

F. Foreign Policy.

1. Factors.

i. For much of the time, Mussolini was his own Foreign Minister. Dino Grandi, Under-Secretary from 1925, was Foreign Minister from September 1929 to July 1932; Grandi's dismissal is usually attributed to his concern for diplomatic niceties and formalities, his Anglomania, and his sympathy for the League of Nations, but, quite probably, the reason was that Mussolini saw the chance for a more aggressive foreign policy and wanted the credit for any successes. From June 1936 to 1943, Count Galeazzo Ciano was Foreign Minister; he was married to Mussolini's favourite daughter Edda, was not an early Fascist, but was ambitious; he was vain, lazy and indiscreet.

ii. Mussolini was ignorant about other countries, and surrounded himself with sycophants. After his visit in December 1922 to London, where he felt humiliated by the press, he rarely left the country.

iii. His foreign policy was not well thought out or co-ordinated, but followed a "policy of improvisation without a definite aim" (Gaetano Salvemini), that is, he was an opportunist. He often worked through unofficial channels, so that the Italian diplomatic corps did not know what was going on, and their morale was low; for example, they were not consulted before Corfu (see 3 ii below). Mussolini was as contradictory in his foreign policies as he was in other matters; for example, he was anti-Bolshevik, but hoped to be the first to recognize the USSR; he was scornful of the League of Nations, but demanded Italy's full quota of high offices.

iv. At first, to about 1927, foreign policy was seen as a means to help him preserve and increase his power at home; thus Corfu and Locarno (see 4 i below) brought him international attention and prestige. After 1927, when his domestic authority was unchallenged, he pursued a more forceful policy, to achieve Italy's "rightful place", with, after 1929, the added incentive of helping to solve Italy's economic problems, or at least taking people's minds off their problems, and distracting them from criticizing his domestic policies.

v. He believed that an empire was a sign of virility, and apparently believed in war for its own sake - "la prova di guerra" ("the test of war") - as it would toughen people; war was "the only beautiful thing worth the pain of living". Italian civilization was superior to all others, and Italy was "the director of

world culture". Like Hitler, he believed that he rode the tide of history, which prompted a lack of realism. He was probably ready only for war against a small, weak country like Abyssinia, and not against a country like France, until the support of German power seemed to make it safe.

vi. He was convinced that Britain, France and other "demoplutocracies" were decadent; for example, they had declining birth-rates and ageing populations. He was especially anti-British, as he was jealous of Britain's position in the Mediterranean and the world as a whole. From 1935, he increasingly came to see Hitler as his partner, having previously opposed him, considering him a competitor, especially in the Balkans.

vii. Despite his boasts from 1927 of an advanced, motorized army of (in 1939) 12 million men, and his warlike preparations from 1935, the Italian forces were unprepared, ill-equipped, poorly trained, and in 1939 numbered only 3 million. The rifles were an 1891 design; the best artillery were those pieces captured from the Austrians in 1918; there was almost no anti-aircraft equipment and no radar; there was no tank until 1940, when Mussolini intuitively (and unwisely) selected a design, the Italian army having had to make do with a poor quality armoured car; 1/3 of naval tonnage was battleships and there were no aircraft carriers, Mussolini assuming that planes could reach anywhere in the Mediterranean- the other ships were fast, but lightly armed and armoured; officially the air force had 8,530 planes, but, in fact, it was 454 bombers and 129 fighters, mostly inferior in speed and arms; there was no co-ordination of the forces, and no plans were worked out before 1939.

viii. How far did Mussolini (like Hitler) continue traditional policies and methods? The earlier Liberals, such as Francesco Crispi (1819-1901), had been imperialist. Traditional Italian diplomatic methods centred on equidistance between the powers, playing one off against the other; the German threat, especially after 1933, enabled him to extract concessions from France and Britain.

ix. The Italian defeat in 1896 in Abyssinia at Adowa at the hands of the Abyssinians, and the low status accorded Italy, especially at Versailles in 1919, had to be avenged.

x. Increasingly, he lost touch with reality, believing his own propaganda, and convincing himself he would be a great war-leader.

