



AP[®] European History 2002 Sample Student Responses Form B

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Question 1

DD-1

The fascist population policy attempted to increase the birthrate in the country, but, ultimately, it failed. While some cases showed adherence to Mussolini's desires for children and mothers at home, overwhelmingly his policy failed. From 1921 - 1945, the birth rate continually fell (Document 12). While limited examples show some people followed his council (Document 10, 11), the vast majority did not heed his views.

Economically speaking, the various laws and decrees did not provide enough motivation to have children. The Italian people (as would any group of people) as a whole could not help but realize the enormous costs related with child-rearing. People, in order to gain wealth and privilege, would willingly not have children (Document 3). The benefits provided, ~~the~~ physically protection for children, clinics for care and supervision, and help for needy families (Document 4) couldn't possibly make up for the extra costs. The ineffectiveness of the program is easily seen through the changes in birthrates - in every region and the whole birthrates constantly decreased throughout fascist rule (Document 12).

The only people to whom this new law, the National Organization for the protection of Mothers and Children, would appeal would be those specifically affected. The first two points specifically mention

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needy families. It is thus no surprise that needy families would be the most respondent to these new laws.

Poor families increased in size and represented the largest families. Despite the new laws, however, many large, needed families did not receive the assistance they required, and thus, as did L.D.R. (Document 10), asked for more aid to help them in their poor conditions. For the majority of Italian families,

the incentives were not enough. The families that did not need to worry about money could have larger families without worrying about "psychological feeling of deprivation." (Document 2). Families such as that in the photograph (Document 11) could thus increase in size, pay bills, and benefit from some of the new policies.

The official fascist magazines and Mussolini himself would naturally portray the laws as grand. Mussolini, in another attempt to increase the birthrate, ~~gave women~~ ~~the~~ proclaimed that women who work cause man's problems (Document 5). Women were urged to remain home and support the men there. Considering that he was the leader of the Italian Fascist party, it is not surprising that he would take such a view. Both articles from Motherhood and Childhood suffer similar bias. Official party magazines would

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not go against their own policies, but exact from the articles present the lessening of motherhood as an abomination - something that "headed for slavery" and "crimes against the health of the race." The Fascist policy of generating as many births as possible were (naturally) applauded by party leaders and magazines. The blame for demographic concerns was always the female - Mussolini declared it in a speech and Paolo Orano cited a doctor who said, "The true cause of the declining birthrate concerns women." (Document 8). Mussolini and the fascists concentrated their efforts on women.

Those "modern and independent" (Document 9) women were ~~not~~ not pleased with the law. Edda Ciano, Mussolini's daughter, years after the actual events, recalled her enormous displeasure with motherhood (Document 7). Political opponents, as well would be against any such law. Salvemini - a political refugee - criticizes the policies and insinuates that Mussolini will continue and execute the slender. (Document 4) A refugee - someone forced to leave to avoid violence, would naturally oppose those who forced him or her to leave.

The fascist population policy of rewarding motherhood, removing all chances to prevent birth, and glorifying both childhood and motherhood failed. Positive reaction to the party's policies was limited and not

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DP-4

nearly enough to make up for the overwhelming negative reaction. This ~~a~~ incredible opposition resulted in the exact opposite of Mussolini's intentions - the birth rate decreased dramatically (29.9 births/1000 inhabitants in 1921-25 to 19.9 in 1941-45) instead of the desired increase.

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As Europe came into the XX^{th} century the population of most of its countries was declining. Such was the case in Italy. Benito Mussolini, the Prime Minister from 1922 to 1943, tried to curb this trend by introducing government policies which attempted to promote the cult of "motherhood" and raise the birthrate in Italy. Such policies, of course, received mixed reactions from the general population. Italian women often viewed them unfavorably since they undermined women's status and rights.

The existing condition of Italy ^{during} ~~at the~~ ~~time~~ Mussolini's ^{stay in} ~~came to~~ power saw a gradually decreasing population (doc. 2). This trend had many causes. One such cause was expressed by A. Molinary, a professor of statistics, who said that the people were having less children due to their "search for a better life" (doc. 3). Indeed, this was often the case since it was hardly possible to sustain a ~~better~~ big family in comfort and prosperity. The result, therefore, for many people was to limit the number of children they had. In his article "Economy", Pietro Battaia attributed this trend towards smaller families as being caused by "the

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psychological feeling of deprivation" among Italian society.

To counteract all these developments, Benito Mussolini puts forth certain reforms devised to encourage a rise in birthrates.

His main aim to create a large population was ^{clearly illustrated} ~~expressed~~ in the fascist party magazine for women which promoted the idea that a ~~low~~ low populated nation "is condemned to moral, political and economic decline" (doc. 6).

Mussolini, therefore, strives to take all possible measures which will enable the government to prevent such a decline. The first of these measures came in 1925 ~~when~~ ~~the~~ with the ~~the~~ establishment of the National Organization for the Protection of Mothers and Children which ~~was~~ granted pregnant women, mothers and children significant benefits. Another method used to achieve the same result was propoganda. Gaetano Salvemini, a political refugee ~~in~~ living in the USA, ~~critic~~ ridicules the fascist party's attempt to create a popular "ideal... of a huge woman", ^{or} ~~who~~ a women of such physical build as was believed to be favorable for child bearing. (doc 4). The third method

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used to increase the population was limiting the freedom of Italian women. In his speech in 1934 Mussolini attributed the decreasing birth rate to the relatively new notions of "independence and a fashion that is contrary to the process of childbirth". (doc. 5) Although only in speech form, Mussolini's statement reflected the growing attitude ^{of government} that the woman's position was at home. It also indicates, however, that women were not willing to make sacrifices of their liberty in order to have more children. One of the main ~~to~~ political steps to increase child birth, however, was the ban on contraceptives which helped to "neutralize" the fall decline of population. Like Mussolini's speech, this action would surely have incurred a wave of passive protest from the women.

So why were the women protesting to expanded families? One of the answers ~~is~~ comes from Edda Mussolini Ciano, the daughter of the Duce himself, who was infuriated by having her ^{independent} life cut short by her relatively early pregnancies. Like many other women, Edda protested against having to commit to

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a family so early on in life. (doc. 7)

Another reason so many women reacted negatively to the government's population policies was the bare^{economic} desparation ~~that~~ which families with many children had to endure. This circumstance is clearly illustrated ~~to~~ in a letter to Edda Mussolini Ciano from a certain L.D. B. who, having seen her husband off to war, found that she could not sustain "a family of 12 people by myself" (doc. 10).

In contrast to the women's views on government policy, Paolo Orlando, an Italian journalist attributes women's desire to have less children to "female insubordination" (doc. 8) This perspective clashes sharply with the attitudes of Italian women and is perhaps indicative of the patriarchal dominance in Italian society.

Nevertheless, despite protestant calls from women, big families ~~was~~ existed ~~and~~ were common in Italy (doc. 14). Mussolini's ~~attempts~~ ~~policies~~, although having failed in the long run, led to certain improvements, one of which was the raised status of the mother and child ~~status~~ to which Mussolini referred to as "the supreme values of the race" (doc. 6)