

ITALIAN HISTORY 1815 TO 2008

Roberto Bertoni's class notes

CONTENTS

Handout 1: The Risorgimento	P. 2
Handout 2: The Liberal State	P. 9
Handout 3: Fascism	P. 12

THE RISORGIMENTO

1. Reasons for the delay in the unification in Italy

There were some unifying factors in Italy before the Risorgimento. In particular, Italians felt a sense of belonging in a geographical territory spreading from the Alps in the North to the very South and including the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Some sense of identity was given by the fact that Italians had been united under the Romans. And there was a written literary tradition of works written in Italian by important authors such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in the 14th century and by other intellectuals in subsequent centuries.

Divisive factors, however, prevailed, and prevented early unification. Italy did not even have a common spoken language. Only 2 to 3% of Italians spoke the national language up to 1861 while the rest used a variety of dialects. Economic development was uneven. Differences were pronounced between country and city. Northern and central areas were wealthier than the South. Italy was divided for centuries into a number of States competing for supremacy. Foreign powers (especially Spain, France and Austria) throughout the centuries occupied various regions. The Vatican State was against a unification that would threaten its existence. The industrial revolution occurred late in Italy with the result that modern social classes and ideals supporting unification were slow to appear.

2.2. The Carbonari and the 1820-21 insurrections

In the Italian States the political establishment was conservative and opposed to democracy, social reforms and unification.

Influenced by the democratic ideals of the French Revolution, some secret nationalist associations (especially the *Carbonari*) were formed and promoted the first wave of nationalist unrest in 1820-21.

The *Carbonari* who insurrected in Lombardy-Venetia were discovered and some of their leaders, including Pellico and Confalonieri, were arrested in 1821. Pellico exposed the Austrian regime in his book *Le mie prigioni*.

In 1820 an insurrection led by the nationalist General Pepe in the Regno delle Due Sicilie (or Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, including the South of the Italian peninsula and Sicily) resulted in the promulgation of a constitution. Pepe was defeated and exiled, and the constitution was withdrawn in 1821.

In 1821, due to an insurrection in Piedmont, the Savoy king Victor Emanuel I abdicated in favour of Charles Felix. Charles Felix had meanwhile fled to Modena. It was his nephew Charles Albert who approved a constitution. Charles Felix repealed this constitution on his return to Turin.

2.3. *The Radicals and the Moderates. From the 1830s to 1847*

Failure of the 1820-21 insurrections prompted Mazzini to draw a political platform opposed to elitist conspiracies and in favour of associations whose aims should be made public. Mazzini was one of the Radicals in the Risorgimento. His slogans were 'pensiero e azione' (thought and action) and 'Dio e popolo' (God and the people). His concept of the people included the lower middle classes and the poor. He believed in what he called 'a religion of progress and fraternity'. He propagated the ideals of 'patria' (fatherland), 'dovere' (duty) and 'missione'. The mission he assigned to the Italian people was to become an independent nation. He was a republican and wanted a non-federalist, united Italy. He founded the association called *Giovine Italia* (Young Italy) in 1831, and *Giovine Europa* (Young Europe) in 1834.

In 1831 Charles Albert became king of Piedmont. Insurrections inspired by Mazzini with the participation of Garibaldi (a radical military leader) failed in 1833-34 in Savoy and Liguria. Mazzini fled to Switzerland and subsequently to Britain, and Garibaldi sailed to America. In 1844 the Bandiera brothers led a small group of patriots to the South of Italy where king Ferdinando II had suppressed political liberties. They were arrested and executed. Other attempts at insurrections failed in Romagna in 1843 and 1845.