2. Aims.

i. He wanted to increase Italian power, to "make Italy count for something", to gain for Italy and himself their rightful place in the world, and to avenge the defeat at Adowa 1896 against the Abyssinians (Ethiopians) and the failures of the First World War.

ii. The revision of Versailles was a main theme after 1927. Before then, he said he had no plans to overthrow Versailles, admitting that Italy had gained more than any Western European state.

iii. In 1934, Mussolini said "Italy's historical objectives have two names: Asia and Africa." However, Mussolini was always more interested in dominating the Mediterranean, "mare nostrum" ("our sea"), and in particular the Adriatic and the Balkan states, especially Albania. Mussolini thus resisted Hitler's efforts to get him to concentrate on North Africa. Mussolini also had hopes of gaining the Ticino and parts of the Graubünden and Valais from Switzerland, Corsica and Savoy from France, and Malta from Britain.

iv. Initially, he worked to build Germany as a counterforce to France, so as to be able to play one off against the other, to Italian advantage. After 1935, he was increasingly under the German aegis, but Mussolini was undecided right up to 1940 about whether to support Hitler, apparently weighing up the advantages of supporting France, or of neutrality. His neutral stance taken at Munich was probably genuine and the Axis (See Sections 6 and 7 below) was offset by the Gentlemen's Agreement with Britain. He was sensitive to taunts that he was "Gauleiter of Italy", that is, Hitler's puppet.

v. Despite his denials, he wanted to spread Fascism as an international force, and an alternative to Communism, and in a way, to the League of Nations.

vi. Did he really want war? Probably he was only bluffing, except against an easy target. In any event, he procrastinated before the 1940 collapse of France.

3. The Balkans: attempts to dominate, by means of force and diplomacy.

i. Yugoslavia.

In July 1923, Mussolini occupied Rijeka (called Fiume in Italian; both names mean "river"), which had been awarded to Yugoslavia in 1919; in September 1919, D'Annunzio and his Blackshirts had occupied Rijeka, but Italian Prime Minister Giolitti had, in December 1920, forced D'Annunzio out, following the November 1920 Treaty of Rapallo with Yugoslavia, which made Rijeka a Free City, contiguous to Italy.

However, in January 1924, the Yugoslavs agreed to a Pact of Friendship and Cordial Collaboration with Italy. The Italian occupation of Rijeka had been something of a formality, as there was a large Italian population; Mussolini had renounced claims to other parts of the Dalmatian coast; and the Yugoslavs wanted Italian support against Hungarian revanchism and revisionism.

Yugoslav-Italian relations worsened in 1926, as Italian influence increased in Albania, thereby raising Yugoslav fears of encirclement. The Yugoslavs also in March 1926 made a treaty with France; Mussolini assumed the French were competing with him for influence in Yugoslavia, whereas, in fact, the French were seeking an ally against Germany. Thus Mussolini changed his policy from one of trying to influence Yugoslavia, to one of domination in co-operation with the Hungarians. Consequently, for example, in 1928, 60 tons of Italian guns were found in Austria, apparently en route for Hungary, in violation of the Treaty of Trianon of 1920, dealing with Hungary after the Great War. Mussolini also allowed border raids from Italy by Yugoslav separatists, and was possibly involved in the 1934 assassination in Marseilles of the Yugoslav King, Alexander, in an attempt to destabilize Yugoslavia. In 1929, the Yugoslavs pointedly let the 1924 Pact of Friendship lapse.

ii. Corfu (a Greek island).

Mussolini's probable motives: Corfu occupies a strategic position at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea, but he was probably more interested in eclipsing D'Annunzio as a man of action, building up his reputation, and gaining popularity in Italy.

In August 1923, the Italian General, Enrico Tellini and four members of his staff were assassinated while on a post-war Allied Commission delineating the Greek-Albanian border. Without consulting his Foreign Office, Mussolini issued the Greeks an ultimatum, blaming them for the assassination. The Greeks accepted some terms, such as delivery of an apology, and a naval salute for the Italian flag but they rejected the demand for 50 million lire compensation and Italian assistance in an enquiry. Consequently, on 31st August 1923, Mussolini seized Corfu, with an unnecessary bombardment, which caused many casualties. Mussolini had clearly made certain preparations, for example, having ready Italian stamps overprinted with the name Corfu, and it was suggested that he had planned the assassination.

