

A SURVEY OF THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF FASCISM IN ITALY
1919-1935

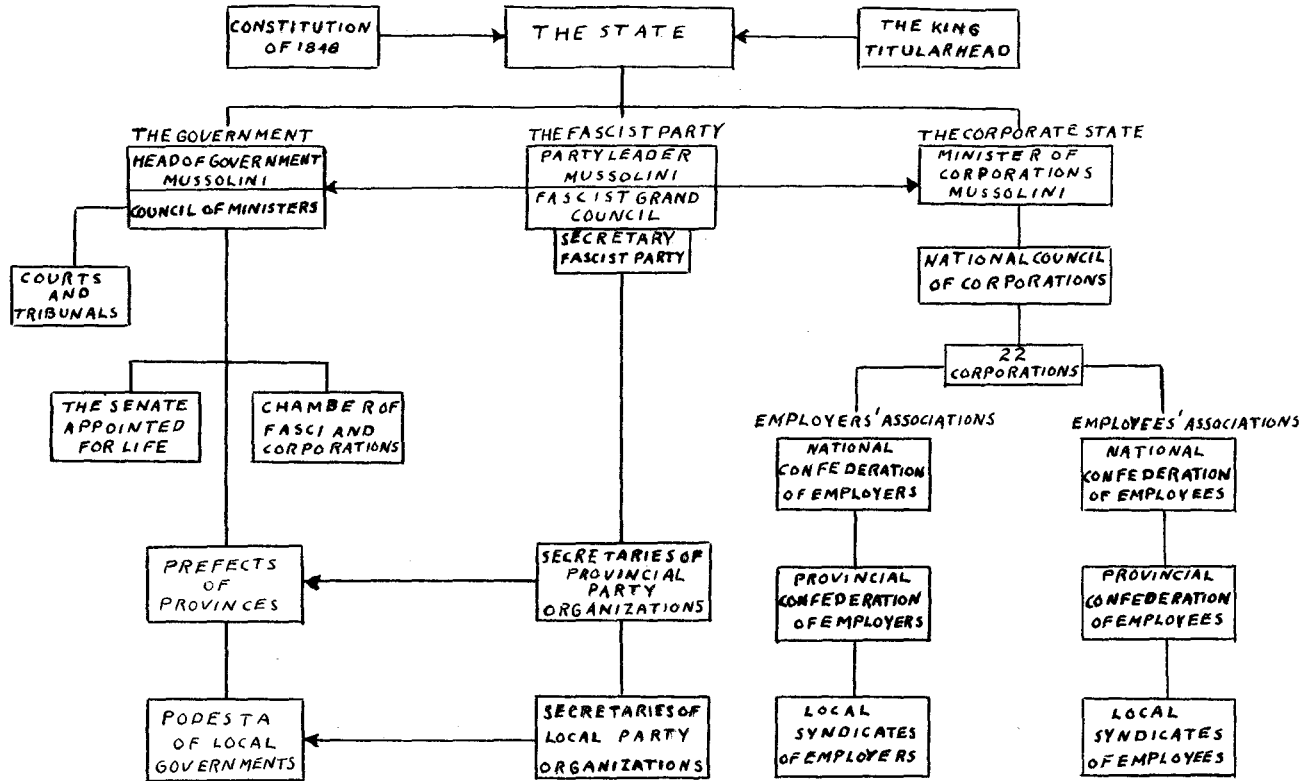
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THE GOVERNMENT OF FASCIST ITALY

LOUIS WASSERMAN, HANDBOOK OF POLITICAL "ISMS", 104.

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Chapter I

FROM UNIFICATION TO WORLD WAR I

Italy was one of the last countries in Europe to attain political unification. It was during the mid-nineteenth century, in the period known as the Risorgimento, that Italy, a land which had been desired, fought over, and possessed by many rulers and countries, was finally welded together into a unified kingdom. Mazzini, who made the liberation of Italy the one objective in his life, inspired the Italians with the desire for national independence and unity. But other equally determined and courageous men, such as Cavour, Victor Emmanuel and Garibaldi aided the cause. These men, completely different in character, temperament, methods, and abilities, were united in the common cause.

After a long and bitter struggle, the goal was achieved in 1870. During the next thirty years, the new kingdom of Italy, sought to find itself. Many difficult domestic problems prevented her from achieving the internal unity which she desired. The seizure of Rome in 1870 had produced a tension between church and state which kept the country internally divided. In the family of nations, Italy was considered an intruder. There were leaders abroad who thought that the new kingdom would be short-lived.¹

¹Luigi Sturzo, Italy and the Coming World, 1-15.

Cavour had given to Italy a parliamentary government for which Italy was not quite prepared. Too much time had elapsed since the Roman era for Italy to be successful in governing herself. This unreadiness was demonstrated frequently by disorders, distress, and political backwardness of the successive ministries. Moreover, the European powers were quite distrustful and bitter toward this Patria Nuova. Minister Agostino Depretis took this situation for granted but Minister Francesco Crispi was to learn it by bitter experience. In fact, the Fascists later looked upon Crispi as their direct predecessor because he was the first statesman of the New Italy who conceived the idea of Italy as a world power.²

²Herman Finer, Mussolini's Italy, 42.

Up to 1882, Italian nationalists had visualized Italy as a national state with the hope that it would include Italia Irredenta. But in 1882, Minister Crispi decided otherwise. He felt that Italy's expansion should take other forms. He was convinced that Italy's greatest enemy was France, not Austria, and he claimed that Italy should become an economic and imperial power before it could become a unified national state. Riding on a wave of anti-French and anti-clerical sentiment, he contended that Italy's future destiny was in the Mediterranean and not towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³

³Margot Hentze, Prefascist Italy, the Rise and Fall of the Parliamentary Regime, 126-166.

Crispi approached Bismarck who referred him to Vienna where, in 1882, the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy was formed. Soon German capital began to pour into Italy. From the combination of German capital and Italian labor, an era of prosperity for Italy resulted. It was during this prosperous era that Italy's economic leaders brought forth the "Sacro Egoismo" with its economic implications.

In 1880, Depretis had failed to take Tunis which was then easily available. It was mostly peopled by emigrants of Italian extraction which would have been sufficient reason for acquiring it. But the Italian government hesitated and France acquired it. To compensate herself for the loss of Tunis, Italy sought to obtain a colonial empire in eastern Africa along the Red Sea. By treaties with native chieftains and with Great Britain and by commercial and military occupation, she acquired, between 1882 and 1890, the sparsely peopled tracts of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, and thence set out to subdue the Negro kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The Abyssinians, however, routed an Italian army so decisively at Adowa in 1896 that Italy agreed to make peace and respect Abyssinia's independence.

The small success and the meager returns were discouraging for the great expenditures of money made by the Italian government to elevate Italy to the position of a Great Power and to defray the expenses of maintaining an army and a navy. To avoid bankruptcy the government imposed a heavy burden of

taxation. The economic condition of the mass of peasants and urban workingmen was bad and their standard of living was low. The population was increasing at a more rapid rate than employment could be found to absorb it. These conditions caused considerable unrest. Part of this surplus population, however, migrated to foreign countries.⁴

⁴Benedetto Croce, A History of Italy, 1871-1915, 27-40.

The spread of Marxian socialism and revolutionary violence found fertile ground among the industrial workers in the northern cities. A socialist party was founded at Milan in 1891 and had become so popular that in 1895 it succeeded in electing twelve members to the Chamber of Deputies. Anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism also sprang up. They would have nothing to do with any parliamentary regime but concentrated on the idea of class warfare, organization of labor, and acts of violence against employers and the government. As a result of these disturbing conditions, the government began to devote more attention to internal reform. In 1904 the government was forced to call out the army to suppress a general strike at Milan. The strike was conducted with great violence and with obvious revolutionary purpose. Consequently, between 1904 and 1912, several important reforms were adopted, the most important being universal manhood suffrage. In the general election of 1913, the first under the

new suffrage law, the Socialist Party increased its membership in the Chamber of Deputies from 43 to 78. Giolitti's Ministry was so weakened by the election that he resigned.⁵

⁵Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe, II, 579.

During this period, Mussolini was an ardent socialist who had been writing articles attacking the government. In 1911 he was much interested in starting a world revolution. During the Turco-Italian War, 1911-1912, his articles were considered so unpatriotic that he was sentenced to one year in prison.⁶

⁶Gaudens Megaro, Mussolini in the Making, 81-83.

Nationalism was arising again in Italy. It was stimulated by the concurrent rise of democracy and by the writings of a group of intellectuals among whom Gabriele D'Annunzio was the most prominent. He had developed and propagated a zeal for the acquisition of Italia irredenta for which he demanded war against Austria. This resurgent nationalist clamored for greater armaments, a more vigorous foreign policy, the "redemption" of Italia irredenta and more colonies. In 1911-1912, Italy waged a successful war with the Ottoman Empire and obtained its African provinces of Tripoli and

Cyrenaica and in 1912-1913, she obtained a special position in Albania.⁷ The outcome of the Turco-Italian War aroused

⁷Carlton J. H. Hayes, op. cit., II, 579-580, 685.

a new spirit of confidence in Italy's power and prestige. It was clear now that Italy could fight its own war for its own ends. To the Italian people, it was the beginning of their career as a world power.

This new nationalism spread beyond the boundaries of party politics. The society, "Dante Alighiere," doubled its membership between 1905 and 1914 when it took up the idea of irredentism and became the chief organ for all Italians living beyond the confines of Italy. Another society, "Pro Trento e Trieste" was founded to carry on irredentist propaganda in northern Italy. The geographer, Ettore Tolomei, developed the theory of Italianity of the Southern Tyrol while other scientists came to his support with their discovery of Italy's "natural frontiers."⁸

⁸Herbert W. Schneider, Making the Fascist State, 3-9.

To the nationalist group, World War I was a godsend to end the internal class struggle with which the Socialists had kept the country in turmoil. Mussolini, the editor of a paper The Class Struggle was much pleased to hear that Italy would remain neutral in the event of war between Austria and

Serbia. When Italy proclaimed her neutrality on August 2, 1914, the semi-official press explained that Austria had acted and sent an ultimatum to Serbia before informing Italy and that this was in violation of the Triple Alliance. Behind this declaration of neutrality Italy had two purposes. The first was to gain time to prepare herself and the second was to enter the war on the side which offered the greatest "compensations."

Italy was totally unprepared for war. The Giolitti Ministry had left the army deplorably deficient in munitions, heavy artillery and machine guns. There was no aircraft. She was totally without coal and poorly supplied with iron and other raw materials. There was a shortage of shipping tonnage and her ports were inadequate for assistance from her allies. There was much talk of intervention but the majority of the people were opposed to entering the war. But, as time passed, Italians began to take sides as to whether Italy should or should not enter the conflict.

The Socialist party had fought endlessly to maintain international solidarity when the rest of the world was in the throes of unbridled nationalism. Eighty deputies condemned the war as a war of capitalism. Among the extreme left wing socialists was Mussolini, who was then the editor of the official socialist newspaper Avanti! At first, he praised the Italian government's policy of neutrality. But in October 1914 he changed sides. He was ousted from the

Socialist part for desiring participation in the war. He still considered himself a loyal socialist. At his expulsion from the party on November 25, 1914, he said:

Do not imagine that by tearing up my membership card in the Socialist party, you can forbid my Socialist faith or prevent me from continuing my work for the cause of socialism and of the revolution.⁹

⁹Herbert Schneider, op. cit., 8.

