

POLITICAL-MILITARY DOCTRINE, ITALIAN FASCIST DOCTRINE

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Abstract: *Fascism was a political movement founded by Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini in 1919, dominating Italy's leadership between 1922-1945. In its various periods, fascism has received many different definitions, obviously based on quite different points of view. Each of them reveals to a greater or lesser extent the political essence of this contradictory and enigmatic phenomenon for the culture of the twentieth century.*

Keywords: *totalitarianism, political system, ideology, repressive attitude, dictatorship.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ernst Thalmann characterizes fascism as an "armed counter-revolution presented as a mass movement and represented by Hitlerite organizations". In the same period, the Italian historian Delle Plane calls fascism a "preventive counter-revolution" and Luigi Longo qualifies it as "one of the forms of preventive counter-revolution".

Eugen Kox, in his desire to highlight the contradictory nature of fascism and, in particular, the contradiction between its mass social base, between the mass popular movement and the profoundly reactionary program it carries out, calls it a "reactionary revolution."

Wilhelm Reich in *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, without denying the role of the economic factor in the emergence of fascism, tries to explain its entire rise through psychological causes. Fascism constitutes "an affirmation of the irrational structure of man shaped by the mob."

All the definitions and characterizations mentioned above contain a partial truth. They simply reflect certain sides of the real political phenomenon called fascism. But none of them reveal the main basis of fascism, its specific essence. This was expressed relatively fully in the definition given to fascism by the 7th Congress of the Comintern: "an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinistic and imperialist elements of finance capital". Because precisely this financial capital is the basis of fascism, determining its program.

Without the presence of finance capital, fascism would have lost its nature, political essence and content. In general, without financial capital, fascism could not have become a movement of the entire nation and could not have seized state power. It is no coincidence that fascism appeared in the age of imperialism, in the conditions of a strong social crisis, which threatened the very existence of the capitalist system.

Fascists support violence, war and militarism as a provider of positive transformation in society, bringing a new spirit, education, instilling a desire to dominate in the character

of the people and creating national camaraderie through military service. Fascists see violence and war as actions, which create national regeneration, spirit and vitality.

2. ITALY AFTER THE TRAUMA OF THE WAR AND ITS ROLE IN THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF FASCIST IDEOLOGY

Fascism, a far-right political regime, appeared after the Great War in Italy as a product of economic and social difficulties such as: increasing financial expenses, tax increases, the crisis in the sale of industrial products, the decrease in purchasing power, the emergence of a labor surplus as a result of the war demobilizations, the accumulation of disappointments among those who linked their high hopes to the consequences of the war, seconded by the success and strengthening of the positions won by the socialist and communist political parties in the local councils and in the Parliament. "It had reached a rejection of everything that was considered to be of bourgeois essence"[1], and everything that had a bourgeois appearance was an object of aggression.

Disappointed in its territorial ambitions, prey to a crisis generating unemployment and often bloody strikes, processed by the socialist extreme left that in March 1919 joined the Third International and demanded the dictatorship of the proletariat, "Italian democracy, collapsed in governmental instability, it seems unable to prevent the civil war and the triumph of Bolshevism. In the face of this danger, fascism seems the only bulwark of order". [2]

The First World War and the economic crisis that followed generated the sociological and psychological conditions necessary for the constitution of the fascist movement, but they did not produce the fascist ideology. The war contributed to the final crystallization of fascist ideology by providing proof of nationalism's ability to mobilize the masses and showcasing the formidable power of the modern state. He highlighted new possibilities for economic planning and mobilizing both the national economy and private property in the service of the state. "The state was seen as an expression of national unity, and its power depended on the spiritual unanimity of the masses, but at the same time it was the guardian of this unity, which it supported by all available means".[3]

The war demonstrated how great the capacity for sacrifice of individuals could be, how superficial the idea of internationalism was and how easily all layers of society could be mobilized in the service of the state. He demonstrated the importance of unity of command, authority and leaders, moral mobilization, mass education and propaganda as instruments of power and, above all, "showed how easily democratic liberties could be suspended and how easily a quasi-dictatorship could be accepted". [3]

3. THE NATIONALIST AND REFORMIST PLATFORM

Against the background of these conditions, Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini's initiatives to form the association *Fasci Italiani Di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Fascisms) with a nationalist and reformist platform actually appeared on the Italian political scene.