In September 1923, Greece appealed to the League of Nations, but in vain. The French wanted Mussolini's support against Germany, and were afraid that it might be a precedent for League involvement in the Ruhr dispute, which had begun in January 1923, when French and Belgian forces had occupied the Ruhr area because of German default on reparations payments, remaining there until 1925. The question of Corfu was therefore shunted off to the Conference of Ambassadors (which had been set up to deal with matters outstanding from the First World War) meeting in Paris. The Conference, or rather Britain and France, got Mussolini to evacuate Corfu (on 27th September 1923) in return for 50 million lire "compensation" (about \$2.5 million) from the Greek government.

The crisis was important because it brought the danger of a European war; it increased Mussolini's dislike of Britain and France; and it was the first nail in the coffin lid of the League of Nations.

iii. Albania.

In August 1920, the Prime Minister, Giolitti, had withdrawn Italian troops from the Albania coastal areas, which had been occupied in 1918, but increasingly under Mussolini, Ahmed Zog, the Albanian head of government from 1922, fell under Italian influence. From 1925, and especially with the November 1926 Treaty of Tirana, Zog gained Italian development loans, and the Albanian army was reorganized by Italian officers. In 1928, Zog became king, with Italian support.

Easter 1939, Italian forces, without resistance, occupied Albania, and Zog fled to Greece. In theory, the Italians had been invited in by Albanian revolutionaries; in fact they had been bribed. Victor Emmanuel became King of Albania.

Reasons for the invasion:

Zog had tried to reduce Italian influence.

After Hitler's Anschluss with Austria, Mussolini felt that his prestige needed a similar success. He also feared (needlessly in fact) Hitler's ambitions in the Balkans.

It was a possible stepping stone to the conquest of Greece and Turkey.

Results:

Italian forces under General Buzzoni were revealed as inefficient and unco-ordinated (for example, the fleet was unaware that the harbours were too shallow for large ships), although it was presented as a masterpiece of planning. It possibly made Mussolini have second thoughts about participation in a general war.

Hitler was annoyed as he wanted a neutral Balkans and had hoped for a promise from Mussolini to keep the Balkans neutral.

It broke the 1937 agreement with Britain not to alter the status quo in the Mediterranean (see 6 iv below). It was one reason for the Anglo-French guarantees to Romania and Greece, and for the British introduction of conscription.

In October 1940, the Italians invaded Greece from Albania (but were pushed back. April 1941, the Germans overran Yugoslavia and Greece to safeguard the southern flank).

There were no economic gains: land was reclaimed, for publicity, although there was unused land available; Albanian oil was sulphurous, and more expensive than imports from other places.

4. Mussolini's attempts to increase his international standing.

i. The 1925 Locarno Treaties. The Swiss resort of Locarno, close to Italy, had been selected as the venue by the British, to encourage Mussolini's participation. Italy and Britain became the guarantors of Germany's Western borders (that is, of France and Belgium against Germany), but Mussolini refused French offers of a guarantee of Italy's Northern border with Austria, as a sign of weakness. The treaty meant international recognition of Italy as a great power.

ii. In 1928, Italy adhered to the Briand-Kellogg Pact, by which signatories renounced war as an instrument of national policy. However, Mussolini did make a number of reservations (for example, that Italian policy would continue to be based on a strong army) and told the Italian Parliament that war, not peace, would bring the necessary changes in Europe.

iii. At the League of Nations Disarmament Conference, 1932-1934, Mussolini surprisingly supported disarmament, possibly in an attempt to save money on battleships, tanks, and other materiel, and to stop others from rearming. Admittedly, during the conference, he said: "War alone can carry to the maximum tension all human energies, and imprint with the seal of nobility those people who have the courage to confront it."

iv. In June 1933, he made an unsuccessful attempt to arrange a Pact of Collaboration that would include Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Rome, he claimed, was the centre of the world.

v. In April 1935, the Conference in the Italian resort of Stresa (again a site to attract Mussolini) produced the shortlived Stresa Front. The British, French and Italian Premiers and Foreign Ministers, meeting in Stresa to discuss Hitler's recent denunciation of the Versailles clauses on arms limitation, agreed to co-operate against Hitler, beginning with the issuing of a formal joint protest to the German government. This informal co-operation came to be called the Stresa Front.

vi. In September 1938 at the Munich Conference over Czechoslovakia, Mussolini's mediation apparently prevented war in Europe, and brought him great popularity.

vii. nb. In December 1937, Mussolini reluctantly left the League of Nations, in view of its condemnation of his conquest of Abyssinia in 1935 and 1936. League membership and the seat on the League Council had been a good forum for propaganda, and a good status symbol.

