

# VARIOUS

READINGS ON FASCISM  
AND NATIONAL  
SOCIALISM

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**Readings on Fascism  
and National Socialism**

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**Various  
Readings on Fascism and National Socialism /  
Selected by members of the department  
of philosophy, University of Colorado**

**THE DOCTRINE OF FASCISM**

by

**Benito Mussolini**

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The English translation of the "Fundamental Ideas" is by Mr. I.S. Munro, reprinted by his kind permission from "Fascism to World-Power" (Alexander Maclehose, London, 1933).

**FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS**

**1. Philosophic Conception**

Like every concrete political conception, Fascism is thought and action. It is action with an inherent doctrine which, arising out of a given system of historic forces, is inserted in it and works on it from within. It has therefore a form co-related to the contingencies of time and place; but it has at the same time an ideal content which elevates it into a formula of truth in the higher region of the history of thought.

There is no way of exercising a spiritual influence on the things of the world by means of a human will-power commanding the wills of others, without first having a clear conception of the particular and transient reality on which the will-power must act, and without also having a clear conception of the universal and permanent reality in which the particular and transient reality has its life and being. To know men we must have a knowledge of man; and to have a knowledge of man we must know the reality of things and their laws.

There can be no conception of a State which is not fundamentally a conception of Life. It is a philosophy or intuition, a system of ideas which evolves itself into a system of logical contraction, or which concentrates itself in a vision or in a faith, but which is always, at least virtually, an organic conception of the world.

## **2. Spiritualised Conception**

Fascism would therefore not be understood in many of its manifestations (as, for example, in its organisations of the Party, its system of education, its discipline) were it not considered in the light of its general view of life. A spiritualised view.

To Fascism the world is not this material world which appears on the surface, in which man is an individual separated from all other men, standing by himself and subject to a natural law which instinctively impels him to lead a life of momentary and egoistic pleasure. In Fascism man is an individual who is the nation and the country. He is this by a moral law which embraces and binds together individuals and generations in an established tradition and mission, a moral law which suppresses the instinct to lead a life confined to a brief cycle of pleasure in order, instead, to replace it within the orbit of duty in a superior conception of life, free from the limits of time and space a life in which the individual by self-abnegation and by the sacrifice of his particular interests, even by death, realises the entirely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists.

## **3. Positive Conception of Life as a Struggle**

It is therefore a spiritual conception, itself also a result of the general reaction of the Century against the languid and materialistic positivism of the Eighteenth Century. Anti-positivist, but positive: neither sceptical nor agnostic, neither pessimistic nor passively optimistic, as are in general the doctrines (all of them negative) which place the centre of life outside of man, who by his free will can and should create his own world for himself.

Fascism wants a man to be active and to be absorbed in action with all his energies; it wants him to have a manly consciousness of the difficulties that exist and to be ready to face them. It conceives life as a struggle, thinking that it is the duty of man to conquer that life which is really worthy of him: creating in the first place within himself the (physical, moral, intellectual) instrument with which to build it.

As for the individual, so for the nation, so for mankind. Hence the high value of culture in all its forms (art, religion, science) and the supreme importance of education. Hence also the essential value of labour, with which man conquers nature and creates the human world (economic, political, moral, intellectual).

## **4. Ethical Conception**

This positive conception of life is evidently an ethical conception. And it comprises the whole reality as well as the human activity which domineers it. No action is to be removed from the moral sense; nothing is to be in the world that is divested of the importance which belongs to it in respect of moral aims. Life, therefore, as the Fascist conceives it, is serious, austere, religious; entirely balanced in a world sustained by the moral and responsible forces of the spirit. The Fascist disdains the "easy" life.

## **5. Religious Conception**

Fascism is a religious conception in which man is considered to be in the powerful grip of a superior law, with an objective will which transcends the particular individual and elevates him into a fully conscious member of a spiritual society. Anyone who has stopped short at the mere consideration

of opportunism in the religious policy of the Fascist Regime, has failed to understand that Fascism, besides being a system of government, is also a system of thought.

## **6. Historical and Realist Conception**

Fascism is an historical conception in which man could not be what he is without being a factor in the spiritual process to which he contributes, either in the family sphere or in the social sphere, in the nation or in history in general to which all nations contribute. Hence is derived the great importance of tradition in the records, language, customs and rules of human society. Man without a part in history is nothing.

For this reason Fascism is opposed to all the abstractions of an individualistic character based upon materialism typical of the Eighteenth Century; and it is opposed to all the Jacobin innovations and utopias. It does not believe in the possibility of "happiness" on earth as conceived by the literature of the economists of the Seventeenth Century; it therefore spurns all the teleological conceptions of final causes through which, at a given period of history, a final systematisation of the human race would take place. Such theories only mean placing oneself outside real history and life, which is a continual ebb and flow and process of realisations.

Politically speaking, Fascism aims at being a realistic doctrine; in its practice it aspired to solve only the problems which present themselves of their own accord in the process of history, and which of themselves find or suggest their own solution. To have the effect of action among men, it is necessary to enter into the process of reality and to master the forces actually at work.

## **7. The Individual and Liberty**

Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception is for the State; it is for the individual only in so far as he coincides with the State, universal consciousness and will of man in his historic existence. It is opposed to the classic Liberalism which arose out of the need of reaction against absolutism, and had accomplished its mission in history when the State itself had become transformed in the popular will and consciousness.

Liberalism denied the State in the interests of the particular individual; Fascism reaffirms the State as the only true expression of the individual.

And if liberty is to be the attribute of the real man, and not of the scarecrow invented by the individualistic Liberalism, then Fascism is for liberty. It is for the only kind of liberty that is serious—the liberty of the State and of the individual in the State. Because, for the Fascist, all is comprised in the State and nothing spiritual or human exists—much less has any value—outside the State. In this respect Fascism is a totalising concept, and the Fascist State—the unification and synthesis of every value—interprets, develops and potentiates the whole life of the people.

