



Chapter 8

Fascism

On a regular visit twenty some years ago to John K. King Books, a four-storied collection of used and rare books in Detroit, Michigan, I noticed a small green book on their shelves amongst several hundred books concerned with War History. The book had imprinted on its spine: Fascism Mussolini 335.6 M977 4c. That was it nothing more. I selected the book, for then unknown reasons, and after a brief inspection of its contents I decided to purchase the book then and there. Its copyright notice is COPYRIGHT BY "ARDITA" - ROME 1935. XIII (printed in Italy) Rome - Officine Grafiche Castaldi 1935 - A. XIII. The book of 313 pages is imprinted with the stamps of previous owners and a circulation pocket which contains a two sided user card listing 21 readers from 1936 to 1953 when the book was withdrawn from W.S.U Libraries - Wayne State University, Detroit Michigan .The original purchaser was SOCIETANAZIONALE DANTE ALIGHIERI - COMITATO DI DETROIT. The TITLE PAGE has the following information: MUSSOLINI FASCISM DOCTRINE AND INSTITUTIONS "ARDITA" PUBLISHERS - ROME.

Today its Library Cloth Binding remains in excellent condition with some browning and paper loss in its first few pages. A rare a valuable find indeed that day in Detroit.

It is now quite certain that by the publication of this book, Mussolini and the Fascist Government wanted to assure the English speaking world that his Fascist Government in Italy was not in any way shape or form the Regime that was then being described to them by Western Democratic Governments. Instead the book was published to prove that Fascism was a government of law and order and was a product of the Italian People and correctly reflected the history, culture, and needs of the Italian Nation.

A careful reading of Mussolini's words published in the following pages will provide the reader with a clear and detailed picture of the various governments and their philosophies then holding power in Europe and the world. He reaches back into the world's immediate past to discuss the history, nature, and political programs of Liberalism, Socialism, Conservatism, Democracy, Capitalism, Communism with an array of knowledge and notations unrivaled in political writings.

Reading the book Fascism - Doctrine and Institutions has provided a very clear and somewhat profound understanding of just what kind of genius this man Benito Mussolini was. He stood alone, unrivaled in the company of statesmen by his political and social knowledge, his innate forthrightness, his military and personal courage and his universal recognition as a gifted orator and diplomat.



FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

Like all sound political concepts, Fascism is action and it is thought; action in which doctrine is immanent, and doctrine arising from a given system of historical forces in which it is inserted, and working on them from within (1). It has therefore a form correlated to contingencies of time and space; but it has also an ideal content which makes it an expression of truth in the higher region of the history of thought (2). There is no way of exercising a spiritual influence in the world as a human will dominating the will of others, unless one has a conception both of the transient and the specific reality on which that action is to be exercised, and of the permanent and universal reality in which the transient dwells and has being. To know men one must know man; and to know man one must be acquainted with reality and its laws. There can be no conception of the State which is not fundamentally a concept of life: philosophy or intuition, system of ideas evolving within the framework of logic or concentrated in a vision or a faith, but always, at least potentially, an organic conception of the world.

Thus many of the practical expressions of Fascism — such as party organisation, system of education, discipline — can only be understood when considered in relation to its general attitude toward life. A spiritual attitude (3). Fascism sees in the world not only those superficial, material aspects in which man appears as an individual, standing by himself, self-centred, subject to natural law which instinctively urges him toward a life of selfish momentary pleasure; it sees not only the individual but the nation and the country; individuals and generations bound together by a moral law, with common traditions and a mission which suppressing the instinct for life closed in a brief circle of pleasure, builds up a higher life, founded on duty, a life free from the limitations of time and space, in which the individual, by self-sacrifice, the renunciation of self-interest, by death itself, can achieve that purely spiritual existence in which his value as a man consists.

The conception is therefore a spiritual one, a rising from the general reaction of the century against the naive materialistic positivism of the XIX century. Anti-positivistic but positive; neither sceptical nor agnostic; neither pessimistic nor supinely optimistic as are, generally speaking, the doctrines (all negative) which place the centre of life outside man; whereas, by the exercise of his free will, man can and must create his own world.

Fascism wants man to be active and to engage in action with all his energies; it wants him to be manfully aware of the difficulties besetting him and ready to face them. It conceives of life as a struggle in which it behoves man to win for himself a really worthy place, first of all by fitting himself (physically, morally, intellectually) to become the implement required for winning it. As for the individual, so for the nation, and so for mankind (4). Hence the high value of culture in all its forms (artistic, religious, scientific) (5), and the outstanding importance of education. Hence also the essential value of work, by which man subjugates nature and creates the human world (economic, political, ethical, and intellectual).

This positive conception of life is obviously an ethical one. It invests the whole field of reality as well as the human activities which master it. No action is exempt from moral judgement; no activity can be despoiled of the value which amoral purpose confers on all things. Therefore life, as conceived of by the Fascist, is serious, austere, religious; all its manifestations are poised in a world sustained by moral forces and subject to spiritual responsibilities. The Fascist disdains an “easy” life (6).



The Fascist conception of life is a religious one (7), in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society. Those who perceive nothing beyond opportunistic considerations in the religious policy of the Fascist régime fail to realise that Fascism is not only a system of government but also and above all a system of thought. In the Fascist conception of history, man is man only by virtue of the spiritual process to which he contributes as a member of the family, the social group, the nation, and in function of history to which all nations bring their contribution. Hence the great value of tradition in records, in language, in customs, in the rules of social life (8).

Outside history man is a nonentity. Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions based on eighteenth century materialism; and it is opposed to all Jacobinistic utopias and innovations. It does not believe in the possibility of "happiness" on earth as conceived by the economic literature of the XVIIIth century, and it therefore rejects the teleological notion that at some future time the human family will secure a final settlement of all its difficulties. This notion runs counter to experience which teaches that life is in continual flux and in process of evolution. In politics Fascism aims at realism; in practice it desires to deal only with those problems which are the spontaneous product of historic conditions and which find or suggest their own solutions (9). Only by entering into the process of reality and taking possession of the forces at work within it can man act on man and on nature (10).

Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State, which stands for the conscience and the individual will of man as a historical entity (11). It is opposed to classical liberalism which arose as a reaction to absolutism and exhausted its historical function when the State became the expression of the conscience and will of the people. Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts the rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual (12). And if liberty is to be the attribute of living men and not of abstract dummies invented by individualist liberalism, then Fascism stands for liberty, and for the only liberty worth having, the liberty of the State and of the individual within the State (11). The Fascist concept of the State is all-embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism is totalitarian, the Fascist State — a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values — interprets, develops, and potentiates the whole life of a people (14).

No individuals or groups (political parties, cultural associations, economic unions, social classes) outside the State (15). Fascism is therefore opposed to Socialism to which unity within the State (which amalgamates classes into a single economic and ethical reality) is unknown, and which see in history nothing but the class struggle. Fascism is likewise opposed to trade-unionism as a class weapon. But when brought within the orbit of the State, Fascism recognises the real needs which give rise to socialism and trade-unionism, giving them due weight in the guild or corporative system in which divergent interests are coordinated and harmonised in the unity of the State (16).

Grouped according to their several interests individuals form classes; they form trade-unions when organised according to their several economic activities; but first and foremost they form the State, which is no mere matter of numbers, the sum of the individuals forming the majority.....