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## Careful Vladimir or You May End Up Like Il Duce

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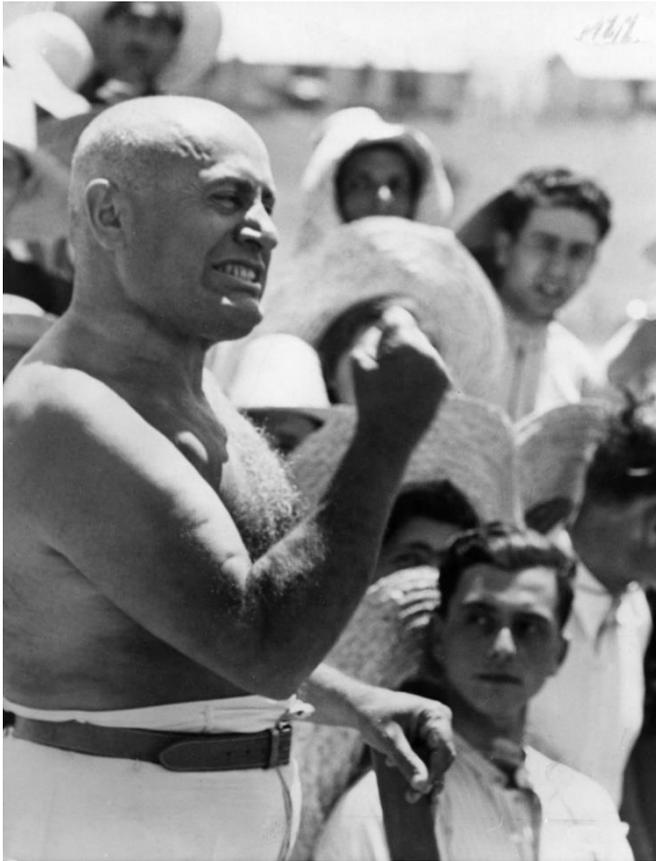
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*Benito Mussolini, "Il Duce," projected an aura of manhood, action, leadership, and intellectual prowess.*

## Careful Vladimir or you may end up like Il Duce.

— Emilio Iodice, Rome, Italy

For years he was hailed as the greatest leader of his time.

Gandhi called him a "Superman."

He was named the "Napoleon of the Twentieth Century."

Churchill, Roosevelt, and notable leaders from around the world praised his leadership. People from across the globe extolled him.

Women adored him. Journalists and writers fell under his hypnotic spell as did millions of his countrymen.

He was a master of the media and bent and twisted it to convey his message of greatness, pride, and nationalism. He transformed a rural, backward nation into a model of efficiency, economic growth, and self-esteem.

His doctrine of fascism was analyzed by economists, sociologists, and politicians as, perhaps, a new way of governing in complex times.

Fascist parties grew in civilized nations.

Suddenly, his fame evaporated as the world understood what was behind his façade.

It was violence, tyranny, the destruction of liberty and the



*Courtesy, Istituto Luce and Italian National Archives*



*Vladimir Putin, Courtesy, Cambridge University Press*

suffering and bloodshed of war and mayhem.

The times and crises that created him are once again upon us. Democracies are weak and governments in free nations are divided and unable to deal with the threat of growing totalitarianism, prejudice, and intolerance.

An increasing number of Russian analysts are calling Putin's regime "fascist." Without a doubt, he is following in the footsteps of Italy's 20<sup>th</sup> century dictator.



He wrestled tigers and leopards, went shirtless, rode horses, dove into the Tiber, played the violin, boasted about his sexual skills, and ran a police state.

Putin paints the same picture. He rejects signs of femininity or weakness.

An avid sportsman who loves hockey, plays the piano, rides horses without a shirt, practices martial arts, caresses tigers, and leopards, swims in frigid waters, writes about development of Russia's natural

*Courtesy, RAI News*

resources, and the reunification of his nation with its past and imposed authoritarian rule on his people.

Mussolini rose to power in eighteen months following election to parliament. Putin became President nine months after becoming Premier. Both were young. Il Duce was 39, Vladimir 48. Mussolini set out to restore the Roman Empire. Putin dreams of recreating the Soviet Union.



*Courtesy, Istituto Luce and Italian National Archives*

Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty and made peace with the Vatican following 60 years of separation.

Putin helped create the Act of Canonical Communion which restored relations between the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow and the Church in other parts of the world following an 80 schism.

Il Duce dragged his nation into useless wars. First in Ethiopia, then in Spain, and finally the Second World War.



*Courtesy, Orthodox Times*

His alliance with Hitler was devastating for him and his people.



*Courtesy, Istituto Luce and Italian National Archives*

To extend his despotic rule and increase his empire, Putin launched attacks in Chechin, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Xi Jinping of China is his only friend.

A few years before the start of WWII, an old Socialist companion of Mussolini visited him. He warned Il Duce that he would end up like Cola di Rienzo, a 14<sup>th</sup>



*Courtesy, Tass and Radio Free Europe*



*Courtesy, Tass and the New Yorker*



*Courtesy, Istituto Luce, Italian National Archives and Wikipedia Commons*

century leader who rose rapidly to power only to be executed and hung by his heels in the town square. Mussolini laughed and replied, "I do not wear rings like Cola," who was identified by the jewelry he wore.

Six years later, Il Duce was killed by his people and hung by his heels in a square in Milan.

Vladimir Putin does not wear rings. Yet he will be identified by the hatred, suffering, and misery he aroused.

Careful Vladimir or you may end up like Il Duce.

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*Emilio Iodice is Director Emeritus of Loyola University Chicago's Rome Center, Professor of Leadership, and author of "The Return of Mussolini: The Rise of Modern-Day Tyranny." [iodicebooks.com](http://iodicebooks.com).*