## **8. Conception of a Corporate State**

No individuals nor groups (political parties, associations, labour unions, classes) outside the State. For this reason Fascism is opposed to Socialism, which clings rigidly to class war in the historic evolution and ignores the unity of the State which moulds the classes into a single, moral and economic reality. In the same way Fascism is opposed to the unions of the labouring classes. But within the orbit of the State with ordinative functions, the real needs, which give rise to the Socialist movement and to the forming of labour unions, are emphatically recognised by Fascism and are given their full expression in the Corporative System, which conciliates every interest in the unity of the State.

## 9. Democracy

Individuals form classes according to categories of interests. They are associated according to differentiated economical activities which have a common interest: but first and foremost they form the State. The State is not merely either the numbers or the sum of individuals forming the majority of a people. Fascism for this reason is opposed to the democracy which identifies peoples with the greatest number of individuals and reduces them to a majority level. But if people are conceived, as they should be, qualitatively and not quantitatively, then Fascism is democracy in its purest form. The qualitative conception is the most coherent and truest form and is therefore the most moral, because it sees a people realised in the consciousness and will of the few or even of one only; an ideal which moves to its realisation in the consciousness and will of all. By "all" is meant all who derive their justification as a nation, ethnically speaking, from their nature and history, and who follow the same line of spiritual formation and development as one single will and consciousness—not as a race nor as a geographically determined region, but as a progeny that is rather the outcome of a history which perpetuates itself; a multitude unified by an idea embodied in the will to have power and to exist, conscious of itself and of its personality.

## 10. Conception of the State

This higher personality is truly the nation, inasmuch as it is the State. The nation does not beget the State, according to the decrepit nationalistic concept which was used as a basis for the publicists of the national States in the Nineteenth Century. On the contrary, the nation is created by the State, which gives the people, conscious of their own moral unity, the will, and thereby an effective existence. The right of a nation to its independence is derived not from a literary and ideal consciousness of its own existence, much less from a *de facto* situation more or less inert and unconscious, but from an active consciousness, from an active political will disposed to demonstrate in its right; that is to say, a kind of State already in its pride (*in fieri*). The State, in fact, as a universal ethical will, is the creator of right.

## 11. Dynamic Reality

The nation as a State is an ethical reality which exists and lives in measure as it develops. A standstill is its death. Therefore the State is not only the authority which governs and which gives the forms of law and the worth of the spiritual life to the individual wills, but it is also the power which gives effect to its will in foreign matters, causing it to be recognised and respected by demonstrating through facts the universality of all the manifestations necessary for its development. Hence it is organization as well as expansion, and it may be thereby considered, at least virtually, equal to the very nature of the human will, which in its evolution recognises no barriers, and which realises itself by proving its infinity.

## 12. The Rôle of the State

The Fascist State, the highest and the most powerful form of personality is a force, but a spiritual one. It reassumes all the forms of the moral and intellectual life of man. It cannot, therefore, be limited to a simple function of order and of safeguarding, as was contended by Liberalism. It is not a simple mechanism which limits the sphere of the presumed individual liberties. It is an internal form and rule, a discipline of the entire person: it penetrates the will as well as the intelligence. Its principle, a central inspiration of the living human personality in the civil community, descends into

the depths and settles in the heart of the man of action as well as the thinker, of the artist as well as of the scientist; the soul of our soul.

### **13. Discipline and Authority**

Fascism, in short, is not only a lawgiver and the founder of institutions, but an educator and a promoter of the spiritual life. It aims to rebuild not the forms of human life, but its content, the man, the character, the faith. And for this end it exacts discipline and an authority which descend into and dominates the interior of the spirit without opposition. Its emblem, therefore, is the lictorian *fascis*, symbol of unity, of force and of justice.

## **Political And Social Doctrine**

### **1. Origins of the Doctrine**

When, in the now distant March of 1919, I summoned a meeting at Milan, through the columns of the *Popolo d'Italia*, of those who had supported and endured the war and who had followed me since the constitution of the *fasci* or Revolutionary Action in January 1915, there was no specific doctrinal plan in my mind. I had the experience of one only doctrine—that of Socialism from 1903-04 to the winter of 1914 about a decade—but I made it first in the ranks and later as a leader and it was never an experience in theory. My doctrine, even during that period, was a doctrine of action. A universally accepted doctrine of Socialism had not existed since 1915 when the revisionist movement started in Germany, under the leadership of Bernstein. Against this, in the swing of tendencies, a left revolutionary movement began to take shape, but in Italy it never went further than the "field of phrases," whereas in Russian Socialistic circles it became the prelude of Bolscevism. "Reformism," "revolutionarism," "centrism," this is a terminology of which even the echoes are now spent—but in the great river of Fascism are currents which flowed from Sorel, from Peguy, from Lagardelle and the "Mouvement Socialiste," from Italian syndicalists which were legion between 1904 and 1914, and sounded a new note in Italian Socialist circles (weakened then by the betrayal of Giolitti) through Olivetti's *Pagine Libere*, Orano's *La Lupa* and Enrico Leone's *Divenire Sociale*.

After the War, in 1919, Socialism was already dead as a doctrine: it existed only as a grudge. In Italy especially, it had one only possibility of action: reprisals against those who had wanted the War and must now pay its penalty. The *Popolo d'Italia* carried as sub-title "daily of ex-service men and producers," and the word producers was already then the expression of a turn of mind. Fascism was not the nursling of a doctrine previously worked out at a desk; it was born of the need for action and it was action. It was not a party, in fact during the first two years, it was an anti-party and a movement.

The name I gave the organisation fixed its character. Yet whoever should read the now crumpled sheets with the minutes of the meeting at which the Italian "Fasci di Combattimento" were constituted, would fail to discover a doctrine, but would find a series of ideas, of anticipations, of hints which, liberated from the inevitable strangleholds of contingencies, were destined after some years to develop into doctrinal conceptions. Through them Fascism became a political doctrine to itself, different, by comparison, to all others whether contemporary or of the past.

