

AQA A Level History 2L
Italy and Fascism c.1900 – 1945
Part Two: Fascist Italy, 1926-1945

- Unit 4: Fascist society, 1926-1940
- Propaganda and the cult of Il Duce: control of the media; education as propaganda; the role of Fascist organisations
- The police state: the machinery of Fascist repression; methods to deal with opposition and dissent; the race laws of 1938
- Fascist economic policies: the establishment and implementation of the Corporate State; Fascist economic policies in response to the 1930s Depression; living standards; the impact on the economy of Fascist military expansion
- Fascist society: relations between the Fascist regime and the Church; the impact of Fascist organisations on women, youth, peasants and workers; the extent of 'Fascistisation' of society by 1940

How will you be assessed?

One exam that will take 2 hours 30 minutes.

You are advised to spend around:

- 60 minutes on the first section (question one based on 3 sources)
- 1 hour 30 minutes on the second section (answer 2 essay questions)

7 key questions underpin this course:

- How stable, secure and united was Italy by 1900?
- How stable, secure and united was Italy by 1915?
- How did the First World War make the problems of Liberal Italy worse?
- Why was Mussolini appointed Prime Minister of Italy in 1922?
- How did Mussolini consolidate his power in the years 1922 to 1926?
- To what extent did Mussolini create 'a nation of fascists'?
- Why did Mussolini fall from power?

KEY PEOPLE

Arturo Bocchini – was a career civil servant who joined the Ministry of the Interior in 1903, he became prefect of Genoa in 1925 and Mussolini appointed him chief of police and head of the secret police force or OVRA in 1926, positions he retained until his death in 1940. He was personally loyal to Il Duce and became known as the ‘Shield of Mussolini’ but did not share Mussolini’s firm fascist beliefs. He protected the police from PNF control and effectively destroyed the PCI and other opponents of the regime. He disapproved of the introduction of anti-Semitic legislation and Italy’s entry into the Second World War.

Giuseppe Bottai (1895-1959) – Education Minister who, in 1939 introduced the School Charter. Former Arditi commando, journalist and futurist, he helped to establish the fascist movement in Rome and was elected a deputy in 1921. He was Minister of Corporations (1926-32) and tried to make the corporate state function effectively but was thwarted by Mussolini’s indifference and industrialists’ hostility. He opposed Mussolini at the Fascist Grand Council meeting in 1943.

Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) – He was a respected philosopher and university professor who influenced the ideas of Fascism. In 1923, he was appointed Minister of Public Education and tasked to reform school textbooks along fascist lines and the Gentile Reform shaped education policy in the 1920s. Mussolini was heavily influenced by Gentile’s thinking about Fascist ideology and the Corporate State. Gentile was largely responsible for authoring Mussolini’s book ‘The Doctrine of Fascism’ published in 1932. He was murdered by anti-fascist partisans in April 1944.

Pope Pius XI (1859-1939) – Elected Pope in February 1922 just before Mussolini’s rise to power. Pius XI clashed with the fascist regime, often over issues connected to education and youth. He denounced totalitarianism in 1931 and, in 1938, showed disapproval of Mussolini’s race laws. However, he did collaborate with Mussolini by signing the Lateran pacts of 1929 which made Catholicism the only officially recognized religion in Italy, the teaching of religious education compulsory in secondary schools and recognized the dominant position of the Church in Italian society. He died in 1939.

Rosselli brothers (Carlo and Nello) – born into a wealthy Tuscan Jewish family, they were opponents of Mussolini’s regime and in 1929 co-founded ‘Justice and Liberty’ an anti-fascist organization made up of young intellectuals, democrats, republicans and socialists. They were active Socialists and both escaped into exile in France where they continued their anti-fascist activities. They were killed in the French town of Bagnoles-de-l’Orne in June 1937 by French fascists acting on the Italian government’s orders.

Edmondo Rossoni (1884-1965) – he was a radical Socialist and syndicalist before the First World War. He joined the Fascists in 1921 and led the fascist syndicates which demanded that employers cooperate with workers in the early 1920s. Later, he became Minister of Agriculture and served on the Fascist Grand Council. He voted against Mussolini on 25th July 1943 and as a result, the Salo Republic sentenced him to death but he had fled to Canada.

Count Giuseppe Volpi (1877-1947) – an influential businessman from Venice, he provided an important link between Mussolini and big business. He became Finance Minister from 1925-1928 and played an important role in the development of the Corporate State. He negotiated the financial parts of the Concordat with the papacy in 1928-9. Count Volpi was a member of the Fascist Grand Council and president of the federation of employers, Confindustria from 1934.

Example Question 1:

This will always be based on 3 sources and will be worth 30 marks. You should spend about 60 minutes on this type of question. You have to answer question 1!

Source Based Question:

With reference to this source and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of this source to an historian studying the relations between the Catholic Church and the Fascist state.

Source A

From an article entitled, ‘Historic Scene in the Lateran Palace’, written by a Catholic priest in 1929. This was published in ‘The Catholic Advocate’, a Catholic newspaper in Brisbane, Australia.

It is noon on Monday, the fateful 11 February, and we are standing by the north door of the Mother of the Churches of the world. We have watched Cardinal Gaspari and Premier Mussolini drive into the Lateran Palace and they are now sealing the agreement between the Holy See and Italy. A crowd, tense with excitement, is here to witness the passage of these two men whose pens will heal a wound of 59 years.

