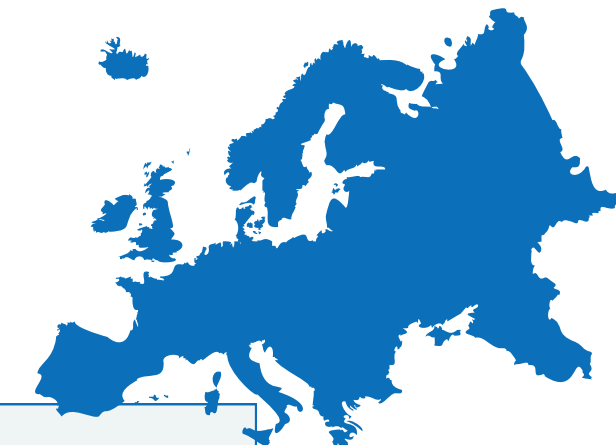




*Life* **IN** *fascist* **ITALY**

# LIFE IN FASCIST ITALY

3.9 EXAMINE life in one fascist country and one communist country in the twentieth century



**March on Rome** - Mussolini and his **Blackshirts** rise to power.

**Giacome Matteotti** assassinated due to opposition against Mussolini

The **Rome-Berlin Axis Treaty** is signed by Hitler and Mussolini.

1921

Oct 1922

1923

Jun 1924

Apr 1929

Oct 1936

1940

**Benito Mussolini** forms the **National Fascist Party**

**Acerbo Law**  
Only the King could interfere with Mussolini's power

**Lateran Treaty of Concordat** give Mussolini an understanding with the Catholic Church.

Italy enters **World War II** as an **Axis Power**.

# Learning Outcomes

**3.9 EXAMINE** life in one fascist country and one communist country in the twentieth century.

**1.7 DEVELOP** historical judgements based on evidence about personalities, issues and events in the past, showing awareness of historical significance.

**1.9 DEMONSTRATE** awareness of the significance of the history of Ireland and of Europe and the wider world across various dimensions, including political, social, economic, religious, cultural and scientific dimensions.

**1.10 DEMONSTRATE** chronological awareness by creating and maintaining timelines to locate personalities, issues and events in their appropriate historical eras.



# Introduction

Italy, after the First World War, was in political and economic turmoil. The rise of Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party marked a drastic shift in Italian politics, ultimately leading to Italy's transformation into a totalitarian state. Mussolini promised stability and resurgence for a nation scarred by war and political infighting but at the expense of personal freedoms and democratic principles.



# 23.1 : FASCISM AND ITALY

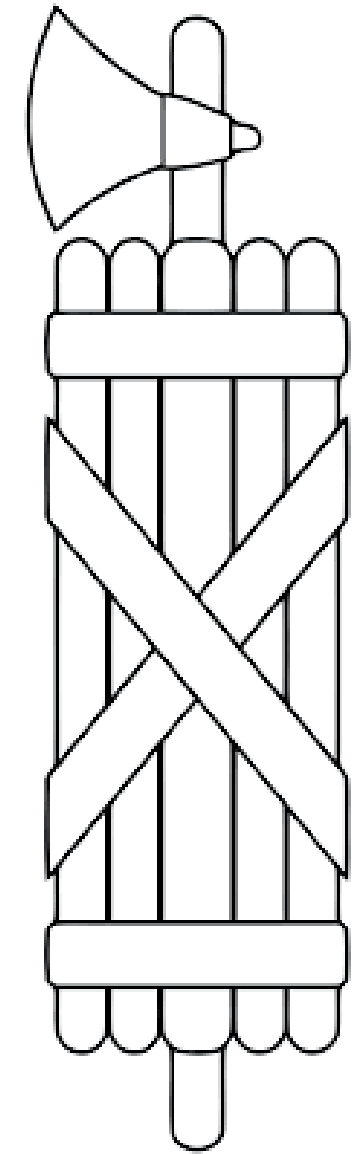
# Fascism

**Fascism** is a political ideology that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a nationalistic right-wing system of government in which individual rights are subjugated to the authority of the state.