I said then, "If the bourgeoisie think we are ready to act as lightning-conductors, they are mistaken. We must go towards labour. We wish to train the working classes to directive functions. We wish to convince them that it is not easy to manage Industry or Trade: we shall fight the technique and the spirit of the rearguard. When the succession of the regime is open, we must not lack the fighting spirit. We must rush and if the present regime be overcome, it is we who must fill its place.

The claim to succession belongs to us, because it was we who forced the country into War and we who led her to victory. The present political representation cannot suffice: we must have a direct representation of all interest. Against this programme one might say it is a return to corporations. But that does not matter. Therefore I should like this assembly to accept the claims put in by national syndicalism from an economic standpoint...."

Is it not strange that the word corporations should have been uttered at the first meeting of Piazza San Sepolcro, when one considers that, in the course of the Revolution, it came to express one of the social and legislative creations at the very foundations of the regime?

## 2. Development

The years which preceded the March on Rome were years in which the necessity of action did not permit complete doctrinal investigations or elaborations. The battle was raging in the towns and villages. There were discussions, but what was more important and sacred—there was death. Men knew how to die. The doctrine—all complete and formed, with divisions into chapters, paragraphs, and accompanying elucubrations—might be missing; but there was something more decided to replace it, there was faith.

Notwithstanding, whoever remembers with the aid of books and speeches, whoever could search through them and select, would find that the fundamental principles were laid down whilst the battle raged. It was really in those years that the Fascist idea armed itself, became refined and proceeded towards organisation: the problems of the individual and of the State, the problems of authority and of liberty, the political and social problems, especially national; the fight against the liberal, democratic, socialistic and popular doctrines, was carried out together with the "punitive expeditions."

But as a "system" was lacking, our adversaries in bad faith, denied to Fascism any capacity to produce a doctrine, though that doctrine was growing tumultuously, at first under the aspect of violent and dogmatic negation, as happens to all newly-born ideas, and later under the positive aspect of construction which was successively realised, in the years 1926-27-28 through the laws and institutions of the regime. Fascism today stands clearly defined not only as a regime, but also as a doctrine. This word doctrine should be interpreted in the sense that Fascism, to-day, when passing criticism on itself and others, has its own point of view and its own point of reference, and therefore also its own orientation when facing those problems which beset the world in the spirit and in the matter.

## 3. Against Pacifism: War and Life as a Duty

As far as the general future and development of humanity is concerned, and apart from any mere consideration of current politics, Fascism above all does not believe either in the possibility or utility of universal peace. It therefore rejects the pacifism which masks surrender and cowardice. War alone brings all human energies to their highest tension and sets a seal of nobility on the peoples who have the virtue to face it. All other tests are but substitutes which never make a man face himself in the alternative of life or death. A doctrine which has its starting-point at the prejudicial postulate of peace is therefore extraneous to Fascism.

In the same way all international creations (which, as history demonstrates, can be blown to the winds when sentimental, ideal and practical elements storm the heart of a people) are also extraneous to the spirit of Fascism—even if such international creations are accepted for whatever utility they may have in any determined political situation.

Fascism also transports this anti-pacifist spirit into the life of individuals. The proud *squadrista* motto "*me ne frego*" ("I don't give a damn") scrawled on the bandages of the wounded is an act of

philosophy—not only stoic. It is a summary of a doctrine not only political: it is an education in strife and an acceptance of the risks which it carried: it is a new style of Italian life. It is thus that the Fascist loves and accepts life, ignores and disdains suicide; understands life as a duty, a lifting up, a conquest; something to be filled in and sustained on a high plane; a thing that has to be lived through for its own sake, but above all for the sake of others near and far, present and future.

#### **4. The Demographic Policy and the "Neighbour."**

The "demographic" policy of the regime is the result of these premises. The Fascist also loves his neighbour, but "neighbour" is not for him a vague and undefinable word: love for his neighbour does not prevent necessary educational severities. Fascism rejects professions of universal affection and, though living in the community of civilised peoples, it watches them and looks at them diffidently. It follows them in their state of mind and in the transformation of their interests, but it does not allow itself to be deceived by fallacious and mutable appearances.

#### **5. Against Historical Materialism and Class-Struggle**

Through this conception of life Fascism becomes the emphatic negation of that doctrine which constituted the basis of the so-called scientific Socialism or Marxism: the doctrine of historical materialism, according to which the story of human civilisation is to be explained only by the conflict of interests between the various social groups and by the change of the means and instruments of production.

That the economic vicissitudes—discovery of prime or raw materials, new methods of labour, scientific inventions—have their particular importance, is denied by none, but that they suffice to explain human history, excluding other factors from it, is absurd: Fascism still believes in sanctity and in heroism, that is to say in acts in which no economic motive, immediate or remote, operates.

Fascism having denied historical materialism, by which men are only puppets in history, appearing and disappearing on the surface of the tides while in the depths the real directive forces act and labour, it also denies the immutable and irreparable class warfare, which is the natural filiation of such an economic conception of history: and it denies above all that class warfare is the preponderating agent of social transformation.

Being defeated on these two capital points of its doctrine, nothing remains of Socialism save the sentimental aspiration—as old as humanity—to achieve a community of social life in which the sufferings and hardships of the humblest classes are alleviated. But here Fascism repudiates the concept of an economic "happiness" which is to be—at a given moment in the evolution of economy—socialistically and almost automatically realised by assuring to all the maximum of well-being.

Fascism denies the possibilities of the materialistic concept of "happiness"—it leaves that to the economists of the first half of the Seventeenth Century; that is, it denies the equation "well-being-happiness," which reduces man to the state of the animals, mindful of only one thing—that of being fed and fattened; reduced, in fact, to a pure and simple vegetative existence.

#### **6. Against Democratic Ideologies**

After disposing of Socialism, Fascism opens a breach on the whole complex of the democratic ideologies, and repudiates them in their theoretic premises as well as in their practical application or instrumentation. Fascism denies that numbers, by the mere fact of being numbers, can direct human society; it denies that these numbers can govern by means of periodical consultations; it affirms also

the fertilising, beneficent and unassailable inequality of men, who cannot be levelled through an extrinsic and mechanical process such as universal suffrage.

