Fascism in Italy

When Italy agreed to join the Allies in 1915, France and Britain secretly promised to give Italy certain Austro-Hungarian territories. When the Allies won, Italy received some of the promised territories, but others became part of the new Yugoslavia. The broken promises outraged Italian nationalists. Disorders within Italy multiplied. Inspired in part by the revolution in Russia, peasants seized land, and workers went on strike or seized factories. Amid the chaos, returning veterans faced economic chaos and political corruption. Italy’s constitutional government, he felt, “had betrayed the hopes of soldiers, reducing Italy to a shameful peace.” Disgusted and angry, Balbo rallied behind a fiercely nationalist leader, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini’s rise to power in the 1920s served as a model for ambitious strongmen elsewhere in Europe.

Mussolini’s Rise to Power

As you teach this section, keep students focused on the following objectives to help them answer the Section Focus Question and master core content.

- Describe how conditions in Italy favored the rise of Mussolini.
- Summarize how Mussolini changed Italy.
- Understand the values and goals of fascist ideology.
- Compare and contrast fascism and communism.

**Terms, People, and Places**
- Benito Mussolini
- Fascism
- Black Shirts
- March on Rome

**Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas**
- Find the main points of the text under the first two headings and record them in a flowchart like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissatisfaction and Dire Straits</th>
<th>Mussolini Takes Power</th>
<th>Mussolini Changes Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment. Trade declined and taxes rose. The government, or seized factories. Amid the chaos, returning veterans faced economic chaos and political corruption. Italy’s constitutional government, he felt, “had betrayed the hopes of soldiers, reducing Italy to a shameful peace.” Disgusted and angry, Balbo rallied behind a fiercely nationalist leader, Benito Mussolini. Mussolini’s rise to power in the 1920s served as a model for ambitious strongmen elsewhere in Europe.</td>
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Mussolini’s Rise to Power

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The son of a socialist blacksmith and a teacher, Mussolini had been a socialist in his youth. During the war, however, he expected socialism to announce elections. After the election, the mayor proclaimed the Fasci of Italy.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use words from this section.

**High-Use Words**

- proclaim, p. 900

**Definitions and Sample Sentences**

- After the election, the mayor proclaimed her victory to the awaiting constituents.

- Ideology, p. 901

- a system of ideas that guides an individual, movement, or political program. Antiwar protests were driven by a pacifist ideology.

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**WITNESS HISTORY**

### A New Leader: Mussolini

In the early 1920s, a new leader turned Benito Mussolini arose in Italy. The Italian people were inspired by Mussolini’s promises to bring stability and glory to Italy.

“Only joy at finding such a leader! can explain the enthusiasm (Mussolini) evoked at gathering after gathering, where his mere presence drew the people from all sides to greet him with frenzied acclamations. Even the men who at first came out of mere curiosity and with indifferent or even hostile feelings gradually felt themselves fired by his personal magnetic influence...”

—Margherita G. Sarfatti, The Life of Benito Mussolini (St. Frederick Wible)

**Focus Question**

How and why did fascism rise in Italy?
Mussolini's Rule

At first, Fascists held only a few cabinet posts in the new government. By 1925, though, Mussolini had assumed more power and taken the title Il Duce (eel DOO chay), "The Leader." He suppressed rival parties, replaced elected officials with Fascist supporters, muzzled the press, rigged elections, and "The Leader" He suppressed rival parties, replaced elected officials with Fascist supporters. In 1925, Mussolini received support from Pope Pius XI in return for recognizing Vatican City as an independent state, although the pope continued to disagree with some of Mussolini's goals. In theory, Italy remained a parliamentary monarchy. In fact, it was a dictatorship upheld by terror. Crises were thrown into prison, forced into exile, or murdered. Secret police and propaganda bolstered the regime.

State Control of the Economy

To spur economic growth and end conflicts between owners and workers, Mussolini brought the economy under state control. However, he preserved capitalism. Under Mussolini's corporate state, representatives of business, labor, government, and the Fascist owners and workers, Mussolini brought the economy under state control. However, he preserved capitalism. Under Mussolini's corporate state, representatives of business, labor, government, and the Fascist

Mussolini's Rise to Power

In 1922, the Fascists made a bid for power. At a rally in Naples, they announced their intention to go to Rome to demand that the government make changes. In the March on Rome, tens of thousands of Fascists swarmed towards the capital. Fearing civil war, King Victor Emmanuel III asked Mussolini to form a government as prime minister. Mussolini entered the city triumphantly on October 30, 1929. He thus obtained a nominally legal, constitutional appointment from the king to lead Italy.