To keep his ideas before the people he started a new paper Popolo d'Italia. In it he expounded the theories which later became characteristic of Fascism. Mussolini argued that Italy would be forced into the war sooner or later, so she might as well enter it of her own free will and for her own interest; that Italy would be isolated and despised after the war if she remained out of it; that neutrals never dominated anything and that Germany and Austria must be defeated if Italy was to obtain her national boundaries.

These arguments were echoed by various groups who either for material or emotional reasons favored intervention. It was these groups who in the name of "Sacred Egoism" brought Italy into the war in return for the acquisition of certain territories. A secret treaty signed by Great Britain, France and Russia with Italy at London, April 26, 1915, promised Italy a considerable extension of territory in Europe, Asia, and Africa.¹⁰

¹⁰Ibid., 11-12.

Chapter II

POST-WAR ITALY

At the close of World War I Italy felt that she had truly won the war and waited for the rewards that had been promised to her by the Treaty of London. There came instead a bitter awakening. The nationalists aptly called it "the great humiliation of Versailles." It was at the peace conference that the Italian achievements were minimized and Italian imperialism was denounced. President Wilson openly opposed secret treaties which in turn caused diplomatic embarrassment to the Italian delegates.

Mussolini wrote in favor of the peace conference because he, along with everyone else in Italy, expected that the terms of the Pact of London would be fulfilled. But, as he saw the drift of events, that Wilson refused to honor the secret treaties and had gone over the heads of Orlando and Sannino to appeal to the Italian people, Mussolini began to criticize the peace conference. He contended that Italy had won the war but had lost the peace. He blamed Italy's statesmen, calling them a handful of timid, pessimistic, and degenerate old men who had thrown away what Italy had so dearly won. Nitti and his policies were made the special objects of his hatred and invective.¹¹

¹¹Benito Mussolini, My Autobiography, 74-76.

To make matters worse, four and a half years of war had left Europe prostrate. Among all the Allies Italy was in the worst condition. The deplorable economic and social conditions took on explosive forms in 1919 with strikes, mutinies, and a terrifying increase in crime. Among the causes which contributed to the continual unrest were the discontent among the masses, disillusionment at the political results of the war, the popular disgust at parliamentary ineptitude, and the feeling of national humiliation following the failure of Italian ventures in overseas expansion and international politics.¹²

¹²The Fascist Party, 3-8.

The increasing instability in public affairs threw a mass of desperadoes and shady characters into the arena of politics. Agitation, strikes, and violence forced the Orlando's resignation of June 19, 1919. He was succeeded by Francesco Saverio who personified the anti-war, anti-national, and anti-victory party. So low had morale fallen in those days, that he granted amnesty to deserters and encouraged subversive movements throughout the country.¹³

¹³Roberto Farinacci, Storia del Fascismo, 79-92.

On September 12, 1919, the poet, patriot, and ardent

nationalist, Gabriele D'Annunzio led an organized band of black-shirted Arditi (shock troops during the war) to Fiume in a chartered boat and took the city by force. He entered the capital of the Quarnaro at the head of his legionnaires. Mussolini declared himself wholeheartedly for D'Annunzio and opened up a subscription for Fiume in his Popolo d'Italia. This adventure was significant for two reasons. First, it was a decisive stage in the making of Fascism and secondly, it demonstrated that the government was so weak that a political adventurer could set himself above the government without fear of molestation or punishment. D'Annunzio's legionnaires defied the Italian government for a year before they were expelled by Italian troops. This expulsion infuriated the nationalists against the government and the ministry in power.¹⁴

¹⁴Benito Mussolini, op. cit., 123-125.

The domestic scene was becoming progressively worse. Millions of soldiers had been demobilized with no jobs waiting for them because industry was demoralized. The few jobs that existed had been filled by those who had stayed home. Foreign trade and foreign markets were lost or closed. Tourist traffic which had long been a source of income was at a standstill. Prices of food rose. Rich traders continued to make excessive profits. They were called "presciani" or sharks

and it was on these war profiteers that the people vented their hatred.¹⁵ Ex-soldiers demanded land but there was none

¹⁵The Fascist Party, 8-12.

available. So they seized the large estates and uncultivated lands. Mussolini supported their action. Soon there was much looting of shops and violent conflicts. Concerning these activities, Mussolini demanded in his paper:

Down with the oppressors of the poor! The people must rise and strike at those who are starving them.¹⁶

¹⁶Emilio Lussu, Road to Exile, 4.

Giolitti, preoccupied with this dreadful domestic situation, signed a treaty withdrawing Italian troops from Albania except from the island of Sasena. The Nationalists cried that this was an additional "inglorious page of history!"

Conditions in Italy became so bad in 1919 that a vigorous rebirth of Marxian Socialism with its left wing revolutionary syndicalism appeared. It gained new followers because of the apparent success of Lenin and his "dictatorship of the proletariat" in Russia. These socialists committed sabotage, conducted strikes and other acts of violence. They appropriated industrial plants and attempted to operate them with little or no success. In parliament, the Socialists consistently voted against the measures of the government thus

producing a stalemate. Because of the generous promises of the Socialists, the country veered fast towards radicalism and anarchy. During this period there was considerable talk of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" for Italy.¹⁷

¹⁷Farinacci, op. cit., 144-156.

The political scene changed in 1919 when the Pope removed his veto on Catholic political parties. A new party was organized called the Catholic People's Party or Popular Party headed by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Sturzo. He was supported by the Catholic intellectuals who wished to counteract the hostility of the Liberals and by Catholic peasants who were sympathetic towards the party's program of social reform. The peasants liked the party's plan of distributing large landed estates among peasant proprietors. The program of the popular party was based on the principles of a democratic government. There was to be liberty not merely for the individual but for the natural and historical organisms which preceded the state of Democrazia Christiana. Sturzo had an abiding faith in democratic institutions leavened by Christian morality.¹⁸ Few of his time were able to command

¹⁸D. A. Binchey, Church and State in Fascist Italy, 65.

such a high degree of personal affection and admiration from his supporters and certainly no man was more hated by

the Fascist leader than was Sturzo. A writer, neither a friend of Sturzo, nor an Italian, nor a Catholic describes him as follows:

The very antithesis of Mussolini in appearance, character, behavior and thought . . . a radical, social reformer, a pacifist, candid, fearless, brilliant and above all else an honest man.¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., 65.

Don Sturzo took the position of segretario politico of his new party. He saw it become the second largest party in Italy and a rival for leadership with the Socialist party. Although he maintained that his party was Christian in spirit and not sectarian, its membership was mainly Catholic. In 1919, the Popular party captured 101 out of 508 seats in the national Chamber of Deputies. Sturzo became a powerful figure in the country's politics. No cabinet could be formed without consulting him. He came to the conclusion, however, that his party leaders lacked courage. The Liberals showed themselves incapable of assuming the responsibilities of directing the government when a coalition cabinet fell through because of the objection of the Socialist leader, Philip Turati.

With the Popularists on one side and the Socialists on the other and with both having fairly definite programs, the middle-class liberal majority in parliament could present no

united front. Internal dissension between the two groups was acute just when firmness and unity were needed most. In 1920, Giolitti just managed to form his fourth ministry but he was getting old and was unable to press for any real social reforms or to employ armed force against lawlessness and disorder.

Disorders reached a new peak in 1920-21. The Communists kidnapped capitalists, set up "revolutionary tribunals," armed themselves as "red guards" while strikes paralyzed the metal industries, the railways, and even agriculture. The government did nothing. The workers, however, found it difficult to carry on without managerial experience, raw materials, or a sufficient food supply. The Socialists split among themselves. Their representation in the Chamber declined from 156 to 122. A Communist party appeared with 16 representatives.²⁰

²⁰Farinacci, op. cit., 150-151, 262-267.

In 1921, a new nationalist group, the Fascists, appeared in the Chamber of Deputies with 35 seats. It was at this time that Fascism, begun as a revolutionary movement, put itself, more or less openly, at the service of employers to destroy the workers' unions. Giolitti welcomed the new party as a counterpoise to Socialism.

Giolitti dissolved Parliament in April 1921 and appealed

to the country. Many landlords who were much affected by incidents in the brief reign of radicalism, university people, and professional men were much disgusted at the trend of events. They were looking for a general house cleaning in government and the emergence of a strong, and patriotic administration. The Liberals could offer nothing because they had become a quarrelsome minority.

The premiers who followed Giolitti were men of mediocre quality. There was still time for the Socialists, Popularists, and Anti-Fascist Liberals to form a coalition against the Fascists and save the democratic state. But the continual petty quarreling among these groups in parliament rendered a coalition impossible. Giolitti's successor Bonomi saw continued clashes between the Fascists and the various other groups.

Mussolini tried to restrain his Fascists as he felt that they had gone too far in their brutality. He tried to get closer to the more liberal groups. His financial and military supporters stepped in and prevented it. They were determined to fight the "Reds" to the bitter end. They needed Mussolini, if only to fascinate and hypnotize the masses. Even without Mussolini's help, the industrialists and agrarians were quite prepared to abolish the parliamentary system and establish a full-fledged military dictatorship. Mussolini's craving for power urged him to the final step--the complete betrayal of the workers' movement.²¹

²¹Herman Finer, op. cit., 135-138.

Violence once more dominated the political life of the country. The failure of the Italian democratic elements to unite against the Fascists brought ruin and destruction. The strife and turmoil among the Liberals and popularists caused the overthrow of Bonomi's government. Luigi Facta was installed as new minister.²²

²²Ibid., 138.

Facta, a provincial lawyer, was known all his life as Giolitti's friend and reliable follower. He represented the ruling class of Italian bourgeoisie which at first backed the Fascists and which later could not get rid of them. In Facta's eyes, Giolitti was the greatest political genius in Europe. According to his political foes, Facta was Giolitti's errand boy. There did exist between Giolitti and Facta a pupil-teacher relationship. Facta followed in the footsteps of Giolitti. He was a quiet self-controlled man with a magnetic voice. He was humble and firmly believed in the average man.

The Fascists, however, were convinced of Facta's weakness. Feeling themselves the masters of government, they encouraged outbursts of violence in various localities. In September and October 1922, Mussolini was still willing to form a coalition government with the understanding that his own followers would be given sufficient representation in the government. Again the Socialists and Democrats hesitated.

This time they lost. They would never be given the opportunity again.

In October, at a great congress of Fascisti in Naples, Mussolini delivered his ultimatum: "Either the government will be given to us or we shall seize it by marching on Rome."²³

²³Herman Finer, op. cit., 147-148.

A ministerial crisis ensued. A tardy attempt was made to bring the Fascisti into the ministry by offering them certain positions. The Fascisti declined. Instead they began their "march on Rome." Over 10,000 Fascists armed with revolvers and clubs arrived in the city.²⁴ Facta asked the king to

²⁴Benito Mussolini, op. cit., 174-177.

declare martial law. The timid king was afraid to risk his crown to protect the Constitution. He refused.²⁵ Upon

²⁵Ibid., 183.

hearing this news, the Fascists became bolder in their demands and came in greater numbers to Rome. Facta's position was now so untenable that he awaited the reopening of the Chamber to submit his resignation. Rumors were spreading that Facta was secretly working for the return of Giolitti.²⁶

²⁶Luigi Sturzo, Italy and Fascism, 80.

As a result of Facta's ineffectual actions, Fascism was allowed to gain control of the government. Carlo Sforza was surprised that Giolitti did not appear on the scene in Rome and seize power. When asked about it, Giolitti replied that he had thought of going, that Facta placed every possible excuse in his way, and that he finally decided to remain where he was. Giolitti claimed that Facta had been hoodwinked by the promises of a new cabinet in which he would be prime minister and Mussolini and other Fascists his colleagues.²⁷

²⁷Carlo Sforza, The Makers of Modern Europe, 130.