The state is ruled by a dictator and political opposition is suppressed. The word **fascism** comes from the Latin word, **fascēs**, which was the name given to a bundle of rods with an axe blade protruding. A symbol of strength and unity, it would become the symbol of the Italian Fascist Party.

After the end of WWI in November 1918, a number of conditions emerged in Europe that saw the rise of fascism:

- Anger at the post-war peace treaties.
- Economic turmoil because of inflation and high unemployment.
- Fear of the spread of communism.
- Weak democratic governments.
- The emergence of several charismatic leaders who won the support of both the middle and working classes.



# The Birth of Fascism in Italy

The war left Italy in economic chaos, with skyrocketing **unemployment** and public unrest. The **Fascist Party**, founded by Benito Mussolini in 1919, sought to address these issues through a blend of **nationalism**, **authoritarianism**, and **corporatism**. Exploiting the widespread discontent and portraying themselves as Italy's saviors, the Fascists gained traction quickly.

Mussolini and his **Blackshirts**, the paramilitary arm of the Fascist Party, organized and participated in violent confrontations against socialists, communists, and other political opponents. They presented themselves as the sole defenders of Italy's honor and traditions.



# March on Rome and Mussolini's Rise to Power

In October 1922, thousands of **Blackshirts** marched on Rome, effectively staging a coup. **King Victor Emmanuel III**, fearing civil war and swayed by the popularity of the Fascists, invited Mussolini to form a government. Mussolini became Italy's youngest-ever Prime Minister and immediately began consolidating his power.





# Benito Mussolini, 1883-1945



Benito Mussolini was born in Predappio, Italy. A former schoolteacher and journalist, Mussolini was initially aligned with socialist ideologies but shifted to the far right during and after World War I. In 1919, he founded the **Fascist Party**. His charismatic speeches, promises of national renewal, and violent suppression of opponents enabled him to become Italy's premier in 1922. He established a **totalitarian regime**, emphasizing Italian nationalism, militarism, and anti-communism. In the late 1930s, he formed an alliance with **Nazi Germany**. Mussolini's aggressive foreign policies and role in World War II would eventually lead to his downfall. He was captured and executed by partisans in 1945.

# Checkpoint 23.1

1. Explain the following terms: **fascism**; **Blackshirts**; **corporatism**.
2. Who was (a) **King Victor Emmanuel III**; (b) **Benito Mussolini**?
3. How did Mussolini rise to power in 1922?



# Checkpoint 23.1

1. Fascism is: a form of right wing, one party government ruled by a dictator.
  - a. Blackshirts were Mussolini's private paramilitary army.
  - b. Corporatism is the 22 "departments" set up to run the state.
2. (a) **King Victor Emmanuel III was the King of Italy**
3. (b) **Benito Mussolini was the leader of the Fascist Party and the youngest ever Prime Minister of Italy.**
4. Mussolini rose to power in 1922 following the March on Rome when King Victor Emmanuel III decided to allow him to set up a government after 5 failed governments and the Fascist Party's popularity.

# 23.2: *Life* UNDER *Mussolini*

# Life Under Mussolini

Mussolini, known as "**Il Duce**" (The Leader), implemented policies that strengthened the central government and suppressed opposition. The press was heavily **censored**, and political dissenters were imprisoned or sent to confinement in remote areas.

Economic policies were designed around the idea of **corporatism**, where representatives from business, labor, and the Fascist Party collaborated to set industry policies, leaving no room for strikes or lockouts. This pseudo-cooperative method was meant to stabilize Italy's economy and prevent class conflict, though, in reality, it gave the state and the capitalists more control over workers.

Mussolini sought to create a new **Roman Empire**. This imperialistic ambition led Italy to invade and colonize regions in Africa, like Libya, and participate in international conflicts like the Spanish Civil War.



