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.