Great hopes were centered on the Fascists by their backers, the industrialists who had pledged whole-hearted support in their paper L'Organizzazione Industriale. On October 29, 1922, the king called upon Mussolini to form a new ministry. The government which the latter established on October 30, was a coalition in which the Fascisti were predominant.

The legend of a non-existent Bolshevist danger persisted and the Fascists owed much of their fame as restorers of law and order and saviors of Italy to Bolshevism. The march on Rome, however, was an offensive act and not an act restoring law and order as the Fascists have always claimed.

Mussolini: Background and Early Life

To understand Mussolini in his two major careers, the one as a Socialist, the other as a Fascist, it is necessary now to investigate his early life and career. He was born on July 29, 1883, at Varano di Costa, a village which overlooks Dovia in the commune of Preddapio. He was the oldest of three children of Alessandro and Rosa (Maltoni) Mussolini. The father was a blacksmith and a socialist labor leader. His mother was a graduate of Forli Normal School and a teacher in the primary school there. The land where Mussolini was born is one of intense feelings and political violence. It has been the battleground of extreme radical ideas and the fertile ground for the growth of Jacobinism, Carbonarism, Massinian republican insurrectionism, anarchism, and revolutionary socialism.

Alessandro Mussolini followed the anarchistic internationalists and all too frequently, he, along with all the socialists, anarchists, and internationalists, was looked upon as a common criminal. It was a source of pride to Benito while a socialist, to point to his own prison record and that of his father and grandfather. When his father died in 1910, Benito was a fiery twenty-seven year old editor of the socialist weekly, La Lotta di Classe (The Class Struggle) of Forli. Concerning his father, he wrote:

My father experienced the joys of party work and also the inevitable bitterness due to the moral pettiness of men. He was a good man and at times excessively

altruistic. He did good to comrades and adversaries. In many respects he had a tormented existence. His end was premature. Of worldly goods he left us nothing; of spiritual goods he left us a treasure: The Idea.²⁸

²⁸Megaro, op. cit., 26.

Only fragments of Alessandro's writings remain and most of these have been distorted by the Fascist writers. But the spiritual treasure referred to by Benito was the "Socialist Idea." An article which he wrote in 1891 described his enthusiasm for socialism. He wrote:

What is Socialism? The question is asked by the masses who are ignorant of this noble idea and are frightened by the powerful and mysterious word that echoes resoundingly from one end of the world to the other. Socialism, we answer, is open, violent, and moral rebellion against the inhuman order of things as now constituted. It is knowledge and the excelsior that illumines the world. It is reason that supplants faith. It is free thought rebelling against prejudice. It is free love taking the place of a legal contract. It is a free agreement among all men to live a truly decent life. It is true justice that reigns as sovereign over the earth.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., 27.

Alessandro Mussolini was poor and his living conditions were of the crudest. He felt great sympathy for the peasants who had less than he. He also felt deeply about those who had to emigrate to earn their daily bread. The third Italy, as he called the middle class and the Catholics, were

constantly attacked by him. He was an ardent anti-Catholic and an atheist. He had no use for the Catholic priests whom he referred to as the "Black Sect."

After the above incident, Alessandro was not as active. He continued to write and attacked the evil practices of the period. He wrote about the increasing poverty of the workers and their need for employment. When Alessandro Mussolini died at the age of fifty-six, he was remembered and esteemed by his comrades as the "father of Predappio Socialism."³⁰

³⁰Ibid., 23-33.

Benito's mother was a pious Catholic, who was not interested in social and economic questions. Because they were poor she taught school to increase their meager income. Alessandro was inclined to be too generous to his needy and persecuted companions for whom his home was a frequent refuge and gathering place.

Education

About his early boyhood, Mussolini relates some interesting facts such as learning to read between the ages of four and five. He attended his mother's school from the sixth to the ninth year. Then he attended school taught by Silvio Marani, the chief elementary schoolteacher at Predappio. When Benito was nine, he was sent to a Catholic school for

boys conducted by the Salesian Fathers at Faenza. His father was opposed to a Catholic school or college but his mother insisted and to make her happy he consented. Benito hated the idea as he felt that college and prison were identical.³¹

³¹Megaro, op. cit., 42.

During his stay of two years in college, Benito remembered three things well. First, he recalled the social discrimination that existed among the students; secondly his brief stay, and thirdly his expulsion from the college. He was already at that age responding to his father's teachings concerning social and economic inequalities. In this school for various reasons, the students were divided into three classes with the result that Benito, a child of an extremely poor family had to dine at the third class table.³²

³²Ibid., 43.

A classmate insulted him and Benito did not hesitate to stab him with a penknife. He also got into so many other scrapes that he acquired the reputation of a "tough" boy. He became so difficult to handle that the Salesian Fathers were forced to expel him.

His parents, then, sent him to the Royal Normal School of Forlimpopoli where he completed his high school training

in 1898 and normal school in 1901. Here, too, he was regarded as a lively fellow. During his last year at school he was again suspended for ten days from school.³³

³³Ibid., 40-45.

When Mussolini was about seventeen years old, he delivered an apologia for regicide. In this article he expressed his admiration for the anarchist, Gaetano Bresci, who had assassinated King Humbert of Italy, July 29, 1900, at Monza. In this article he defended at great length the need for violence in political action. As early as 1901 he was mentioned in the Socialist paper Avanti. From these facts we may conclude that he was known as a Socialist to his comrades in his teens.

In 1901 he obtained a post teaching in an elementary school in the Commune of Gualtieri Emilia. He did little in the way of Socialist activities there. After an unsatisfactory school year, he borrowed forty-five lire from his mother and left for Switzerland in July 1902.

During his stay there he found comfort, assistance, and an audience among the Swiss and expatriate Italian Socialists. He managed to attend some of the courses at Lausanne University. Mussolini's main work in Switzerland was neither "manual" labor or "university" work. For the most part he was a labor organizer and socialist, propagandist, and

journalist. His associates in Switzerland thought of him as an active revolutionist.

In 1903, he organized the stoneworker's strike in Bern and was expelled from the canton for his efforts. In 1904, he was expelled from Geneva because of a falsification in his passport. He had ignored the call of the Italian army and was listed as a Renitente de Leva or Refractaire (deserter). But, during 1904, an amnesty was granted to all such deserters. This gave him an opportunity to return to Italy. He reported for military service and was immediately inducted into service with the Bersaglieri.

His time in the army was cut short because of the death of his mother. For the next three years, 1906-1909, he engaged in teaching. He did not like it and kept getting into trouble because of his Socialist activities.

In 1909, he gave up teaching and gave his time to Socialist activities exclusively. He went to Austrian Trentino and there he directed the affairs of the Secretariat of Labor and edited its weekly, L'Avvenire. He put great zeal into his work. He began to write for Il Popolo, of which he became managing editor because its editor, Battisti, wanted more time for his scientific geographical studies.

Mussolini was soon expelled from Trentino because of having participated in a plan to begin an armed irredentist movement. Being an Italian and an outspoken writer, he came under suspicion of the authorities. Circumstantial evidence

that Mussolini was contemplating the use of dynamite against the Austrian authorities was found at his lodgings.³⁴

³⁴Finer, op. cit., 46-47.

He returned to Forli where his father was running a tavern. Helping him was a widow, Anna Agostini Guido, whose daughter Rachele later became Benito's wife. Mussolini lived at home for three years. He was asked to publish a paper of his own. So he became here, at Forli, what he was later to be, in the Italian Socialist and Fascist movement--the dominant leader, the duce.

Although editing this paper was an uphill fight, the struggle between the socialists and the republicans was violent and it appealed to all parts of his belligerent nature. He named the paper La Lotta di Classe (The Class Struggle). It was filled with valuable articles giving Mussolini's extreme views on all subjects such as patriotism, militarism, religion, etc.

Here he was imprisoned in 1911 during the Italo-Turkish war, on numerous counts such as riots, hampering war work, interfering with recruiting, etc. Between the years 1910 and 1912, he kept his readers informed of socialist activities in Italy and other countries.

He read a great deal about revolutionary movements, methods and objectives in periodical literature. Then he

ran in his paper La Lotta di Classe a series of articles, sketches, essays on such thinkers or agitators as Thomas More, Babeux, Fourier, Robert Owen, Banqui, and Kotoku (the Japanese anarchist who was executed by the Japanese government in 1911). Some of these articles were reprinted from other papers; others were written by Mussolini. His education was thus continued and broadened. He, also provided in his columns a cultural program for the education of his comrades.³⁵

³⁵Megaro, op. cit., 142-180.

Through his writings Mussolini became a national figure. When the Italian Socialist Congress convened at Reggio Emilia in 1912, he was elected director of the Socialist Party and editor of the top Socialist organ Avanti. While editor he continued his anti-capitalist and anti-clerical writings. He wrote a book on John Huss in which he attacked the Church in the preface. He also wrote an anti-clerical historical novel entitled, "The Cardinal's Mistress."

From the years 1912 to 1914 he was the Duce, the dominant personality in the nationalists social movement. When the menace of intervention in World War I appeared, in June 1914, he led the mob to Cathedral Square in Milano in an unsuccessful attempt to seize the municipal buildings during "Red Week Revolution." In August 1914, he fought intervention. At the Socialist Congress of September 9, 1914, the policy

established by the Socialists was neutrality at all costs. Mussolini began to waver and his attitude towards non-intervention changed. It was much more in keeping with his belligerent nature to demand intervention and action. He had declared before that neutrals win nothing. So he changed sides in October, 1914. He became an interventionist and a nationalist. For this he was expelled from the Socialist party.

He started a new paper Popolo d'Italia in November, 1914, which came out immediately for Italy's entrance into the war on the side of the Allies. Three other men, d'Annunzio, Battisti, and Corradini helped Mussolini to organize this movement.

In April 1915 Mussolini was arrested for organizing the interventionists. On May 24, 1915, Italy declared war on Germany and Austria.

Mussolini was called to arms with the 10th Bersaglieri. He was fifteen months at the front when he was wounded by a bomb. In August 1917, he was discharged from further military service. He returned to his paper Popolo d'Italia, and continued to praise and help the war effort.³⁶

³⁶Finer, Op. cit., 100-103, 106.

Ideas of Mussolini

As to tracing his ideas and impulses, it has not been easy because of the many legends his followers have developed about him. After his ascent as the Fascist Duce, many of the records of his former life have been destroyed or are unavailable. Even with all that, some of his early ideas, can be indicated. He always desired to be considered a leader. The cause, he fought for, was always secondary to his love of leadership. He was definitely anti-militaristic when he was a socialist. He publicized his status as a refractaire (deserter) and his anti-militaristic stand by means of his articles.

He came back later and served his term in the Italian Army but it did not change his hatred of militarism. He still preached a general strike and civil strife during the war of 1911.

It must be remembered that Mussolini came from the lower classed. The chief leaders of the pre-war Italian Socialist movement, Turati, Bissolati, Treves, and others came from the comfortable bourgeois class. Mussolini was the son of a poor blacksmith who knew poverty and whose socialist father had reared him on socialist ideas.

Although prominent for his ideas and circulating the ideas of others, he became known to his comrades as a man of action. The record of his career, whether fascist or socialist,

is that of a gifted revolutionary man of action.³⁷

³⁷ Megaro, op. cit., 111.

Mussolini was a man who was definitely quite individualistic. His rebellious impulses found in the social movement one well adapted to give full scope to them. His father Alessandro had the first profound influence on his ideas. Benito read extensively but only literature of revolution, or that which he could use for self-advancement as a man of action. His sole preoccupation was himself.