# Economic Policies

- **Corporate State:** Mussolini aimed to create a corporate state, where the economy was organized by sectors (**corporations**) which included representatives from both employers and employees. The idea was to avoid class conflict and disputes, thereby harmonizing the needs of the workers with the needs of the state and industry.
- **Battle for Grain:** In an effort to make Italy more self-sufficient and less dependent on foreign imports, Mussolini initiated the "*Battle for Grain*" in 1925. The aim was to increase domestic grain production. By 1935, wheat production in Italy had increased substantially. However, this emphasis on grain production led to other agricultural sectors being neglected.
- **Land Reclamation:** Vast projects were undertaken to reclaim marshlands and turn them into arable farmland. **The Pontine Marshes** near Rome were one of the most notable reclamation projects.
- **Industrial Growth:** Mussolini was keen on industrial growth and viewed it as a measure of national strength. His government invested in infrastructure projects like roads and railways. This, in turn, led to a growth in industries related to transport, such as automobile and steel production. The autostrada, a network of highways, was one such achievement.
- **Protectionism:** In order to safeguard and stimulate the Italian economy, Mussolini's government raised tariffs on imported goods, encouraging people to buy domestic products.







# Economic Policies

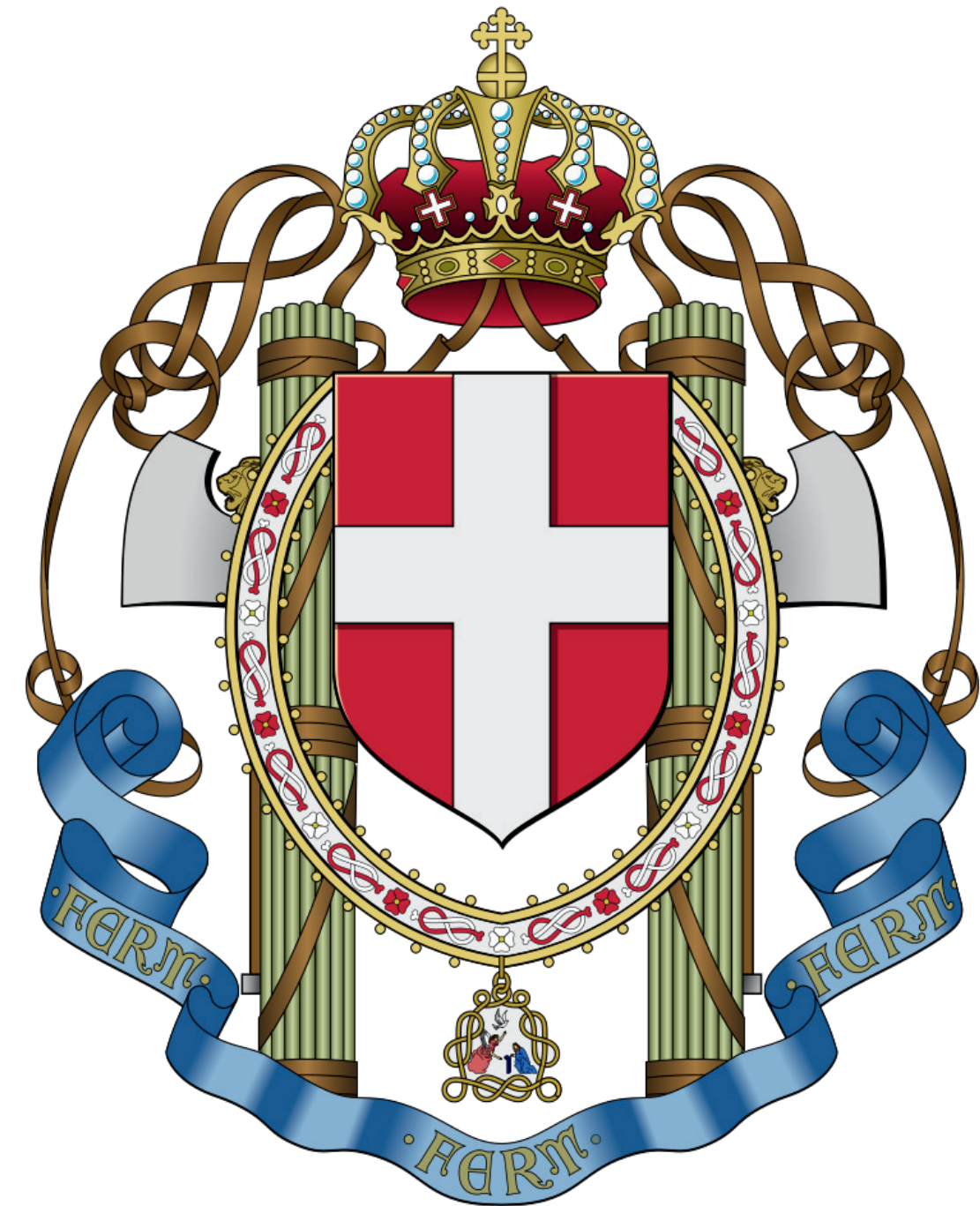
- **State Intervention and Control:** Mussolini did not shy away from direct state intervention in the economy. By the mid-1930s, the state had control over a vast portion of the Italian economy, either directly or through government-controlled entities.
- **Dependence on Germany:** While Mussolini aimed for self-sufficiency, Italy's economy increasingly became dependent on trade with Nazi Germany, especially after Italy's invasion of Abyssinia led to international sanctions.
- **Living Standards and Wages:** Despite all the economic activities and efforts to increase production, the living standards for the average Italian did not rise significantly under Fascist rule. Wages remained relatively stagnant, and the living conditions for many were challenging.
- **Public Works:** Many public works projects were initiated to provide employment. Notably, the draining of marshes and the construction of new roads and buildings were heralded as symbols of the new Fascist Italy.