Regimes can be called democratic which, from time to time, give the people the illusion of being sovereign, whereas the real and effective sovereignty exists in other, and very often secret and irresponsible forces.

Democracy is a regime without a king, but very often with many kings, far more exclusive, tyrannical and ruinous than a single king, even if he be a tyrant. This explains why Fascism which, for contingent reasons, had assumed a republican tendency before 1922, renounced it previous to the March on Rome, with the conviction that the political constitution of a State is not nowadays a supreme question; and that, if the examples of past and present monarchies and past and present republics are studied, the result is that neither monarchies nor republics are to be judged under the assumption of eternity, but that they merely represent forms in which the extrinsic political evolution takes shape as well as the history, the tradition and the psychology of a given country.

Consequently, Fascism glides over the antithesis between monarchy and republic, on which democraticism wasted time, blaming the former for all social shortcomings and exalting the latter as a regime of perfection. We have now seen that there are republics which may be profoundly absolutist and reactionary, and monarchies which welcome the most venturesome social and political experiments.

## **7. Untruths of Democracy**

"Reason and science" says Renan (who had certain pre-fascist enlightenments) in one of his philosophical meditations, "are products of mankind, but to seek reason directly for the people and through the people is a chimera. It is not necessary for the existence of reason that everybody should know it. In any case if this initiation were to be brought about it could not be through low-class democracy, which seems to lead rather to the extinction of every difficult culture and of every great discipline. The principle that society exists only for the welfare and liberty of individuals composing it, does not seem to conform with the plans of nature: plans in which the species only is taken into consideration and the individual appears sacrificed. It is strongly to be feared that the last word of democracy thus understood (I hasten to add that it can also be differently understood) would be a social state in which a degenerated mass would have no preoccupation other than that of enjoying the ignoble pleasures of the vulgar person."

Thus Renan. In Democracy Fascism rejects the absurd conventional falsehood of political equality, the habit of collective responsibility and the myth of indefinite progress and happiness.

But if there be a different understanding of Democracy if, in other words, Democracy can also signify to not push the people back as far as the margins of the State, then Fascism may well have been defined by the present writer as "an organised, centralised, authoritarian Democracy."

## **8. Against Liberal Doctrines**

As regards the Liberal doctrines, the attitude of Fascism is one of absolute opposition both in the political and in the economical field. There is no need to exaggerate the importance of Liberalism in the last century—simply for the sake of present-day polemics—and to transform one of the numerous doctrines unfolded in that last century into a religion of humanity for all times, present and future. Liberalism did not flourish for more than a period of fifteen years. It was born in 1830 from the reaction to the Holy Alliance which attempted to set Europe back to the period which preceded '89 and had its years of splendour in 1848, when also Pius IX was a Liberal. Its decadence began immediately afterwards. If 1848 was a year of light and poesy, 1849 was a year of weakness and tragedy. The Roman Republic was killed by another Republic, the French Republic. In the same year

Marx issued his famous manifesto of Communism. In 1851 Napoleon III made his anti-Liberal *coup d'état* and reigned over France until 1870. He was overthrown by a popular movement, following one of the greatest defeats registered in history. The victor was Bismarck, who always ignored the religion of liberty and its prophets. It is symptomatic that a people of high civilisation like the Germans completely ignored the religion of liberty throughout the whole Nineteenth Century—with but one parenthesis, represented by that which was called "the ridiculous parliament of Frankfurt" which lasted one season. Germany realised its national unity outside of Liberalism, against Liberalism—a doctrine which seemed alien to the German spirit essentially monarchical, since Liberalism is the historical and logical ante-chamber of anarchy.

The three wars of 1864, 1866 and 1870 conducted by "Liberals" like Moltke and Bismarck mark the three stages of German unity. As for Italian unity, Liberalism played a very inferior part in the make-up of Mazzini and Garibaldi, who were not liberals. Without the intervention of the anti-Liberal Napoleon we would not have had Lombardy, and without the help of the anti-Liberal Bismarck at Sadowa and Sedan it is very likely that we would not have got Venice in 1866, or that we would have entered Rome in 1870.

During the period of 1870-1915 the preachers of the new Credo themselves denounced the twilight of their religion; it was beaten in the breach by decadence in literature. It was beaten in the open by decadence in practice. Activism: that is to say, nationalism, futurism. Fascism.

The "Liberal Century" after having accumulated an infinity of Gordian knots, sought to cut them in the hecatomb of the World War. Never did any religion impose such a terrible sacrifice. Have the gods of Liberalism slaked their blood-thirst?

Liberalism is now on the point of closing the doors of its deserted temples because nations feel that its agnosticism in the economic field and its indifference in political and moral matters, causes, as it has already caused, the sure ruin of States. That is why all the political experiences of the contemporary world are anti-Liberal, and it is supremely silly to seek to classify them as things outside of history—as if history were a hunting ground reserved to Liberalism and its professors; as if Liberalism were the last and incomparable word of civilisation.

## **9. Fascism Does Not Turn Back**

The Fascist negation of Socialism, of Democracy, of Liberalism, should not lead one to believe that Fascism wishes to push the world back to where it was before 1879, the date accepted as the opening year of the demo-Liberal century. One cannot turn back. The Fascist doctrine has not chosen De Maistre for its prophet. Monarchical absolutism is a thing of the past, and so is the worship of church power. Feudal privileges and divisions into impenetrable castes with no connection between them, are also "have beens." The conception of Fascist authority has nothing in common with the Police. A party that totally rules a nation is a new chapter in history. References and comparisons are not possible. From the ruins of the socialist, liberal and democratic doctrines, Fascism picks those elements that still have a living value; keeps those that might be termed "facts acquired by history," and rejects the rest: namely the conception of a doctrine good for all times and all people.

