



### 2.2.1 Terms

#### *March on Rome:*

- The means by which **Benito Mussolini** came to power in Italy in 1922; a government crisis and threat of civil war enabled him to demand the formation of a fascist government to restore order.
- On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1922 Mussolini was invited to come to Rome to take power.
- The march was a propaganda myth as Mussolini traveled overnight by train from Milan to Rome, where he formed a government on **October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1922**.
- Some 20,000 fascist **Black Shirts** were also transported to the city where they marched in a ceremonial parade October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1922.

### 2.2.2 Fascism

- **Fascism** is a movement or political philosophy emphasizing national and racial superiority and a centralized, autocratic government headed by a dictator.
- **Its characteristics include:**
  - 1) **Extreme Nationalism:**
    - Fascist leaders demanded unquestioned loyalty and service to the nation-state.
    - A strong state, they argued, had every right to overcome a weaker state.
    - Their clear sense of superiority to others often involved returning a failed nation back to the glories of the past.
    - Glorification of the state was key as Mussolini stated, "Everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state."
  - 2) **Dictatorship:**
    - Fascist parties promote the cult of the leader and absolute obedience to that persons wishes.
    - They condemn democracy because they believe rival political parties destroy the unity of the state.
    - They swear loyalty to one person who becomes the voice of the nation and represents the entire power of the nation.(**Mussolini** – Italy; **Hitler** – Germany)

3) **Economic Self Sufficiency:**

- Fascism promoted self-sufficiency within a nation by concentrating on building the nation and limiting dependence on other nations.
- Public works programs, increased manufacturing, housing programs, and improving infrastructure (road building, etc) helped to reduce unemployment.
- Other policies such as minimizing imports and maximizing exports strengthened the economy.
- Hitler went so far as to encourage scientist to develop materials (synthetic rubber, plastics, etc) that would lessen Germany's dependence on raw materials from other countries.

4) **Military Strength and War:**

- Fascist emphasized militarism.
- They believed aggression represented action, while the desire for peace merely indicated weakness.
- The military had to be strong, sizable, and well trained.
- Military training was introduced at an early age and the young recruits were taught the virtue of obedience to the ruler.
- Much effort was put into growing the military and building up supplies and materials for them to use. Fascist felt war was something which was inevitable, even necessary if they were to achieve the greatness they desired.
- Thus, they were always preparing for it.

### 2.2.3 Mussolini's Rise to Power

- Mussolini's rise to power was partly his own doing but other important factors included the following;

1) **Economic Difficulties:**

- The economic conditions of the 1920's did much to encourage support for extremist parties like the Fascist.
- This was mainly due to Italy's war debts and problems of reconstruction, as well as the devaluation of the **Lire** (\$).
- The working class voter's wages remained at prewar levels while prices increased.
- As a result, more support was created for left wing parties (socialist).
- Mussolini gained support from this by saying it could lead to social revolution which increased his support with the middle classes who feared socialism.

2) **Weakness of Coalition Governments:**

- In the period following W.W.I Italy had a series of coalition governments (# of parties get together to form a government).
- These governments were generally weak, having little power to make any significant moves.
- The unrest in the countryside and the general strikes could not be handled by these governments.
- The governments in power even went to the extreme of asking the Fascists to handle these difficult situations.
- Consequently, the Fascist increased their influence and gained popular support.

3) **Industrialist's fear of Socialism and Communism:**

- Italian industrialist had seen what had happened to Russia with the arrival of communism.
- They did not want to suffer the same fate they knew they would if communism came to Italy.
- The Fascists believed in and supported private enterprise.
- The industrialists wanted to maintain their wealth and thus put their support behind the Fascists.
- Wealthy landowners also gave support to Mussolini.
- Italians were willing to give in to the idea of Fascism to prevent ruin by the coming of Communism.

**2.2.7 Domestic Policies of Mussolini**

- Mussolini wished to establish totalitarian regimes within their respective countries.
- To accomplish this he introduced domestic policies which restricted freedoms of people/groups and concentrated power in themselves.
- **Mussolini** adopted several policies, two of which were the abolition of all political parties except the Fascist Party and the censorship of the press.
- When Mussolini took control of Italy he quickly removed all opposition political parties by outlawing them and stripping them of any power or influence.
- He made it illegal for any other political party to exist.
- Also, Mussolini took control of all press venues within Italy.
- He ensured that no negative or damaging new items made it into the newspapers or radio broadcasts.
- Only stories which showed the government and Mussolini in a positive light made it to the public.
- Those who disobeyed or broke from the rules were severely punished.

