**Mussolini's Italy**

At first, Fascists held only a few cabinet posts. By 1925, though, Mussolini had assumed more power and taken the title Il Duce (EEL Doochay), "The Leader." He suppressed rival parties, muzzled the press, limited the number of voters, and rigged elections. In provinces and towns, he replaced elected officials with Fascist supporters.

In theory, Italy remained a parliamentary monarchy. In fact, it was a dictatorship upheld by Fascist violence and terror. Critics were thrown into prison, forced into exile, or murdered outright. Secret police and propaganda bolstered the regime.

**Economic policy.** To encourage economic growth and end conflicts between owners and workers, Mussolini brought the economy under state control. Unlike socialists, though, he preserved capitalism. Under Mussolini's "corporate state," representatives of business, labor, government and the Fascist party controlled industry, agriculture, and trade. This policy did help business, and production increased. This success came, though, at the expense of workers, who were forbidden to strike and whose wages lagged.

**Social policies.** To Fascists, the individual was unimportant except as a member of the state. Men, women, and children were bombarded with slogans glorifying the state and Mussolini. "Believe! Obey! Fight!" loudspeakers blared and posters proclaimed. Men were urged to be ruthless, selfless warriors for the glory of Italy. "A minute on the battlefield," they were told, "is worth a lifetime of peace."

Women were called on to "win the battle of motherhood." Those who bore more than 14 children were given a medal by Il Duce himself. Women were valued as wives and mothers but not as workers. "Machines and women," declared Mussolini, "are the two major causes of unemployment." Under the Fascists, women were pushed out of paid jobs or earned much less than men for the same work.

Still, Mussolini expected women to make sacrifices for the nation. He once asked them to donate their gold wedding bands to the treasury, handing out iron ones in exchange. The iron symbolized their contribution to a stronger nation.

**Fascist Youth-** Shaping the young was a major Fascist goal. Fascist youth groups toughened children and taught them to obey strict military discipline. Boys and girls learned about the glories of ancient Rome. Young Fascists marched in torchlight parades, singing patriotic hymns and chanting -Mussolini is always right."

By the 1930s, a generation of young soldiers stood ready to back Il Duce's drive to expand Italian power.

**What Is Fascism?**

Historians still debate the real nature of fascist ideology. Mussolini coined the term, but fascists had no single unifying set of beliefs, as Marxists did. Today, we generally use the term to describe any authoritarian government that is not communist. In the 1920s and 1930s, though, fascism meant different things in different countries.

All forms of fascism, however, shared some basic features. It was rooted in extreme nationalism. Fascists glorified action, violence, discipline, and, above all, blind loyalty to the state. According to Mussolini:

> "Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State."

Fascists were antidemocratic. They rejected the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the concepts of equality and liberty spread by the French Revolution. To them, democracy led to greed, corruption, and weakness. They claimed it put individual or class interests above national goals and destroyed feelings of community. Instead, fascists emphasized emotion and the need for the citizen to serve the state.

Fascists also pursued aggressive foreign expansion. Their ideas were linked to Social Darwinism, with its notion of "survival of the fittest." (See page 571.) Fascist leaders glorified warfare as a necessary and noble struggle for survival. "War alone," said Mussolini, "brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon peoples who have the courage to face it."
How Did Fascism Reshape Life In Italy?

Directions: Beginning with "Mussolini's Italy" on page 775, read until "Compared to Communism. Answer each of the following questions.

1. Who was II Duce? ____________________________________________________________

2. Explain why no other political parties challenged Mussolini's rule. ____________________________________________________________

3. How was life in a democratic nation different from life under Mussolini's rule? ____________________________________________________________

4. Explain why workers opposed Mussolini but business owners didn't. ____________________________________________________________

5. What role in society did Mussolini want for men? ____________________________________________________________

6. According to Mussolini, what was a woman's most important job? ____________________________________________________________

7. How did Mussolini "brainwash" the youth of Italy? ____________________________________________________________

8. According to all fascists, what was the most important duty of all people? ____________________________________________________________

9. Why did fascists oppose democracy? ____________________________________________________________

10. (Examine the photo of Mussolini) What fascist ideas are illustrated in this picture? ____________________________________________________________