

Italy – Rise of a Fascist State

Problems:

1. Current system was not uniting Italians
 2. Imperial Failures (WWI)
 3. Political instability
 - a. Proportional representation – 10% of popular vote = 10% of seats in parliament – creates more minority governments
 - i. 1919-1922, 5 different governments, 4 different PM's
 4. Economic failures
 - a. Enormous debt (WWI)
 - b. Cost of Living had increased by 50% = affects the working class the most
 - c. Ex-soldiers joined Socialist/Communist parties = many strikes in the North
 5. Agricultural Problems
 - a. Archaic system of land-owning
 - b. Peasants raided land, demanded 8 hr. work day, refused to pay rent = riots, many died
- Mussolini entered the power vacuum
 - Large companies (Fiat/Pirelli) supported him because he promised stability
 - Abandoned socialism as he knew big business would not support him
 - o To industry he promised to squash socialism
 - o To the middle class/professionals he promised economic and political stability
 - o To the soldiers he promised to return the country to its glory days (Roman Empire – common theme for Fascists)
 - o To the unemployed he promised jobs
 - Used the Blackshirts to get rid of opponents (not as bad as SS, but would beat and force people to drink oil until they gave in)

- 1921, gained support from the current PM Giolitti = winning 35 of 535 Parliamentary seats.
- 1922 re-trained Blackshirts into a very efficient militia, destroying towns and squashing strikes
- October, 1922 Mussolini laid out a plan to seize power
 - o Fascists were brought to Rome from all over Italy
 - o All important public-holdings taken over
 - o Demanded the resignation of the current government
 - o Armed Fascists located near Rome, if government did not follow demands, they would take by force
- Threatened a March on Rome with 50,000 Blackshirts, PM Luigi Facta asked King Emmanuel III to allow him to use Rome's highly trained 12,000 police troops to repel them
 - o Emmanuel, who was anti-communist, feared a civil war that would lead to a communist revolution, so he refused Luigi's request
- Oct. 29th Emmanuel asked Mussolini to become the new PM of a coalition government.