Such failures of Mazzini's democratic platform oriented nationalist opinion towards politically moderate options. In his attempt at reconciling the Pope's opposition to a united Italy with nationalist will, in *Del primato civile e morale degli italiani* (1843), in contrast to Mazzini, Gioberti proposed a Neo-Guelphic Italian confederation of States led by the Pope and characterized by political conservatism. Gioberti wrote:

'Italy contains within herself, above all through religion, all the conditions required for her national and political resurrection or risorgimento, and to bring this about she has no need of revolution within and still less of foreign invasions or foreign exemplars. [...] We have the real principle of Italian unity [...]. This principle, the Papacy, is supremely ours and our nation's because it created the nation and has been rooted here for eighteen centuries; it is concrete, living, real - not an abstraction or a chimera, but an institution, an oracle and a person [...], it is a power organized by God himself. [...] The benefits Italy would gain from a political confederation under the moderating authority of the pontiff are beyond enumeration. For such a cooperative association would increase the strength of the various princes without damaging their independence, and would put the strength of each at the disposal of all: it would remove the causes of disruptive wars and revolutions at home, and make foreign invasions impossible' [D. Mack Smith, cit., pp. 74-84].

In *Le speranze d'Italia* (1844), Balbo, too, envisaged a confederation but he saw it as led by Charles Albert, and hoped that Lombardy-Venetia could become Italian if Austria lost it in return for land in the Balkans. (In 1851, in *Il rinnovamento civile degli italiani*, Gioberti, too, assigned the role of liberator of Italy to the king of Savoy and encouraged him to bring forward liberal reforms).

Not all Federalists, however, were Moderates. The Federalist Cattaneo had a democratic programme, and Ferrari showed socialist leanings. Ferrari stated:

‘Our very history rejects the possibility or desirability of our becoming a unitary nation; on the other hand a federal system will enable us to reach the very highest goals. In a federation every big city is transformed into a capital on its own, surrounded by its own territory. In a federation every individual Italian State would continue to exist and would have an assembly of its own to perpetrate its own particular traditions. Each of these assemblies would then nominate representatives to the national parliament, in which the whole country, even those areas still under the Pope, would end by working out their destinies. With a federation we shall still have a single army, because, as is also true in Germany and the United States, our purpose would be to unite and not to disunite. We should also have a single foreign policy decided by the national parliament.

There is a widespread fallacy that federation means division, dissociation, and separation. But the word *federation* comes from *foedus*, which means pact, union, a reciprocal bond. [...] We may regard federation as the purest form of constitutional government, founding liberty on a written pact, on a multiplicity of assemblies, on the inviolability of all internal frontiers, and the solemnity of its central parliament’ [Mack Smith, cit., pp. 341-345].

Neo-Ghibelline Guerrazzi and Niccolini saw the Pope as the main obstacle to unification and were therefore adverse to him.

When Pius IX was elected Pope in 1846 (succeeding Gregorius XVI), his initially liberal reforms raised hopes among the moderate Nationalists, and prompted Charles Albert and other Italian rulers to pass similar reform bills.

Among the Moderates of non-Federalist persuasion was Cavour (see below 2.5 and 2.6). He was in favour of a centralized united Italy but opposed to democratic revolutions. He stated:

‘A democratic revolution has no chance of success in Italy, as can be seen if you analyse the elements which favour political innovation. For innovations find no great sympathy among the masses, because the common people, except for some occasional urban groups, are for the most part deeply attached to the old institutions of the country. Active power resides almost exclusively in the middle class and part of the upper class, both of which groups have ultra-conservative interests to defend. In Italy the ownership of property is not, thank Heaven, the exclusive privilege of an upper class. Even where a feudal nobility manages to exist, it shares landed property with the third estate. The subversive doctrines of Mazzini’s Young Italy are therefore taking little hold among those who have an interest in maintaining social order’ [Mack Smith, cit., pp. 101-10].

Political differences between the Moderates and the Radicals constitute one of the features of the Risorgimento. As it is implicit in the following sections of these notes, it was Cavour with his conservative views that eventually prevailed. The Radicals participated actively in the Risorgimento but they could not obtain a full democracy from its outcome.