5. Relations with France.

- i. There were poor relations generally as a result of:-
 - Exiles from Fascism found refuge in France, which Mussolini anyway despised as decadent.
 - Italian claims to Savoy, Nice, Corsica, Tunisia, and the Italianization policy in the Aosta area.
 - Mussolini's aspirations in the Mediterranean.
 - Quarrels with French allies, notably the Yugoslavs.

ii. However, poor relations did not prevent co-operation when in Mussolini's interests, especially to limit German power. Thus he supported the French in 1923 over the Ruhr (although he shrank from military support), was a signatory of Locarno in 1925, made the January 1935 Franco-Italian Pact of Rome (settling previous colonial problems, which involved France ceding 45,000 sq. miles to Libya and Somaliland, and agreeing to consult if Austrian independence was threatened) and helping to set up the Stresa Front, April 1935. By 1935, Mussolini was worried about Hitler and wanted French support over Abyssinia.

iii. Relations with France were soured by the Abyssinian conflict, October 1935-May 1936. Mussolini denounced as inadequate the Anglo-French Hoare-Laval (the British and French Foreign Ministers) Plan of December 1935, which accepted Italian acquisition of a large part of Ethiopia. In the event, the Plan foundered on popular opposition in Britain and France, once details of the plan came out. However, in January 1937, the Franco-Italian Laval Agreement gave Mussolini a more or less free hand in Abyssinia.

iv. From 1936, Italian radio invited the Arabs to revolt against the French (and British. Mussolini had been busy subduing the Senussi in Libya until 1932!).

v. Relations were not improved by Italian involvement in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39. Mussolini was a party to the September 1937 Nyon Conference which set in motion patrols to stop unmarked (in fact Italian) vessels preventing supplies from reaching the Republicans.

vi. The Munich Conference in September 1938 led to a short-lived improvement in relations, spoilt November 1938, when Mussolini in Parliament demanded the surrender of Corsica and other French areas. War against France seemed likely, but Hitler refused support.

vii. When war began September 1939, Mussolini did not join in. It was only in June 1940, when Paris was about to fall to the Germans, that he declared war on France (and Britain). Even so, the first Italian troops moved only when Hitler began to arrange an armistice without him, (Italian forces captured 13 villages, but fared badly against French forces, with 37 French dying, to 631 Italians.)

6. Relations with Britain.

i. From the start, relations were poor; the British disliked Mussolini's aggressiveness, while Mussolini was envious of the British position in the Mediterranean and elsewhere.

ii. The two sides could come together when it was in their interests, for example, Locarno in 1925 and the Stresa Front in 1935.

iii. Relations deteriorated with Italian involvement in Abyssinia 1935-36, and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39. In early 1938, Mussolini was saying that war against Britain was inevitable; already, in March 1937, he had told his generals that he intended to destroy Britain, although he did not explain how!

iv. Despite the animosity, deals were still possible, albeit half-heartedly, and Mussolini seems to have been trying to leave his options open.

In January 1937, there was the short-lived "Gentlemen's Agreement", despite the fact that Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Minister, thought Mussolini had "the mentality of a gangster". This confirmed the independence and integrity of Spain, and guaranteed the status quo in the Mediterranean.

In September 1937, Mussolini was a signatory to the Nyon Agreement (see 5 v above).

In April 1938, there was the Anglo-Italian Pact of Friendship, in which Britain recognized Italian control of Abyssinia, and Italy promised to withdraw from Spain on the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War.

In September 1938, he helped arrange the Munich Conference over Czechoslovakia, which preserved peace for the time being.

