

— BENITO —  
**MUSSOLINI**

A LIFE FROM BEGINNING TO END



# **BENITO MUSSOLINI**

*A Life from Beginning to End*

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# Introduction

It was Benito Mussolini who first coined the expression “fascism” to describe the widespread nationalism that had swept over post-World War Europe. He made this critique over a decade before Hitler would rise to power. And it wasn't long after such observations, that Mussolini became the unquestioned dictator of Italy. But, perhaps the most startling thing about Mussolini was not his meteoric rise to power, but rather his sudden change of opinion.

And as you will soon see; the beliefs and ideology of the Mussolini at the beginning of this book are completely and diametrically opposed to the Mussolini who emerges at the end of this book. Mussolini began his political career as a right-wing socialist, championing the ideas of Karl Marx, looking forward to a day when class distinction and even national borders would no longer exist.

In stark contrast to the values of his youth, Mussolini would return from World War I as a hardened soldier with a penchant for militant nationalism. For many of Mussolini's former associates in Italy's Socialist Party, he seemed to change literally overnight. As incredible as this ideological shift was, however, it wasn't the only time Mussolini would change his mind.

During his leadership, he was known to have a change of heart quite frequently. During the Second World War such changeability even caused Italy to lose major battles, unable to stay the course because of his incessant flip-flopping.

Before he was a dictator, Mussolini was the editor of a popular newspaper, and he often bragged that he could understand and write from any point of view. He was completely comfortable in putting himself in other people's shoes and seeing from their perspective. This may have been a good asset as a writer, but it often proved disastrous as a leader. This is the life, the legend, and the enigma that is Benito Mussolini.

# Chapter One

## Searching for Destiny

*“The history of saints is mainly the history of insane people.”*

—Benito Mussolini

Benito Mussolini was born on a quiet Sunday morning, in a sleepy Italian village named Varano di Costa in the county of Predappio, which was itself part of the larger northern Italian region of Forlì Romagna, on July 29, 1883. Though considered an Italian backwater at the time, the region was a hotbed of revolutionary activity. Of which, his father Alessandro, was often a part. Alessandro was a local blacksmith and ardent socialist, while his mother Rosa was a pious Catholic and schoolteacher.

The two would often conflict over their ideological beliefs, but Alessandro usually imposed his will and wishes on the family in the end. This is a fact borne out by the very name that he chose for his son. Because while his mother no doubt would have liked to have named him after an apostle or saint, his father had other ideas for his baby boy, and actually named his son Benito after Mexican president Benito Juárez.

Juárez was a liberal of Native American descent who had stood up to the colonial powers of Europe. Alessandro considered him a great leader and role model at the time. Before the young Benito could live up to his revolutionary namesake, his first task would be to help his father in the family business of being a blacksmith. While he was learning the family trade of smithing, however, Benito was also acquiring the other family business which was politics.

It was in the blacksmith shop that his father frequently preached to him the virtue and value of socialism. Alessandro, ironically, did his best to enlighten the future dictator on the more humanist tendencies of such Italian philosophers such as Giuseppe Mazzini, Carlo Pisacane, and especially those of Giuseppe Garibaldi. It was Garibaldi in particular whose authoritarian leanings would influence Mussolini later on.

Mussolini would even later note with strange satisfaction the fact that Garibaldi died shortly before his birth as if he believed in some strange