2.4. 1848-49 and the first war for independence

1848-49 was a period of nationalist and democratic revolutions throughout Europe. Important for their influence on the Italian Risorgimento were the following three events:

- i. A rebellion occurred in Vienna and the Nationalists insurrected in Hungary and Bohemia against Hapsburg rule. Even though they were finally suppressed by the Austrian army with the help of the Russians, these revolutions raised the sympathy of European Nationalists and seemed to indicate some weakening of Austria.
- ii. A German Confederation led by Prussia was hostile to Austria.
- iii. A democratic and socialist revolution in Paris resulted in king Louis Philippe's abdication and the proclamation of the republic. Initially a successful experiment among European insurrections, the Paris revolution ended with the defeat of the Socialists and the election of Louis Bonaparte as President of the Republic. He was a representative of law and order in the name of the middle and upper classes. He subsequently became Emperor of France with the name of Napoleon III and played a role in Italian events (see below the Plombières agreement and the French occupation of Rome).

In 1848, under pressure from an insurrection, Ferdinando II was compelled to approve a constitution in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. His example was followed by Leopold II in Tuscany and by Charles Albert in Piedmont. (Charles Albert's constitution, or 'Statuto Albertino', was later to become the first constitution of the united Italy).

In Lombardy-Venetia, under pressure from a nationalist rebellion, Austrian troops left Venice. Manin and Tommaseo created an independent Venetian Republic. The Milanese also rebelled following suit of the revolution in Vienna, and expelled the Austrian soldiers led by Radetzky (this rising is known as 'le cinque giornate di Milano').

Invited by the Lombards, Piedmont intervened in March, starting the first war for independence.

Charles Albert's allies were Pius IX and Ferdinando II. They sent troops in aid of the Savoy king in order to meet nationalist demands internally (Ferdinando recalled Pepe from exile and sent him as commander). As to their foreign policies, they intended to prevent the predominance and expansion of Piedmont in case of a victory against Austria.

Due to the military skills of the Austrians, and to their four stronghold known as 'Quadrilatero' (Peschiera, Verona, Mantua and Legnago), the Italian army was defeated at Custoza. An armistice was signed in August.

Moderate Casati led the provisional government in Milan which included also radical Mazzini and Cattaneo. In July this government and the Venetian insurgents declared annexation to Piedmont.

In a speech delivered in April 1848 in Rome, Pius IX had denied that he would ever accept to head an Italian federation of States. Thus Neo-Guelphism collapsed, and federalism became a less viable option for an independent Italy. The Italian Nationalists

chose more radical options. After the murder of the Roman Prime Minister Rossi, a Roman Republic was created in February 1849 under the triumvirate of Armellini, Saffi and Mazzini. A Florentine Republic led by Montanelli and Guerrazzi was also proclaimed in February that year.

Piedmont Prime Minister Gioberti planned to offer help to duke Leopold in Tuscany and to Pius IX in Rome, but king Charles Albert rejected this plan.

After Gioberti resigned, Charles Albert started the war against Austria again, thus indicating a turning point in the direction of a definite commitment of the Savoy dynasty to a united Italy. Defeated in Novara in March 1849, he abdicated in April. Victor Emanuel II became king of Piedmont.

The Roman insurgents were defeated due mainly to military intervention from a French army sent by Bonaparte and headed by Oudinot. A rebellion in Palermo was suppressed. The Florentine Republic and Venice fell. The previous rulers went back to their territories and strengthened their reaction against nationalism.

2.5. The 1850s, or the so called 'decade of preparation' towards unity

In the 1850s, Mazzini continued promoting the cause of nationalism and democracy.

His 1850 campaign for 'prestito nazionale' (money 'loans' to be refunded when the Italian State would come into existence) was relatively successful.

In 1852 some of Mazzini's followers were arrested in Lombardy-Venetia and hanged (they are known as 'the martyrs of Belfiore').

Genoa insurrection, inspired by Mazzini, failed in 1856.

In 1857 Pisacane, a Socialist influenced by some of Mazzini's ideals, led a small group of insurgents to Sapri in the South of Italy in order to persuade the local peasantry to rebel against Ferdinando II. The peasants actually supported the Bourbons who had the patriots arrested. Pisacane died in a clash with the Neapolitan troops.

