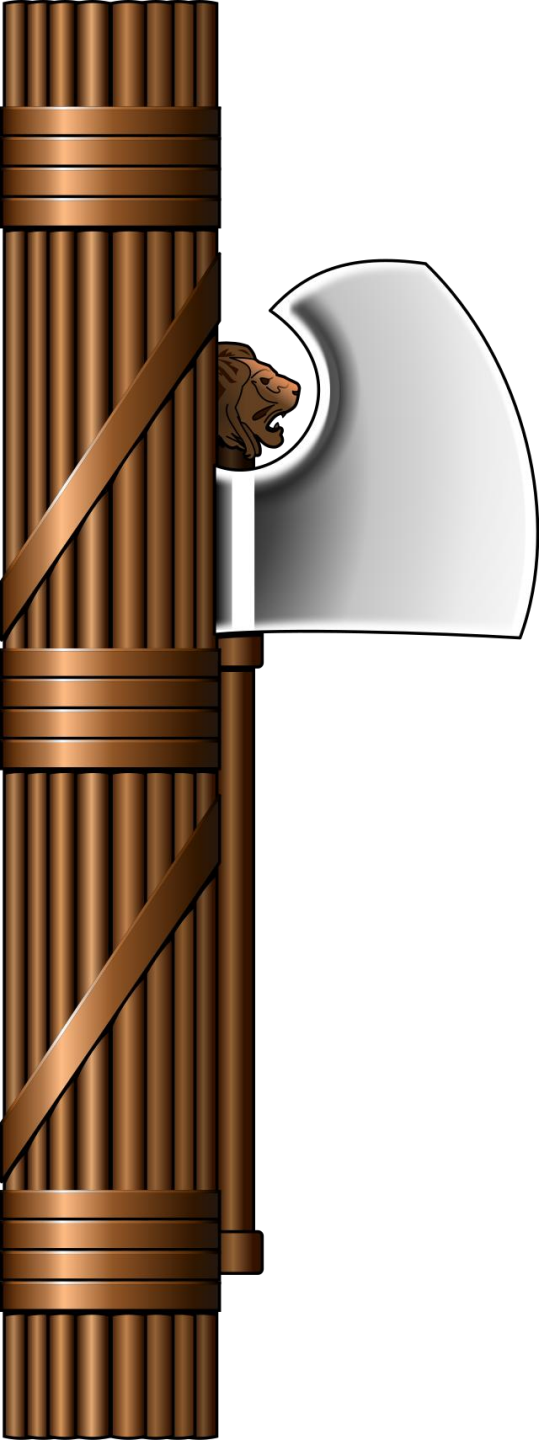


Fascism in Italy

This is the *fasces*, a symbol of power in the ancient Roman Empire. Each wooden rod individually can be broken easily, but when bound together into a bundle, they are much tougher.

2,000 years later, the *fasces* became the symbol for a new political movement in Italy: Fascism.



Italy in the Early 20th Century

Population: 34 million

Life expectancy: around 45

Emigration: around 600,000 per year leave Italy, most for the USA

Regions: The **south** was primarily agricultural and poor. The **north** had huge factories in towns like Turin, Milan and Genoa.

Italian Unification:

1848: revolution against Austrian control

1866: Many small states unify into one Italian state

The **Italian Empire** controlled Libya and parts of East Africa

Italy was a **Constitutional Monarchy**. This meant it had a king (Victor Emmanuel) but his powers were limited by a parliament. This parliament was elected by all adult males.

Italy, before it was unified into a single state



Italy in World War One

Italy joined the war on the Allied side in 1915. In the secret Treaty of London, the Allies promised them Austrian territory on the Adriatic Coast.



Italian soldiers in World War One

Lands promised to Italy's leaders under the Treaty of London (1915) shaded in black.



Italy in World War One

- 5 million Italians were **conscripted** into the armed forces.
- Soldiers who broke the rules were punished with imprisonment of their families or even **decimation** – the killing of one soldier in ten.
- Between 600,000 and 1 million Italians were killed in the war.

The war was a good time for industry owners. Output and profits doubled between 1914 and 1917. Fiat employed 4,400 workers in 1914. By 1918 it employed 41,200.

Italy after the War

The Russian Revolution inspired Italian workers to struggle for socialism.

Italy was humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles – gained little new territory.

600,000 Italians were killed in the War.

The Italian economy was in crisis, especially the south.

Italy ruled Libya – but Italian rulers were hungry for a bigger empire.