7. Relations with Germany.

i. Despite the tradition (1882-1915) of Italian-German co-operation, Mussolini was anxious, before and after 1933, to limit German power. He was especially alarmed by German interest in union with Austria, which would bring a strong power on his border, and would give Germany a route to the Balkans, which he coveted. (In 1930, Hitler had said that Trieste would have to become a German port.) Thus Mussolini was a signatory to the 1925 Locarno Agreement, in 1934 he massed Italian troops on the Brenner Pass to discourage Nazi intervention in Austria, and in 1935 he joined the Stresa Front.

ii. However, Mussolini supported Hitler (especially financially) before 1933. He underestimated Hitler, and considered a Nazi victory would be a victory for Fascism. After 1933, he was flattered by Hitler seeking his advice, at least at first. Mussolini refused a meeting until June 1934, when they met in Venice. There are conflicting accounts of what was said at this secret 4-hour meeting, but both were disappointed by the other. Mussolini thought that Hitler sounded like a gramophone record, repeating things several times; that he was an ideologue, not a realist, that he was a buffoon and not martial; and that he lacked intelligence and was slightly mad!

iii. Mussolini disliked the way Hitler had come to power legally, without the use of force; considered that the Nazis were too socialist and had no new system to offer; objected to Nazi Aryan claims to superiority (partly as it was nonsense, and partly as Italians claimed cultural superiority!); and was angered by the way Hitler left the League in October 1933, pipping him at the post! He thought Goering and Goebbels vain, and the Nazis generally condescending in attitude, although he was a good one to talk, having, for example, in 1933, sent an aide to Germany to convince the Nazis that "there is nothing left for them to invent"!. In 1934, following the Night of the Long Knives (when Hitler eliminated 1,000 or so opponents) and the murder of Engelbert Dollfuss (the Austrian Chancellor) by Austrian Nazis, the Italian press mounted a campaign against Germany, accusing Hitler, among other things, of being an Anti-Christ. For his part, Hitler doubted Mussolini's reliability, and resented the treatment of Germans in the Alto Adige. Even so, Hitler had "a general liking, and even some admiration, for Mussolini" (Mack Smith).

iv. In July 1934, following the murder of the Austrian Chancellor, Dollfuss, and the attempted coup by Austrian Nazis, Mussolini massed troops on the Brenner Pass to discourage any intervention by Hitler. Mussolini also bolstered Austria by arms shipments. In a way, the crisis in Austria was of Mussolini's making, as he had encouraged Dollfuss to establish a dictatorial regime along Fascist lines; this had the effect of destroying the socialists, who could have co-operated with Dollfuss against the Nazis.

The Germans were not invited to the December 1934 Montreux Fascist International, where Fascists from 16 countries were represented.

In April 1935, the Stresa Front was arranged, and May 1935, Italy and France made a Military Pact for the defence of Austria.

v. After 1935, Mussolini came increasingly under Hitler's aegis, initially because of Abyssinia, when Hitler alone supported Italy.

In January 1936, Mussolini recognized Austria as a German satellite. Then, in April 1936, the Italian press was ordered to reverse the anti-German line. Mussolini encouraged Hitler to denounce Locarno, so as to preoccupy the West. In October 1936, Mussolini announced the existence of a Rome-Berlin Axis (his name for Italian-German co-operation) after talks between Ciano, Neurath (Italian and German Foreign Ministers) and Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

At last, in September 1937, Mussolini visited Germany, and in November 1937 adhered to the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact which had been organized in 1936.

In 1938, the goose-step was introduced, and an anti-Semitic campaign begun.

The Alto Adige problem was solved in 1939, when Germans living there were allowed to emigrate to Germany.

Thanks to Hjalmar Schacht, the German Economics Minister, the Italian economy was increasingly tied to the German one, to Italian disadvantage; Italian exports of fruit, vegetables and rayon were paid for in German manufactured goods, which were expensive and not always available. Anschluss (Austrian union with Germany in March 1938) reduced Italian trade with Austria, and the Abyssinian War increased dependence on Germany. In December 1937, Mussolini agreed to send 30,000 agricultural workers to Germany; this was an admission of the Italian economic failure, and a sign of the role Hitler had in mind for Italians - unskilled Italian labour, leaving Germans for skilled work, or for fighting).

vi. However, in 1938 and 1939, relations deteriorated, and Mussolini apparently considered a reversal of alliances, and a deal with Britain and France.

He had reluctantly concluded that acceptance of Austro-German Anschluss (Union) was the price that had to be paid for Italian expansion. However, he had been given little warning before Anschluss came in March 1938, which left him with the knotty problem of how to tell the Italians, without losing face. In the event, he rose to the occasion and sold Anschluss to the country as the removal of differences between Italy and Germany, and as a means to help Germany and Italy save European civilization!.