I do not deny it. I am in a tremble at the greatness of the moment. My thoughts are of the effect this freeing of the Pope will have in every country where a Catholic heart throbs.

There are newspaper men near me. A Frenchman is saying to himself: ‘This will make a good story tonight in Paris’. An Englishman: ‘This gets the first column in London this evening’. An American sees his ‘stuff’ in headlines from New York to San Francisco.

Key Words

Anti-Semitism – Hatred of Jews

Autarky – Economic independence or self-sufficiency

Balance of payments – the relationship between the total economic value of income, from exports, compared with the total economic costs of imports. A balance of payments surplus is the sign of a healthy economy; a balance of payments deficit can push governments into economic crisis.

Battle for Grain – Fascism's attempt to make Italy self-sufficient in the production of grain and, therefore bread.

Confindustria – was the 'Italian Employers Federation' founded in 1910 it was a powerful, conservative organisation representing big business. After 1922, Confindustria gave financial support to Mussolini in return for fascist actions against workers and trade unions. From 1925, Confindustria was an important part of the Corporate State.

Corporate State – Under this system, every industry would be part of a fascist-led corporation that would resolve disputes between workers and managements and help to organise production, pay and conditions.

The Depression – triggered by the Wall Street Crash which in October 1929 was the sudden collapse of the American stock market. This event stopped American loans reaching Europe and damaged international trade. The height of the Depression was felt in the years 1931-32 when the economic crisis, especially mass unemployment was at its worse but the economic stagnation lasted for most of the 1930s.

Fascistisation – (in Italian, l'inquadramento, or 'totalitarian regimentation') aimed at the complete coordination of society according to principles of fascist ideology.

IMI – the Istituto Mobiliare Italiano was a government initiative that saved Italian banks from collapsing because of the Depression when industry and businesses could not afford to repay their loans. This prompt action by the fascist regime saved many small businesses and individuals from ruin and meant that Italy was saved from the worst effects of the Depression.

Key Words

IRI – The Institute for Industrial Reconstruction was created by the Fascist regime, the IRI bought shares in many Italian companies and prevented them from going bust. The IRI also took over from the banks in providing loans to Italian industry.

Lateran Agreements – these were made up of a treaty and a deal, known as a concordat, which officially ended the dispute about the role and status of the Catholic Church in the Italian state. They are named after the Lateran Palace in the Vatican City.

Lira – The Italian currency from 1861-2002. (Singular: lira)

'Mussolini made the trains run on time' – This phrase was coined by foreign journalists to suggest that the Fascist regime had somehow improved the efficiency of Italian industries.

ONB – (Opera Nazionale Balilla) was the main youth organisation of the Italian nation. The motto of the youth movement which had over 8 million members was 'Believe, Obey, Fight' and would create Italians who were worthy of the Duce and able to fight to create a great nation.

OND – (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro or Dopolavoro) a programme of adult leisure activities and welfare facilities organized by the state with the aim of linking people more closely with fascist aims and regime.

OVRA – Fascist secret police

Protective tariffs – duties imposed on imported goods to make them more expensive and thus 'protect' goods produced in the home country.

Real wages – the value of wages once prices have been taken into account – a pay rise might actually be the same as a pay cut if prices rise by a greater amount.

Quota Novanta (Quota 90) – the level at which Mussolini decided to revalue the lira, a rate of £1 – 90 lire.

Revaluation – Changing the value of a currency compared to another country's currency. (The Fascist government tried to increase the value of the lira against other countries' currencies.)

Roman Question – the political dispute over the role of the Catholic Church in the Italian state, including the territorial claims of the Pope over Rome, and the issues of civil and church marriage and divorce.

Totalitarian – a government that attempts to control the lives of its citizens or subjects completely, is dictatorial and demands total obedience.

Timeline of Key Events

1925 Apr. OND (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro) founded

Oct. Start of 'battle for grain'

1926 Cult of personality underway

Rocco Law passed, Ministry of Corporations set up, start of corporate state experiment

Apr. ONB (Opera Nazionale Balilla) founded

Nov. OVRA (the secret police) and the 'Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State' established, 'anti-regime' publications established

1927 Revaluation of the lira damaged Italian economy

Battle for Births policy introduced

1928 The 'Battle for land' launched

1929 Feb. Teachers compelled to take an oath of loyalty

Oct. Start of global economic depression

Lateran Agreements improved relations between fascism and the Catholic Church

1931 Aug. Professors compelled to take an oath of loyalty

IMI (The Institute for Italian Securities) founded

1933 IRI (The Institute for Industrial Reconstruction) founded

1936 Mussolini's increased drive for economic autarky

Bank of Italy nationalised

1937 Jun. Anti-Fascist Rosselli brothers murdered

1938-39 Anti-Semitic legislation introduced and anti-Semitism taught in schools

1939 Parliament replaced by the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations

Example essay question:

The next 2 questions are essays and you choose 2 from 3 possible questions. They are worth 25 marks each. You should spend around 45 minutes on each question. Here is an example:

Example Essay Question:

How successful were fascist economic policies in dealing with the Great Depression in the 1930s?

(25marks)