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## Propaganda & Economic Policies During The Regime Of Mussolini & Stalin

The 20th century witnessed the rise of two opposing ideological movements: Mussolini's fascism and Stalin's communism. Both having a symbolic representation of their movements: Mussolini's fascist Italy and Stalin's communist USSR. Mussolini and Stalin both aimed to establish a totalitarian system in their country. Both effectively using propaganda to represent their ideas. Mussolini stated that his domestic policies would 'transform' the organisation of the Italian economy and would prepare the nation for war. Focusing heavily on Italian agriculture, Stalin concentrated on the nation's economy and its development, wanting to modernise the economy in reshaping Soviet agriculture and industry.

Mussolini and Stalin had total control of their government, both using propaganda to expand their ideological views. Being a former journalist, Mussolini understood the importance of a strong image. He had first come to the national attention of propagandist newspaper, *Il Popolo D'Italia*. Using methods to build up support for his regime and to prevent the rise of any opposition. Mussolini started by suppressing newspapers that opposed Mussolini and notified journalists and editors that they could be arrested if they published anything against the regime. In the mid-1920s, there were around 40,000 radios in the country. Mussolini took this into his own benefit and turned all radio networks into the property of the state, using them to be tools for Fascist propaganda. These radios were later distributed around the country especially to schools. The regime would then feature propagandist sessions displayed on the radio for everyone to hear.

The Cult of Personality, where the great Mussolini was praised and portrayed as not just as a Politician but as Italy's saviour. The New Julius Caesar - a man of action, culture and pride, dedicated to reviving Italy to their glory days of the Roman Empire. British Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, said "Mussolini is a wonderful man working for the greatness of his country". The Phrase "Mussolini is always right" started to become very popular within the country. To maintain his status, Mussolini would quickly claim the credit for the success of Italy and would be even quicker to blame others for any mistakes. Often displayed as a model of all males, Mussolini would have newspapers and magazines portraying him as a 'vigorous, athletic and courageous man' by his ability to ride horses, flying aeroplanes, doing sports and helping the Italian army.

An image of being a superhuman regardless of his age had to be shown since he believed that the exaggeration of his image would 'motivate' the public and would 'enjoy' the idea that the

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country was being governed by a superhuman. Mussolini stated that the use of propaganda was “to strike the imagination of the public: that is the real secret of how to govern.” Mussolini would use Propaganda to display his godlike figure by his successes in Italy making it a great nation to the Italians. Stalin also focused on propaganda to control the people of the Soviet Union. Stalin, very much like Mussolini, used propaganda to represent himself as an almighty figure. However, Stalin did not use propaganda just to display his power and god-like figure but additionally using it to suppress any chance of other potential leadership. Stalin used The Cult of Personality just like Mussolini. Stalin did not use propaganda to display the greatness of his country like Mussolini but instead used propaganda in order to get the people to appreciate him. Stalin would use literature to amplify his greatness to the people.

Poetry written about him and history books published such as “The Short Course” which was aimed to completely change Russian history, improving Stalin's popularity and image among the people. Art and imagery were very well done in Russia, having pictures and monuments of Stalin in every building, fortifying his image of greatness and power into the minds of the people. Stalin was constantly praised and shown admiration from the Russians with very few disliking Stalin as a person. The reason for this was because Stalin would have people arrested for anyone who was talking against their leader. Stalin knew he had to prove his acts to the public, therefore making public appearances to farmers and the industrial area from time to time with the press taking responsibility to show the world the emotional connection Stalin has to his people. This specifically caused many newspapers to publish letters written by industrial workers praising Stalin for improving and bringing joy into their lives.

