

The town of Trento. Mussolini began his working career here.

SOURCES INCLUDE:  
Palla, Marco. Mussolini and Fascism.  
DeGrand, Alexander. Italian Fascism.  
Tomkinson, John. Single-Party States.

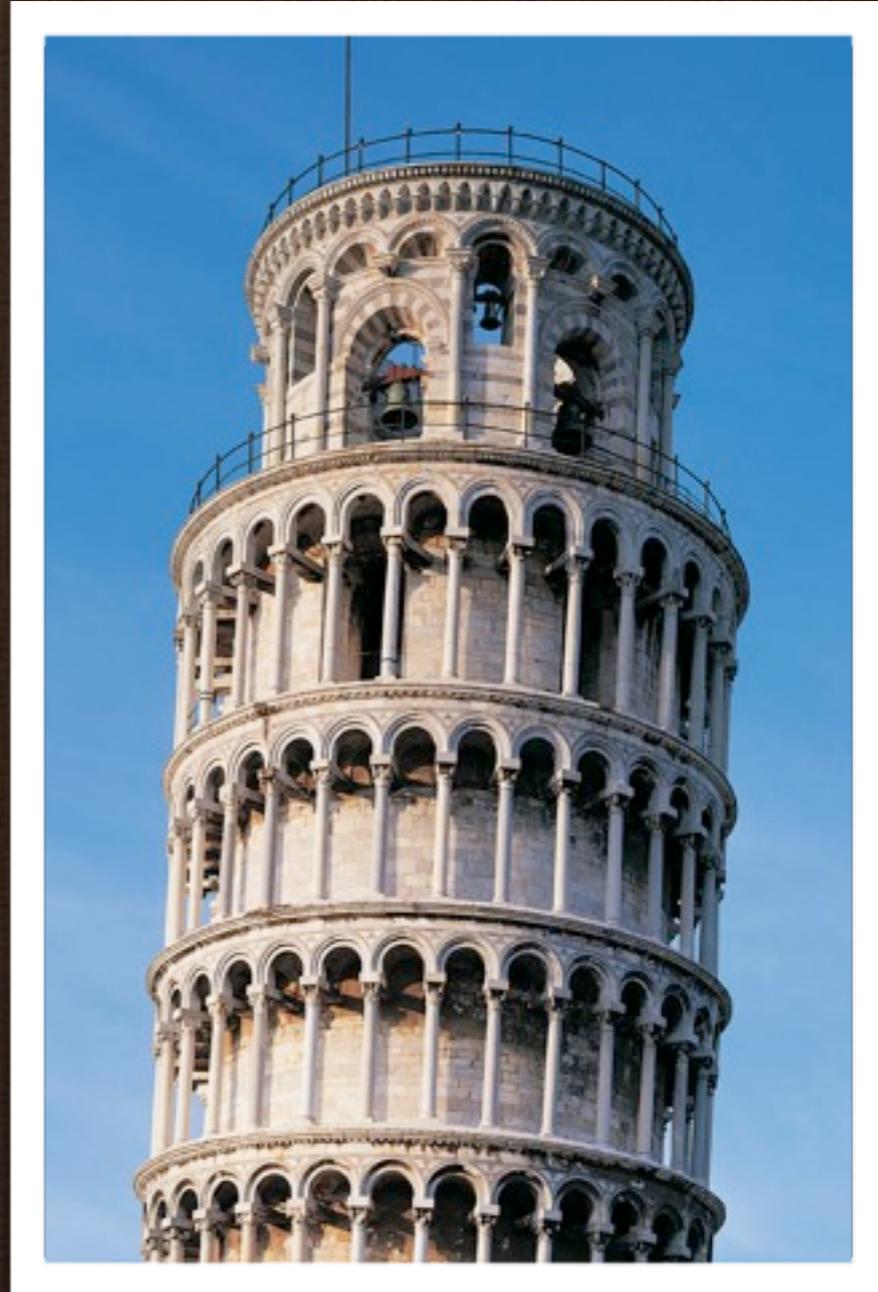


# The Rise of Mussolini and the Fascist Party

*How and why did Mussolini and the Fascists rise to power in Italy by the end of October 1922?*