He thought the masses were cowardly and he cared nothing for them. Max Stirner's book, The Ego and His Own, appealed to Mussolini so strongly that he said about it:

the Gospel of individualism is the greatest poem that has ever been sung to the glory of man become god.³⁸

³⁸ Megaro, op. cit., 319.

Another author from whom he selected what he liked was Wilfredo Pareto. Mussolini, among the other revolutionists, popularized the Paretan theory of the "elite," which states:

history is a record of the succession of the dominant minorities (or aristocracies) varying in their composition and ideology throughout the course of human experience. An organized minority always constitutes the ruling class of a given people. Since the contemporary European bourgeois elite or aristocracy was proving very disappointing to Pareto, he began to

view sympathetically the rise of a new elite or aristocracy from the proletarian class, thus ingratiating himself with many revolutionary writers.³⁹

³⁹Ibid., 115.

So Mussolini placed his faith in the action of small groups of audacious proletarian elite with himself always at the head of them. He had a magnetic voice and a clever faculty in making it appear that he was completely absorbed by zealous devotion to a cause. It was this faculty that was one of the great sources of his strength as a political agitator and leader.

He never trusted anyone but himself. He derived a keen pleasure in playing on the emotions of a crowd. He seemed outwardly excited but was always inwardly quite calm. While always appealing to and exciting the emotions and passions of his audiences he, himself, was never carried away by his emotional display. He was a genuine "blaguer" (braggart) uttering small, staccato sentences, declaiming instead of arguing, dictating with a threatening tone, instead of persuading.

He had a personal magnetism that made most people believe anything. He was the past master in the art of political deception. He was completely lacking in generosity. Friendship was not in him. With the exception of his immediate family, Mussolini had never loved or trusted anyone. He had

rarely shown any like for people. His only trusted confidant was his brother Arnaldo who died in 1931. Otherwise, in neither socialist or fascist movement, did he have a trusted and intimate friend. His selfishness enabled him to act unhampered by any sentimental considerations. He would rather be feared than loved. He was the coldest judge of men and he had a thorough knowledge of all that was weak and bad in human nature. He used this knowledge for his own ends at all times. He enjoyed a sadistic satisfaction in degrading men and in bringing out their worst qualities. He strove to humble, not to elevate, man. He destroyed individuals by the most pitiless methods. Therefore he could be called a great corrupter of men.⁴⁰ He had very little respect for

⁴⁰Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries. 1939-1943. XXVIII, 185.

the socialists in the postwar period because they talked too much about revolution without resorting to the weapon of violence. Ideas did not count for him; but power did--power through violence. Only one fundamental idea never changed and that was the seizure and maintenance of power.

He always had a flair for whatever would impress the masses to use them and their emotions to gain his own ends. The confidence in himself never failed. He said on one occasion:

I am a leader who leads, not a leader who follows.
 Besides and above all, I go against the current; I
 will never yield and I will always be on the watch,

especially when the changing wind swells the sails of my destiny Yes, I'm possessed by this mania. It inflames, gnaws, and consumes me, like a physical malady. I want to make a mark on history with my will, like a lion with his claws.⁴¹

⁴¹Megarao, op. cit., 327.

Concerning his opinions, he veered from one extreme to the other. He was most inconsistent making use today of ideas and people whom he quickly discarded when they had served their purpose. Mussolini never felt bound by any orthodoxies, not even those which he imposed on his followers. He approached his problems instinctively rather than intellectually. He preferred to rely on his own subtle understanding of Italian psychology rather than on following a set doctrine.

With his break from the Socialist party over the interventionist issue, the development of Mussolini the Fascist began. He conveyed his ideas to the people through his paper Il Popolo d'Italia. Charges were made that since Mussolini was penniless he received a "loan" from the French Government. These charges, however, have been disproved by some authors, among them Megaró.⁴² Since no proof can be found to sub-

⁴²Megarao, op. cit., 191.

stantiate it, it is more probable that the money might have

come from landowners, bankers and industrialists as Finer maintains.⁴³ Being a man of action, he was in the thick of

⁴³Finer, op. cit., 101.

the fight with his new paper. He explained:

It is necessary to act, move, fight, and if need be, to die Neutrals have never dominated events. They have always succumbed to them. It is blood which gives movement to the wheels of history.⁴⁴

⁴⁴H. L. Matthews, The Fruits of Fascism, 40.

In religion, he was an atheist. Any religious belief was incompatible to a true belief in socialism. He wrote pamphlets and even a novel with anti-clericalism as its theme. He felt that science was disproving all that religion taught. He often quoted Marx's dictum that "Religion is the opium of the people." He felt that religion was immoral and that it was a disease.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Megaro, op. cit., 94-97.

Chapter III

THE THEORY OF FASCISM

Action was the keynote to the origin of Fascism. It was the definite negation of other doctrines. It was an antiparty. With the passing of time and under the pressure of conditions, a doctrine was urgently needed.

Fascism was not premeditated as action was Mussolini's creed in the beginning. The thoughts and ideas which guided his actions were drawn from many sources. When the doctrine became necessary, he incorporated into it ideas drawn from Sorel, Peguy, Largardelle in the mouvement Socialiste and the Trades-Union movement.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Benito Mussolini, Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism. International Conciliation, 5. No. 306.

There was a fusion of two main ideas, which was peculiarly an Italian phenomenon, the union of syndicalist theory and the doctrine of Italian nationalism. There were many formulations by secondary figures in the Fascist world, professors, journalists, and ministers. All of them had written a great deal about the doctrine of Fascism. Following in the footsteps of his leader, Rocco, Minister of Justice, declared that fascism was above all action and sentiment and so it must continue to be.⁴⁷ Another leader in fascism, Gentile,

⁴⁷Alfredo Rocco, The Political Doctrine of Fascism. International Conciliation, 1926, No. 223, 10.

who became the first Minister of Education, in his speeches tried to explain that fascism was thought and action. Later he stated that fascism was not to be analyzed as a group political formula.⁴⁸ The most authoritative statement was

⁴⁸Giovanni Gentile, "The Philosophical Basis of Fascism," Foreign Affairs, 6:290-304, 1928, 290.

the one published in the Enciclopedia Italiana in 1932 and written by Mussolini. The following is a summary of the main ideas explained in his essay.

Fascism was to the Italian a way of life. The individual man represented a nation while the moral law bound him to the tradition of generations with one mission and ideal. Duty was the higher aim in life. The individual had to suppress his own interests, desires, and even death itself, to attain this spiritual ideal to which he owed his value as a man.

Fascism was a revolt against the materialistic positivism of the eighteenth century. Any doctrine that placed the center of life outside of man himself, and that, with his own free will he could create his own world, was not to be tolerated. Fascism wanted an active, courageous, physically fit man. The Fascist's life was to be serious, austere and religious. Fascism was an ethical and religious concept of life. It was a system of thought as well as a system of government. Man was the result of past generations and history. Without his environment man was nothing. Fascism

was against all individual abstractions, utopias, and Jacobin innovations. Perfect happiness was the result of wishful thinking of the economic literature of the seventeenth century which Fascism denied. It denied all theological concepts by which in a certain historical period the human race would be systematized.

Fascism aimed at being politically a realistic doctrine. It intended to solve only those problems which presented themselves of their own accord and suggested their own solution. Therefore, it was necessary to enter the process of reality and to master the forces in actual operation.

The Rights of the State and the Individual

Fascism was interested in the State and was only interested in the individual when it was to the greater benefit of the State. The true reality of the individual was the state. The only true freedom was the freedom of the State. For the Fascist nothing had value or existed outside of the State.

The Fascist State was the ultimate unit of value and therefore it was totalitarian. It interpreted, developed, and controlled the entire life of the people. It tolerated no group outside of the Fascist State. Any historical movement such as Socialism which ignored the unity of the State was destroyed. However, Fascism did not ignore the needs which brought into existence the Socialist and Syndicalist movements. It wished to recognize these needs and then

to use them in the Corporative State under the rule of the State Order.

Fascism classified individuals according to their interests. Syndicates were to be developed according to the economic interests and supervised by the State. Quality not quantity was desired. It wanted to mold the character and religion of man. It wanted man to believe and obey without question. The personality of the nation was formed by the State, not the people. It gave the State moral unity, a will, and an effective existence. The right of independence developed from the active consciousness, from the political will in action, and willingness to demonstrate its proper authority abroad. The fascist state was the spiritual as well as the material force which controlled the entire individual.

In summarizing, fascism was not only the giver of laws and the founder of institutions but the educator and promoter of spiritual life as well. It wanted to reform the mind, character and soul of man. This was the end for which it wanted discipline and authority to rule unquestioned the spiritual realm.

The political and social doctrine of fascism hated pacifism. It hated cowardice or an unwillingness to fight. It did not believe in peace. It claimed that only war brought human energies to a peak and stamped nobility on the people who had the courage to fight. All other trials were insignificant to this one because it placed man in front of a decision

between life and death. This belligerent spirit fascism emphasized even in the lives of the individuals.

Fascism loved life and believed in duty and conquest. It had only contempt for suicides. Life was to be active and flourishing. It was to be lived for others as well as for oneself.

The fascist believed in the love of one's neighbor but not a universal brotherhood. He watched the other nations with vigilant and suspicious eyes. He did not allow himself to be fooled by other nations' changing and pretentious appearances.

Marxian socialism believed in historical materialism of human society. It believed in struggle of interests in various groups, changes of means and instruments of production, and new methods of work. For Fascism this was not enough. It believed in holiness and heroism, where no material selfishness was involved. It did not believe that social progress was obtained through class struggle. Fascism denied the concept of maximum material happiness which, in the socialist ideal would be achieved at a certain moment during the evolution of its economic system.

The Fascist concept of the state was that it was absolute. It was an ethical state because it had its own thought and its own will. It was the custodian of the spiritual as well as the material sphere. It transcended the limits of individual life and represented the conscience of the nation. It was the state which educated the citizen, pointed out his

mission in life, and made him a part of the state itself.

The state respected, defended, and protected religion. The state did not create its own God but respected God, saints, and heroes of the Church. The Roman Catholic religion was a part of the state.

A part of the important fascist doctrine was its belief in violence. Mussolini believed in the most rigid discipline for all of his followers. He felt he could not demand such discipline from the rest of the nation unless he could have it in his own followers. Then, and only then, would Italy become powerful enough to make herself important in the eyes of the other nations. This discipline had to be accepted, willingly ; if not, then it had to be imposed by force.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Benito Mussolini, The Doctrine of Fascism. Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, XIV, 847-851.

In their doctrine war was essential. They even had the motto, "Me ne frego" (I don't care!" of the Squadristi written on the bandages of the wounded. It was an act of philosophy, not a display of stoicism.⁵⁰ It was an education to know how

⁵⁰Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine, and Institutions, 19.

to fight, accepting the risks involved, and thereby building a new life for Italy. That this doctrine was a living thing and that this faith was powerful in the minds of men was ably

demonstrated by those who suffered and died for it.⁵¹

⁵¹Benito Mussolini, The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism International Conciliation, 16-17.

Fascism was fact and action. According to it, hidden forces in labor and capital were the causes of war between classes. To enforce its system violence was used when necessary. In an article published in 1923, entitled "Force and Consent," Mussolini stated that every system of government used force and no government could do without it. There was always a minority which was dissatisfied. So that this dissatisfaction would not spread and endanger the state, force was to be necessary to deal with the disgruntled minority.⁵²

⁵²For the article see Herbert Schneider, Making the Fascist State, 341-342.

Mussolini was not unnecessarily brutal. He developed rules to govern the use of force. He had ruled that it should be chivalrous and not revengeful. It should be timely, proportioned to its object, and of direct value. The lesson of violence was the easiest and quickest to teach and learn. Mussolini intended that violence be used only as the last resort. Facts bear witness, however, to a campaign of terror known as "squadrist." ⁵³

⁵³Parinacci, op. cit., 216-221.