1. Why did Italy's leaders agree to participate in World War One?
2. At whose expense did they hope to gain territory?
3. What was the Treaty of London?
4. Define the following terms: conscription, decimation
5. How many Italians lost their lives in the war?
6. Why were Italian leaders unsatisfied with the Treaty of Versailles?
7. List two other difficulties faced by the leaders of Italy after World War One.

The Socialist Movement in Italy



The Fourth Estate, by Giuseppe Pelizza de Volpedo, 1900. This painting celebrates the workers' movement.

The Socialist Movement in Italy

Italy had huge socialist and **anarchist** movements. (Anarchists believe in a society with no state, army or police).

In September 1920 Italy was close to socialist revolution. 500,000 workers **occupied their factories** in northern Italy. Nearly every small town and village in Italy had workers' clubs or socialist-controlled local councils.



Armed workers guard their factories, September 1920



However, **unlike the Bolsheviks**, the socialists in Italy did not stage a revolution when they may have had the chance. They believed in obeying the law and trusting to elections. So they passed on the opportunity in 1920. But this failure opened up an opportunity for a very different political movement: **Fascism**.

Italy and Russia

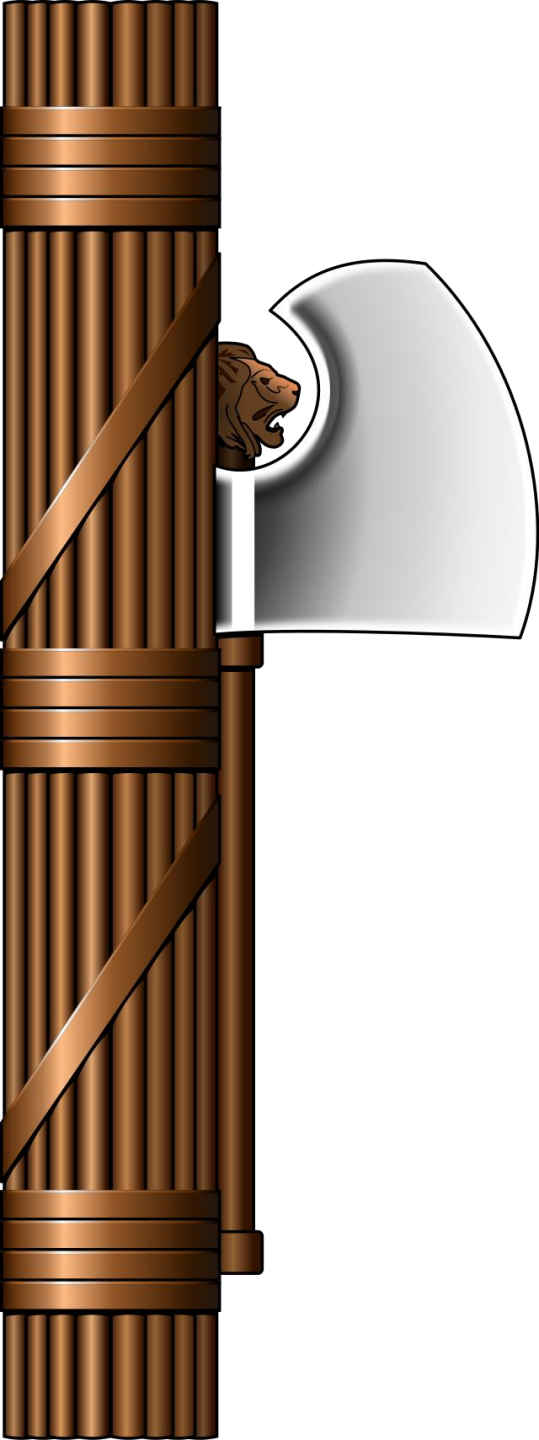


From your study of the Russian Revolution, can you suggest any more similarities, or any differences, between the situation in Italy and the situation in Russia?

Similarities

Poor majority of farmers
Both had a strong demand for socialism
Both suffered badly in the war
Both lost out at the end of the war