Checkpoint: How did postwar disillusionment contribute to Mussolini's rise?
Mussolini's Rule

Instruct

- Introduce: Ask students to preview the headings and visuals in this section. Then ask students to recall how Mussolini rose to power. Based on their previous reading and visuals in this section, have students predict what kind of leader Mussolini will be.

- Teach: Discuss the ways in which Mussolini imposed a totalitarian regime in Italy. Then ask, Why is control of the media important in a totalitarian state? (It enables the state to censor information and spread propaganda.)

- Quick Activity: Display Color Transparency 170: The Triumphs of Mussolini. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion on the political cartoon satirizing Mussolini.

Independent Practice

- Link to Literature: To help students understand how fascism was integrated into the school day, have them read the selection from "The Sound of the Cicadas," by Arturo Vivante, and complete the worksheet.

Monitor Progress

To review this section, ask students to summarize how Mussolini ruled Italy.

Vocabulary Builder

- Pronounce—Approach AYA001.tiff, officially

History Background

All in the Family One of Mussolini's most prominent supporters and assistants was his son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano. Ciano married Mussolini's favorite daughter, Edda, in 1930. He then served as a diplomat in China before leading a bomber squadron in the Ethiopian War. When Ciano returned to Italy, he climbed high in the Fascist hierarchy, eventually becoming foreign minister in 1936.

Answer

- Dictatorship: The term "dictatorship" generally refers to a system of government in which one person holds absolute power. However, Mussolini's government was characterized by a different kind of control. Mussolini's government did not allow for open debate on issues, and it closely monitored and controlled the media. Mussolini's government also supported a number of cultural and social policies that were aimed at strengthening the state and promoting its goals, such as the "Mussolini's Year of Work" program, which encouraged people to work harder and support the state.

- Economy: Mussolini's government sought to create a more self-sufficient industrial economy. To this end, it nationalized many industries and industries that were important to the war effort. The government also supported the development of new industries and technologies, such as the production of aircraft and machinery. Mussolini's government also sought to create a stable domestic currency by establishing the Lira as the official currency of Italy. Mussolini's government also sought to stabilize the Italian economy by promoting economic growth and reducing inflation.

- Domestic Life: Mussolini's government sought to create a more disciplined society. The government encouraged people to conform to a set of values and norms that it believed were essential to the success of the regime. Mussolini's government also sought to strengthen the family as a unit of society and promote traditional gender roles. Mussolini's government also sought to reduce crime and violence, and it established a number of institutions and programs to achieve this goal, such as the "Mussolini's Year of Work" program and the "Mussolini's Year of Work for Children" program.

- Culture: Mussolini's government sought to promote a particular kind of culture that was aligned with the values of the regime. Mussolini's government funded the production of films, literature, and music that were intended to promote national pride and loyalty. Mussolini's government also sought to control the arts and media, and it pursued a policy of "Art for All," which sought to make art accessible to all people.

- Propaganda: Mussolini's government used a variety of tools to spread its message and promote its goals. Mussolini's government sponsored a number of propaganda campaigns, such as the "Mussolini's Year of Work" program and the "Mussolini's Year of Work for Children" program, as well as a number of other initiatives, such as the "Mussolini's Year of Work for the Churches" program and the "Mussolini's Year of Work for the Schools" program. Mussolini's government also sought to control the media, and it pursued a policy of "Art for All," which sought to make art accessible to all people.
The Nature of Fascism

Mussolini built the first totalitarian state. In this form of government, a one-party dictatorship attempts to regulate every aspect of the lives of its citizens. Other dictators, notably Stalin and Hitler, followed Mussolini’s lead. Mussolini’s rule was fascist in nature, as was Hitler’s, but totalitarian governments rise under other kinds of ideology as well, such as communism in Stalin’s Soviet Union.

What is Fascism? Historians still debate the real nature of Mussolini’s fascist ideology. Mussolini coined the term, but fascists had no unifying theory as Marxists did. Today, we generally use the term fascism to describe any centralized, authoritarian government that is not communist whose policies glorify the state over the individual and are destructive to basic human rights. In the 1920s and 1930s, though, fascism meant different things in different countries.

All forms of fascism, however, shared some basic features. They were rooted in extreme nationalism. Fascists glorified action, violence, discipline, and above all, blind loyalty to the state. Fascists also pursued aggressive foreign expansion. Echoing the idea of “survival of the fittest,” Fascist leaders glorified warfare as a noble struggle for survival.

Fascists were also antidemocratic. They rejected faith in reason and the concepts of equality and liberty. To them, democracy led to corruption and weakness and put individual or class interests above national goals. Instead, fascists emphasized emotion and the supremacy of the state.