If we were to characterize Mussolini in a few words, we could say about his character that he was a sum of contradictions, making up a complex personality, the thirst for action, the taste for violence and the ambition to succeed, define him completely. Mussolini was an extrovert, he liked to impress and impose his character. [4]

Under the political aspect, it provided for measures regarding the application of the democratic principles of strictly proportional representation, the right to vote and eligibility for women, lowering the age for electing deputies from 33 to 25, abolishing the

Senate and replacing it with technical councils chosen by professional groups, convening a National Assembly for the purpose of drafting a new fundamental law.

One of the essential features that dominates the structure of the fascist regime is the "primacy of the chief" symbolized by the formula: "Il Duce ha semper ragione!" ("The Duke is always right"). To give applicability to the formula "traditional institutions are emptied of their content or suppressed" [2] as in the case of the Chamber of Deputies replaced in 1928 by the Chamber of fascists and corporations, while all power was concentrated in the hands of the Duke, simultaneously head of government, minister of corporations and the leader of the armies.

Another basic feature of fascism was the "primacy of the party" identified with the state, its essential deliberative body being from December 9, 1928, the Great Council of Fascism which designates the candidates for deputy, being consulted less and less by the Duke.

The social field saw measures such as the regulation by law of the eight-hour working day, the participation of representatives of industrial workers and agricultural workers in the management of specialized enterprises, the concession of public enterprises to workers' organizations that proved capable of taking them over.

The financial policy envisaged the exaggerated taxation of capital, the sequestration of the assets of religious congregations, the removal of fiscal privileges granted to the clergy and especially the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the revision of military supply contracts concluded during the war.

The final objective of fascist-type political action is "justice for all and freedom for all", and the achievement of this objective takes place under the motto: "Harmony, altruism, freedom, discipline, the union of rights and duties, the work of peace".

3.1 Fascist ideology - "ideology of rejection"

"Fascist ideology is made up, above all, of rejections: rejection of democracy, rejection of socialism, rejection of class struggle"[5]. The negations are strongly supported, but the affirmations belong to a rhetoric that, most of the time, comes down to a few completely traditional ideas: the cult of action, of violence, of virility, the cult of the duke and the state.

The fascist ideology is based on the anti-materialist theses of Sorel, who replaced the Hegelian rationalist foundations of Marxism with anti-materialist, voluntarist, vitalist elements. "This form of socialism was a philosophy of action based on intuition, on the cult of energy and momentum, on activism and heroism". In order to mobilize the masses, Sorel believed, we needed not reasonings but myths, systems of images that ignite the imagination. By replacing the proletariat with the great force in the process of being affirmed, the nation as a whole, a socialism for all was arrived at, which embodied a new idea of revolution, a national, moral and psychological revolution, "the only kind of revolution that did not have the characteristics of class struggle ". Thus, during the war, revolutionary trade unionism turned into national trade unionism and then into fascism". [3]

3.2 "The new man" and the "new society"

The fascist concepts of "new man" and "new society" were ideally characterized by the French fascist Marcel Deat: "The total man in the total society, without conflicts, without collapses, without anarchy."

The revolutionary nationalists and syndicalists wanted to replace the mercantile civilization of their time with a civilization of monks and warriors, a virile and heroic warrior civilization" in which the sense of sacrifice would replace bourgeois selfishness. This new world was to be created by an elite aware of its duties, the only one capable of leading the masses, who were nothing more than a herd, into battle". [3]

Fascism cultivated the image of a solitary and reunified people and precisely because of this it emphasized marches, parades and uniforms, on an entire community ceremonial in which the place of deliberation and discussion was taken by songs and torches, by the cult of physical force, violence and brutality.

3.3 Anti-individualism and corporatism

For Mussolini, the fascist state is a conscious entity endowed with its own will. Not only does the existence of the state imply the subordination of individual rights, but the state proclaims its right to be a state that necessarily transforms men, even in their physical aspects. Outside the state there can be no human or spiritual values, no individuals or groups, cultural associations, economic unions or social classes.

