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with this judgement?
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

To succeed in securing his power within Italy, Mussolini had to transform Italian society and instil fascist ideas within it. As Mussolini's son-in-law remarked, 'the revolution must impinge upon the habits of Italians' in order to be successful.

Mussolini targeted the youth, hoping that his education and youth policies would entrench fascist ideals in the young and create a new generation of young fascists. There were other other factors that were important in helping the Duce to consolidate his power. His campaigns of propaganda, relationship with the Catholic Church and control of the PNF also helped secure his hold on power. Fascist education and youth policies played an important role in helping Mussolini secure his dictatorship.

There was heavy censorship of school textbooks which increased after 1936, with 317 different history books being reduced to a single government approved text and 'suitable' fascist textbooks were imposed on schools. There was much emphasis on Italian history and literature within schools to imbue students with the fascist version of culture and the past. The Ministry of Popular Culture banned all books considered to be 'unsuitable to the fascist spirit'. In the early 1930s, fascist control of education increased. Fascists were usually appointed to key posts, such as headteachers and teachers at all levels, including university staff, had to swear oaths of loyalty to the Duce and few objected.

From 1937, under the new education minister Guiseppe Bottai, more radical reforms were planned, intended to make the education system more amenable to strictly fascist ends and to empty the schools and universities to

create a truly fascist society. Fascist education policies were reasonably successful in helping Mussolini secure his hold on power. Several generations of students grew up within the fascist education system that paid at least lip service to fascist ideology. The pictures of Mussolini that hung in classrooms alongside those of the king illustrated one aspect of the stress that was laid, even with the youngest children, on the remarkable qualities of the Duce. However, not all schools were under the full control of the fascists.

Church schools had survived and had become increasingly attractive to middle-class parents who could afford the fees. Their continued existence remained a major obstacle to the creation of a thoroughgoing fascist education system and somewhat limited the impact of education policies on securing the Duce's hold on power. Education, or re-education, was not confined to the young. Mussolini and the fascist leadership wished to change the thinking of the entire Italian nation. In 1925, the Dopolavoro was set up with the clear aim of educating adults in fascist models of thinking. It aimed to provide leisure activities with a fascist flavour and at the same time reducing worker irritation with the fascist ban on trade union-sponsored clubs.

By the 1930s, the activities of the Dopolavoro covered soccer, theatres, bands and libraries. Membership swelled from 300,000 in 1926 to nearly four million in 1939. The Dopolavoro enjoyed popularity, but its success was limited as the organisation did not take its propaganda role too seriously and so Italians joined without being treated to a diet of fascist ideology. Many of the cultural activities put on by the Dopolavoro lacked political content and were more popular because of this.

The regime had a great direct impact on the young through the numerous youth clubs that were set up. A wide range of groups were set up to try and mould the minds of young people. These bodies together provided for children as young as 6 and students through to 26. In 1926 the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) was set up to organise and train the youth of Italy. The ONB was the main youth organisation and had branches for different ages of boys and girls from 8 to 21, and membership of the group became compulsory after 1935, but despite the efforts to indoctrinate children it has been estimated that 40% of all those aged between 8 and 18 managed to avoid joining fascist youth groups.

By the late 1930s the Italian youth movement and the fascist student unions had over 8 million members. The organisation was very tied to the school system, and teachers were urged to become ONB leaders. From 1929, the youth movement was directed by the Ministry of National Education, which emphasised the importance of sport, gymnastics and military drilling. The motto of the youth movement was 'Believe, Obey, Fight' and its central purpose was to produce a new generation of Italians worthy of the Duce and able to fight to create a great nation. Patriotic and warlike images were constantly emphasised, and there were many rallies with youths dressed in appropriate uniforms.

Young people came under a lot of pressure to join these official clubs and rival organisations had many obstacles put in their way, for instance, after 1931 Church clubs were not permitted to organise sporting activities. Although Catholic youth clubs such as Catholic Action continued to exist, the fascist youth movement was perhaps the regime's most successful

propaganda agent. In 1937, the ONB merged with the Young Fascists to form a unified party youth organisation, the Gioventin Italiana del Littore (GIL). From 1938 the GIL provided pre-military training as well as proaganda. By 1939, it had done much to persuade a generation of young people that fascism was a normal and natural part of the Italian way of life.