Fascist enterprises

Mussolini started a large-scale public works program that included agricultural and architectural restoration projects. Roads, schools, and train stations were built, trees planted, and archaeological sites financed. One of Mussolini’s most successful projects was the drainage of several hundred thousand acres of marshland to help Italy win “the battle for wheat” and end its dependence on imported grain. The increase in farmstand boosted wheat production by about 30 percent. Mussolini also directed the construction of a network of highways. With the help of private businesses, the first one was completed in 1924. However, not all end results matched Mussolini’s grand initial claims. Many projects were left unfinished, and huge sums of money lined the pockets of corrupt officials in charge of overseeing the programs. Still, few people blamed Mussolini.

The Nature of Fascism/ Looking Ahead

Instruct

 ■ Introduce: Vocabulary Builder

Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Using the Idea Wave strategy (TE, p. T22), ask students to list examples of modern political ideologies.

 ■ Teach

Ask students to identify the main characteristics of fascist governments, and write their responses on the board. Ask: How did fascist values differ from democratic principles and goals? (Unlike democracy, fascism rejected the concepts of equality and liberty, placed national goals above individual interests, and emphasized the role of emotion over reason.)

 ■ Analyzing the Visuals

Refer students to the Infographic on this page. Ask students to describe how each image illustrates some of the features of totalitarian states. (Sample: The photo from the the Soviet secret police file shows the use of terror to enforce the will of the state; the Young Fascists show the indoctrination of children.)

Independent Practice

Note Taking Have students fill in the table recording information about fascism.

Thinking Critically

1. Draw Inferences: Why did totalitarian governments try to win the loyalty of their nation’s young people?

2. Recognize Ideologies: Why did leaders honor women for having many children?

Answers

Thinking Critically

1. to create a constant flow of people willing to serve the government

2. to reinforce traditional roles and to create many new soldiers and loyal citizens as possible
The Appeal of Fascism

Given its restrictions on individual freedom, why did fascism appeal to many Italians? First, it promised a strong, stable government and an end to the political feuding that had paralyzed democracy in Italy. Mussolini projected a sense of power and confidence at a time of disorder and despair. Mussolini's intense nationalism also revived national pride. At first, newspapers in Britain, France, and North America applauded the discipline and order of Mussolini's government. "He got the trains running on time," admirers said. Only later, when Mussolini embarked on a course of foreign conquest, did Western democracies protest.

Fascism Compared to Communism

Fascism was the sworn enemy of socialism and communism. While communists worked for international change, fascists pursued nationalist goals. Fascists supported a society with defined classes. They found allies among business leaders, wealthy landowners, and the lower middle class. Communists touted a classless society. They were supported among both urban and agricultural workers.

Despite these differences, the products of these two ideologies had much in common. Both drew their power by inspiring a blind devotion to the state, or a charismatic leader as the embodiment of the state. Both used terror to guard their power. Both flourished during economic hard times by promoting extreme programs of social change. In both, a party elite claimed to rule in the name of the national interest.

Checkpoint

Describe the similarities between fascism and communism.

Looking Ahead

Three systems of government competed for influence in postwar Europe. Democracy endured in Britain and France but faced an uphill struggle in hard times. Communism emerged in Russia and was supported elsewhere. In Italy, fascism offered a different option. At the Great Depression spread, other nations—most notably Germany—looked to fascist leaders.

Quick Write: Write a Thesis Statement

A compare-and-contrast thesis statement should introduce the items you are comparing and the point you intend to make. Which of the following thesis statements would work best for a compare-and-contrast essay?

- Fascism and communism are very different ideologies, but they both led to the imposition of totalitarian governments.
- Fascism led to a totalitarian government in Italy.

Writing About History

The first statement is the best thesis, as it allows for both comparison and contrast.

For additional assessment, have students access Progress Monitoring Online at Web Code: naa-2831.

The Rise of Totalitarianism

1. Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section.
2. The fascists, led by Mussolini, took advantage of Italy's postwar turmoil to seize control of the nation.
3. The fascists promised order, employment, labor harmony, and an end to the political chaos of the Republic.
4. Mussolini exploited these problems in order to unite Italians.

Terms, People, and Places

- Mussolini
- fascists
- Liebenberg
- fascists
- Mussolini's economic or social goals, and explain the actions he took to achieve it.
- Compare and Contrast: list two similarities and two differences between fascism and communism.
- Identify Point of View: Mussolini said, "Machines and women are the two main causes of unemployment." What do you think he meant? (a) What do you think he meant? (b) How did Mussolini's policies reflect his attitude toward women?
- Writing About History:

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