Mussolini came into power in a time where the Italian industry was beginning a period of an economic ‘boom’. The economic situation was starting to improve throughout Europe and Mussolini saw this as an opportunity to increase exports in the country during 1922-25. Mussolini was not interested with the problems of Italian agriculture but was more interested in the industry, therefore, creating a major method that would increase his personal power and to make Italy more self-sufficient in case of war. Mussolini started off with The Battle for Grain in 1925, its main goal was to promote Fascist power and create self-sufficiency and prepare Italy for war. Italy would often import large quantities of grain to produce products but Mussolini found this as a major weakness. To help with this ‘weakness’ Mussolini offered grants to farmers to buy new equipment such as tractors and fertilisers. These incentives worked as the average harvest production rose from 5.5 million tonnes per year at the beginning of 1920 to almost 8.5 million tonnes 10 years later.

The Battle of Land was then implemented in 1928. The goal was to clear and transform any marshland into farming spaces. Any other pieces of unused lands were cleared up and had housing or roads built on it - aimed to improve Italy’s infrastructure. These policies may have had positive and negative impacts on the people. The Battle for Grain was ineffective in central

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and southern regions since lands in those areas were unsuitable for wheat, they were more suited in the growth of fruits or wine. Due to this traditional agricultural exports decline. Additionally, agricultural workers had their wages cut even more than the years prior. Many Italians ended up leaving the countryside in hopes to find a better standard of living and work.

In November 1927, Joseph Stalin launched his 'revolution from above' by implementing methods called Industrialization and Collectivization. Like Mussolini, Stalin wanted to improve economic growth for the country, launching 5 year-plans. His economic policy essentially had only one goal - the modernisation of the Soviet economy. Stalin's use of collectivisation made all land from peasants owned by the state, meaning that the crops that they produced were now for the state and not for individual utility. It was believed that state-owned farms would be more efficient and would help the development of Russia in the long run. Like Mussolini, Stalin encouraged the use of effective agricultural machinery such as tractors and fertilisers. It would then create a surplus of food supplies that would, later on, be sold abroad to raise more capital for the Soviet economy. Mussolini and Stalin both shared the aims of establishing a war economy. Mussolini used The Battle for Grain to prepare his nation for war. Stalin used Industrialization to prepare the USSR for war, instead of focusing on the production of crops like Mussolini, Stalin focused on the production of iron, steel and oil. Materials that guaranteed the strength and readiness of the nation against oppositions. Industrialization proceeded under the use of Five-Year Plans (FYPs).

The first FYP was very successful, having double the final production of iron, steel and coal by the end of 1932. The output of coal and iron especially had massive increases in the country. However, similar to Mussolini, the living conditions and wages of the Soviet people actually declined. It called for the sacrifice of the Soviet people for the benefit of the country for the future. The biggest difference between the two leaders was the use of concentration camps. Stalin used Gulags which was a campaign used to turn the Soviet Union into a modern industrial power. Gulags consisted of people who were prisoners or victims of the purges. These people were forced to take part in economic activity - typically inefficient and a combination of violence, hard labour, unsanitary conditions and inadequate food rations, leading to very high death rates. Mussolini however, did not use concentration camps in Italy during his rule, only when he had a relationship with Hitler during World War II. When Mussolini used concentration camps, he did not use them for the benefit of his country like Stalin. Instead used it in collaboration with Hitler.

The use of propaganda and economic policies of both Mussolini and Stalin were visible during their regime. Both using propaganda to establishing a god-figure status and spreading their ideologies among the people. Focusing heavily on strict censorship and controlling government media. Additionally, Mussolini used propaganda to display the greatness of Italy to the Italians, while Stalin used it for his personal benefit a lot more. Their economic policies were both very

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similar. The focus on improving the countries economy in preparation of war was clearly visible with the major difference being in what they wanted to produce. Italy focusing on food while Soviet Russia focused on the production of raw materials to improve strength and military power, with both losing lives during these improvements. Russia a lot more than Italy due to their concentration camps throughout the country. It is safe to say that both leaders establishing a single party dictatorship with Stalin believing in communism and Mussolini focusing on fascism, each mainly using policies for their personal benefit.

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