Differences



Some features of Fascism

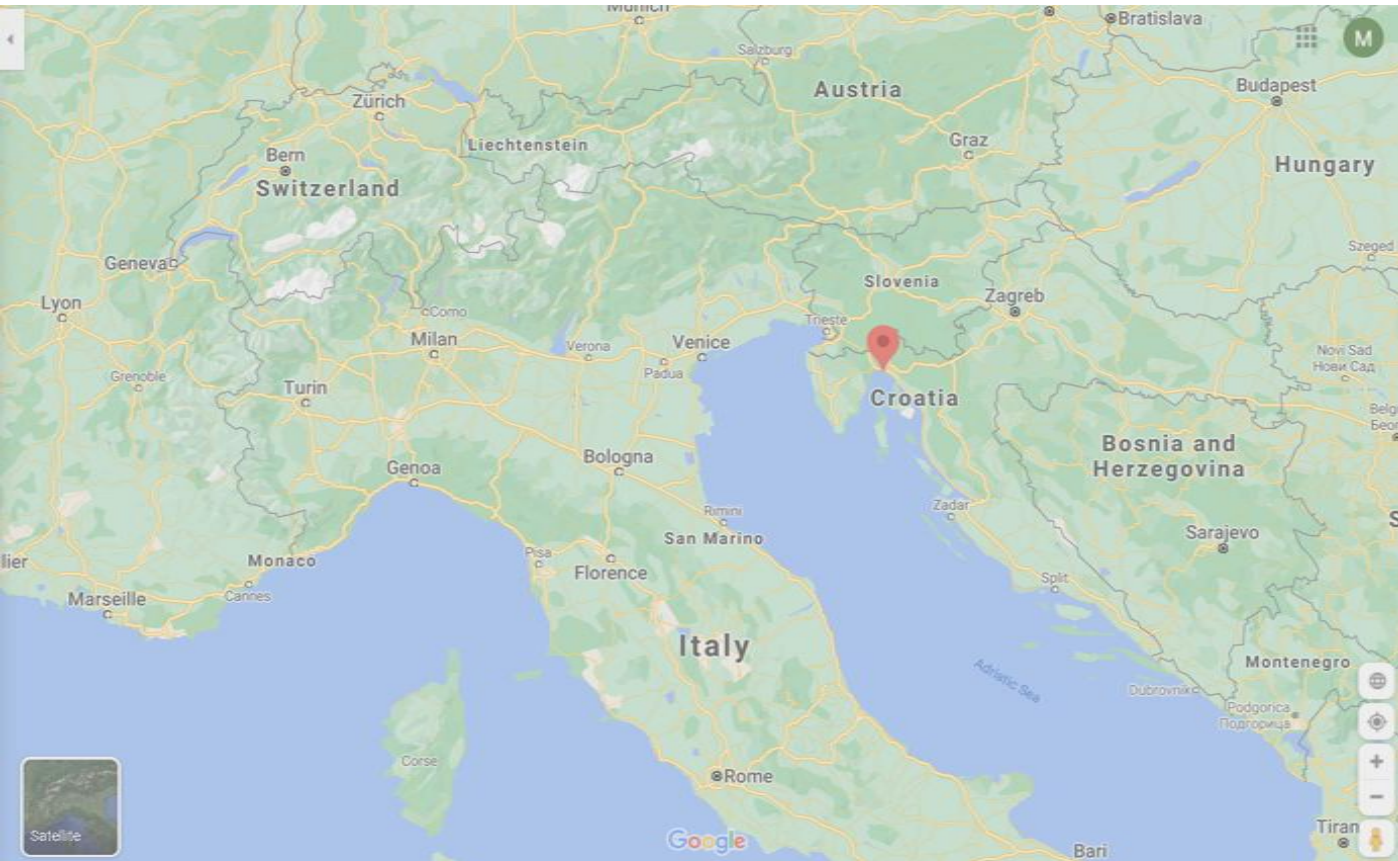
Nationalism – loyalty to the nation rather than to any class or religion

Irredentism – demanding the return of old territories. Comes from the phrase ‘Italia Irredenta’ – meaning ‘unreclaimed Italy’

Ritual – an emphasis on symbols and big public ceremonies, appealing to emotion rather than intellect

Personality Cult – celebrating a single leader, unquestioning loyalty to him

An Italian Airman Foreshadows Fascism



Gabriele
D'Annunzio

The town of Fiume (Rijeka) in modern-day
Croatia

An Italian Airman Foreshadows Fascism

Gabriele D'Annunzio was an Italian poet, fighter pilot and celebrity.

The city of Fiume (modern-day Rijeka) had many Italians living in it. In the Treaty of London, the Allies promised that Fiume would become Italian territory, but this promise was never fulfilled.

In 1919 D'Annunzio and 2,000 supporters took over the city.

From September 1919 to November 1920 D'Annunzio ruled the city as dictator or *comandante*.

- He would make dramatic speeches from balconies to cheering crowds.
- They would salute him with the straight-arm Roman salute.
- They had large public nationalistic rituals and beat up their enemies.
- They enjoyed wild drunken parties.