Mussolini had no use for the rule of the masses. He claimed that a small group of gifted elite of a nation was the cause behind national progress and not mass movements or theories or latent forces. This new system of things brought about order instead of equality, work instead of fraternity, and a sense of duty and sacrifice for the country instead of freedom.

Chapter IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE FASCIST PARTY

The interventionists used every type of appeal, even violence to get Italy into the war. By creating the appearance of forcing Italy into war against the will of Parliament, the interventionists prepared the way for Fascism. So the ground work, the method, and the program of fascism were all tried out in the years 1914-1915. The results were encouraging.

Although not as important as d'Annunzio and the other nationalists, Mussolini was the most vociferous and active. He was effective in swaying the masses including some of the proletariat. Fasci d'Azione had been organized as early as October, 1914, by young men of action eager to have Italy join the allied powers in the war. Over a hundred fasci were organized and vigorous methods of propaganda had been used to win the country to the interventionist viewpoint.

Mussolini was at the head of the Milan Fascio and his Popolo d'Italia was the fascist organ. The creation of the fascist revolutionary party as such took place in January 1915. Its doctrine, similar to the interventionist movement, was active, violent, full of faith and courage. Its main essentials stated by Mussolini were:

Only by forming this agile, free powerful organization shall we be able to act when the time comes. It is useless to enumerate all the reforms, postulate all the problems, set forth all solutions, if the means of agitation and achievement are lacking. This is the

purpose of the Fasci Fascism is a movement from preconceptions. Some fail to understand that Fascism ceases to be such as soon as it ties itself down to a given preconceived notion. The fasci are not, do not, wish to be, cannot become a party. The Fasci are a provisional organization of all those who accept certain solutions of certain actual problems. Fascism is anti-academic. It does not go in for politics. It has neither statutes nor regulations.⁵⁴

⁵⁴The Fascist Party, 12.

The interventionists and fascists won their point. On May 24, 1915, Italy entered the war against the Central Powers. Mussolini enlisted in the army and served well. He was wounded on February 23, 1917. That ended his military career and he went back to the editorship of Popolo d'Italia. In this position he was able to take advantage of the chaos that followed.

When the war ended in 1919, Italy was on the verge of exhaustion. Millions of men had to be demobilized. Italy's industries were demoralized and many closed. So, the returning veterans could not find jobs. They could not emigrate owing to lack of funds at home and the restrictive legislation of foreign countries. The price of food rose quickly. Currency inflation added to the other problems. The Socialists had captured 156 seats in the elections of 1919. This created a parliamentary stalemate. Soon riots, strikes, and other violence broke out. The authorities seemed unable, or were unwilling to do anything about it. Socialism spread rapidly

and radicalism grew stronger. Shouts of "Down with the King!" and "Long live Lenin!" were often heard on the streets in those days.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Walter Consuelo Langsam, The World since 1914, 332-271.

Even the formation of a new, political party, The Catholic People's Party failed to stop the Socialists and the Radicals. The Nationalists and the ex-soldiers were angry and worried that the result of their participation in the war might be an anarchic Italy. On the international front things were faring just as badly. None of the promises to Italy had been kept. Italy felt as though she were a conquered country instead of a victorious ally.

In his newspaper Mussolini wrote on January 16, 1919, that the people of Italy should spontaneously and generously go towards the returning soldiers. It had been proclaimed for three years that a new "social order" would be necessary to recompense the masses that defended the nation and to tie them to the future. The soldiers returned with only the satisfaction of having done their duty. They began to look for work. There was none. They must be provided for. Many were living in the most squalid circumstances.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Parinacci, op. cit., 54-57.

So the fascists felt that a new revolutionary act was needed to win the peace from parliament. As an added sign to the coming tempest, the Arditi (shock troops during the war) began to unite into an association begun at Rome and soon spread throughout Italy. They proclaimed in January 1919 that "the black flames" were going to restore the national life and to represent all that was young, courageous, and bold. They were united in order to protect their country and its future against the threats of her internal enemies.

March 2, 1919, Popolo d'Italia issued an invitation to all its followers, servicemen, ex-service men, citizens and representatives of the fascists of the New Italy and the rest of the nation to attend a private meeting to be held at Milano on the evening of the 23rd of March. The purpose of the invitation was to be the formation of the Fasci di Combattimento.

Before the meeting Mussolini received many letters praising his movement. In Piazza San Sepolcro in the locale of the Alleanza Industriale e Commerciale the meeting took place.⁵⁷ At this meeting there was much talk against Bolshe-

⁵⁷ Ibid., 55-56.

vism. There was much said against the government and how it had neglected the returning servicemen. Then Mussolini brought out the reason for establishing the fasci by saying:

Siamo noi che abbiamo diritto alla suessione per che fummo noi che spingemmo il paese alla guerra e lo conducemmo alla vittoria.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Ibid., 59. "We have the right to succeed (the present government) because we pushed the country into the war and we led her to victory."

Thus started the fascist revolution against the ruling class and the "old regime." The persons who attended the meeting were the unemployed, the ex-service men, younger sons of business men and merchants, property holders, discontented professional men and students. As to the number that attended there are no figures that can be checked. Men were present that later became famous in the fascist party and its activities, such as Roberto Farinacci, F. F. Marinetti, Michele Biguchi, General G. Douhet, and Massimo Rocca.

In the beginning fascism was not the same party it was later on. Then, it had a certain idealistic passion for renovation and change. Among the various changes it demanded were: a statement of war aims, opposition to the imperialism of other nations at Italy's expense, and the acquisition of both Dalmatia and Fiume for Italy. In the internal situation, the fascists aimed to prevent the candidacy of the neutralists of every party. The nationalist group commented favorably on this new revolutionary group. The others did not comment, or if they did, it was to ridicule them and call them impotent and rabid patriots.

It can be said that fascism was multiple in its origin and aims so it could not be expected to start out with a consistent and permanent program. That it finally achieved a united and national organization was due directly to the determined efforts of Mussolini to secure control over the party.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Marian Irish, Fascism in Twentieth Century Political Thought, 87-88.

A hierarchy of officials was established as soon as possible after the first formal session of March 23, 1919. A secretary general, assistant general, and provincial secretaries with important powers were created. Then a number of missionaries or confidential agents (fiduciari) as they have been named were sent out to those provinces where fascism was just beginning and where such new units could be brought under control of the Milano unit.⁶⁰

⁶⁰Herbert Schneider, Making the Fascist State, 69-70.

Among the early organizers were Umberto Pasella, Luigi Freddi, Alessandro Melchiorri, and Francesco Giunta. These men were Mussolini's trustees, men of mediocre ability whom Mussolini could control and who represented his point of view. These men worked in two definite plans: first, they gave what local organization they found a political form. Then

they incorporated them into the general party scheme. Where the local leaders were too prominent they tried to wrest the control from them and focus all attention on Mussolini. Secondly, they tried to win the lower class of people. Much friction was engendered during this period but the opponents made little headway because the rich mens' sons and the middle class dominated the fascio.

There were many signs of struggle going on within the party for supremacy. Mussolini, all this while, was becoming eloquent on the subject of discipline and hierarchy, a gospel preached for the Italian nation but intended mostly for the too independent fasci.⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid., 70-71.

Mussolini's ambitions were given a new impetus when Giolitti suddenly decided in April, 1921, to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. While this crisis was going on in the government, the number of fasci was increasing rapidly. But no anti-party, no mere movement, could hope to get very far in politics or to take advantage of the present situation without a better organized party. So the Fascist deputies met in Milano September 7, 1921, and suggested that a National Congress meet to achieve the domination of the Italian government.⁶²

⁶²Matthews, op. cit., 85-88.

The Congress, known as the Third National Congress, met in Rome, November 7, 1921, and there the Partito Nazionale Fascista was created.⁶³ From the handful of fascists that

⁶³Marion Irish, Fascism, Twentieth Century Political Thought, 85.

met in 1919, the party had grown to 310,000 members and 2,200 fasci. Most of these represented the northern part of Italy. There were very few representatives from southern Italy. In Rome, the people were indifferent or hostile to the fascists. All during the time the Congress was in session there were scenes of violence with the squadrists and nationalists fighting the workers and the anti-fascists. A general strike occurred at this time and the fascists proclaimed that if the government did not break the strike peacefully, they would do so with violence.

It was a technique they were later going to use frequently to gain power. They felt that they were supporting law and order by using violence to stop violence.

In the Congress, Mussolini wanted to develop a collective responsibility. It was naturally out of the question that Mussolini should leave the helm of the party. Mussolini and Fascism were synonymous. So the fascist party received a structure and program in which the party was at Mussolini's service and the program was incidental.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Benito Mussolini, My Autobiography, 143-144.

When the Squadristi had been organized into a militia it became the military organization of a political party. It was something new that fascism introduced into modern government. This was organized chiefly by Italo Balbo, De Bono, and De Vecchi.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Matthews, op. cit., 89-90.

The fascist party had its own rules and regulations adopted in 1921 by the National Directory with which it became a political association. In 1926, the Grand Council adopted the second statute which made fascism a definite party. The law of December 9, 1928, the Grand Council which was the governing body of the fascist party was changed into a Constitutional organ of the state.⁶⁶ Then the Grand Council of

⁶⁶For the text of the law see Michael Oakeshott, The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe, 181-183.

1929 made provisions for promulgations of future party statutes by royal decree following the deliberation of the Grand Council and the Council of Ministers.

There was no single enactment incorporating the party as a whole into the state, but a series of acts had given to the organs of the party definite functions in the government.

The highest official in the party was Il Duce and, by

royal decree, he was also, the head of the government. The Fascist Grand Council was to be consulted in advance of the enactment of legislation of a constitutional character. It prepared the national list upon which elections to the Chamber of Deputies took place under the electoral law of 1928. It was a function which was tantamount to the appointment of the Chamber of Deputies. It was to the Grand Council that the king must turn for advice in regard to a successor, in the event, that the office of the head of the government was vacated.⁶⁷

⁶⁷The Fascist Party, 67.

The Secretary of the Party was, under the decree-law of 1937, a member of the Council of Ministers and, as a minister he occupied the government bench in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Genuine powers of substantive legislation were devolved upon the party under the royal decree-law of October 5, 1936, which gave to the central price committee of the Party and to the provincial intersyndical committee the authority to establish the wholesale and retail prices for commodities sold in the Italian market.

The Party was given an official voice in the functioning of various state organizations. Among those organs was the Giunta. It was the most important administrative agency in the provinces. The party was included in the council of each of the twenty-two category corporations created in 1934. The

party took part in the work of the Central Commission for local finance. The secretary of the party was an ex-officio member of the following organs of the state as, the Supreme Defense Council, the Council on Higher Education, and the Corporative Central Committee. The party representations had to make sure that all the decisions taken by the above mentioned organs were in accordance with the policies and instructions of the party high command.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Arthur Steiner, Government in Fascist Italy, 39-40.

Representatives from other organs of the state participated in the work of the party institutions, such as, the Fascist Grand Council which included the ministers and the heads of the other state organs and the National Directory of the party which included representatives of the ministries of the Interior and Corporations.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institution, 194-195.

The Italian courts, particularly those concerned with the interpretation of administrative law in its application to public officers, have taken judicial cognizance of the position of the party. Political pronouncements, acts of legislation, and judicial opinions thus concurred in giving to the party a special and unique place in the legal and

constitutional structure of the state. For this reason the Fascist State was more than the form which the Italian State had assumed under Fascist auspices. It was the state into which the Fascist party had been merged as an integral element, and the state which was led, pushed, and pulled as the party desired and willed.⁷⁰

⁷⁰Schneider, op. cit., 68.

