

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

- **Unit 6: Fascist Italy and war, 1940-1945**
- **The decision to enter the war: Mussolini's war aims; Italy's contribution to the conquest of France; the implications for Italy of the continuation of war**
- **Italy's war effort: military campaigns; the impact of the war on the economy and the Italian people; the relationship with Nazi Germany**
- **The fall of Mussolini in 1943: Allied invasion of Sicily and the crisis of the Fascist regime; the overthrow of Mussolini by the Fascist Grand Council and the King; the 'Forty Five Days' and the continuation of war and civil war in Italy**
- **The final collapse of Fascism: the restoration of Mussolini; the Fascist policies of the Salo Republic; the intensification of civil war and the role of the partisans; the end of German occupation; the death and legacy of Mussolini**

**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

**Guido Buffarini Guidi (1895-1945)** – A loyal member of the PNF from 1921, Buffarini was one of the few to vote in favour of Mussolini at the Grand Fascist Council on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1943. As a reward, he was given the position of Minister of the Interior in the Salo Republic but was later sacked due to allegations of corruption. He was captured by partisans in April 1945 and sentenced to death by military tribunal.

**Also Vidussoni (1914-1986)** – Trained as a lawyer and joined the PNF in 1936. Vidussoni fought in both the Abyssinian and Spanish Civil Wars where he lost his right eye and left arm. In December 1942 he was appointed National Secretary of the PNF but was sacked in April 1943. He became a leader in the PRF (the Fascist Party of the Salo Republic) from September 1943. After the war, Vidussoni became an insurance salesman.

**Field Marshal Albert Kesselring (1885-1960)** – a veteran of the First World War and Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe from 1936. Kesselring became Commander in Chief South and had control over German forces in North Africa and Italy from November 1941. He was responsible for seizing Rome after the armistice on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1943 and his defensive operations thwarted the allied advance through Italy for two years before the war ended. Kesselring was sentenced death after the war for war crimes but was later released.

**Alessandro Pavolino (1903-45)** – He was a journalist and committed fascist politician who from 1929 to 1934 was local leader of the PNF in Florence. In 1943, he was made head of the PFR, the re-formed Fascist party of the Salo Republic. In April 1945, he was captured and executed alongside Mussolini and Clara Petacci.

**Clara Petacci** – the last, and most loyal of Mussolini's many mistresses. In 1945, she refused the opportunity to escape from Italy and stayed with Mussolini until they were captured and executed near Lake Como by partisans.

**Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964)** – A founding member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its leader from 1927 until his death in 1964. Togliatti spent most of his political career in exile but returned to Italy in 1944 when the PCI took part in the first post-war governments until 1947, where he was Minister for Justice.

**Pope Pius XII (1876 – 1958)** – He was elected Pope in 1939 and is sometimes known as 'Hitler's Pope' for his perceived failure to speak out against anti-Jewish atrocities such as the round-up of Roman Jews in October 1943. His defenders argue that his diplomacy behind the scenes secured the protection of many more Jews.

**King Umberto II (1904-1983)** – became King after his father, Victor Emmanuel III abdicated in May 1946 in an attempt to save the monarchy. He only reigned until June 1946 when the Italians voted in a referendum for a republic.

### 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 role of King Victor Emmanuel in Mussolini's dismissal from power.

#### **Source A**

**Part of the conversation between King Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini on 25 July 1943, recalled by a bodyguard who was standing outside the door.**

I heard the King say: 'Things are no longer working. Italy is on its knees. The army's morale is at rock bottom and the soldiers do not want to fight anymore. The vote of the Grand Council is dreadful. At this moment you are the most hated man in Italy. Only one friend has remained with you – myself. I have demonstrated my friendship many times, defending you from every attack, but this time I must ask you to leave me free to place the government in other hands.' Mussolini said: 'Then everything is finished?'  
**The King answered: 'I am sorry, I am very sorry. There is no other solution.'**

## Key Words

**Blitzkrieg** – ‘Lightning War’ tactics used by the Nazis very successfully in the early years of the Second World War involving the use of aircraft, tanks and infantry.

**BN (Brigate Nere)** – the ‘Black Brigades’, volunteer militia groups formed to defend the Salo Republic.

**CNLAI (Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy)** – organisation formed to co-ordinate the various resistance groups fighting to liberate Italy in 1943-45.

**DC (Christian Democrats)** – formed in 1944 as Catholic, democratic and anti-Communist party. The DC dominated post-war Italian politics until 1994.

**The ‘Forty-Five Days’** – refers to the period from July to September 1943 when Mussolini was dismissed by the King on 25<sup>th</sup> July and Italy’s surrender on 8<sup>th</sup> September.

**Garibaldi Brigades** – communist partisans fighting against fascist militias and German forces in 1943-45.

**Partisans** – Armed anti-Fascist groups.

**PCI (Italian Communist Party)** – volunteer armies fighting against the Salo Republic and German forces in northern Italy in 1943-45.

**PFR (Fascist Party of the Republic)** – the re-formed Fascist Party of the Salo Republic, replacing the PNF.

**Republic of Salo (Italian Socialist Republic or RSI)** – Mussolini’s Fascist Regime in northern Italy, 1943-45.

**Battle of Taranto** – A naval disaster where the British destroyed half the Italian battle fleet.

**Total War** – Involving the total commitment of all the nation’s resources to the task of fighting.

### Timeline of Key Events

- 1940** Italy enters the Second World War  
Italian invasion of North Africa and Greece
- 1941** Defeats of Italian armies in North Africa  
Bread rationing introduced in Italy  
Italian declarations of war against USSR and United States
- 1942** Failure of attempts to seize Malta  
Allied daylight bombing raids on Milan
- 1943** Allied invasion of Sicily  
Mussolini dismissed from power and arrested  
Armistice between allies and new Italian government  
Mussolini becomes head of the newly established Salò Republic in northern Italy
- 1944** Execution of Count Ciano  
Liberation of Rome by allied forces  
Last meeting between Mussolini and Hitler
- 1945** Partisan uprising in Milan  
Capture and death of Mussolini  
End of Second World War
- 1946** Italy declared a republic after a referendum

### 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:

**'Mussolini's downfall in 1943 was caused by his own ineffective leadership from 1935 onwards.'**

**Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.**  
(25marks)