Admitting that the Nineteenth Century was the Century of Socialism, Liberalism and Democracy, it is not said that the Twentieth century must also be the century of Socialism, of Liberalism, of Democracy. Political doctrines pass on, but peoples remain. One may now think that this will be the century of authority, the century of the "right wing" the century of Fascism. If the Nineteenth Century was the century of the individual (liberalism signifies individualism) one may think that this will be the century of "collectivism," the century of the State. It is perfectly logical that a new doctrine should utilise the vital elements of other doctrines. No doctrine was ever born entirely new and shining, never seen before. No doctrine can boast of absolute "originality." Each doctrine is bound historically to doctrines which went before, to doctrines yet to come. Thus the scientific

Socialism of Marx is bound to the Utopian Socialism of Fourier, of Owen, of Saint-Simon; thus the Liberalism of 1800 is linked with the movement of 1700. Thus Democratic doctrines are bound to the Encyclopaedists. Each doctrine tends to direct human activity towards a definite object; but the activity of man reacts upon the doctrine, transforms it and adapts it to new requirements, or overcomes it. Doctrine therefore should be an act of life and not an academy of words. In this lie the pragmatic veins of Fascism, its will to power, its will to be, its position with regard to "violence" and its value.

## **10. The Value and Mission of the State**

The capital point of the Fascist doctrine is the conception of the State, its essence, the work to be accomplished, its final aims. In the conception of Fascism, the State is an absolute before which individuals and groups are relative. Individuals and groups are "conceivable" inasmuch as they are in the State. The Liberal State does not direct the movement and the material and spiritual evolution of collectivity, but limits itself to recording the results; the Fascist State has its conscious conviction, a will of its own, and for this reason it is called an "ethical" State.

In 1929 at the first quinquennial assembly of the Regime, I said: "In Fascism the State is not a night-watchman, only occupied with the personal safety of the citizens, nor is it an organisation with purely material aims, such as that of assuring a certain well-being and a comparatively easy social cohabitation. A board of directors would be quite sufficient to deal with this. It is not a purely political creation, either, detached from the complex material realities of the life of individuals and of peoples. The State as conceived and enacted by Fascism, is a spiritual and moral fact since it gives concrete form to the political, juridical and economical organisation of the country. Furthermore this organisation as it rises and develops, is a manifestation of the spirit. The State is a safeguard of interior and exterior safety but it is also the keeper and the transmitter of the spirit of the people, as it was elaborated throughout the ages, in its language, customs and beliefs. The State is not only the present, but it is also the past and above all the future. The State, inasmuch as it transcends the short limits of individual lives, represents the immanent conscience of the nation. The forms in which the State expresses itself are subject to changes, but the necessity for the State remains. It is the State which educates the citizens in civic virtues, gives them a consciousness of their mission, presses them towards unity; the State harmonizes their interests through justice, transmits to prosperity the attainments of thoughts, in science, in art, in laws, in the solidarity of mankind. The State leads men from primitive tribal life to that highest expression of human power which is Empire; links up through the centuries the names of those who died to preserve its integrity or to obey its laws; holds up the memory of the leaders who increased its territory, and of the geniuses who cast the light of glory upon it, as an example for future generations to follow. When the conception of the State declines and disintegrating or centrifugal tendencies prevail, whether of individuals or groups, then the national society is about to set."

## **11. The Unity of the State and the Contradictions of Capitalism**

From 1929 onwards to the present day, the universal, political and economical evolution has still further strengthened the doctrinal positions. The giant who rules is the State. The one who can resolve the dramatic contradictions of capital is the State. What is called the crisis cannot be resolved except by the State and in the State. Where are the ghosts of Jules Simon who, at the dawn of Liberalism, proclaimed that "the State must set to work to make itself useless and prepare its resignation?" Of MacCulloch who, in the second half of the past century, proclaimed that the State must abstain from ruling? What would the Englishman Bentham say today to the continual and inevitably-invoked intervention of the State in the sphere of economics, while, according to his theories, industry should ask no more of the State than to be left in peace? Or the German Humboldt according to whom an

"idle" State was the best kind of State? It is true that the second wave of Liberal economists were less extreme than the first, and Adam Smith himself opened the door—if only very cautiously—to let State intervention into the economic field.

If Liberalism signifies the individual—then Fascism signifies the State. But the Fascist State is unique of its kind and is an original creation. It is not reactionary but revolutionary, inasmuch as it anticipates the solution of certain universal problems such as those which are treated elsewhere: 1) in the political sphere, by the subdivisions of parties, in the preponderance of parliamentarism and in the irresponsibilities of assemblies; 2) in the economic sphere, by the functions of trade unions which are becoming constantly more numerous and powerful, whether in the labour or industrial fields, in their conflicts and combinations, and 3) in the moral sphere by the necessity of order, discipline, obedience to those who are the moral dictators of the country. Fascism wants the State to be strong, organic and at the same time supported on a wide popular basis. As part of its task the Fascist State has penetrated the economic field: through the corporative, social and educational institutions which it has created. The presence of the State is felt in the remotest ramifications of the country. And in the State also, all the political, economic and spiritual forces of the nation circulate, mustered in their respective organisations.

A State which stands on the support of millions of individuals who recognise it, who believe in it, who are ready to serve it, is not the tyrannical State of the mediaeval lord. It has nothing in common with the absolutist States before or after '89. The individual in the Fascist State is not annulled but rather multiplied, just as in a regiment a soldier is not diminished, but multiplied by the number of his comrades.

The Fascist State organises the nation, but leaves a sufficient margin afterward to the individual; it has limited the useless or harmful liberties and has preserved the essential ones. The one to judge in this respect is not the individual but the State.

## **12. The Fascist State and Religion**

The Fascist State is not indifferent to the presence or the fact of religion in general nor to the presence of that particular established religion, which is Italian Catholicism. The State has no theology, but it has morality. In the Fascist State religion is considered as one of the most profound manifestations of the spirit; it is therefore not only respected, but defended and protected. The Fascist State does not create its own "God," as Robespierre wanted to do at a certain moment in the frenzies of the Convention; nor does it vainly endeavour to cancel the idea of God from the mind as Bolshevism tries to do. Fascism respects the God of the ascetics, of the saints and of the heroes. It also respects God as he is conceived and prayed to in the ingenuous and primitive heart of the people.