When Hitler demanded the Sudetenland from the Czechs in September 1938, Mussolini kept the Führer at a distance and tried to hold the balance between the Germans on the one hand and the British and French on the other. Hitler was stealing the European limelight, and might make great gains from a war in which Italy was in no position to participate. Anyway, after Anschluss, it had been his turn to gain.

Consequently, Mussolini helped to arrange the Munich Conference of September 1938, which, to Hitler's chagrin, averted war. The Duce apparently agreed impulsively to attend the Conference following criticism of him in the French press. For his part, Hitler resented Mussolini's neutral stance at Munich.

vii. Then, in January 1939, Mussolini decided on an alliance with Germany, having refused earlier, preferring the role of arbiter. Such an alliance would be hard to sell to the Italians, and would limit his freedom of action. However, he was influenced by Hitler's promise that it was his turn, and by the conclusion that German support was necessary if he were to build a Balkan empire. Not surprisingly, though, he was shocked in March 1939, when Hitler occupied the Czech rump, having been given no warning, and having been led to believe it was his turn to expand.

viii. The Italian-German Alliance, called the Pact of Steel, was signed in May 1939. This was a 10-year political and military alliance, and was blatantly offensive, promising support regardless of who caused the war, and with specific mention of support to secure "living space" for Germans. Mussolini had been so optimistic that the Pact was his means to gain, in the Balkans and against France, that he had not read the text, and was surprised to find later that Italy was totally committed to support Germany.

ix. Hitler refused to support Mussolini's plans against France. In November 1938, after Mussolini had made noisy demands about French territory, Hitler refused support, pleading unreadiness, although his real motive was that it would upset his plans. In March 1939, Mussolini proposed to the Fascist Grand Council war against France, if Hitler provided munitions, which Hitler would not. For his part, Mussolini was no more ready to support Hitler in September 1939, despite the Pact of Steel, pleading unreadiness, and offering to help only if Germany supplied equipment in such large amounts that Mussolini knew that there was no chance of German compliance!

x. Hitler was not impressed when, with France about to fall, Mussolini on 10th June 1940, at last declared war on France and Britain. However, in September 1940, in Berlin, the Tripartite Pact of Germany, Japan and Italy was signed, with the avowed purpose being to "promote the prosperity of their peoples".

xi. Hitler disliked Mussolini's advance in October 1940 from Albania into Greece (which began what Mussolini called "the Parallel War"), as he had

hoped to dominate the Balkans peacefully, and divert Mussolini to North Africa, partly in order to distract the British and the French.

xii. After Mussolini's overthrow in 1943, Hitler arranged his rescue from his Gran Sasso prison. Thereafter, until 1945, Mussolini was wholly dependent on Hitler.

8. Relations with the USSR.

i. On 8th February 1924, diplomatic relations were reopened with the USSR, having been broken off in 1917. Mussolini was annoyed that the British had got in before him on 2nd February 1924!

ii. In 1933, he arranged a Treaty of Friendship, including the promise not to join an alliance against the other. This did not prevent him from adhering in 1937 to the Anti-Comintern Pact made 1936 by Germany and Japan.

iii. In 1941, he joined Hitler in the war against the USSR.

9. Abyssinia, October 1935 - May 1936.

i. As early as 1925, Mussolini had decided on action to expand the Italian Empire in East Africa from Eritrea and Somaliland (conquered in the 1880s), partly as he wanted to avenge the Italian defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians at Adowa in 1896.

ii. With international attention concentrated on Hitler, and facing economic problems, Mussolini decided 1935 that the time was right for action.

iii. After the generation of frontier incidents around Wal Wal (which had an Italian garrison, even though according to Italian maps, it was 80 miles inside Ethiopia), in October 1935 Italian forces under the aged De Bono invaded without declaring war.

iv. The League of Nations condemned Italy as the aggressor, and in November 1935 imposed limited sanctions. Even with air superiority and the use of poison gas, Italian advance was slow until the more energetic Badoglio replaced De Bono. Following the decisive battle of Maichew, Italian troops entered the capital, Addis Ababa, May 1936.

v. About 500,000 Ethiopians died, and about 5,000 Italian troops (mostly African). The war cost about Italy's total income for one year. No great economic advantages resulted. The war brought bad relations with Britain and France, and put Mussolini into Hitler's camp.

vi. nb. Colonies.