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Exploring the “Why?”  
Dimension



## ESTABLISHING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- ❖ Italian democracy had been unstable for a long time
  - ❖ 22 governments between 1871 and 1900
  - ❖ Roman Catholic Church opposed state (loss of Papal States) - *some loosening in late 1890s*
  - ❖ Only in 1912 did all men receive right to vote
  - ❖ Perception: 1) democracy was corrupt & inefficient (*trasformismo*); 2) politics was only for the elite

# Background



Why?

## ESTABLISHING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

# World War I: Unpopular War and “Mutilated Victory”

- ❖ Entering the war (while lacking public support)
- ❖ Treaty of London terms and actual gains (1919-20): *see chart at right*
- ❖ Losses, hardships during the war (mostly poor performance until the end)

TREATY OF LONDON PROMISES	RESULTS
Tyrol (including Trentino)	<i>Received</i>
Trieste (but no Fiume)	<i>Received</i>
Duchy of Carniola	<i>Denied</i>
Parts of Carinthia	<i>Mostly Received</i>
Dalmatian Islands	<i>Denied</i>
Dodecanese Islands	<i>Received</i>
Protectorate over Albania	<i>Denied</i>
Some Turkish lands	<i>Denied</i>
Parts of German Asian and African empire	<i>Denied</i>

*Why?*

## ESTABLISHING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- ❖ High debt (owed to Britain, France, etc.)
- ❖ Transition to peace-time economy
- ❖ Tensions with returning troops
- ❖ Lower class is politicized & asserting itself:
  - ❖ Strikes, lockouts in cities
  - ❖ Peasant Leagues formed in countryside
- ❖ Lack of professional (white collar) jobs

# Post-war Economic Crisis



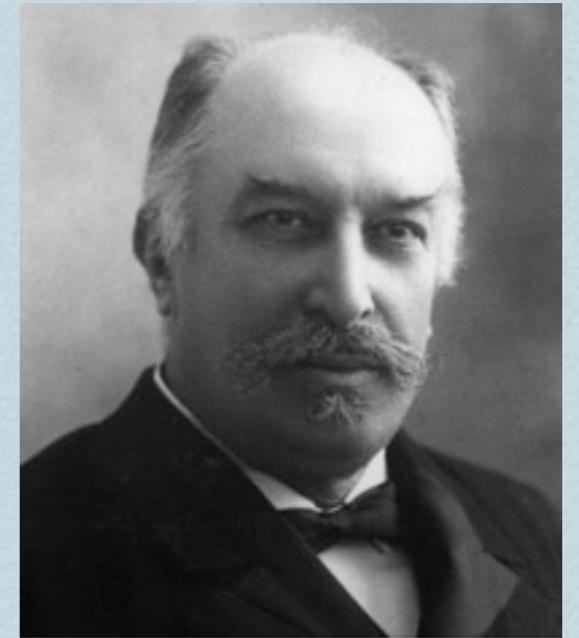
*Why?*

# A Discredited Political Class

- ❖ Difficult for recycled leaders of 'Liberal Bloc' to make ruling coalition w/ mass parties in play (Socialists, Popolari, Fascists)
- ❖ Lack of action against Peasant Leagues and General Confederation of Labor strikes
- ❖ Did almost nothing to control Fascist-Socialist violence
- ❖ Charges of corruption; anger over "mutilated victory";



KING VICTOR  
EMMANUEL III



GIOVANNI  
GIOLITTI



ANTONIO  
SALANDRA



LUIGI FACTA

*Why?*

# Fasci di Combattimento

❖ Turning from Socialism: Mussolini split with the Socialists over WWI

❖ He then founded *Il Popolo d'Italia* newspaper

❖ Fascist Party early platform (1919): progressive nationalism (still left wing on most social & economic issues & courting workers, but right wing on national security & worked to attract former WWI soldiers)

❖ Symbolism of the *Fasces*: Based on Roman Empire instrument (bundle of rods tied together with an axe, symbolizing power over life and death when carried by magistrates and lictors)



FASCIST MANIFESTO (1919): Benito Mussolini organizes “Blackshirt” fighting squads that were already developing into a loose *Fasci di Combattimento* organization that built a political platform that was both left- and right-wing oriented in its apparent aims.