Idealism, lack of deep understanding of the real problems of the people, and practical failure seemed to characterize these attempts at revolution, and yet the influence of those ideals and the emotional impact of those actions were important in determining support for the Italian cause.

The 1850s saw the prevalence of moderately liberal politics, the full conversion of the House of Savoy to the national cause (which coincided with their expansion), military preparation, and some important political developments in Piedmont due especially to Cavour's initiative.

Cavour sought support among the bourgeois class by adopting a conservative policy and uniting the two Moderate political factions (the Centre-Left and the Centre-Right) in the Parliament of Piedmont. He achieved this through a pact of cooperation with Rattazzi ('connubio Cavour-Rattazzi').

In 1852 Cavour became Prime Minister.

He modernized the Kingdom of Piedmont by starting the building of railways.

Due to his Centre-Right political persuasion, he was adverse to radical politics. He tried to restrain the action of Mazzini and of Socialist campaigners while exploiting their popular appeal. In 1857 a 'Società nazionale italiana' (Italian National Society) was

founded which included some former Radicals and followers of Mazzini. Its slogan was 'Italia e Victor Emanuel'. One of its members was Garibaldi.

Due to his pact with the Centre-Left, Cavour approved of Siccardi's bill (1850) and Rattazzi's bill (1855) which reduced the prerogatives of the clergy and separated the State from the Church in Piedmont. Because most Italians were Catholic, this constituted a serious problem to be confronted after unification. However, Cavour was now allowed to wage a war against the Pope if necessary in order to liberate Rome.

In 1855 Piedmont, due mainly to Victor Emanuel II's initiative, participated in the war of Crimea, which was fought and won by the European powers and the Ottoman Empire against Russia. Piedmont became a State to be treated as equal by important States internationally. In 1856, at the Paris Peace Conference, in spite of Austria's opposition, Cavour was able to raise interest in a plan for a united Italy.

In 1858 the Plombières agreement was stipulated between France and Piedmont. France granted help to Piedmont in case of a war provoked by Austria, was offered Savoy and Nice in return for military aid, envisaged a federated Italy with the exclusion of Rome and the Lazio region, and obtained that Clotilde of Savoy (Victor Emanuel II's daughter) could marry Napoleon's son Gerolamo Bonaparte.

2.6. From 1859 to 1870 (the second and third wars for independence and the acquisition of Rome)

In 1859 an Austrian ultimatum ordering Piedmont to unilaterally demilitarize constituted the pretext that made Austria appear as an aggressor, and allowed Victor Emanuel II to declare a war on Austria known as the second war of independence.

Napoleon III led his troops from France into Italy. After a French victory at the battle of Magenta the allies occupied Milan. Patriots led by Ricasoli in Tuscany, and by Farini in Parma, Modena, Bologna and Romagna, rebelled against their rulers. Meanwhile the Austrians (led by Emperor Frances Joseph) were defeated at Solferino by the French and at San Martino by the Savoy.

At this stage the war was interrupted by the armistice of Villafranca, signed by Napoleon who acquired Lombardy from Austria and passed it on to Victor Emanuel. Napoleon's reasons to seek an armistice were his preoccupations with European stability and his fear that Piedmont might become too powerful with the acquisition of Lombardy and the predictable annexations of Tuscany, Emilia and Romagna.

Initially perceived as a humiliation, the armistice of Villafranca gave Victor Emanuel and Cavour scope to move towards the unification of Italy independently from the French. Some international support was obtained in November 1859 at the peace Conference of Zurich where the English were in favour of the Italian annexations. France approved the possibility of these annexations in principle. In March 1860, a number of plebiscites took place that voted the annexation of the various parts of central Italy to Piedmont, Sardinia and Lombardy.