The political party in the one-party totalitarian state was definitely a closed organization. It was confined to an elite, dues paying, semi-professional membership. The principle, steadily applied in the communist party was not enforced at first in Italy. Mussolini was of the idea that the party should include all good and loyal Italians. Rewards of party membership in terms of political and economic preferment became apparent. The party was then swamped by membership applications from persons anxious to participate in the spoils.

So, in 1927, the membership to the party was closed to all but graduates of the youth organization, then the Avanguardia, who became full members at the age of eighteen. In 1930, the Young Fascist Organization (Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento) was formed to receive, at the age of eighteen, recruits from the Avanguardia.⁷¹ After a three year probationary

⁷¹Benito Mussolini, Fascism Doctrine and Institutions, 270-271.

period, the young Fascists acquired senior status at the age of twenty-one, on the occasion of the annual Fascist levy. This occurred annually on May 24. It was conducted by the secretary of the party. So it can be said that in 1931 there was one party member for 12.5 registered voters and one member for every 5.5 voters in 1935.⁷²

⁷²Schneider, op. cit., 68-70.

Once admitted into the party not all members were placed on the same footing. There was a special aristocracy in the party ranks and they took precedence over all others. They were the few surviving members of the original meeting in Piazza San Sepolcro. Also included were the members who participated in the work of the party before the march on Rome. Among others were those who, if injured for the cause, received financial compensation.

There was no formal period of probation except that served by young recruits during their three years in the Young Fascist Organization. A member of the party was strictly held to the observance of disciplinary regulations, particularly those arising from his oath:

In the name of God and of Italy I swear to carry out without discussion the orders of the Duce and to serve the Cause of the Fascist Revolution with all my might and if necessary with my life."⁷³

⁷³Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 208.

He was expected to be a model of good behavior and if he failed, he was subjected to various penalties. These penalties ranged from reprimand to expulsion from the party.

Expulsion from the party mean exclusion from all forms of public activity. It was reserved for traitors to the party or hardened criminals. Only the Duce could readmit a person that had been excluded.

The organization of the party hierarchy was formed on a pyramid idea with the Duce at its apex. His election or appointment had never been defined. The party statute of 1929 listed him first among the hierarchy but the statute of 1932 deliberately removed him from, and placed him above, the hierarchy. He was its director and leader accountable to no one. Then, under him came the party hierarchy which included those who carried out the Duce's wishes, and finally came the rank and file, whose exclusive party privilege was that of obeying the principles set down by the Duce and following the directions laid down by the hierarchy.⁷⁴

⁷⁴For the texts of the Laws see Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 194-200.

The Party Statute recognized five hierarchical levels, based on the broad stratum of local officialdom and building to a one-man apex--the party secretary. The secretary was appointed by royal decree on the proposal of Il Duce. He was the direct representative in supervising and maintaining the

party offices, services, and functions. He was accountable to the Fascist Grand Council of which he was also the secretary.

Then the next or second level was made up of the members of the National Directorate. This was a council of eleven members appointed by the Duce on the proposal of the Secretary. They were removable at any time. There were three vice-secretaries, the administrative secretary and seven regular members. This body met for the purpose of advising the higher authorities and to serve as an agency of party legislation. When Il Duce presided, its membership included the ministers of Interior and Corporations, and the Commandant General of the Militia-Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale; when the Secretary took the chair, the undersecretaries of state for Interior and Corporations and the Chief of the General Staff of the Militia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale participated.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 201-202.

Until 1936, a single vice-secretary assisted the secretary and substituted in the event of his absence. Later there were three vice-secretaries to help with the work. The bulk of the routine work was done by the administrative secretary. He employed and supervised the personnel in party service but also prepared the budget for the national organization

and approved the budget for the national organization and approved the budgets of the provincial federations.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 203-204.

On the third hierarchical level were found the most important officers in the provincial organizations, the federal secretaries and commanders of the Young Fascists. The federal secretaries met from time to time at the call of the National Secretary. This organ was known as the National Council of the Party. This Council's purpose was to summon the Federal secretaries to Rome to report personally upon their activities and receive the orders of the Secretary.

The fourth level in the hierarchy included the notable members of the federal directories, the secretaries of the provincial fascist university groups and the officers second in command in the Young Fascist groups.

The last group comprised the major officers of the local fasci, mostly political secretaries and members of the local directories.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 205-207.

So around this structure the party was built. Two important principles were outstanding in this structure. One was that each hierarch dominated and controlled all the

hierarchs on the lower levels. Secondly, where several hierarchs were found on the same level the superior one among them controlled them all. In none of the steps were there any provisions made for the election of hierarchs. All powers of control and removal were exercised by superior hierarchs.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Ibid., 211.

The local units were composed of Fasci di Combattimento which were grouped in a federation of Fasci di Combattimento. In the large cities the basic Fascio was divided into regional groups, the communal fascio remained the basis of the party organization in the small towns. These local units were made up of squadristi or fighting groups. Twenty members made up a session. Several sessions made up the provincial federation. These federations were to receive their financial support from the session that composed it.

The provincial federation elected the provincial committee and the secretary. Their business was to supervise the action of all the sessions in the area. The provincial secretaries together with the regional representatives in the Central Council, constituted a directing Committee of the regional federation.

There were approximately 7,300 local units. There were ninety-four provincial federations. Each one was in charge of a secretary, who was also the secretary of the local fascio

in the provincial capital.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Schneider, op. cit., 72-79.

The Fascist party maintained an establishment comparable in size and function to any regular government department in the Palazzo del Littorio, the headquarters of the party. The party offices were under the joint direction of the party secretary and the national directory for the management and control of the Senior Fasci di Combattimento, and the federations and all other fascist organizations. They had national jurisdiction, each maintaining direct contact with comparable offices organized on a local scale and attached to the local fasci. There were six such offices. The first was the political secretariat assisted by a secretary who maintained political contact with the leaders of the local fasci and provincial federations; second, the administrative secretary who was in charge of the central files and records relating to party membership and finance. It employed the personnel attached to party offices and acted as a service agency for all party offices. Third, the Press and Propaganda Office, which was responsible for party's publication program and prepared the Fogli d'Ordini, the official bulletin of the party. Fourth, was the Historical Office and fifth, the Archives Office whose functions their titles so adequately explain. The sixth office was the Permanent Price Control Committee. It not only fixed wholesale and retail prices but also acted as an economic

general staff for the party and the Ministry of Corporations. In addition the six offices there was a private secretariat (or gabinetto) which rendered personal assistance to the Secretary.⁸⁰

⁸⁰Matthews, op. cit., 49-77

The party agencies which maintained control over the party organizations besides the Senior Fasci who had a strictly political character were: the Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento or young fascists; the Fascist University groups made up of students in institutions of higher learning; the senior women's auxiliary (Feminine Fasci); the young fascist women's groups from which the women's auxiliary recruited their members; the massie rurali, an organization of rural women.⁸¹

⁸¹Steiner, op. cit., 52-53.

Then there were functional associations sponsored by the party. These associations had a compulsory membership drawn from persons of either sex engaged in various forms of public activity. There were five of them: first, the Fascist School Association, in which the educators were organized in separate sections as (a) elementary schools, (b) middle schools, (c) university professors, (d) university assistants,

and (e) institutions of fine arts and libraries; second, the Fascist Association of Public Employees combined professional administrators not included in some other association; third, the Fascist Association of Postelegrafonici, that is, of postal, telegraph, and telephone workers; fourth, the Fascist Association of Railway workers; and fifth, the Fascist Association of workers in the State Enterprises.⁸²

⁸²Steiner, op. cit., 53.

Fascism replaced the horizontal conception of democracy by a vertical conception which, as in all organizations of an authoritarian character, was a pledge of success and victory. The main characteristics of the program in 1921 were: that they were definitely antiparty and the Liberal State; that they were a movement without being bound to a preconceived doctrine; and the fairly spontaneous rise of local groups.⁸³ Mussolini declared that his party contained

⁸³Finer, op. cit., 309-310.

three planks at that time. They were: to uphold the moral and material claims of the associations of those who fought; to oppose imperialism of any country that was damaging to Italy; and to fight with all their means the candidates of the opposition.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Benito Mussolini, My Autobiography, 71-72.

Then the political situation changed and it became imperative to have a definite program. So a program was developed and initiated as we know it now. From this program it was possible to follow the three cardinal principles of Order, Discipline, and Hierarchy. The theory by which Fascism justified its private army, and through which it seized power, was developed to its final form. The first manifests of the directorate of the party dated November 21, 1921, said:

We are a voluntary militia, placed at the service of the nation. We will be with the State and for the State every time that it shows itself a jealous custodian, defender, and propagator of the national tradition, the national sentiment, the national will, capable of imposing its authority at all costs. We will substitute ourselves for the State every time that it shows itself incapable, of facing and fighting without lamentable indulgence, the causes and elements leading to internal disintegration of the principles of national solidarity. We will array ourselves against the State whenever it gives evidence of falling into the hands of those who threaten and attack the life of the country.⁸⁵

⁸⁵Herbert Matthews, The Fruits of Fascism, 90-91.

The Fascist party proclaimed at that time that their main objectives were to seize and govern the country by force.

They further stated:

The prestige of the National State will be restored . . .
 . . . The liberty of the citizens will be doubly limited; in the liberty of other juridical persons and in the sovereign right of the nation to live and develop . . .
 Fascism does not believe in the vitality or the principles which aspire the so-called League of Nations. There is to be an 'organic plan of Public Works' to compete and

reorganize railway lines, electrification, roads, and maritime communications. In education there must be 'rigid State control of curricula, the choice of teachers and their work.' Schools were to be 'rigorously national' institutions. Obligatory military service and remilitary instructions 'from the earliest years' is demanded. At this time even the Corporative State was in outline form in this program. 'The state should invest the organizations with the capacity and responsibility, conferring on the professional and economic corporations the right to be elected to the national technical councils.' The State is sovereign and the corporations are to be directed toward national ends.⁸⁶

⁸⁶Ibid., 91.

They made short work of Parliament by just stating that the powers and functions of that body be limited. Wherever they could not gain their ends with persuasion, they used violence and force. So the essentials were rapidly coming forward although it was slightly confused with remnants of liberal and socialist leanings of Mussolini's past sympathies.

The outstanding trend was towards the all-absorbing state with the idea of the fascist party governing the country and substituting itself for the state. Mussolini never had any use for the masses of people. He was essentially an individualist and had an overpowering desire for personal diminution. In April, 1926, Mussolini definitely stated the importance of the party to the State, when he said:

The party is the political and spiritual reserve of the Regime. . . . The party must make the nation, a Fascist Nation from top to bottom and from bottom to

to top, and lastly, the party must give the nation a Fascist governing class.⁸⁷

⁸⁷The Fascist Party, 63.

By the statutes of 1925, the party was radically reformed; elections were abolished and appointments were made by Il Duce, who was recognized as the supreme authority.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Beniamino de Ritis, Aims and Policies of the Fascist Regime in Italy, International Conciliation, 1935, 306, 20.

Chapter V

THE MATTEOTTI CASE

The final step in the process of militarization through which the Fascist Party had been passing was in January 1923, when Mussolini founded the Fascist Militia (Militia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale). The non-socialist groups had shown good will towards Mussolini when he first took up the reins but soon turned against him. The expectation of peace after Mussolini's advent to power did not materialize. Opposition persisted despite all efforts of the Fascists to crush it with arms and cruelty. So cruel had they become that to avenge the death of one Fascist they murdered twenty-two workmen in Torino in a single day in December 1922.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Salvemini, The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy, 122-129.