# General Election: Nov. 1919

- ❖ Socialist Party strength was demonstrated in specific regions too: Emilia-Romagna (60%), Piedmont (49.7%), Umbria (46.5%), Lombardy (45.9%), Tuscany (41.7%)
- ❖ Mussolini's brand new Fascist Party received very few votes (less than 1 percent) - lost among a sea of competing left-wing parties. This led to Mussolini shifting the party more firmly to the political right.

Italian Socialist Party (PSI)	32.3%
Italian People's Party (PPI)	20.5%
Liberal-Democratic-Radical Coalition	15.9%
Italian Social Democratic Party (PDSI)	10.9%
Italian Liberal Party (PLI)	8.6%
Fighters' Party	4.1%
Radical Party	1.9%
All other parties	8.9%

PPI = Christian Democratic party founded to oppose the Socialist Party. National Bloc = combination of right-wing parties, including Fascists.

# Socialist Party (PSI) Successes

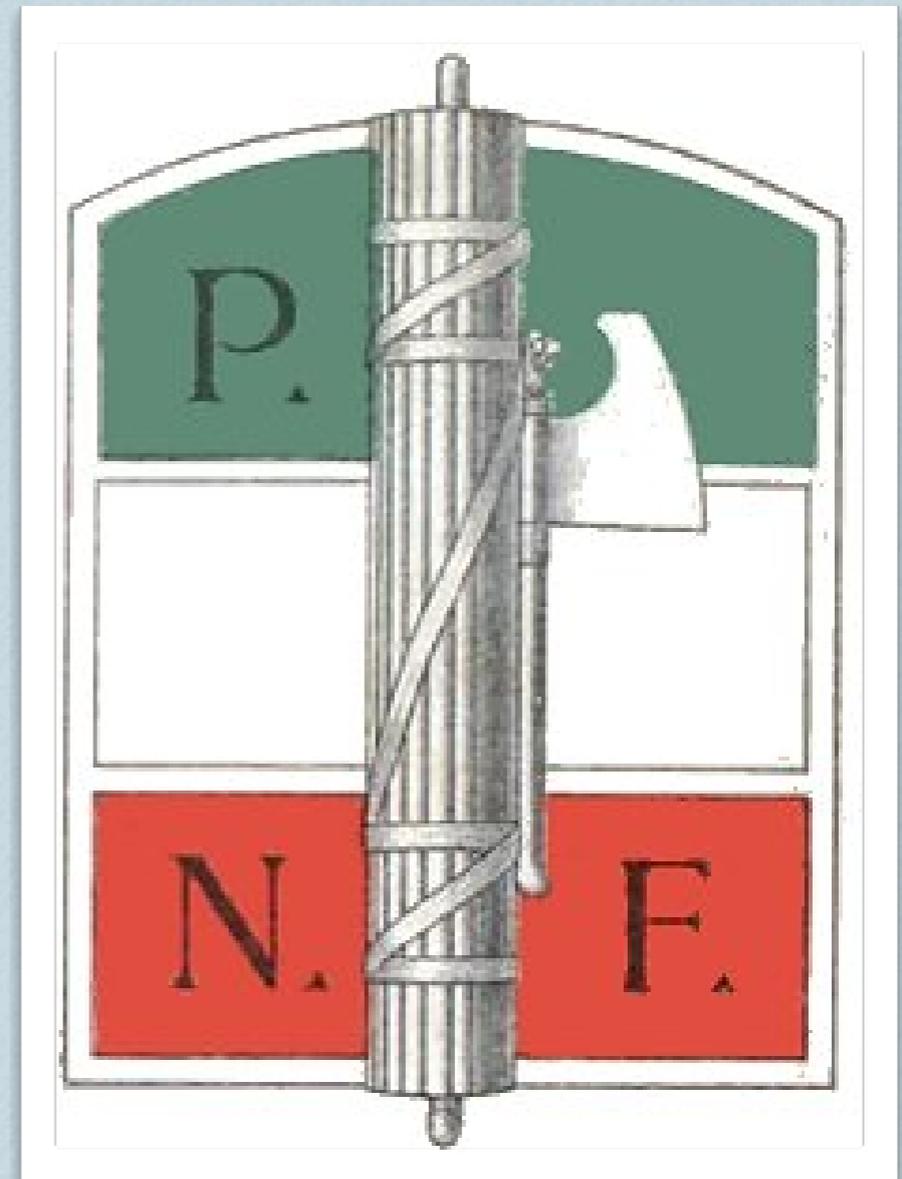
- ❖ Election results in 1919-21 period (see General Election slides)
- ❖ Socialist Party appeal to voters (bases of support: industrial workers in northern & central Italy & peasants joined in Peasant Leagues in central & some parts of southern Italy)
- ❖ Starting in 1921, there was a separate Communist Party (much less popular)
- ❖ Reaction: the “Red Scare” (due to Russian Revolution & civil war); fear was primarily among middle & upper classes