The 'Partito di Azione' (Action Party), including Radicals such as Crispi, Pilo and Garibaldi, planned a revolution in the South of Italy, and Garibaldi organized the 'spedizione dei mille' (expedition of the Thousand). The 'mille' were an army of volunteers who sailed from Quarto (near Genoa) to Marsala in Sicily in May 1860.

Under pressure from France, and because he feared that Garibaldi's conquest of the South could provoke radical and republican unrest, Cavour was stingy with support for the volunteers. In public the king ordered Garibaldi not to go to Sicily, but did not dissuade him privately from taking action.

Garibaldi with his volunteers, without military help from Piedmont, rapidly liberated Sicily and increased the size of his army as he was moving victoriously through the island. From there he went to the South of the peninsula.

It was then that Cavour sent an Italian army from the North towards Garibaldi in order to prevent him from marching on Rome where the French army would most certainly protect the Pope.

The Italian regular army defeated the Pope's troops at Castelfidardo and occupied Umbria and Marche. At the battle of Volturno the Garibaldini defeated the Bourbon army. In October, new plebiscites confirmed the annexations of the liberated territories.

In spite of his hostility to Cavour, at a meeting in Teano, Garibaldi renounced his mandate as dictator of the South of Italy and handed the territory he had conquered over to the king.

The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861.

About a year after the death of Cavour, in 1862 Garibaldi made an attempt to liberate Rome from the French, but the Italian army stopped him at Aspromonte. Wounded, he was imprisoned in the Varignano fort at La Spezia, then freed due to an amnesty. Even though, as a result of this, the Italian Prime Minister Rattazzi resigned, there was a cleavage between the radical patriots and the institutional representative of Italy.

The Italian government wanted Rome but was waiting for a better opportunity to catch it. In 1865 the capital city was moved from Turin to Florence, closer to Rome.

Veneto became Italian in 1866 due to the third war of independence and to international diplomacy. Italy had made a pact with Bismark's Prussia by which both countries were committed to mutually support their acquisitions of national territories from Austria. The Prussians won at Sadowa. The Austrians defeated the Italians at Custoza, then in a naval battle at Lissa. At the peace conference in Vienna, Veneto was handed over by Austria to Napoleon, and in turn by Napoleon to Italy.

Relations between the Pope and the king of Italy were tense. In 1864, Pius IX had promulgated the 'Syllabus' which condemned Catholic involvement with secular politics. Further separation of the political power of the State from the Church was caused by a number of Italian laws in 1866 and 1867. In 1867 Garibaldi made another attempt at seizing Rome and was defeated by the French at Mentana.

In 1870, when the French were engaged in the Franco-Prussian war, the Italian army led by Cadorna invaded Rome through Porta Pia. A plebiscite confirmed its annexation to Italy. Rome became the capital city. The Pope was assigned the state of the Vatican. In 1871 a 'legge delle guarentigie' (bill of guarantees) allowed the Church to practice and teach religion in Italy, but relations between the Pope and Italy remained tense for a number of years.

3. *Problems left unsolved by the Risorgimento*

Unification was not completed during the Risorgimento. Trentino was annexed to Italy after the First World War, but it was not until after the Second World War that Trieste became Italian, and Istria and Dalmatia were included in Yugoslavia.

With regard to the social question it is interesting to note Gramsci's interpretation of Risorgimento as a 'rivoluzione passiva' (or passive revolution). According to Gramsci, conservative politicians blocked the political potential of people's action for a democratic Italy. The radical Left lacked unity of purpose due to its divisive factions. All of this resulted into limited democracy and pronounced class conflict. In 1871 Mazzini stated: 'In domestic policy we are ruled by an arbitrary violation of the law; administrative corruption has been elevated into a system; a narrow franchise means that we are governed by a few rich men. Our army is not popularly based, and it is used only for internal repression. Rights of the press and of free association are ferreted, and a corrupt political system inevitably is bringing a slow but inevitable collapse' [Mack Smith, cit., p. 363].

The gap between the richer North and the poorer South of Italy was pronounced. The expectations of Southerners were not fulfilled by the new State, which imposed Northern law and bureaucracy, and promoted a geographically unbalanced economic development.