A "fascist style" had also taken shape, which gradually took shape trying to copy Mussolini's style, from the shaved head to the furious gaze. In an attempt to define the new style, Mussolini himself states that "life, as conceived by fascism, is serious, austere, religious. Fascism despises the comfortable life. He believes and will continue to believe in holiness and heroism". Mussolini's phrase was often present in Italian newspapers: "It is better to live one day as a lion than one hundred years as a sheep."

"Fascism rejects the materialistic conception of a possible happiness. He therefore denies the equation of well-being and happiness according to which people turn into animals because they only think of one thing: to be fed and fat, that is, to a simply vegetative life". [5]

With all its anti-individualism, fascism is characterized by the cult of a leader who embodied the spirit, will and virtues of the people and who was identified with the nation. "Credere, ubbidire, combattere" ("To believe, to obey, to fight") is the fascist slogan that proves that fascism is an ideology of submission and conquest characterized by a rhetoric of violence and faith, by a mysticism of the leader, of the hierarchy and the state, of an exaltation of nationalism.

In this ideological context, corporatism became "the great theme of propaganda, the great illusion, the great hope, the great alibi". [5]

The fundamental principle of corporatism consists in the subordination of private interests to the general interest, that is, to the national interest and to the subordination of social classes to the collective. As a consequence, there can no longer be conflicts between social classes, these having to collaborate with each other within what is represented by the "state-arbitrator, state-regulator" which organizes social classes.

3.4 The totalitarian state

In 1936 Il Duce stated: "Everything resides in the state, nothing human or spiritual exists outside the state." The fascist conception of the state being all-encompassing and outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, Mussolini states that "fascism is totalitarian and the fascist state, a synthesis and unity of all values, interprets, develops and potentiates the whole a person's life".

Proposing to create a new civilization, a new type of man and a completely new way of life, fascism could not conceive of any sphere of human activity remaining immune to state intervention. "We are, in other words, a state that controls all the forces acting in nature. We control the political forces, we control the moral forces, we control the economic forces", wrote Mussolini.

4. THE FALL OF THE FASCIST REGIME

The balance sheet of the twenty years of Mussolian despotism is eloquent: over 40,000 civilians and soldiers killed in deportation and 444,523 people officially declared as killed and missing as a result of the war. In 1945, industrial production exceeded only a

quarter of that of 1938, and agricultural production, at least half. Foreign trade had been destroyed by autarky, gold reserves were exhausted, inflation and unemployment had increased, public finances were disorganized.

Mussolini miscalculated his aggressive status on the European scene. He assumed that if he intensified his military force, the opponents would give in to his territorial claims. Mussolini had always talked about the advantages of war and about Italy's willingness to enter the conflict if necessary.

In 1940 Germany launched a lightning attack on France and Mussolini quickly took a stand, showing cowardly arrogance. He entered the war under the impression that it was a matter of weeks before the tension would ease. It didn't happen like that. Mussolini had now become a puppet of the Germans. He supported Hitler in declaring war on Russia in June 1941 and on the United States in December 1941.

And they chose death. Italy was defeated on all its fronts and foreign flags were flying in Sicily in 1943. The war was over and Italy had been humiliated. She turned against her savior. The king ordered his arrest.

A few months later, the Germans rescued him and Mussolini moved to the north of Italy where he founded and led a new fascist party (Republica Salo). In 1945 he was captured by Walter Audisio, an Italian partisan. Realizing that he was fast approaching his own end, Mussolini asked to be shot. The next day, Mussolini's body was hung upside down for all to see.

Italy had finally gotten rid of a demonic figure. Italy was slowly rising from its misery. As expected, fascism had failed in its intention to create a perfect Italian state.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the fascist totalitarian regime can be considered the definition of statism (theory according to which the role of the state is paramount in the organization and administration of economic and social life): "If liberalism means the individual, fascism means the state", chanted Mussolini.

Therefore, "everything in the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state" represents the essence of fascist doctrine.

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