*Why?*

# Fascists: Changing the Platform

- ❖ From anti-Catholicism to support for Catholicism
- ❖ From republicanism to support for the monarchy
- ❖ From workers' rights (and the 8-hour day) to defense of business interests and landowners (beating up peasant league and union members)
- ❖ Election results: 1921 (joined the National Bloc, but still not a top contending party)



The National Fascist Party (PNF; founded 1921) grew out of the earlier 1919 *Fasci di Combattimento*)

# General Election: May 1921

- ❖ Socialists won election, but once again did not get Prime Minister post; plus, support fell from 32.3% in 1919 (partly because Communists now a separate party)
- ❖ Fascists (now called PNF) experienced more success as part of 3rd place National Bloc, with some elected deputies
- ❖ Communist Party showing was poor in its 1st election: under 5%

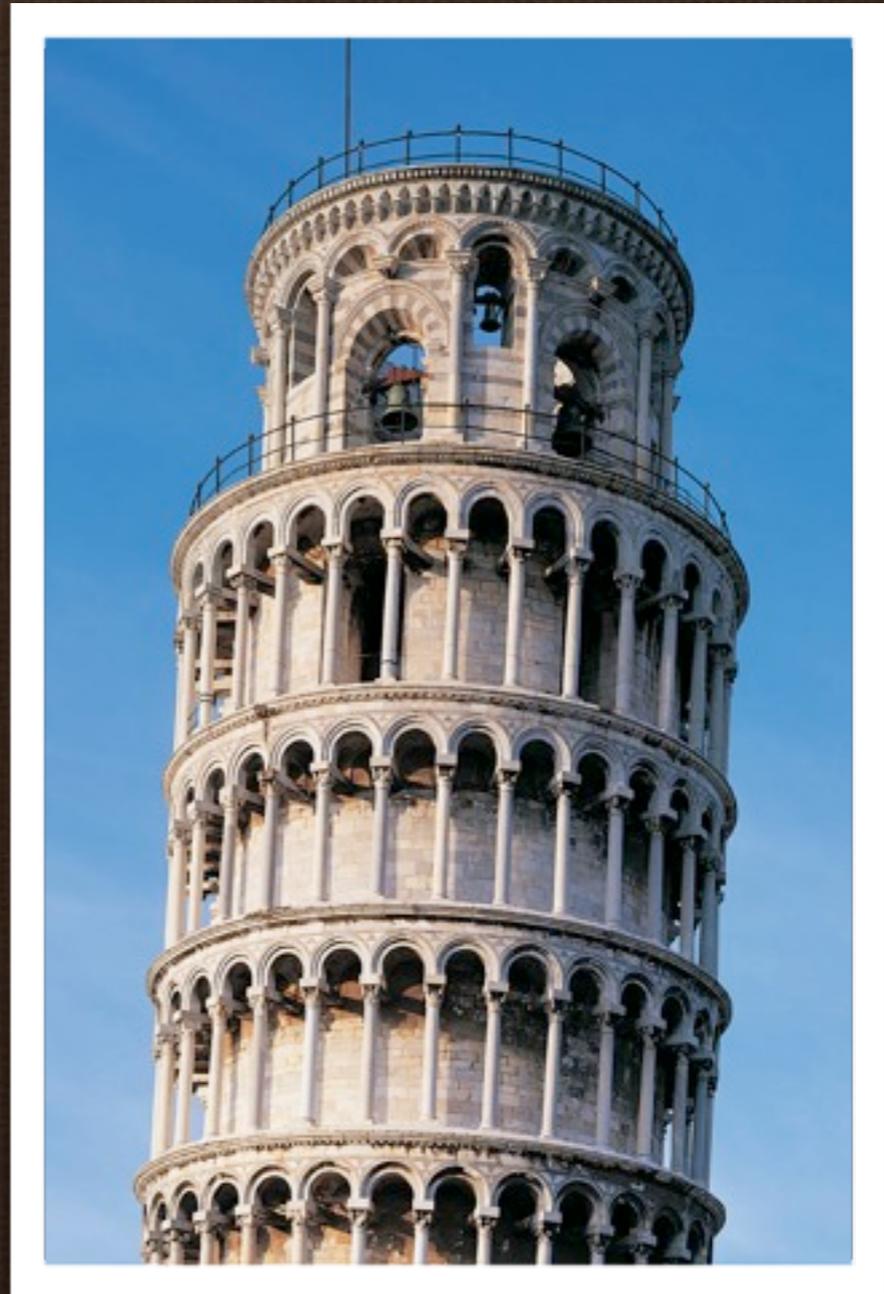
Italian Socialist Party (PSI)	24.7%
Italian People's Party (PPI)	20.4%
National Bloc	19.1%
Democratic Liberal Party (PLD)	10.4%
Italian Liberal Party (PLI)	7.1%
Italian Social Democratic Party (PDSI)	4.7%
Communist Party of Italy	4.6%
All other parties	8.9%

PPI = Christian Democratic party founded to oppose the Socialist Party. National Bloc = combination of right-wing parties, including Fascists.

*How and why did Mussolini and the Fascists rise to power in Italy by the end of October 1922?*

