

Mussolini's appointment as prime minister in October 1922 did not create a Fascist Italy. Although he held the critical positions of Minister of the Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the 14 man cabinet contained only four Fascists. The remaining 10 members, mainly Liberals, Catholics and military leaders, were convinced that Mussolini could be used to crush the threat of the left. After this crisis passed, they believed that Mussolini would either become a respectable politician, tamed by the trappings of power, or he could be dismissed. Mussolini had been appointed by the King, and could therefore be dismissed by the King just as easily. The Fascists were still a minority in parliament, where their 35 seats represented just 7% of the popular vote.

By the end of 1925, however, all other political parties had been banned and a one party state had been established. The revolution which created a one party state, and installed Mussolini as Il Duce, was more easily achieved because it was partly endorsed by the King and by parliament.

Task: Using the cards, complete the description for each event below. Then, decide which of the following it is an example of (it may be an example of more than one):

- the use of legal power
- support from the King
- the use of terror
- the mistakes of opponents

	Description ...	An example of ...
<p><b>November 1922</b></p> <p>Mussolini was given the power to rule by decree for 12 months.</p>		
<p><b>December 1922</b></p> <p>The Fascist Grand Council was created.</p>		
<p><b>January 1923</b></p> <p>The Fascist militia was created.</p>		
<p><b>November 1923</b></p> <p>The Acerbo Law was passed.</p>		

<b>April 1924</b> National elections led to the Fascists becoming the largest party.		
<b>June 1924</b> Matteotti was murdered.		
<b>July 1924</b> After the Aventine Secession, Mussolini had total power.		
<b>December 1925</b> The 'Legge Fascistissime' banned all other political parties.		
<b>October 1926</b> A formal decree confirmed the one party state.		

Which event do you think was most important in establishing a dictatorship? Why?

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100 socialist deputies protested against the murder of Matteotti by withdrawing from government and meeting separately – this was known as the Aventine Secession.

Government by decree meant that Mussolini was now answerable only to the King.

Mussolini set up the Fascist Grand Council who would present policy to the government. Mussolini chose members of the council, ensuring he controlled policy.

The 'Legge Fascistissime' decree banned all opposition parties after the attempted assassination of Mussolini by a socialist.

Mussolini created the state militia (MSVN) who used the threat of violence against opposition – three opposition politicians were murdered and 50 violently attacked in 1923 alone.

Parliament granted Mussolini emergency powers to rule by decree for 12 months thanks to support from Liberals and Catholics who feared the rise of socialism.

The Acerbo Law passed by a 100 vote majority. It granted a two-thirds majority of seats in government to the party who won over 25% of votes in an election.

Fascists polled four and a half million votes, compared to three million votes for the opposition, thanks to foreign policy successes like the Pact of Rome, which returned Fiume to Italy.

Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti was murdered by Fascists for publishing an article about Fascist vote rigging in the April election.