D'Annunzio and his supporters abandoned Fiume after just over a year. But he had helped to create some of the rituals and ideas that would later be seen in Italian Fascism.

Benito Mussolini

Read Notes (1) and answer questions

1. Why did Mussolini reject socialism? Give two reasons.
2. In what city was the fascist movement founded in 1919?
3. What were *fasci di combattimento*?
4. What happened after the Bologna city council elections in 1920?
5. Who made up the membership of Mussolini's Blackshirt combat squads?
6. What kind of buildings did they burn down?
7. Who were the main victims of Fascist violence?





A blackshirt combat squad from the town of Lucca

Translated: "Effects of the castor oil cure: before the cure, during the cure, after the cure."

EFFETTI DELLA CURA DELL'OLIO DI RICINO

PRIMA DELLA CURA



DURANTE LA CURA



DOPO LA CURA



Why were the Fascists successful?

The Socialist Party's leaders were too slow to fight back. They believed that the police and courts would protect them.

But the police, military and courts let the Fascists away with murder – or even helped them at times.

Many of the Blackshirts had fighting skills because of their military experience.

Landowners and wealthy people gave money and other aid (weapons, trucks, fuel, drugs) to the Fascists.

Some did fight back, such as the Communist Party and a group of war veterans called the Arditi Del Popolo. There was a battle in the town of Parma where the fascists were defeated. But these groups were too small and disorganised.





1. Why do you think landowners and wealthy people supported the Fascists?
2. Why do you think the police and courts allowed the Fascists to commit violent acts?
3. After the destruction of the socialists and trade unions, can you guess who the next target of the fascists would be?

