

**THE MYTHICAL MUSSOLINI AS SEEN BY NICOLAE IORGA:
THE STATESMAN, THE GENIUS, THE MAN***

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Abstract: I intend within this paper to focus on the reconstruction of Mussolini's portrait as it appears throughout Nicolae Iorga's selected published writings, starting from late 1922, when the former came to power in Italy, to 1939, the year of the outbreak of the Second World War. I believe that such a study is of much importance since it can provide a contemporary perspective on the Italian dictator from perhaps the most active and best known Romanian intellectual and historian of the '20s-'30s Europe and from one of the greatest orators of Bucharest's elite.

I herein wish to argue that throughout this period, Iorga has not openly criticized the Italian leader, but, on the contrary, the portrait that results from joining all the references to Benito Mussolini is largely encomiastic. When analyzing these texts there is a threefold structure that emerges as how the historian viewed the Italian dictator: the political dimension (Mussolini as a *statesman*), the mythical dimension (Mussolini as *the genius* among other dictators) and the human dimension (Mussolini as *a man*). These three components are complementary and they all together reveal Iorga's constant concern to interpret in depth the Fascist ruler and his regime along with the events surrounding them.

Keywords: Benito Mussolini, Nicolae Iorga, Romanian interwar elites, Italian Fascism, Romanian intellectual history