## **13. Empire and Discipline**

The Fascist State is a will expressing power and empire. The Roman tradition here becomes an idea of force. In the Fascist doctrine, empire is not only a territorial or a military, or a commercial expression: it is a moral and a spiritual one. An empire can be thought of, for instance, as a nation which directly or indirectly guides other nations—without the need of conquering a single mile of territory. For Fascism, the tendency to empire, that is to say the expansion of nations, is a manifestation of vitality, its contrary (the stay-at-home attitude) is a sign of decadence. Peoples who rise, or who suddenly flourish again, are imperialistic; peoples who die are peoples who abdicate. Fascism is a doctrine which most adequately represents the tendencies, the state of mind of a people like the Italian people, which is rising again after many centuries of abandonment and of foreign servitude.

But empire requires discipline, the coordination of forces, duty and sacrifice. This explains many phases of the practical action of the regime. It explains the aims of many of the forces of the State and the necessary severity against those who would oppose themselves to this spontaneous and irresistible movement of the Italy of the Twentieth century by trying to appeal to the discredited ideologies of the Nineteenth century, which have been repudiated wherever great experiments of political and social transformation have been daringly undertaken.

Never more than at the present moment have the nations felt such a thirst for an authority, for a direction, for order. If every century has its own peculiar doctrine, there are a thousand indications that Fascism is that of the present century. That it is a doctrine of life is shown by the fact that it has created a faith; that the faith has taken possession of the mind is demonstrated by the fact that Fascism has had its Fallen and its martyrs.

Fascism has now attained in the world an universality over all doctrines. Being realised, it represents an epoch in the history of the human mind.

# THE POLITICAL DOCTRINE OF FASCISM <sup>1</sup>

by

**His Excellency Alfredo Rocco**

## **Premier Mussolini's Endorsement Of Signor Rocco's Speech**

The following message was sent by Benito Mussolini, the Premier of Italy, to Signor Rocco after he had delivered his speech at Perugia.

Dear Rocco,

I have just read your magnificent address which I endorse throughout. You have presented in a masterful way the doctrine of Fascism. For Fascism has a doctrine, or, if you will, a particular philosophy with regard to all the questions which beset the human mind today. All Italian Fascists should read your discourse and derive from it both the clear formulation of the basic principles of our program as well as the reasons why Fascism must be systematically, firmly, and rationally inflexible in its uncompromising attitude towards other parties. Thus and only thus can the word become flesh and the ideas be turned into deeds.

*Cordial greetings,*

*Mussolini.*

## **Fascism As Action, As Feeling, and As Thought**

Much has been said, and is now being said for or against this complex political and social phenomenon which in the brief period of six years has taken complete hold of Italian life and, spreading beyond the borders of the Kingdom, has made itself felt in varying degrees of intensity throughout the world. But people have been much more eager to extol or to deplore than to understand—which is natural enough in a period of tumultuous fervor and of political passion. The time has not yet arrived for a dispassionate judgment. For even I, who noticed the very first manifestations of this great development, saw its significance from the start and participated directly in its first doings, carefully watching all its early uncertain and changing developments, even I do not feel competent to pass definite judgment. Fascism is so large a part of myself that it would be both arbitrary and absurd for me to try to dissociate my personality from it, to submit it to impartial scrutiny in order to evaluate it coldly and accurately. What can be done, however, and it seldom is attempted, is to make inquiry into the phenomenon which shall not merely consider its fragmentary and adventitious aspects, but strive to get at its inner essence. The undertaking may not be easy, but it is necessary, and no occasion for attempting it is more suitable than the present one afforded me by my friends of Perugia. Suitable it is in time because, at the inauguration of a course of lectures and lessons principally intended to illustrate that old and glorious trend of the life and history of Italy which takes its name from the humble saint of Assisi, it seemed natural to connect it with the greatest achievement of modern Italy,

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Italian.

different in so many ways from the Franciscan movement, but united with it by the mighty common current of Italian History. It is suitable as well in place because at Perugia, which witnessed the growth of our religious ideas, of our political doctrines and of our legal science in the course of the most glorious centuries of our cultural history, the mind is properly disposed and almost oriented towards an investigation of this nature.

First of all let us ask ourselves if there is a political doctrine of Fascism; if there is any ideal content in the Fascist state. For in order to link Fascism, both as concept and system, with the history of Italian thought and find therein a place for it, we must first show that it is thought; that it is a doctrine. Many persons are not quite convinced that it is either the one or the other; and I am not referring solely to those men, cultured or uncultured, as the case may be and very numerous everywhere, who can discern in this political innovation nothing except its local and personal aspects, and who know Fascism only as the particular manner of behavior of this or that well-known Fascist, of this or that group of a certain town; who therefore like or dislike the movement on the basis of their likes and dislikes for the individuals who represent it. Nor do I refer to those intelligent, and cultivated persons, very intelligent indeed and very cultivated, who because of their direct or indirect allegiance to the parties that have been dispossessed by the advent of Fascism, have a natural cause of resentment against it and are therefore unable to see, in the blindness of hatred, anything good in it. I am referring rather to those—and there are many in our ranks too—who know Fascism as action and feeling but not yet as thought, who therefore have an intuition but no comprehension of it.

It is true that Fascism is, above all, action and sentiment and that such it must continue to be. Were it otherwise, it could not keep up that immense driving force, that renovating power which it now possesses and would merely be the solitary meditation of a chosen few. Only because it is feeling and sentiment, only because it is the unconscious reawakening of our profound racial instinct, has it the force to stir the soul of the people, and to set free an irresistible current of national will. Only because it is action, and as such actualizes itself in a vast organization and in a huge movement, has it the conditions for determining the historical course of contemporary Italy.

