



Source 3

Sections of a speech by Mussolini to the Fascist Grand Council, 7 April 1932, on Italy's economic problems

(Catalogue ref: WO 204/948, translated from a document found in Mussolini's villa by Allied troops in 1945)

Questions

1. According to this source, what problems did Italians face?
2. Mussolini does not mention war in this speech, but he does want to find a political solution to Italy's problems. In what ways might a successful foreign war help solve these problems?



HEROES & VILLAINS

Mussolini & Abyssinia > Why invade Abyssinia?

Source 3

In the large cities, even in cities which have been hardest hit, as for example TURIN, the masses recognize that the Regime has made use of all its organs to do all that was humanly possible. Naturally next winter will be no brighter than last; and we must therefore be prepared for it.

A proportion, therefore, of the loan at present being raised - one thousand million, to be precise - will be devoted to public and industrial enterprises; for it is clear that the 150,200 millions allocated for unemployment last year had only a moderate effect and did not substantially alleviate distress in the industrial centres.

On the other hand the unemployment figure is fantastic enough. We have adopted a system by which we tell everything. The Fascist Regime is a regime of brutal frankness. We do not merely say there were 1,147,000 unemployed on 29 February 1932, but we say how many of them are men and how many women, we give a break-down by districts and categories and finally we say how many draw unemployment benefits and how many do not. And there are those who won't believe us! We could say that we have 236,000 unemployed, because that is the number of those drawing unemployment benefits.

The demonstrations were the expression of genuine suffering. And what is more, they took place outside the Headquarters of the Carabinieri to whom these women presented their request that the Government should interest itself in their conditions. When one considers these demonstrations, ten or twelve or thirteen of them in a month, and when one remembers that ten million Italians occupying many thousands of square kilometers found themselves in difficult straits, but caused no commotion and remained completely peaceful, then one can understand how perfect the Italian people's order, calm and discipline have been.

years of lean kind. Fundamentally there is a certain truth in it. Yet I do not believe there has ever been a crisis of such proportions as the present one. We must make it plain that the crisis in which the world now labours must be faced; and faced not merely as a problem of economics, but as a political and moral problem as well.

How? In the political sphere. We have already exhausted the whole gamut of economics. We were asked to rationalize and we have rationalized. We were asked to concentrate, and we have concentrated. We were asked to try State intervention and we have done it, so that now the State carries the whole nation on its shoulders. And now I think that nothing remains to be tried on that score. It only remains to put up with it.

The consequences are serious. They are these. A man who received a loan of 1000 lire in 1927, today owes 1400 or 1500, as the case may be; in other words the debtor's situation has of late been growing more and more onerous. Well then, what is happening? Why, everyone is coming to some arrangement, declaring his assets and pronouncing himself bankrupt. Being unable to repay 100 lire at the new rate, he requests to be allowed to pay 40, 50 or 60. When I read the hundreds of declarations of assets and bankruptcies in the statistical bulletins, I am sorry from the human point of view for what it all must mean in terms of suffering. But on