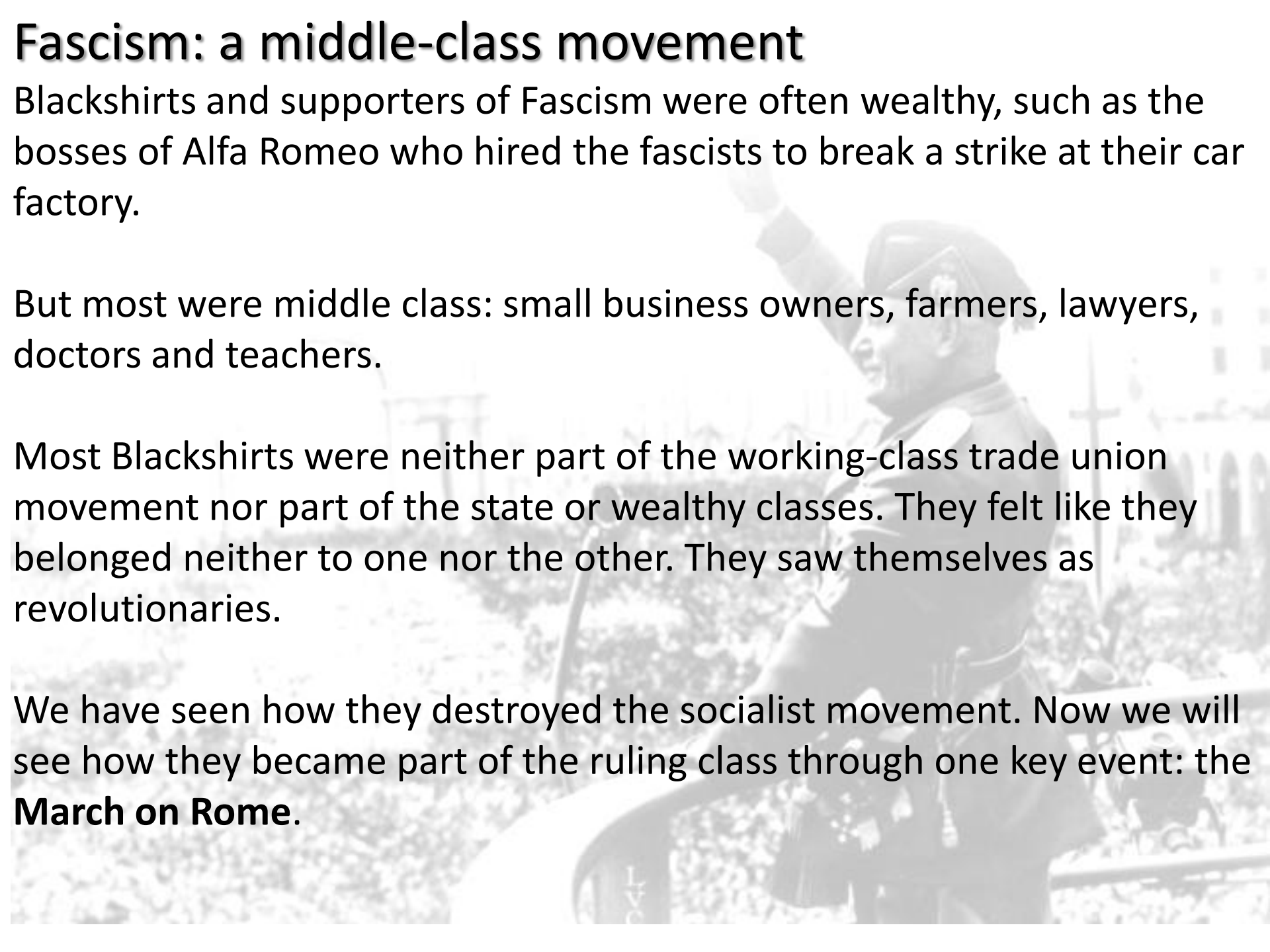
Fascism: a middle-class movement

Blackshirts and supporters of Fascism were often wealthy, such as the bosses of Alfa Romeo who hired the fascists to break a strike at their car factory.

But most were middle class: small business owners, farmers, lawyers, doctors and teachers.

Most Blackshirts were neither part of the working-class trade union movement nor part of the state or wealthy classes. They felt like they belonged neither to one nor the other. They saw themselves as revolutionaries.

We have seen how they destroyed the socialist movement. Now we will see how they became part of the ruling class through one key event: the **March on Rome**.

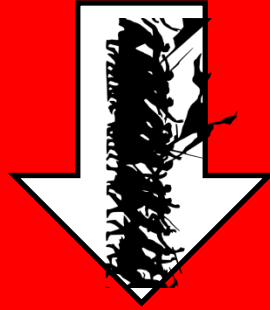


In 1921 the Fascist Party had 320,000 members. They won 35 seats in the parliamentary elections, out of 535.

Mussolini decided it was time to seize power.



**27-29
November
1922**



**30,000 Blackshirts seize
key locations around Italy
and begin closing in on
Rome.**



**Mussolini demands
that the politicians
hand power to him or
he will take it by
force.**



**Italian army prepares
to defend Rome.**



Stop
Mussolini!

But King Victor Emmanuel orders that Rome surrender to Mussolini. He makes Mussolini the new Prime Minister of the first Fascist government.

Prime Minister Luigi Facta declares a **state of siege** and prepares for a battle to defend Rome from the fascists.



Just give
Mussolini what
he wants.

There never was a March on Rome. After Mussolini got what he wanted, he called it off.