But Fascism is thought as well and it has a theory, which is an essential part of this historical phenomenon, and which is responsible in a great measure for the successes that have been achieved. To the existence of this ideal content of Fascism, to the truth of this Fascist logic we ascribe the fact that though we commit many errors of detail, we very seldom go astray on fundamentals, whereas all the parties of the opposition, deprived as they are of an informing, animating principle, of a unique directing concept, do very often wage their war faultlessly in minor tactics, better trained as they are in parliamentary and journalistic manoeuvres, but they constantly break down on the important issues. Fascism, moreover, considered as action, is a typically Italian phenomenon and acquires a universal validity because of the existence of this coherent and organic doctrine. The originality of Fascism is due in great part to the autonomy of its theoretical principles. For even when, in its external behavior and in its conclusions, it seems identical with other political creeds, in reality it possesses an inner originality due to the new spirit which animates it and to an entirely different theoretical approach.

### **Common Origins and Common Background of Modern Political Doctrines: From Liberalism to Socialism**

Modern political thought remained, until recently, both in Italy and outside of Italy under the absolute control of those doctrines which, proceeding from the Protestant Reformation and developed by the adepts of natural law in the XVII and XVIII centuries, were firmly grounded in the institutions and customs of the English, of the American, and of the French Revolutions. Under different and sometimes clashing forms these doctrines have left a determining imprint upon all theories and actions both social and political, of the XIX and XX centuries down to the rise of Fascism. The common basis

of all these doctrines, which stretch from Longuet, from Buchanan, and from Althusen down to Karl Marx, to Wilson and to Lenin is a social and state concept which I shall call mechanical or atomistic.

Society according to this concept is merely a sum total of individuals, a plurality which breaks up into its single components. Therefore the ends of a society, so considered, are nothing more than the ends of the individuals which compose it and for whose sake it exists. An atomistic view of this kind is also necessarily anti-historical, inasmuch as it considers society in its spatial attributes and not in its temporal ones; and because it reduces social life to the existence of a single generation. Society becomes thus a sum of determined individuals, viz., the generation living at a given moment. This doctrine which I call atomistic and which appears to be anti-historical, reveals from under a concealing cloak a strongly materialistic nature. For in its endeavors to isolate the present from the past and the future, it rejects the spiritual inheritance of ideas and sentiments which each generation receives from those preceding and hands down to the following generation thus destroying the unity and the spiritual life itself of human society.

This common basis shows the close logical connection existing between all political doctrines; the substantial solidarity, which unites all the political movements, from Liberalism to Socialism, that until recently have dominated Europe. For these political schools differ from one another in their methods, but all agree as to the ends to be achieved. All of them consider the welfare and happiness of individuals to be the goal of society, itself considered as composed of individuals of the present generation. All of them see in society and in its juridical organization, the state, the mere instrument and means whereby individuals can attain their ends. They differ only in that the methods pursued for the attainment of these ends vary considerably one from the other.

Thus the Liberals insist that the best manner to secure the welfare of the citizens as individuals is to interfere as little as possible with the free development of their activities and that therefore the essential task of the state is merely to coordinate these several liberties in such a way as to guarantee their coexistence. Kant, who was without doubt the most powerful and thorough philosopher of liberalism, said, "man, who is the end, cannot be assumed to have the value of an instrument." And again, "justice, of which the state is the specific organ, is the condition whereby the freedom of each is conditioned upon the freedom of others, according to the general law of liberty."

Having thus defined the task of the state, Liberalism confines itself to the demand of certain guarantees which are to keep the state from overstepping its functions as general coordinator of liberties and from sacrificing the freedom of individuals more than is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of its purpose. All the efforts are therefore directed to see to it that the ruler, mandatory of all and entrusted with the realization, through and by liberty, of the harmonious happiness of everybody, should never be clothed with undue power. Hence the creation of a system of checks and limitations designed to keep the rulers within bounds; and among these, first and foremost, the principle of the division of powers, contrived as a means for weakening the state in its relation to the individual, by making it impossible for the state ever to appear, in its dealings with citizens, in the full plenitude of sovereign powers; also the principle of the participation of citizens in the lawmaking power, as a means for securing, in behalf of the individual, a direct check on this, the strongest branch, and an indirect check on the entire government of the state. This system of checks and limitations, which goes by the name of constitutional government resulted in a moderate and measured liberalism. The checking power was exercised only by those citizens who were deemed worthy and capable, with the result that a small élite was made to represent legally the entire body politic for whose benefit this régime was instituted.

It was evident, however, that this moderate system, being fundamentally illogical and in contradiction with the very principles from which it proceeded, would soon become the object of serious criticism. For if the object of society and of the state is the welfare of individuals, severally considered, how is it possible to admit that this welfare can be secured by the individuals themselves only through the possibilities of such a liberal régime? The inequalities brought about both by nature

and by social organizations are so numerous and so serious, that, for the greater part, individuals abandoned to themselves not only would fail to attain happiness, but would also contribute to the perpetuation of their condition of misery and dejection. The state therefore cannot limit itself to the merely negative function of the defense of liberty. It must become active, in behalf of everybody, for the welfare of the people. It must intervene, when necessary, in order to improve the material, intellectual, and moral conditions of the masses; it must find work for the unemployed, instruct and educate the people, and care for health and hygiene. For if the purpose of society and of the state is the welfare of individuals, and if it is just that these individuals themselves control the attainment of their ends, it becomes difficult to understand why Liberalism should not go the whole distance, why it should see fit to distinguish certain individuals from the rest of the mass, and why the functions of the people should be restricted to the exercise of a mere check. Therefore the state, if it exists for all, must be governed by all, and not by a small minority: if the state is for the people, sovereignty must reside in the people: if all individuals have the right to govern the state, liberty is no longer sufficient; equality must be added: and if sovereignty is vested in the people, the people must wield all sovereignty and not merely a part of it. The power to check and curb the government is not sufficient. The people must be the government. Thus, logically developed, Liberalism leads to Democracy, for Democracy contains the promises of Liberalism but oversteps its limitations in that it makes the action of the state positive, proclaims the equality of all citizens through the dogma of popular sovereignty. Democracy therefore necessarily implies a republican form of government even though at times, for reasons of expediency, it temporarily adjusts itself to a monarchical régime.