Mussolini inherited the Tripolitan or Cyrenaican (modern Libya) War of Independence, which began in 1922. The rebels were crushed only by 1932, after Generals Badoglio and Graziani built concentration camps, used terror, and managed, in September 1931, to capture and execute Sheikh Umar al-Mukhtar, one of the main rebel leaders.

In East Africa, Governor De Vecchi, with great cruelty, imposed Italian authority on tribes hitherto generally independent.

Fascist policy generally included: displacement of natives to give the best land to Italians; apartheid; little attempt to develop the colonies socially, for example, by providing education for natives; some efforts at economic development, which was not generally to Italian advantage (for example, East Africa had a monopoly of banana sales in Italy, although the quality was low and the price high).

Few Italians were interested in settling in Africa and preferred to go to the United States..

10. The Spanish Civil War, 1936-39.

i. Mussolini aided the Nationalist rebels against the Republican government. He assumed that the victorious rebels would be grateful to him and do his bidding, possibly adopting a Fascist system. France would be made more pliable because of encirclement, while actual fighting would be good training for Italians, and would show Italian might.

ii. Italian planes helped airlift rebel forces from North Africa in the crucial opening stages of the rebellion, and Italian supplies were an important factor in the eventual Nationalist success. Italian submarines also prevented (until the September 1937 Nyon Agreement) supplies from reaching the Republicans. 70,000 Italians fought in Spain, but without distinguishing themselves (for example, their failure at the March 1937 battle for Guadalajara).

iii. The war cost Italy 5,000 or so dead and the equivalent of half a year's tax. Mussolini gained a reputation for inefficiency and brutality (sinking by

submarines of merchant ships; terror bombing of Spanish cities, especially Barcelona, which annoyed Franco considerably). Franco and the Nationalists declined to be puppets, so that there was no real gain.

11. The Second World War.

i. In 1939, Mussolini was undecided how to act. He feared a war, and especially a British attack; at the same time, he feared not going to war, for his reputation would suffer, he would be giving up chances to gain, and he might even risk German invasion. In August 1939, he told Hitler he would fight if the Germans could provide munitions, in quantities deliberately beyond German capacity. Hitler later complained that he had been counting on the Italians, and that Mussolini's lack of support caused the Poles and others not to give in; that is, that Mussolini brought on the war. He disliked the idea of outright German victory, for reasons of jealousy, and even toyed with the idea of joining the French and British.

ii. Despite the war, Mussolini did not stop the export of arms, and did not build up the arms industry. War preparations were minimal (for example, the construction of Alpine fortifications against the Germans, despite advice not to; in 1943, these were by-passed in a few hours).

iii. In June 1940, when France was about to fall, he at last threw in his lot with Hitler. Then in October 1940, Mussolini began what he called his Parallel War in the Balkans, attacking Greece from Albania. The war went badly and Hitler eventually went to his rescue, to secure his southern flank; in April 1941, in two weeks, German forces overran Yugoslavia and Greece. Mussolini claimed that the rapid German victory was the result of Italian actions earlier!

iv. Mussolini's attacks in Africa proved no more successful. By April 1941, the Italians had been forced out of Abyssinia by British forces. By May 1943, British and US forces had expelled the Italians and Germans from North Africa (although in February 1941, Hitler had sent Rommel with a small German force to bolster the Italians in North Africa). Italian forces suffered from the destruction of almost half their fleet at British hands, in the Battle of Taranto in November 1940.

v. In December 1941, Mussolini unwisely followed the German lead and declared war on the United States. In November 1942, he joined Hitler in

occupying Vichy France (southern France, which had been left nominally independent after the German conquest of 1940), taking the Nice area.

vi. In July and August 1943, United Nations (Anglo-US) forces captured Sicily. On 25th July 1943, the Fascist Grand Council and the King overthrew Mussolini, making Marshal Pietro Badoglio Prime Minister. Mussolini was arrested, but on 12th September 1943 was rescued by German commandos from his Gran Sasso prison, and installed as a German puppet in Salo. On 25th July 1943, Marshal Badoglio and the Government in Brindisi signed an armistice. On 2nd September, United Nations troops landed on the Italian mainland. On 13th October 1943, the Brindisi Government declared war on Germany. Gradually the United Nations forces fought their way northward, eventually between March and May 1944, taking Monte Cassino from the Germans. Finally in April 1945, on the collapse of Germany, German forces in Italy surrendered. of the rebellion, and Italian supplies were