STRATEGIES,  
TACTICS,  
ACTIONS,  
DECISIONS,  
METHODS

Exploring the “How?”  
Dimension

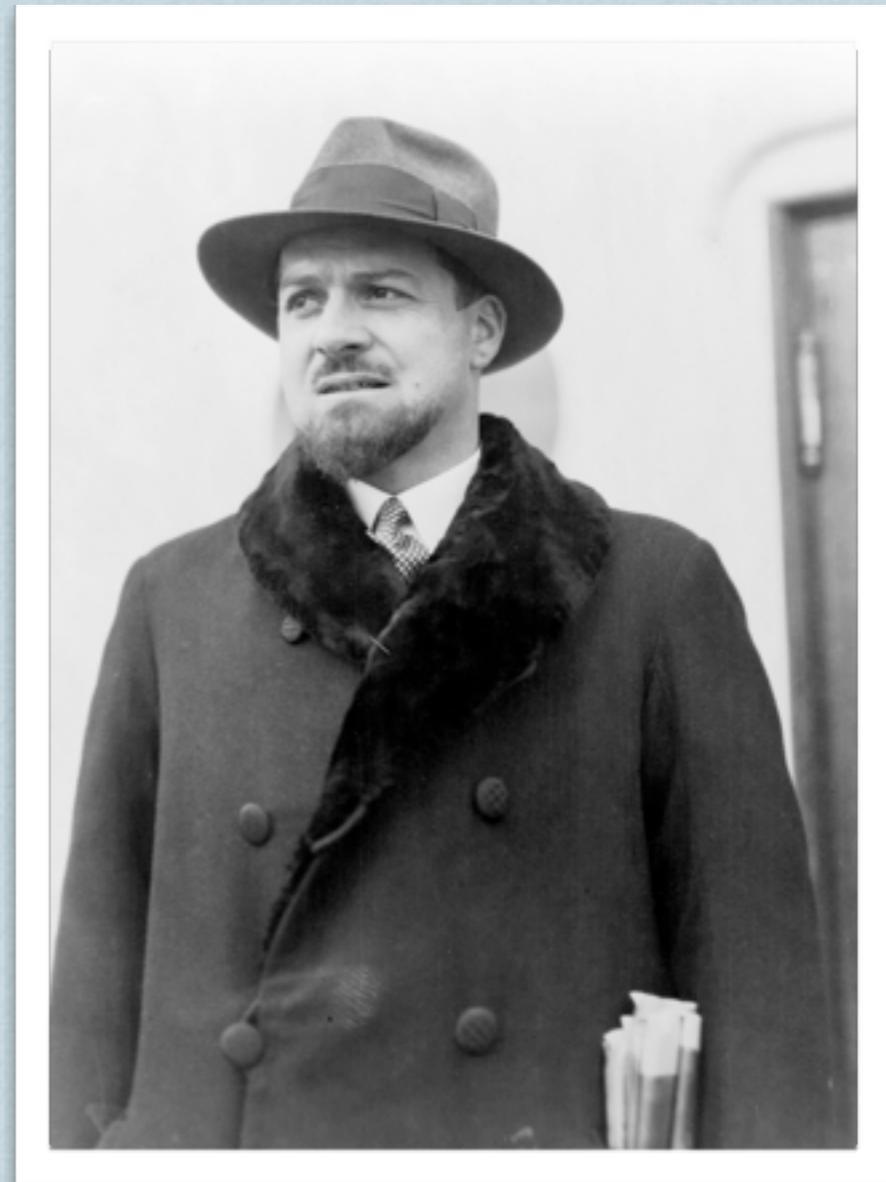


STRATEGIES □ TACTICS □ ACTIONS □ DECISIONS □ METHODS

## *Squadristi:*

“Blackshirt” violence against Socialists and strikers

- ❖ D’Annunzio’s example (and his fall)
- ❖ The Blackshirts and their *Ras* (Farinacci, Balbo, etc.)
- ❖ Breaking ribs and administering castor oil
- ❖ Attacking the Socialists, Peasant Leagues and striking union members



ITALO BALBO, a leading *Ra* *How?*

STRATEGIES □ TACTICS □ ACTIONS □ DECISIONS □ METHODS

# Oratory and Propaganda:

Playing on Red fears; promising “greatness”

- ❖ Mussolini as a public speaker: fiery, charismatic (to some)
- ❖ Anti-socialism, anti-communism, anti-democracy
- ❖ “Il Duce”: The need for the “strongman” (d’Annunzio’s message)
- ❖ Rebuilding Roman greatness: nationalism, stability, strength (the Fascist pitch)