The new State was centralized. Autonomy was granted to the Italian regions only in the second half of the 20th century. The issue of Federalism is still under discussion in the Italian Parliament as these notes are written.

The Vatican State had been reduced to very small proportions. The relations between the Church and the new State were uneasy.

JF Italian History – Handout 2

THE LIBERAL STATE

1. 'Destra storica', Depretis and Crispi

The Destra storica (or the historic Right) was in government in Italy from 1861 to 1876. The main Prime Minister over this period was Rattazzi (who died in 1873). In 1876, the Sinistra (or Left) replaced the Right-Wing government. By Destra and Sinistra in this context we understand the right and left wings of the moderate Liberali. From 1876 the Sinistra and Destra became increasingly similar.

Two Prime Ministers were prominent from 1876 to 1896 - Depretis and Crispi.

Bills were passed in parliament on primary education. A law extended the size of the electorate from one million to two million people entitled to cast a vote in elections. In 1886 some provisions were made for working children.

It was Depretis who introduced 'trasformismo' (transformism) into the Italian political system. This was an appeal to the Destra to side with the government when a parliamentary

majority was missing. The results of such a policy were strong parliamentary majorities but also significant amounts of corruption and ambiguous ideologies.

In the 1870s and 1880s Left-Wing opposition to the government was made by Masonry lodges, Garibaldini, Mazziniani, and Repubblicani. On the Right-Wing side, there were Irredentisti (those who believed that the territories left out from the boundaries of Italy during the Risorgimento should be 'redeemed' and annexed to Italy).

Internationally, in 1882, a treaty of alliance (Triplice Alleanza) was signed among Italy, Austria and Germany. In 1885 the Italian colonial war in Africa started. In 1889, two colonies (Eritrea and Somalia) were created on the Red Sea (treaty of Ucciali with Menelik).

Crispi was Prime Minister from 1887 to 1891, and from 1893 to 1896. The first industrialization and modernization of Italy (confined to the North West) took place in this period.

The Italian Socialist Party was founded in 1892. In 1893 Crispi violently suppressed a rebellion in the South, called Fasci siciliani and led by Socialist associations.

In 1896 Menelik won the battle of Adua against the Italian army. Crispi resigned. His successor Di Rudinì signed the treaty of Addis Ababa that shrank and defined the boundaries of Italian Eritrea.

Further rebellions staged by Socialist and Anarchist associations took place in 1898. In Milan in particular, they were violently suppressed by Bava-Beccaris. Pelloux, who had succeeded Di Rudinì as Prime Minister, resigned. In 1900 King Umberto I was killed by an anarchist.

The modernization of Italy was moving on with an enlarged financial establishment and the creation of the first ranks of the middle class. Yet, poverty was rampant. Emigration from the South and the NorthEast reached 50 per cent of the total number of Italian emigrants after 1880. In 1910, more than five million Italians (out of 35 million) had emigrated.

2. Giolitti

Giolitti was the main Prime Minister of Italy from 1901 to 1914. Though allied to the representatives of the higher classes he included the Socialists and Catholics in some of his governments. In 1912 the right of casting a vote in elections was extended to all men above 30 years of age if illiterate and above 21 years of age if literate. In 1907, Pope Pius X spoke against modern tendencies in society, but some Italian Catholics had been elected as MPs for the first time in 1904, thus breaking traditional Catholic rejection of parliamentary politics. In 1912 Patto Gentiloni was signed between Giolitti and Catholic politicians. According to this pact, Catholics and Liberals would support each other in elections. Tripolitania and Cirenaica became colonies of Italy.

3. Social situation

One of the major problems was the difference between the North and the South of the country. The South was less developed and poorer. The crime phenomenon of mafia

installed itself in the archaic society of Sicily. In parts of the Southern peninsula the so-called “brigands” war took place. The centralized Northern state was often seen as alien and distant by Southerners.