The police did not dare to raise a hand to protect the workers. The leader of the murderers was neither arrested nor punished. In fact, he was publicly acclaimed and a telegram of congratulations was sent to the Fascio of Torino by De Vecchi, then Under-secretary of State for Pensions.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Ebenstein, op. cit., 36. Finer, 326.

The campaign against the Socialist and Catholic Democratic

organizations and newspapers was redoubled. When it became apparent that fascists were going to keep things in disorder all the people became worried. The populace began to resent and hate the Fascist methods. The Liberals, the People's Party, and other non-Socialist groups joined the opposition in 1923.

Mussolini now tried to weaken or suppress opposition. He found the Chamber of Deputies difficult to manage so he ordered new elections for April 1924. The purpose was to obtain an obedient majority. Up to now, he had been in favor of proportional representation, but now, put into practise the system of voting which guaranteed the Fascists power in advance. The system was: the party which gained the largest number of votes--at least one-quarter--was to receive two-thirds of the seats and the remainder of the seats were to be divided among other parties.

The essential feature of Mussolini's system of government was, if consent should fail, there was still force. It was now used as a threat to the opposition. The electoral campaign was opened with the murder of the Socialist Candidate Piccinini who was kidnapped before the eyes of his wife and then shot. The murderers were traced but were freed.⁹¹

⁹¹Salvemini, op. cit., 160.

No chance was given to the opposition to hold meetings or to pass out pamphlets. Violence was resorted to so that

the people would vote for Fascism. Still, the opposition party polled approximately three million votes while the Fascist and the Nationalists using every trick only polled four and a half millions.

Unlimited terror had not freed Mussolini of stubborn opposition as he had hoped. Guns and bullets did not suppress the truth about the methods used to win the election.⁹²

⁹²Finer, op. cit., 233-234, 321-324; Ebenstein, op. cit., 36-38.

Up to the Matteotti crisis in 1924, Mussolini felt that the internal situation would take care of itself. Mussolini's idea was that the new purified parliament would take up the reforms drafted by the government and give them a technical criticism and detailed examination before they became laws.

He was rudely shocked when the minority in the New Chamber of Deputies began to protest the elections, charge illegal procedures and violence, criticize the Fascist Government in general and expound the programs of their respective parties. The Socialists Amendola and Matteotti were particularly irritating. Fascist deputies answered in kind and the atmosphere became heated.⁹³

⁹³Benito Mussolini, La Nuova Politica in Opere di Benito Mussolini, III, 187-190.

The violence of the election and desperation of the

opposition now led to the tragedy of Matteotti. This socialist arraigned the government on May 30, 1924. On June 7, Mussolini replied. He claimed that between February 15 and April 22, 19 Fascists had been killed and 147 wounded. He offered the Socialists co-operation, or if they tried insurrection "in 24 hours or 25 minutes all will be over!"⁹⁴

⁹⁴Finer, op. cit., 234.

Giacomo Matteotti, a Socialist deputy endangered his life and family to reveal the truth. In the spring of 1924, he published a pamphlet which was also sent abroad. After the elections he continued to denounce the elections and methods of the Fascist officials from the parliamentary platform. Matteotti knew he was rushing to certain death by exposing the Fascists. He even mentioned this fact to close friends.⁹⁵

⁹⁵Matthews, op. cit., 151-154.

On June 10, 1924, Matteotti was assaulted in Rome in broad daylight by a band of Fascists, kidnapped and murdered a few miles outside of the city. The assassins, had been led by Amerigo Dumini, who had been called from Milano for this purpose. Dumini was the most infamous of all squadristi, the founder of the Tuscan Fasci, leader of many punitive expeditions and a real killer who confessed in prison to

having perpetrated twelve political murders on orders. In this case, it was Cesare Rossi, chief of the press bureau in Rome, who had given the orders, but in addition to Rossi, Dumini had friends in the highest Fascist circles. Among the assassins was a man named Filippelli who, with Pinzi, ran the Roman Fascist newspaper, Corriere Italiano.

Filippelli was allowed to escape in a motor boat and he had the presence of mind to take with him a valise full of money. Dumini and the others were arrested and were tried in 1926. Their lawyer, as might be guessed, was Roberto Farinacci, who had just served as secretary of the Fascist Party, a position which Mussolini had given him in February 1925, in order to purify the ranks. Two of the accused were acquitted and three, including Dumini, were sentenced to prison. Two months later, the three were released under an amnesty conveniently granted by the King on the 25th anniversary of his reign. Dumini retired in wealth and quiet to Berna on the Lybian coast.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Schneider, op. cit., 27-8; 90-92.

This crime stirred all of Italy as nothing else had done. This act showed as never before the real character of the Fascist movement. It made evident the theory of Mussolini "if consent should fail then force will prevail." Everywhere justice was demanded and the anti-Fascist press accused

Mussolini of being the instigator of the plot.⁹⁷

⁹⁷Schneider, op. cit., 92.

For six months after the murder it looked as though Fascism were on the verge of collapse. In those stirring days there was the possibility that the Fascist regime might have collapsed, for not only the working classes but also the middle classes and the conservative right had been shaken out of their lethargy by this assassination behind which apparently Mussolini himself stood. A large section of the population was ready to offer resistance but indecision or cowardice of the Socialist and Liberal deputies made for lack of leadership.

While the Fascists had to resort everywhere to a large scale terrorism during the second half of 1924, the Socialist Deputies were preaching calmness and tranquillity. They rebuffed as agents provocateurs all those who made proposals for a revolutionary uprising.

The opposition, operating either through the masses or in parliament could have swept aside the Fascists in office. Throughout the country thousands stood ready to rebel against Fascism. They were ready to employ armed force, if necessary, but the Socialist leaders wished to avoid civil war at all costs. Seemingly they still firmly believed that justice would come into its own unaided. The middle class opposition had not learned the lesson from the King's breach of the

Constitution in 1922, they still expected him to take personal control.⁹⁸

⁹⁸Schneider, op. cit., 92; Finer, op. cit., 248-249.

The opposition acted unwisely. They should have taken the initiative and tried to overthrow the Fascist government at least by parliamentary means. Instead, it withdrew from Parliament in a body condemning itself to complete inanity and leaving the Fascists in complete control.

A hall was hired on the Aventine Hill, where headquarters were established and whence the campaign of words and ink against Fascism was continued. Mussolini was seriously embarrassed by this move. Unwilling to face the empty seats in the House of Parliament, he assembled his faithful rump parliament of about 350 deputies in the nearby Palazzo Venezia and explained the situation to them as follows:

As for dissolving the Chamber, I ask you who are deputies and who feel yourselves regularly elected by the Italian people, I ask you if you intend to withdraw, to renounce your delegated office, to hand in your resignations to the antion, I would almost say to your own consciences. It goes without saying that this is no time in which to speak of elections and that it is an idea as grotesque as it is catastrophic to want to plunge the masses of the nation who need quiet, calm and work, back into an electoral battle, which, given the present situation, would be of very uncertain issue.⁹⁹

⁹⁹Schneider, op. cit., 92-93; Benito Mussolini, La Nuova Politica III, 197-200.

Mussolini, when he gave the above speech was still willing to compromise. But by the middle of July, 1924, Mussolini's attitude toward the Aventine Secession had changed. He saw that they were not willing to fight so he began to take the offensive and to plan ways of getting rid of the parliamentary nuisance once and for all.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Mussolini, La Nuova Politica III, 203-4.

In the meantime, the Aventine movement was not getting the desired effect. Some of the best minds and characters of Italy were represented. They mistakenly thought they could answer the Fascist force with liberal reason and passive resistance. The essence of the opposition movement was negative. They drew up a program of their ideals. They called their organization the Unione Nazionale whose first manifesto declared "open and decided opposition to Fascism."¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹Matthews, op. cit., 156.

Some of the leading figures who signed this National Union were Giovanni Amendola, Guglielmo Ferrero, Luigi Salvatorelli, Count Sforza, and Mario Vinciguerra. The idea of these men was a defense of the ideals of democracy overthrown by Fascism. They declared:

Italy wants to belong to the type of Great Western Democracies which have based the conditions for their prestige and their greatness in the world on the institutions of popular sovereignty.¹⁰²

¹⁰²Ibid., 156-157.

They had grand ideals but neither they nor the mass of Italian people were ready to fight for them. In January 1925, the issue of the Republican, Critica Politica, summed up the failure of the Aventine movement in the following words:

We must recognize in Mussolini that promptness of decision and that indifference towards the means used which are absolutely lacking in his adversaries, and their weakness consists in that The opposition 'fell for Mussolini's game! and this was their error--to have imposed a battle without the decision to carry it through to the end, or even without fighting; to have believed and let others believe in their own victory without having anything that could give them that certainty Error of method, defect of action, lack of program¹⁰³

¹⁰³Matthews, op. cit., 157.

In this situation, there was only one stand left for the Fascists and that was to bring into existence a dictatorial power.

The "Aventines" began to realize that their leaving the Chamber of Deputies had not brought the desired results so on January 17, 1926, they tried to return to the Chamber of Deputies. Humiliating conditions were imposed by Mussolini

if they wished to return. No one accepted and that ended the last parliament as a liberal parliament.

The crime and violence of the deed shocked all of Italy. This crime coming upon the heels of the promises of the Fascists to preserve law and order, the revelation that the party had a secret police, and the fact that it was revealed Matteotti was killed so brutally but died so bravely (so testified later one of the assassins, Albino Volpi) had a profound effect on the public.

The Fascist press called this crime one of those which could be called an error rather than a misdeed. The above seemed the style of the distorted historical writing which Fascism introduced into the contemporary world.

Mussolini's first reaction was one of annoyance. He stated in the Chamber:

Only an enemy who for long nights had thought up something diabolical against me could have carried out this crime.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Ebenstein, op. cit., 155.

The public was so upset that De Bono was forced to resign his office as police chief. The Duce saw the ranks of his party reduced by the desertion of the fearful and the cowards. A campaign of hatred and accusations had more than halved their number by the flight of all the cowards who hid their Fascist buttons and eclipsed themselves.

When at the end of the year, Mussolini called a council of ministers, the Roman newspapers prepared the banner headlines "Government Resigns!" But Fascism was to prove that it could not fall by popular indignation.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵Matthews, op. cit., 155.

Now the Fascists gathered their forces and held important meetings. They brought Black Shirt legions from Florence and Ferrara and concentrated them in Rome to frighten the people. Actually, Mussolini was afraid to use this force. The Fascists took the stand "kill or be killed." They took on all responsibilities to destroy opposition and launch out into the unknown.¹⁰⁶ Mussolini realized that he would have

¹⁰⁶Finer, op. cit., 323-324.

to muzzle the press to gain control of the government and to clear up the situation which threatened him and his party. So he grew bold and on July 10, 1924, he issued a decree which effectively stopped the press by putting it under prefectorial supervision.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷G. A. Borghese, Goliath, The March March of Fascism, 271.

In the meantime, revolt and weakening of his own ranks became evident. The opposition demanded that Mussolini resign,

that the militia be abolished, and that new election on the basis of proportional representation be held immediately. This revolt spread until Mussolini feared most of all the withdrawal of the nationalists. To save himself, he quickly reconstructed his cabinet; put Federzoni, a nationalist in as minister of the Interior; Rocco, a nationalist, as Minister of Justice, and even placed several nationalist leaders in the Grand Council of the party itself. He, therefore, held a general housecleaning in the government and appeared before Parliament with a new cabinet.¹⁰⁸ He promised a thorough

¹⁰⁸Schneider, op. cit., 91-92.

reorganization of the party and immediate suppression of violence. He, however, refused point blank to resign his office, to touch the militia, or to call new elections.