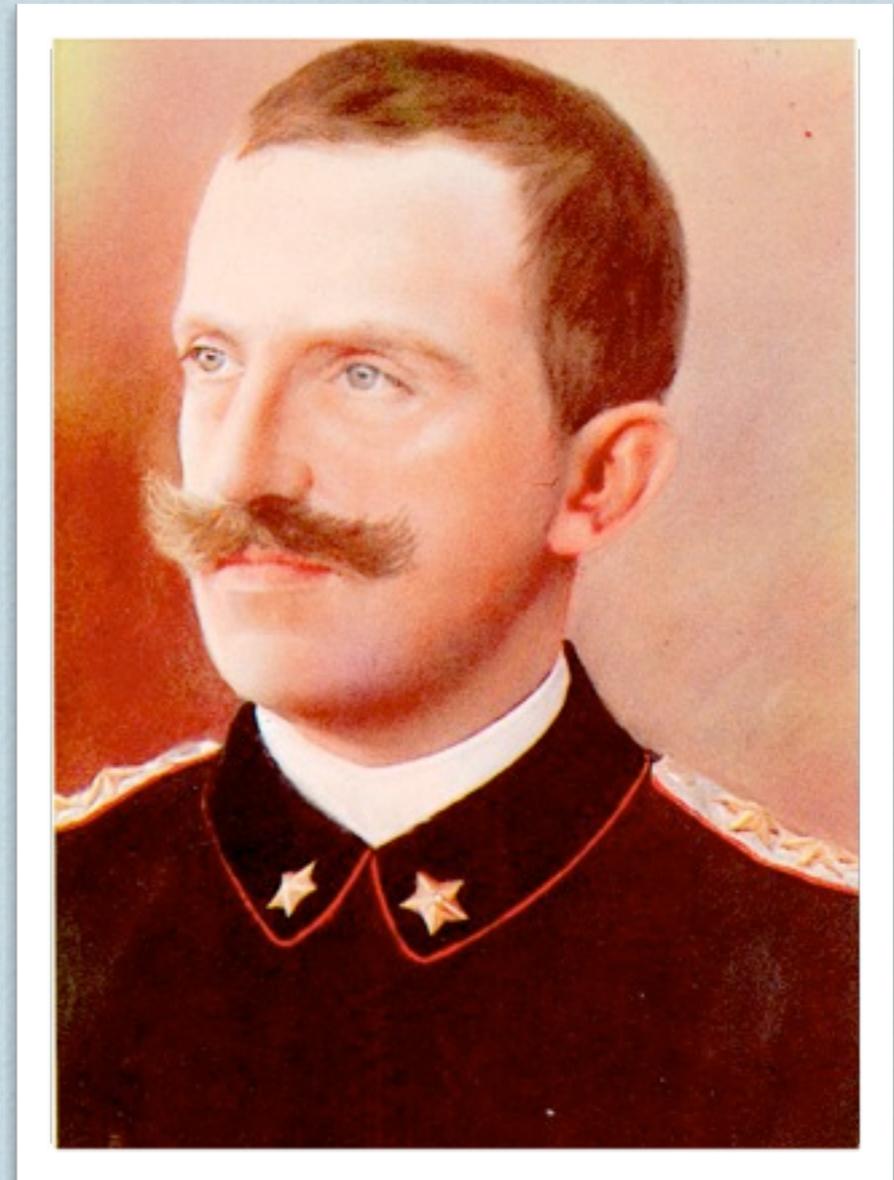
*How?*

STRATEGIES □ TACTICS □ ACTIONS □ DECISIONS □ METHODS

# Negotiating for Power

Mussolini becomes Prime Minister as Blackshirts “March on Rome”

- ❖ Why the Fascists were under serious consideration (King: no more Giolitti; no Socialists in power)
- ❖ Facta resigns; King authorizes Salandra to form government
- ❖ Mussolini’s “All or nothing” approach: Prime Minister or nothing (ending Salandra bid)



*How?*

STRATEGIES □ TACTICS □ ACTIONS □ DECISIONS □ METHODS

# “March on Rome”

The King doesn't call Mussolini's bluff

- ❖ “The March on Rome”: Oct. 27-30, 1922
- ❖ Martial law order: King VE III changes his mind (interpretations)
- ❖ Mussolini appointed Prime Minister (Oct. 31, 1922)



*How?*