



Portrait of Benito
Mussolini

Benito Mussolini was born on July 29th, 1883 in the town of Varnano dei Costa near the village of Predappio. His mother Rosa Maltoni was married to a blacksmith named Alessandro Mussolini. Alessandro, being an admirer of the Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez, named his son after the patriot and hero. Benito Mussolini was an avid writer and after he finished his schooling, he became an editor for the Milan socialist paper "Avanti". He became well known among the Italian socialists, but soon started promoting his views for war against Germany in World War I.

This infuriated the Socialists who were against Italy's entry into the war. In 1915 he formed his own paper, Il Popolo d'Italia, and continued his promotion for war. When Italy finally joined the Allies to fight Germany, Mussolini enlisted into the "Esercito" (Army). Mussolini achieved the rank of Corporal, the same rank as Adolf Hitler, but was discharged in 1917 due to shrapnel wounds while in a trench.

He returned to his career in journalism in which he began to develop his ideas that would soon become known as Fascism. After the war, Italy was in turmoil. The economy was shattered and there were strikes and protests everywhere.

On March 23, 1919, Mussolini and several other veterans formed the National Fascist Party. This party grew in popularity among the people of Italy, who were disenchanted with the chaos surrounding them.



A younger
Benito
Mussolini

Mussolini seemed to have the answers to bring their country into order. During this time, he adopted the Roman salute and the Black Shirt militia, which Hitler later copied from the him as the Brown Shirts. On March 15th 1921, Mussolini along with 35 other Fascists were elected to the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

In August of 1922, The ruling Leftist party ordered a general strike in the nation. Mussolini was enraged and issued an ultimatum that if they did not end the strike, his Fascist party would. The Leftist claimed he was trying to siege the government, but the armed forces wanted nothing to do with stopping the fascists from preventing the strike. On October 29, 1922, King Vittorio Emmanuele III (1869-1947) phoned Mussolini to come to Rome and form a government. Mussolini insisted on a telegram and it was wired soon afterwards. Mussolini boarded a train to Rome and was greeted by thousands of Fascist Blackshirts awaiting his arrival.

His first international crisis as head of Italy made him an Italian hero. The crisis was a border dispute between Greece and Albania. Mussolini sent several men to the area representing Italy as part of an International Commission to dispute the issue. On August 23, 1923, all the Italians were murdered and discovered in Greek territory. In a rage, Mussolini sent the Greek government a list of demands, including a public apology, immediate inquiry into the killings, death sentence to those convicted and payment of 50 million Lira within 5 days. The Greeks refused the demand, since they did not know if it was Greeks who committed the murders.



Mussolini and child

Mussolini ordered the Italian navy to bombard Corfu (Kerkyra) off the Greek coast. The shelling was then followed by an amphibious landing of Italian marines. After the League of Nations condemned the act, Mussolini threatened to pull Italy out of the League.

He insisted that the Conference of Ambassadors, who formed the original mission in the first place, must arbitrate the dispute. France, wanting Italy's support over the mineral rich Ruhr Valley, sided with Italy. As a result, the Conference of Ambassadors endorsed most of Italy's position. The Greek government gave in and agreed to Il Duce's demands. This victory was immediately followed by Mussolini sending elements of the Italian Esercito into the city of Fiume and annexing it from Yugoslavia. Mussolini was eventually made a British Knight of the Bath, but that was canceled in August of 1940.

Although Mussolini quenched his thirst for power, he was still enraged by the treatment Italy received for their part in defeating the Germans and Austrians in World War I. He had visions of a new Roman Empire and he could see the day when the Mediterranean Sea became the "Mare Nostrum"(Our Sea). The invasion of Ethiopia, commanded by Field Marshal Pietro Badoglio, in many ways a revenge against the Italian defeat at Adwa in 1896, and the Italian military assistance in Spanish Civil War, saw his dreams coming to life. But Mussolini found his country blacklisted by the League of Nations



Mussolini: Shot, beaten and hung

and it forced his relationship closer to Nazi Germany, which was also isolated for their actions. Mussolini soon realized that the League

of Nations did not have the backbone to stop Hitler or himself in gaining new colonies, so he pressed forward. On the April 7, 1939, Mussolini invaded Albania and on May 22, 1939, Italy and Germany cemented their alliance with the Pact of Steel.

Italy would find limited success in the war, his conquests in Africa, Greece and Yugoslavia slowly vanished due to poor leadership in the military, and lack of fuel to power their forces. By 1943, Italy was losing the war. In July 1943, Mussolini was deposed by a revolt within his own Fascist Grand Council, and Vittorio Emanuele III, the King of Italy, reduced to a figure head by Mussolini, appointed Field Marshal Pietro Badoglio to be the new Prime Minister of Italy. Mussolini was arrested but later rescued by German paratroopers in a mountain top resort where he was imprisoned. After his rescue, he set up the Italian Socialist Republic in German-held northern Italy, with himself as its leader.

On April 28, 1945, Mussolini and his mistress Clara Petacci, were arrested again by Italian partisans by Lake Como. Walter Audisio (1909-1973), who was once pardoned by Mussolini for a jail term in 1934, took custody of Mussolini and

Petacci. Mussolini, realizing he was going to be killed, opened up his shirt and asked to be shot in the chest. Audisio complied and attempted to shoot the pair with an Italian submachine gun, but it would not fire. He then pulled out an Italian pistol and again it would not fire. In desperation he grabbed a French weapon, a MAS 7.65, from a fellow partisan and killed them both. Their bodies were strung upside down the next day for all to see.

Links to Benito Mussolini's Speeches

1. [Rome, Italy, February 23, 1941](#)
2. [Before The Chamber Of Fasces And Corporations](#)
3. [Mussolini's War Statement](#)
4. [Before The Chamber Of Fasces And Corporations](#)

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