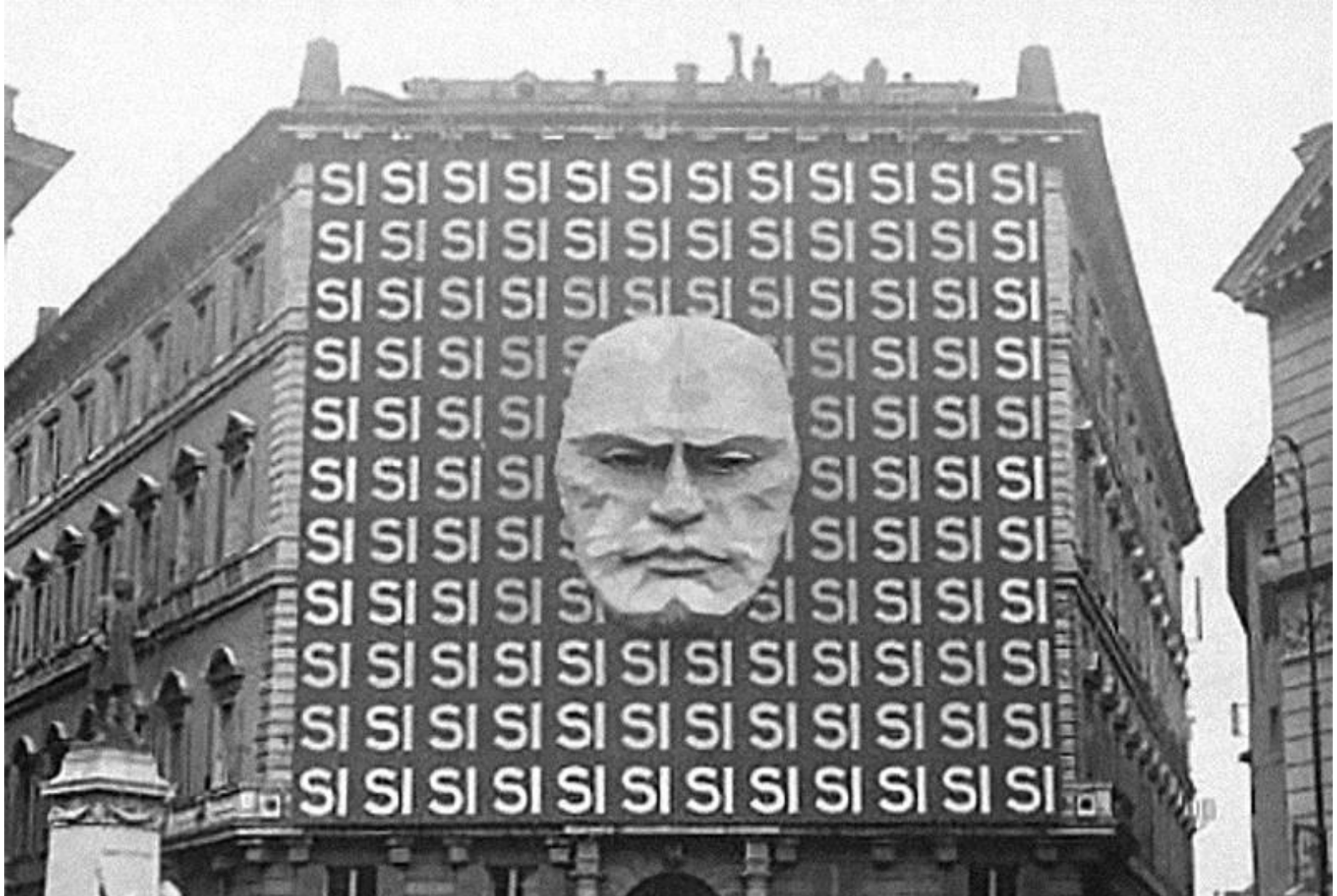
But the Fascists did have a celebration march IN Rome – accompanied by violence, burning of homes and offices, beating of political opponents, etc.

The Fascists were jubilant. They had seized power.



Questions

1. Did the average member of the fascist movement see himself as a part of the ruling class?
2. How many seats in parliament did the fascists win in 1921?
3. What was the March on Rome supposed to achieve?
4. Who was Luigi Facta?
5. Who was Victor Emmanuel?
6. What happened on the streets of Rome after Mussolini was made Prime Minister?



Fascism in power: the new Fascist party offices in Rome



Even after the March on Rome, many challenges remained to Mussolini's rule.

- 1. Parliament:** The Fascists only had 35 out of 535 members of parliament, and they had to rely on other parties.
- 2. The Socialist Party:** The socialists were still a strong political force.
- 3. The Catholic Church:** The Pope lived in Rome and was involved in a long-running dispute with the Italian state.
- 4. Popular opposition:** Many of the Italian people still hated Mussolini and wanted to resist.

Read Notes (2): Fascism in Power and then explain in your own words how fascism overcame each of these challenges.

1
2
3
4

Italy under Fascism: Economic Policies

- The fascists set up the **Council of Corporations**. 27 'corporations' represented different branches of industry. They were supposed to represent the state, bosses and workers. In reality the workers had no say.
- Public works programmes such as the draining of the Pontine Marshes created work for the unemployed and provided services for the public. 4,000 miles of road and 400 bridges were built.
- A series of 'Battles' – the 'Battle for Grain,' the 'Battle for Births' – had more to do with propaganda than economics.



Italy under Fascism: Totalitarian control

- Totalitarianism means complete state control of all workplaces, community & volunteer groups, etc.
- The Balilla was a semi-military youth group. All boys and girls aged 8 to 18 were required to join.
- The Fascists never had complete control, as catholic church organisations kept some independence. But socialist groups were destroyed.
- Strict censorship meant no criticism of fascism was allowed in the press.
- The slogan 'believe, obey, fight' was seen in many places.
- From 1938, extremely harsh racist laws against Jewish people were brought in.





Italy under Fascism: Foreign Policy

- At first, Mussolini was suspicious of Hitler's Germany and formed the **Stresa Front** with Britain and France against Germany. Later, however, he formed an alliance with Hitler called the **Rome-Berlin Axis** and joined the **Pact of Steel** with Germany and Japan.
- In 1935 Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia (Then known as Abyssinia), one of the only independent countries in Africa. The fascists used bombs, poison gas and mass executions, killing 380,000 Ethiopians. The League of Nations, a group formed to prevent wars, failed to stop Fascist Italy. Britain and France stood by and let it happen.

Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia

Italy under Fascism: Foreign Policy (continued)

From 1936-1939 the Spanish Civil War raged between the fascist right and the socialist left. Italy sent weapons, equipment and thousands of soldiers to the fascist side. Many Italian volunteers also fought on the anti-Fascist side. But only the Soviet Union and Mexico helped the anti-Fascist side, and they were defeated.

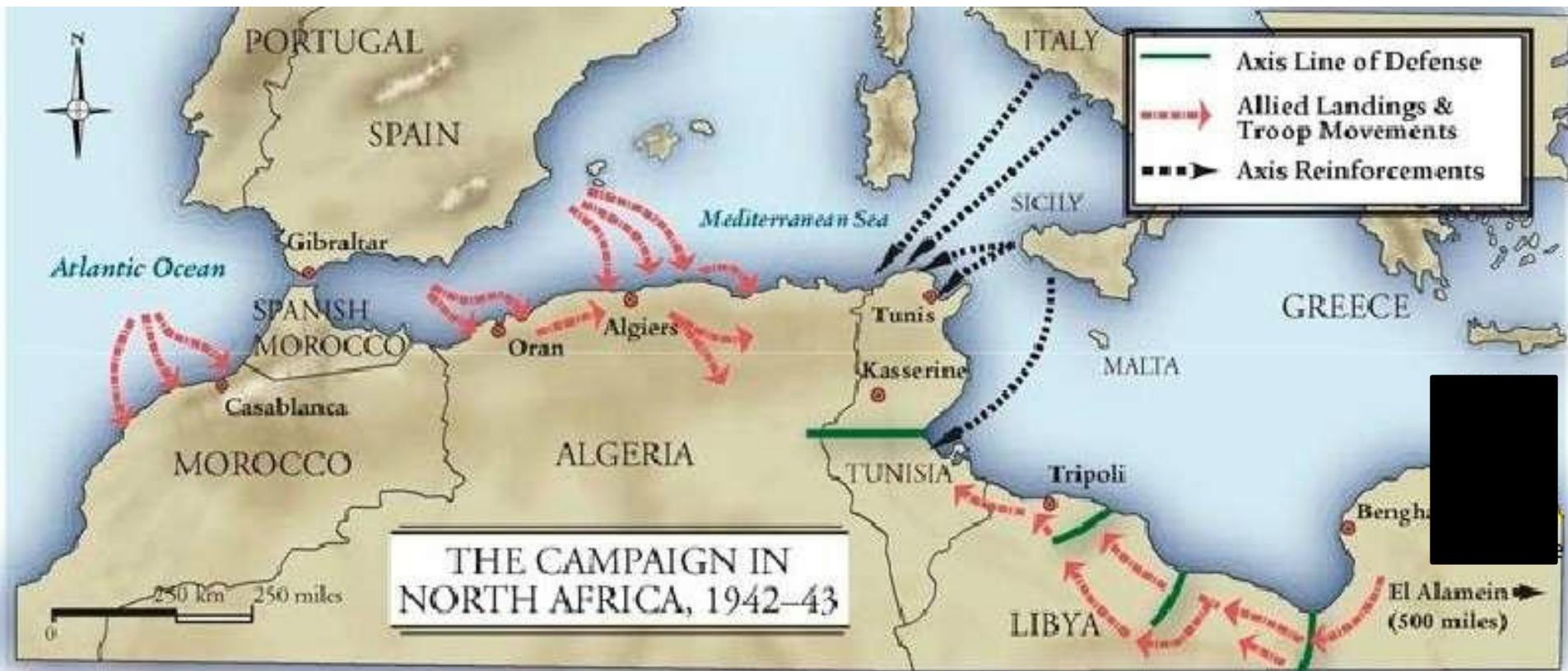
Posters from either side of the Spanish Civil War



Italy in World War Two

1. Which side did Mussolini join?
2. What was his goal in the war?
3. Explain in three bullet points what happened at the Battle of El Alamein.
4. What was the effect of the arrival of US forces?
5. What happened to Mussolini in July 1943?
6. Explain in two bullet points what the 'Italian Social Republic' was.
7. Who were the partisans?
8. What happened to Mussolini in April 1945?
9. Write one sentence describing post-war Italy in your own words.

