

Mussolini's Italy:

Key words: *Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Corporativism, Lateran Treaty, Abyssinia, Munich Pact, Stresa Front, Republic of Salo*

- Fascist slogan: **“One State, One Leader, One People”**
- **Mussolini:** „*Fascism is not only a party, it is a regime, it is not only a regime, but a fait, it is not only a faith but a religion.*”
- **Mussolini about the masses:** “*They are stupid, dirty, do not work hard enough and are content with their little picture shows.*”

The Person of Benito Mussolini:

A Profile of Mussolini

Name Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini

Born 29 July 1883

Mother Schoolteacher

Father Blacksmith

School record Expelled from first school for wounding another boy and leading a protest against school food. Suspended from second for absenteeism, bullying and fighting.

Police record Arrested several times for leading demonstrations against government policy and for writing libellous newspaper articles

Career Qualified as teacher and went to Switzerland. Became interested in Communist ideas of Karl Marx. Supported revolutionary movements and was expelled from Switzerland. Brief spell in the army before returning to teaching. In 1911 became editor of *Avanti!* (Forward!) the Socialist Party newspaper; argued against spending on weapons in favour of more schools, better roads and medicine. At first opposed Italy fighting in the First World War but soon changed his mind. Left the Socialist Party and set up his own newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The people of Italy). Joined the army and fought bravely in the trenches. Wounded in an accident in 1917 and returned to edit his newspaper.

Character and interests Interested in revolutionary politics, drink and women. Contracted VD. As a teacher admitted he could not keep order – bribed children with sweets to keep them quiet. An adventurer, a man of action – excited by new ideas, but often impatient and short-tempered.

On the pic: Benito Mussolini with Adolf Hitler



Mussolini's Italy:

- 1922: The March on
- At first, Mussolini formed a Government along with people **from other parties.**
- But in October 1922 Mussolini decided to increase his power by gaining control of Parliament and the elections.
- Mussolini persuaded

Parliament to get full power for a year. Then in 1923 he **passed the law which gave the party that won most votes in the elections two-thirds of the seats in Parliament:** *Explain this step that the Parliament passed:*

- 1924: **Parliament elections:** the Fascists
..... This way the Fascists won 374 of 554 seats.
- In 1924, the Socialist Party leader, Giacomo Matteotti, was by the Fascists.
- **1925:** newspapers had to be approved by the Government, anti-fascist newspapers closed. Mussolini with **power to make laws without consent of**
- **1925:** Mussolini all political parties except the Fascists.
- **1925:** Mussolini declared himself of Italy.
- **1926:** all other political parties banned, trade union abolished, opponents imprisoned
- **From 1926 Mussolini ruled without** He used a *Fascist Grand Council*, whose members were appointed by Mussolini himself.
- **1927:** Secret Police force – OVRA – formed.

- **1928 elections:** Mussolini changed the voting system so that **only** men who belonged to Fascist organizations could vote. Even they could only vote “yes” or “no” to a whole list of candidates chosen by the *Fascist Grand Council*, so there was **no real choice**.

Controlling the people:

- **Primary school textbook** describes the ideal pupil as follows:

Teacher: “What is 28 October?”

Bruno: “It is the anniversary of the March on Rome. The Fascists in their Blackskirts enter Rome and put everything in order. Then the Duce arrives and says, ‘Go away all nasty Italians who do not know how to do things for the good. Now I will see to putting everything right! Long live Italy!’

Teacher: Good. All of you know what Fascism is and what Benito Mussolini has done for Italy. On October 28th 1922, there began his great work of renewal, which is not yet finished, but which has changed the face of Italy.”

- Schoolchildren began the day by repeating the Fascist Creed which began
..... “ On every classroom wall hung two pictures, one of and
- Children were expected to join youth movements joined with the fascists.
- **Propaganda:** newspapers, cinemas, theatres, books, even leisure time were under the propaganda of the Fascists.

Church:

- **The Italians were good** Mussolini knew that the support of the Pope would increase his control.