# Terror

In Fascist Italy, Mussolini maintained his regime's stability and his own grip on power through terror, transforming Italy into a totalitarian state.

- **OVRA**, Mussolini's secret police, kept watch on Italians and arrested thousands for political "crimes". They acted as a tool of intimidation, ensuring citizens did not speak or act against the Fascist regime.
- Similar to the USSR's gulags, Italy had its own confinement system. Political prisoners, including known anti-Fascists, were sent to remote islands or internment camps.



# The Matteotti Crisis and Subsequent Purges

Mussolini's regime faced significant challenges. In 1924, Giacomo Matteotti, a socialist deputy, publicly criticized the Fascists for electoral fraud and was later kidnapped and murdered by Fascists. The event almost toppled Mussolini but instead led him to consolidate power even further. After the Matteotti crisis, Mussolini initiated a series of purges, removing potential threats from within his party and the government. This 'clean-up' mirrored Stalin's tactics, ensuring unquestionable loyalty to Il Duce.





# Propaganda

Propaganda was an essential tool for Mussolini.

- Mussolini controlled the press, ensuring that the Fascist message was consistently promoted. Newspapers like the **Popolo d'Italia** praised Fascism and Mussolini.
- Through art, cinema, and radio, the Fascist regime promoted an image of a strong, unified, and rejuvenated Italy.
- Mussolini portrayed himself as the nation's savior, with images of him everywhere, cultivating a 'cult of personality'.
- Key historical events were manipulated or rewritten to extol the virtues of Fascism and Mussolini's central role in Italy's revival.

