

The Rise of Fascism in Italy as a Reaction to the Collapse of the Liberal State

Abstract:

Unification of Italy (1861-1870) created a large war debt. This debt was compensated by confiscation of ecclesiastical property, monetary inflation and heavy taxation of its citizens. The new liberal state was a textbook example of parasitic government. This government was characterized by obstacles to capital accumulation and subsequent economic growth. The government efforts to bolster the economy by subsidies and protectionism resulted in a creation of inefficient industrial monopolies. In the beginning of the twentieth century, this system began to disintegrate and crumble as the enlargement of franchise weakened the parliamentary regime and thus help bolster the popularity of socialism. The chaos of Italian "Bolshevism" (1919-20) was replaced by much harsher (and inappropriate) fascist reaction in the following years. In both cases, the administration remained unresponsive. This caused many citizens to turn their beliefs to authoritative regime. The Fascist could not succeed or seize power without the help and support of some powerful government officials. These men in the state apparatus wanted to use Mussolini as a pawn. However, they were under a misconception, when he turned out to be the mastermind.

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