Once started on this downward grade of logical deductions it was inevitable that this atomistic theory of state and society should pass on to a more advanced position. Great industrial developments and the existence of a huge mass of working men, as yet badly treated and in a condition of semi-servitude, possibly endurable in a régime of domestic industry, became intolerable after the industrial revolution. Hence a state of affairs which towards the middle of the last century appeared to be both cruel and threatening. It was therefore natural that the following question be raised: "If the state is created for the welfare of its citizens, severally considered, how can it tolerate an economic system which divides the population into a small minority of exploiters, the capitalists, on one side, and an immense multitude of exploited, the working people, on the other?" No! The state must again intervene and give rise to a different and less iniquitous economic organization, by abolishing private property, by assuming direct control of all production, and by organizing it in such a way that the products of labor be distributed solely among those who create them, viz., the working classes. Hence we find Socialism, with its new economic organization of society, abolishing private ownership of capital and of the instruments and means of production, socializing the product, suppressing the extra profit of capital, and turning over to the working class the entire output of the productive processes. It is evident that Socialism contains and surpasses Democracy in the same way that Democracy comprises and surpasses Liberalism, being a more advanced development of the same fundamental concept. Socialism in its turn generates the still more extreme doctrine of Bolshevism which demands the violent suppression of the holders of capital, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as means for a fairer economic organization of society and for the rescue of the laboring classes from capitalistic exploitation.

Thus Liberalism, Democracy, and Socialism, appear to be, as they are in reality, not only the offspring of one and the same theory of government, but also logical derivations one of the other. Logically developed Liberalism leads to Democracy; the logical development of Democracy issues into Socialism. It is true that for many years, and with some justification, Socialism was looked upon as antithetical to Liberalism. But the antithesis is purely relative and breaks down as we approach the common origin and foundation of the two doctrines, for we find that the opposition is one of method, not of purpose. The end is the same for both, viz., the welfare of the individual members of society. The difference lies in the fact that Liberalism would be guided to its goal by liberty, whereas Socialism

strives to attain it by the collective organization of production. There is therefore no antithesis nor even a divergence as to the nature and scope of the state and the relation of individuals to society. There is only a difference of evaluation of the means for bringing about these ends and establishing these relations, which difference depends entirely on the different economic conditions which prevailed at the time when the various doctrines were formulated. Liberalism arose and began to thrive in the period of small industry; Socialism grew with the rise of industrialism and of world-wide capitalism. The dissension therefore between these two points of view, or the antithesis, if we wish so to call it, is limited to the economic field. Socialism is at odds with Liberalism only on the question of the organization of production and of the division of wealth. In religious, intellectual, and moral matters it is liberal, as it is liberal and democratic in its politics. Even the anti-liberalism and anti-democracy of Bolshevism are in themselves purely contingent. For Bolshevism is opposed to Liberalism only in so far as the former is revolutionary, not in its socialistic aspect. For if the opposition of the Bolsheviki to liberal and democratic doctrines were to continue, as now seems more and more probable, the result might be a complete break between Bolshevism and Socialism notwithstanding the fact that the ultimate aims of both are identical.

### **Fascism as an Integral Doctrine of Sociality Antithetical to the Atomism of Liberal, Democratic, and Socialistic Theories**

The true antithesis, not to this or that manifestation of the liberal-democratic-socialistic conception of the state but to the concept itself, is to be found in the doctrine of Fascism. For while the disagreement between Liberalism and Democracy, and between Liberalism and Socialism lies in a difference of method, as we have said, the rift between Socialism, Democracy, and Liberalism on one side and Fascism on the other is caused by a difference in concept. As a matter of fact, Fascism never raises the question of methods, using in its political praxis now liberal ways, now democratic means and at times even socialistic devices. This indifference to method often exposes Fascism to the charge of incoherence on the part of superficial observers, who do not see that what counts with us is the end and that therefore even when we employ the same means we act with a radically different spiritual attitude and strive for entirely different results. The Fascist concept then of the nation, of the scope of the state, and of the relations obtaining between society and its individual components, rejects entirely the doctrine which I said proceeded from the theories of natural law developed in the course of the XVI, XVII, and XVIII centuries and which form the basis of the liberal, democratic, and socialistic ideology.

I shall not try here to expound this doctrine but shall limit myself to a brief résumé of its fundamental concepts.

Man—the political animal—according to the definition of Aristotle, lives and must live in society. A human being outside the pale of society is an inconceivable thing—a non-man. Humankind in its entirety lives in social groups that are still, today, very numerous and diverse, varying in importance and organization from the tribes of Central Africa to the great Western Empires. These various societies are fractions of the human species each one of them endowed with a unified organization. And as there is no unique organization of the human species, there is not "one" but there are "several" human societies. Humanity therefore exists solely as a biological concept not as a social one.

Each society on the other hand exists in the unity of both its biological and its social contents. Socially considered it is a fraction of the human species endowed with unity of organization for the attainment of the peculiar ends of the species.

This definition brings out all the elements of the social phenomenon and not merely those relating to the preservation and perpetuation of the species. For man is not solely matter; and the ends of the human species, far from being the materialistic ones we have in common with other animals,

are, rather, and predominantly, the spiritual finalities which are peculiar to man and which every form of society strives to attain as well as its stage of social development allows. Thus the organization of every social group is more or less pervaded by the spiritual influxes of: unity of language, of culture, of religion, of tradition, of customs, and in general of feeling and of volition, which are as essential as the material elements: unity of economic interests, of living conditions, and of territory. The definition given above demonstrates another truth, which has been ignored by the political doctrines that for the last four centuries have been the foundations of political systems, viz., that the social concept has a biological aspect, because social groups are fractions of the human species, each one possessing a peculiar organization, a particular rank in the development of civilization with certain needs and appropriate ends, in short, a life which is really its own. If social groups are then fractions of the human species, they must possess the same fundamental traits of the human species, which means that they must be considered as a succession of generations and not as a collection of individuals.

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