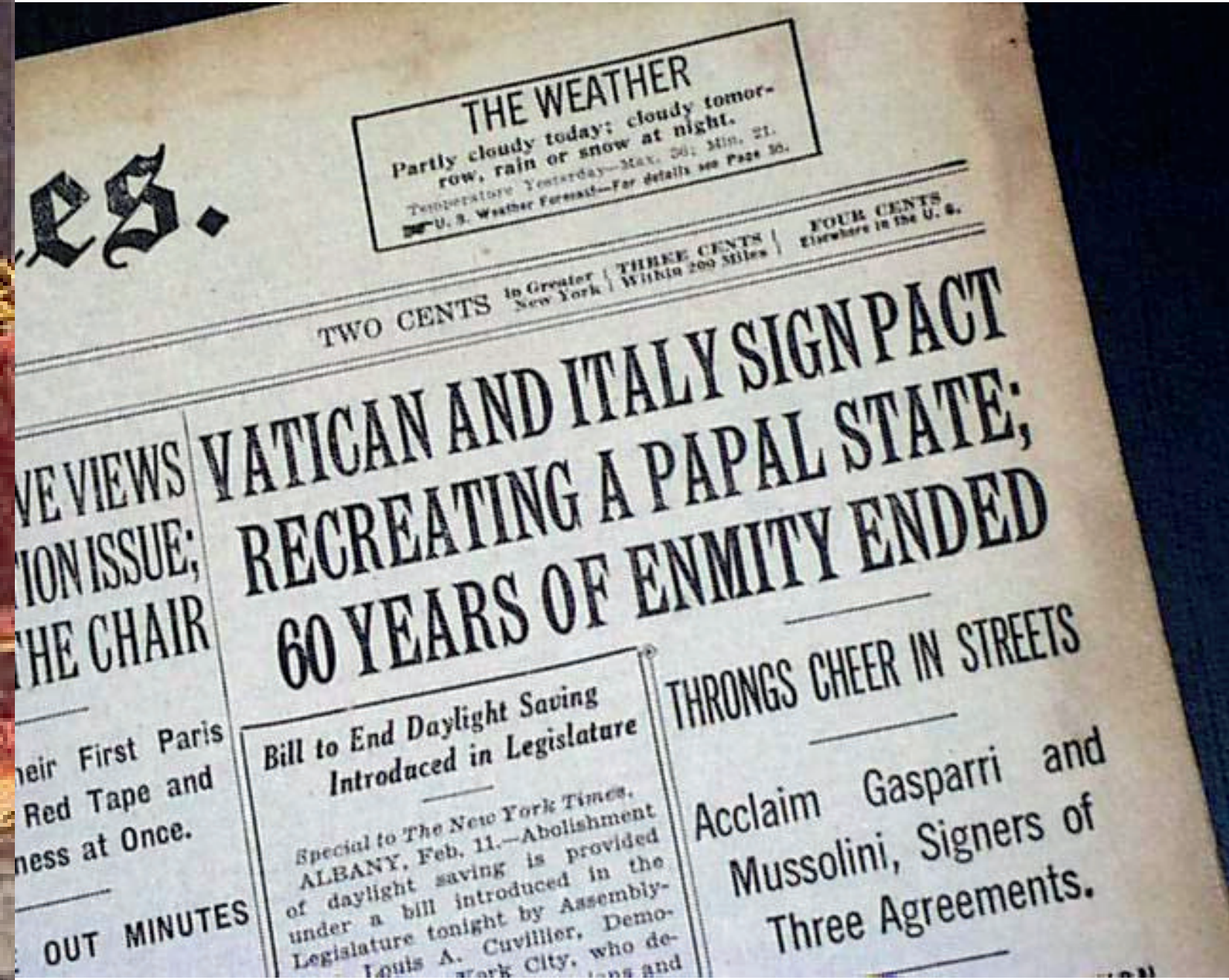




# Winning the Church

Mussolini's relationship with the **Roman Catholic Church** is a defining aspect of his reign, marked most significantly by the signing of the **Lateran Treaty** in 1929. Recognizing the Church's profound influence in Italy, Mussolini sought to win its favor, both to **legitimize** his regime and to **unify** the nation under **Fascism**. The Lateran Treaty resolved the longstanding "**Roman Question**," granting the **Vatican City** independent nation status, ensuring **papal sovereignty**, and providing financial compensation for the **Papal States'** loss in 1870. In return, **Catholicism** was declared Italy's state religion, religious instruction became mandatory in schools, and the Church gained a say in many **family law** matters. This alliance bolstered Mussolini's image, portraying him as a leader who reconciled **modernity** with **tradition**, ensuring the Church's **acquiescence** to his rule. The Church, in return, received assurances of its central role in Italian society, solidifying a mutually beneficial relationship between the **Fascist state** and the **Vatican**.