- **Lateran Treaty (1929)**: agreements between the Kingdom of Italy and the

1. The full sovereignty of the Holy See recognized in the, which was thereby established. The Vatican City is an within the city of Rome, Italy. It has an area of approximately 44 hectares and a population of just over 800. An **enclave** is a territory

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The Vatican State became an independent state with its own army, police and post Office.

2. Compensation for the land lost in 1861.

3. Roman Catholicism to be the only

4. The Pope would accept the King and Mussolini as rulers of Italy.

The economy:

- **Corporativism**: Workers and bosses were brought together in Corporations. By 1936 there were 22 Corporations, each dealing with a main occupation. *The Mining Corporation*, for example, included everyone involved in the mining industry. With the help of a Fascist chairman, the workers and bosses in the Corporation would meet to agree on wages, working conditions and prices.

- In 1925 trade unions were abolished and strikes outlawed.

- **Massive road-building programe** which connected many parts of the country together.

- **Railways** were electrified and many **schools and hospitals** were built.

- **The battle for grain:**

- **The battle for land:**

- **The battle for lira:**

- **The battle for births:**

Foreign Policy:

Mussolini: *"It is a crime not to be strong? War is to men what childbearing is to women! Nothing has ever been won in history without bloodshed!"*

- Mussolini dreamed of **building**: Italian Empire included: Libya, Eritrea, Somaliland, Abyssinia (invaded in 1935), Albania (taken over in 1939).

- **The Corfu Incident (1923)**: The League failed to stop Italy from invading the Greek Island of Corfu even though Greece asked for help. The Corfu Incident was seen as a serious failure for the League.

- **Briand-Kellogg Pact** (signed in 1928): not because Italy believed in the Treaty but because Mussolini thought it would show that Italy was playing a vital role in world affairs.

- **Early 30s:** Italy as a vital ally for against Mussolini feared a German takeover of Austria, Italy's neighbor. In 1935, leaders of Britain and France and Italy met at Stresa in Italy and formed the "....." against the growing threat from Germany.

- **Soon things changed:** Mussolini wanted to fight a war. He believed this would help Italians forget their problems at home. It would also win the coal, iron and oil Italy lacked. Mussolini wanted to add **Abyssinia - now called Ethiopia** - to the Italian Empire. Abyssinia was sandwiched between the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland. It was an independent country ruled by the Emperor **Haile Selassie**. Country was a member of the League of Nations.

Abyssinia, 1935: In 1935 the Italians invaded Abyssinia. The Italian soldiers used tanks, poison gas, bombs and flame-throwers against Abyssinian troops armed with spears and outdated rifles. Selassie appealed to the League of Nations for help., two leading members of the League, could have stopped Italy by closing the Suez Canal to Italian ships – cutting the Italian supply route to Abyssinia. Instead they agreed with the rest of the League to

..... These measures had **little effect**, because they did not include steel, oil and coal, which were vital to the Italian war effort.

In May 1936 the Italian captured the capital of Abyssinia, Addis Ababa.

The Abyssinian crisis dealt a death blow to the League of Nations which was now ignored as a peace-keeping body.

Italy's friendship with Britain and France also suffered. The Stresa Front fell apart, and Mussolini moved towards closer links with

- 1936-1939: The Fascists were sent to help Franco in
- 1937:: Italy joins Anti-Comintern Pact
- 1937: Italy leaves
- 1938: Mussolini agrees to Germany taking control of Austria
- 1938: Munich Conference, 1939: Italy occupies Albania

- **WWII and Salò Republic:** In July 1943 the Allies invaded Meanwhile, Mussolini was arrested and Marshal Badoglio became prime minister of Italy. **New government made peace with the**

Allies and declared war on Germany. **But:** Mussolini was freed by the Germans and the Germans took control of north Italy. Mussolini, supported by Hitler, established on the Italian land dominated by the Germans *Italian Social Republic* - state of Nazi Germany led by Mussolini and his Republican Fascist Party. The state was informally known as the (= from **1943** – to April **1945**)

- *Pic: 29.4.1945, Milan: Mussolini second from the left, 1945.*