Italy in World War Two – North Africa



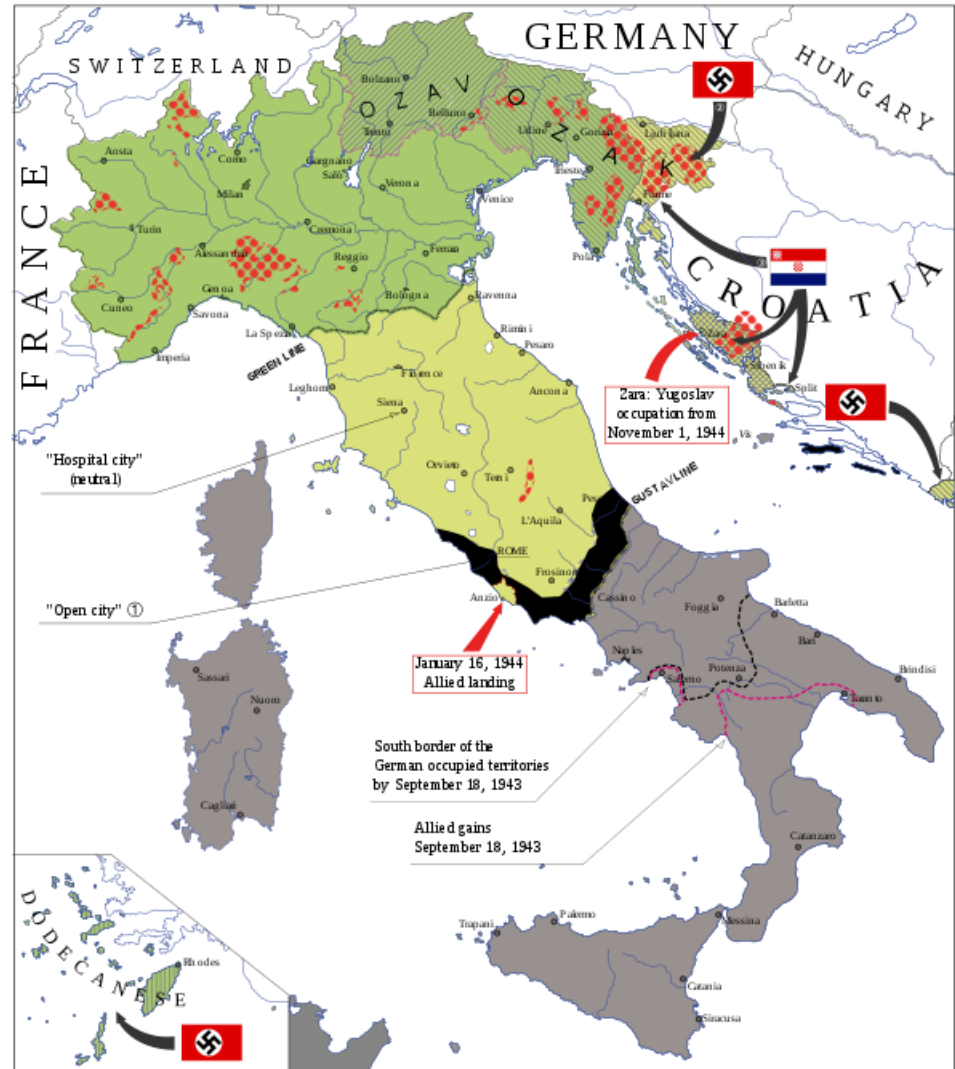
‘Axis’ refers to combined German and Italian forces (shown in green and black)

‘Allied’ here refers to US and British forces (shown in red)

Write 3 bullet points explaining what this map tells us about World War Two in North Africa.

	Territory nominally administered by the RSI		Provinces annexed by Italy prior to German and Croatian occupation
	Territories lost between Dec. 1943 and Sep. 1944		
	German Operational Zones (military administration)		
	Territories annexed by Croatia		Partisan Republics, Free Zones and territories held by Yugoslav partisans (1944)

While Allied and German forces battled for control of Italy, behind German lines Italian fascists and partisans battled



- 1 - Rome was declared an "open city" on August 9, 1943 by Benito Mussolini's government. This was announced by the Italian Social Republic and the Third Reich, although Germany de facto occupied the city and violated its status by using Rome to host troops. The Allies never governed the city.
- 2 - The Province of Fiumicino was annexed by Italy until 1943 and then occupied by Germany until 1945.
- 3 - The Province of Fiumicino, annexed by Italy from 1941, fell under Canadian administration and German military control within the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral in 1943.