In general, all over the country, illiteracy in the 1870s reached 75% (statistics by M. Montroni). In the first forty years of the unified kingdom a number of diseases such as malaria and smallpox still existed in reasonably high proportions; and the main diet of peasants consisted of wheat bread, polenta, bread and chestnuts, pasta, whereas the use of meat was rare due to poverty.

400,000 people on average emigrated each year from Italy from 1880 to 1911, mainly from Sicily and Veneto (statistics by A. Pamparana).

JF Italian History – Handout 3

FASCISM

Causes for Fascism: “Vittoria mutilata” and right wing nationalism; impoverishment; class conflict and “biennio rosso”; ideologies; crisis of Liberal Italy.

Right wing intellectuals: Prezzolini, D’Annunzio, Marinetti

Progressive intellectuals: Gobetti

Communist intellectuals: Gramsci

Use of consent and force by Mussolini.

Importance of propaganda.

Imperialism and war as constituent of Fascism along with dictatorship, totalitarianism, antidemocratic ideology, belief on hierarchy.

TIMELINE [From: *1920to1945.files.wordpress.com*]:

1919 – Mussolini forms ‘combat groups’ (‘fasci di combattimento’).

1919 – Fascists win 2% of the vote in General Election.

1921 – Mussolini forms the National Fascist Party.

1921 – General Election – 35 seats for Fascists.

August 1922 – General Strike in Italy - Fascists help break a general strike.

Oct. 1922 – Mussolini demands to be made Prime Minister. March on Rome – King caves in to Mussolini’s demands.

1923 – Mussolini rescues the Catholic Bank of Rome from financial difficulties.

1923 – Mussolini occupies Corfu. Withdraws when Greece pay ‘compensation’.

Nov. 1923 – Acerbo Law - the party that gained the greatest number of votes in the election would get two-thirds of the seats.

Jan. 1924 – Mussolini occupies Fiume.

April 1924 – Fascists win 65% vote in general election – use violence and intimidation.

April 1924 – Fascists murder Socialist Party leader, Matteotti. Opposition MP’s resign from Parliament in protest (the Aventine Secession). Mistake and allows Mussolini consolidate his position.

Jan. 1925 – Press censorship introduced. All independent newspapers closed.

1925 – Mussolini has a Catholic marriage and baptises his children.

1925 – Pope Pius XI withdraws support from the Catholic Popular Party.

1925 – Battle for Grain (1925-1929). Battle for the Lira. Battle for Land. Battle for babies.

Nov. 1926 – All political parties (except fascists) banned. OVRA established.

1929 – Lateran Treaty between the fascists and the Vatican.

1934 – Mussolini opposes unification of Austria and Germany.

1935 – Italy joins ‘Stresa Front’ with Britain and France to oppose German rearmament and expansion.

1935 – Mussolini invades Abyssinia.

Nov. 1936 – ‘Rome-Berlin Axis. First treaty with Germany signed by Count Ciano (Foreign Minister and Mussolini’s cousin).

1937 – Italy, Germany and Japan sign the ‘Anti-Comintern Pact’. Unites Fascist countries and Japan in their aim to crush the USSR.

March 1939 – Italy issues ultimatum to Albania to accept takeover – tries to bribe King Zog.

April 1939 – Italy invades Albania. Albania defeated – King Zog deposed and replaced as king by King Emmanuel of Italy.

May 1939 – Von Ribbentrop and Ciano sign ‘Pact of Friendship and Alliance’ – known as ‘Pact of Steel’.

Sept. 1939 – Mussolini declares Italy neutral when Germany invade Poland.

1940 - Believing a Germany victory inevitable, Mussolini enters war. Italian invasion of Egypt (from Libya) crushed by British forces.

Oct. 1940 – Italy invades Greece from Albania – attack defeated. Germany intervenes to prevent Italian defeat.

1941 – Italy loses Abyssinia.

1943 – Mussolini deposed but re-installed by Germans in Northern Italy.

1945 – Executed.