The youth clubs proved most popular and successful for school children, and, curiously, the regime's approach to the youth showed a relaxed attitude to university students criticism of the regime. This emphasises that it was more crucial for Mussolini to target the youngest Italians, still in their formative period, and create a new generation of fascists within Italian society who would support and champion their Duce. This certainly served to strengthen the regime, if not necessarily convert millions to fascism. It was harder for the youth and education policies to be so successful with older students, who had more freedom for dissent.

The GUF was a similar body to the ONB which catered for university students, and many who joined did so for career or social purposes, showing that they were not truly enthusiastic about the Duce and his regime but joined as they would reap the benefits of being seen as pro-fascist. The strong position of Catholicism in Italy also served to limit the spread of fascist youth movements. There were also many other factors which helped to secure Mussolini's hold on power. Above all, Mussolini's powerful position in the state was buttressed by relentless state propaganda.

Mussolini put a great effort into attempts at controlling ideas. It has been suggested by D. Mack Smith that fascism was 'propaganda as a substitute

for action'. The publicity harnessed the support of the masses to the regime and helped change political life forever.

Exceptional Decrees in 1926 and 1928 banned many newspapers. Journalists were forced to register with the Fascist Journalist Association. Mussolini supervised the press and put much effort into manufacturing a false view of reality. Mussolini achieved a high degree of success in his efforts; shifts in fascist ideology took place with no negative press response and the Duce was presented as a ruler who was truly in command of the nation.

Propaganda was put out through the strictly censored newspapers, the state-controlled radio and the compulsory cinema newsreels.

These media provided a vast range of images flattering Mussolini and the Cult of the Duce silenced opposition and criticism alike. He was presented as a military leader, dedicated servant of the state, a practical man driving a tractor in the Battle for Grain, a man of culture and a law maker creating the new fascist order. Italians were bombarded with fascist propaganda which had a large impact on their mentality, this propaganda was quite successful in consolidating support for Mussolini and consequently securing his position of power within Italy as well as his popularity as leader. However, there were limitations on the success of propaganda in certain areas that weren't strictly controlled. Much of the Italian film industry was privately owned, and despite setting up the Film Institute in 1925 and an Office of Cinematography in 1934 Mussolini was reluctant to interfere with private capitalism despite his once radical rhetoric. Fascism also interfered comparatively little with academic and individual freedom so '.

.. nearly all the intellectuals were prepared to subscribe to fascism and then continued as before with their intellectual and creative work'. The fascist impact on intellectual life was apparently overwhelming, but in reality it was superficial. Mussolini's relationship with the Catholic Church also helped to secure his hold on power in Italy. The Lateran Pacts introduced in 1929 and the Concordat ensured improved relations between the Church and state, and meant that the two institutions co-operated.

Mussolini's effort to heal this relationship was rewarded, and the Duce and PNF gained international prestige and recognition since they were supported, if not quite endorsed, by the Pope and Church. Italians, who were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, were pleased that the Church and state were reunited which led to their increased support of Mussolini, improving his image and helping to secure his hold on power in Italy. The repression and control of Italians also helped to secure Mussolini's hold on power.

Repression was an essential part of Mussolini's dictatorship, though it never assumed the character that it did in Nazi Germany. There was a fear of terror within Italian society which led to people toeing the line and so as not to suffer the consequences of opposing Mussolini's regime. People did not challenge the government, as for many people keeping quiet meant safety .

Mussolini set up a secret police, the OVRA, which harried opposition. The lack of opposition to the fascists meant that the Italians had no alternatives to Mussolini and PNF and could not unite against him, which put Mussolini in a secure position. This strengthened his role as leader, his control of society meant that it was beneficial for people to be compliant and ensured that he was dominant in Italy. Fascist education and youth policies played a

significant role in helping to secure Mussolini's hold on power, but these policies were not the only factors that allowed the Duce to consolidate his leadership.

Education and youth policies had quite a large impact on the younger generations of Italians, but it was limited and did not secure the support of all Italians for Mussolini. Mussolini's intense propaganda campaigns contributed to securing his hold on power, as did the improved relations between the Church and state. Mussolini's dominant role within the PNF also contributed to this, his control of the fascist party ensured that he had no opponents and the party became more obedient and subservient.