

Mussolini's Latin

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This paper analyses Benito Mussolini's use of Latin words and phrases in his political rhetoric. Through an examination of his published writings and speeches, we investigate how Mussolini's understanding, perceptions, and use of Latin evolved over time, from his early days as a socialist leader to his years as head of Italian Fascism. Despite his limited knowledge of the language, Mussolini accorded Latin special symbolic significance and actively cultivated an image of himself as proficient in it. We show how Mussolini's initial association of Latin with the Roman Catholic Church and bourgeoisie culture gave way to a recognition of its political potential in the context of the Fascist cult of Rome. Throughout his political career, Mussolini employed Latin expressions for various purposes. Our analysis places particular emphasis on the ways in which he instrumentalized Latin to communicate Fascist ideas and construct his public persona as the 'Roman-style' leader of Fascism.