The new PM Badoglio surrenders.
- **Mussolini** was rescued by Germany and set up a puppet government in Northern Italy but was **captured and killed**.
- Other fascist regimes developed in Spain (Franco), Portugal (Salazar) and Austria (Dollfuss).
- Overall there were **many successes** and he **seemed strong** but in fact it was **a front** for the most part and it **never fully became totalitarian**.

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