# Education

Propaganda was not limited to media; it was infused into Italy's education system.

- School curricula were modified to promote Fascist ideologies, focusing on nationalistic and militaristic values.
- Mussolini wanted to create a new generation of Italians devoted to the state and introduced mandatory youth organizations like the **Balilla** and **Piccole Italiane**.



# Women's Lives Under Mussolini

Under Fascist rule, traditional gender roles were reinforced. Women were seen primarily as mothers and homemakers. Mussolini viewed the increase of the Italian population as crucial for his new empire, so policies encouraged women to have large families. Despite this, women were still active in various sectors of society, though often in limited or subservient roles.

# Checkpoint 23.2

1. List two policies Mussolini implemented once in power.
2. What is propaganda? Give three examples of how it was used by Mussolini.
3. Why do you think dictatorships need to use propaganda?
4. How did Mussolini's educational reforms promote Fascism?
5. Did Mussolini's policies encourage traditional family values in Italy?
6. Compare Mussolini's views on women to those of traditional Italian society. Explain your answer.
7. How did Fascist rule impact the lives of Italian women?

## Checkpoint 23.2

1. The Acerbo Law and the Lateran Treaty of Concordat
2. Propaganda is the deliberate control of information that is given to the public to influence opinions. Radio, newspapers, education.
3. To keep themselves in power.
4. It taught fascism to children from a young age to indoctrinate them.
5. Yes, they encouraged traditional life.
6. Mussolini's view was very similar, with the expectation for women to have many children to build up the workforce.
7. While women could work in some parts of society, it restricted them to the household in a very Catholic influenced household where the woman's main role in society was to have children.



# 23.33 : SUMMARY

# In this chapter, we have learned that...

- Benito Mussolini's rise to power following Italy's post-WWI political instability.
- The establishment of Fascist Italy and the methods Mussolini used to maintain and consolidate his rule, including terror, purges, and propaganda.
- The profound impact of Fascism on Italy's social, political, and cultural fabric, from the suppression of dissenting voices to the promotion of nationalistic values.
- Under Mussolini, Italy experienced increased control over every facet of public life, from the press to the educational system.
- Mussolini's policies on gender roles and the family, emphasizing traditional values and the importance of motherhood.

# Reflecting on... Life in Fascist Italy

Mussolini's Fascist regime promised stability and national pride to an Italy scarred by war and political fragmentation. While achieving rapid modernization and asserting Italy on the global stage, the cost was high in terms of personal freedoms, democratic principles, and human lives. The tensions between Fascism, communism, and Western democracies set the stage for the larger ideological battles of the 20th century.



# Examination Questions

2022 SEC Q4

# Project

## Guidelines:

1. **Length:** The depth of your project should reflect about 2-3 weeks of work.
2. **Sources:** Use at least three different sources for your research. These can be books, scholarly articles, or reputable online resources.
3. **Citations:** All information and images that are not your own should be properly cited.
4. **Mediums:** You may choose to present your project in one of the following ways:
  - **Poster:** Your poster should be informative and visually engaging.
  - **Minecraft or Lego Model:** If choosing this option, please also include a brief report explaining your model.
  - **Painting/Drawing:** Your artwork should be accompanied by a description.
  - **Recycled Materials:** Create your model using recycled materials and provide an explanation of your creative process.

## Assessment:

Your projects will be assessed based on:

1. Research and Content
2. Creativity and Presentation
3. Understanding of Context
4. Adherence to Guidelines

# Project

## *Historical Sites*

Palazzo Venezia, Rome, Italy  
Piazzale Loreto, Milan, Italy  
Fiat Lingotto Factory, Turin, Italy  
Ostia Lido, Rome, Italy  
Predappio, Forlì-Cesena, Italy

## *Historical Figures*

Benito Mussolini  
Giovanni Gentile  
Roberto Farinacci  
Emilio De Bono  
Luigi Albertini  
Giovanni Amendola