When the opposition deputies left for "Aventine Hill" he pleaded most fervently a return to legality, but he had no intention of reviving the parliamentary coalition "normalcy" which the opposition wanted. If, at this point, there had been a man with the force of character of Matteotti to keep the opposition groups in Parliament ready to cooperate, the results might have been vastly different.

The poor leadership of the opposition, their unwise actions gave Mussolini what he most needed, the great opportunity not only to reassert his authority but to make it

greater than anything yet known.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹Schneider, op. cit., 92-93; Ebenstein, op. cit., 39-42.

He took full responsibility for the murders and for the sins of the party. Then he counterattacked with point and vigour. In regard to Mussolini's part in the assassination, it was not absolutely demonstrated but his guilt and knowledge of the crime could be believed. These were evident from his close collaborators, Cesari, Rossi, Finzi, Marinelli, and the assassin himself, Dumini. Marinelli and Rossi were received daily by Mussolini and it seemed impossible that they would have instigated a murder against the will of Mussolini. Mussolini realized these obvious implications. At a meeting of the National Council of the Fascist Party on August 8, 1924, he declared:

If these men (who committed the Matteotti crime) had not been in close touch with the government, if they had leapt from obscurity into the heart of the party, it would have made but a feeble impression. On the contrary, however, the men whom I had to penalize were fairly close to me and about this intimacy miserable speculations could have been made.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰Ebenstein, op. cit., 39-40.

Until the political situation was under control, Mussolini wanted no more publicity on the Matteotti affair. Rossi and Marinelli were granted an amnesty to avoid giving public

evidence which might make matters worse. So the proceedings against the assassins themselves were held two years later in a small provincial town. It was quietly held like a well produced play. The judge, jury, and convictions had all been settled well beforehand. Three of the murderers were condemned to six years imprisonment but they were set free two months later. Dumini was sentenced to prison but was later released under an amnesty.

Mussolini challenged the opposition to bring a charge against him under Article 47 of the Italian Constitution. The Senate passed a vote of confidence in Mussolini on June 24, 1924. The opposition had been unwilling to charge Mussolini with guilt. Mussolini became bolder and when the "aventine deputies" wanted to return on January 17, 1926, he imposed such humiliating conditions that they never returned.¹¹¹

¹¹¹Matthews, op. cit., 158.

So for Mussolini a bad deed turned into a golden opportunity to make Italy a dictatorship.

Chapter VI

THE FASCIST STATE

The Fascist movement was aimed at strengthening the state. It was intended as a national movement although the members were few at first. It was to be a popular movement because it addressed itself to all classes. Being a national movement it appealed to the sound forces and lofty traditions of the country. But with great disagreement among the members, in the beginning, only one man kept the Fascists together--Mussolini. All were loyal to him.

The progress of the Fascist party was slow. It can be said that Mussolini's tactics during these early years before the March on Rome contributed greatly to the success of Fascism. He had a rough and ready solution for problems and an intuitive comprehension of the Italians. He gradually penetrated the Italian administrative and political machinery. He organized his followers into voluntary emergency groups, who, in times of strike, kept essential industries running. All these methods Mussolini used to make the party important and powerful. These gradual, methodical, revolutionary tactics eventually brought the Fascist party into national prominence.

The party organization was developed with its concentration of authority and its hierarchic membership through a group of auxiliary organizations. Concentration of membership implied that all party activity centered in the hands

of Mussolini. The will of the leader prevailed in all cases.¹¹²

¹¹²Erwin von Beckerath, "Fascism", Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 6, 136.

The supreme head, the highest authority, and founder of the party was Mussolini. All authority came from him and all discipline was referred to him. He was a political institution, not only as the head of the government, but also, as an active, representative of the revolution. To understand the value of the Duce, we have to understand the personality of Il Duce in relation to the Italian State. The direction of the Italian policy was centralized in him and could not be otherwise.

Without diminishing the value of the monarchy, which was defined in the high functions of the Crown, Il Duce, was the fundamental, effectual, dynamic, and regulating factor of the life of the State.¹¹³

¹¹³The Fascist Party, 73-76.

With the law of December 24, 1925, the office of the Head of the Government was created which was more in keeping with the Fascist idea.¹¹⁴ This was substituted for the

¹¹⁴For the text of the Law see Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 177-180.

position of parliamentary prime minister who was responsible to parliament. The Head of the Government was made responsible to the king alone, while the other ministers were made responsible to both the Head of the Government and to the king. The king had the authority to appoint and remove the Head of the government and on the latter's advice the other ministers.

At the top of the hierarchy in the Fascist Party organization was placed the Fascist Grand Council. It was headed by Mussolini as Il Duce--the Leader. Its position and powers were defined by law. This law stated:

Art. I: The Grand Council is the supreme organ which coordinates and integrates all the activities of the Regime issued from the Revolution of October, 1922. The Council has deliberative functions in cases established by law, but may give its advice upon all other political, economic and social questions of national interest, when called upon to do so by the head of the government.

Art. II: The Head of the Government is the president of the Grand Council of Fascism. The meetings are called by the Head of the Government whenever he thinks it necessary.

Art. III: The General Secretary of the National Fascist Party is the Secretary of the Grand Council.

Art. IV: Members of the Grand Council for an indefinite period (life) are the quandrumvirate of the March on Rome. (They were Italo Balbo, Michele Bianchi, Emilio de Bono, and Conte C. M. de Vecchi di Val Cismon)

Art. VI: The appointment of members of the Grand Council is made by Royal Decree upon proposal of the Head of the Government. Same procedure to revoke members.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 194-197.

Italy became a one party state. The executive power of the state became so strong that it overshadowed completely the legislative and passed it on to the newly created "capo del governo."

There had to be some definite arrangement to insure the perpetuity of chiefs of government and duces of the Fascist party. He had to be one and the same man. The Grand Council of Fascism sustained and gave the Head of the government advice and authority it was his status and prestige which in turn gave it its weight. It was this organ in which all the important decisions regarding State and Party were planned.

This introduced a single-chamber system in which the Council was the only chamber and the Duce was legally and actually the only ruling power. The functions of this body could be described as deliberative in the cases laid down by law. It, furthermore, gave its views on every other question that the Chief of Government might present, be it political, economic, or social. The Chief of the Government was its president. He summoned it when he considered it necessary and also decided what it was to discuss. He had the power of order and discipline over it.

The members of this body were divided into three classes. They were: first, the Secretary of the National Fascist Party, and the Quadrumvirs of the March on Rome without any limit of time; and secondly, ex-officio, for the duration of their functions, the presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies; the ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Interior,

Justice, Finance, Education, Agriculture and Forests and Corporations; the president of the Royal Academy of Italy, the secretary and the two vice-secretaries of the National Fascist Party, the commander-general of the Voluntary Militia for the Security of the Nation, the president of the Tribunal for the Defense of the State, the Presidents of the National Fascist Confederations and of the National Confederations of Fascist Trade Unions in Industry and Agriculture. The third group consisted of members, nominated by a decree of the Chief of Government for a period of three years, with the possibility of re-appointment, from among those who have given honorary service to the nation and the cause of the Fascist Revolution, as members of the Government or secretaries of the Fascist Party since 1922, or in other capacities.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶Finer, op. cit., 276-278.

The functions of the Grand Council were divided into two classes. The first was to determine the final list of candidates for election to the Chamber of Deputies with the power of striking out and adding to the nominations submitted by the confederations. The second was the discussion of the constitution and the political aims of the National Fascist Party; discussion of the nomination and dismissal of the secretary, vice-secretary, and the administrative secretary and the other members of the party. The Constitution of the

Fascist Party was approvable by royal decree on the proposal of the Chief of the Government, after consultation of the Grand Council and the Council of Ministers. The Grand Council's functions of State were of high importance. It had to be consulted on all questions having a constitutional character such as:

. . . the succession to the throne, the attributions, and the prerogatives of the Crown; the composition and the functioning of the Grand Council, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies; the attribution and the prerogatives of the Chief of the Government, Prime Minister, Secretary of State The power of the Executive Authority to issue juridical rules (laws in the form of decrees not passing through the usual parliamentary procedure); the Syndical and the Corporative order. The relations between the State and the Holy See. International Treaties which involve changes in the territory of the State and colonies, or even renunciation of the acquisition of the territories.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 197.

This body also had the power to name the next Chief of Government, that is, the next Duce of the Party. It kept on hand an up-to-date list of names to be presented to the Crown for appointment in case this office was vacant.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸Ibid., 197.

This was done at the order of Il Duce. The Fascists were unwilling to admit that the Fascist State was nothing but a dictatorship. They went to great pains to point out that the

Crown was not obligated to agree to the nominee of the Council. Mussolini tried to distinguish it as being only a right of proposal by the Council, which did not injure the right to decide, which belonged only to the Crown.

Thus it was that the Grand Council was the center of the State as well as the Party. It was linked with the Council of Ministers, with the Chambers, with the Constitution, with the leaders of the Party, and the fact that they had to follow the general policy laid down by the Grand Council. Through these links, it had contact with all the outlying agents of the party in all forms.

Under the present law the regular number was twenty members with five or six additional members. The meetings were held late at night. The proceedings were secret. The public received only a curt message as to their agenda and conclusions. Often, as in the case of salary cuts and reductions of prices and rents, secrecy was observed as if nothing had been said. In the meeting itself, all cards were on the table and frank discussions followed. In the early morning hours, Mussolini would give his most persuasive speeches and harangues to convince the members. If he did not convince them, he would then simply state that it was his wish.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹Finer, *op. cit.*, 280-285; Carl Schmidt, The Corporate State in Action, 58.

Mussolini introduced the important innovation that the

Secretary of the Fascist Party might at the command of the Head of the Government take his place in case of his absence or inability, but that this was not a duty he had to perform. The reason for this innovation was that Mussolini feared treachery at the hands of his own people. So this innovation effectively excluded any possibility of a rival leader usurping power during Mussolini's own lifetime.

The Council was not obliged to have a quorum for its own proceedings. Since Mussolini was the only one who could convene these sessions, he could have summoned no one but himself and the Council would still have retained its competence. All the members were above the law and could not be handed over to justice without the consent of the Council.¹²⁰

¹²⁰Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 196.

It was sufficient for Mussolini to nominate anyone a member of the Grand Council and be automatically outside and above the law. Any membership could have been revoked by a royal decree at the Prime Minister's proposal. This provision was in complete accordance with the spirit of all dictatorships and consequently, also with that of Mussolini's who made it impossible for any other man legally to retain a leading position in public life for too long a time. He applied the technique of rotation of offices with unhampered determination.

The Council also substantially influenced the formation

of the government. When a ministerial post fell vacant the Council, in accordance with the suggestion of the Head of the Government, prepared a list of names from which the King was to make a choice. The Head of the Government alone had the right to consult the Council and since the Head of the Government was also the guiding spirit in the Council this meant that to make changes in the Constitution, Mussolini had only to hold Council with himself.¹²¹

¹²¹Finer, op. cit., 52-55; Lowell Field, The Syndical and Corporative Institutions of Italian Fascism, 24-26.

The Chamber of Deputies, under the parliamentary system, had the power to make laws and control the Executive. Then there was a Senate composed of members appointed for life with powers equal to those of the popular assembly except it had no initiative in money bills.

During the first steps that Mussolini took to control Parliament, he was willing to form a coalition government. However, as time went on he became more and more interested in abolishing the opposition. After the attempt to murder Mussolini in 1925, new legislation was introduced. The object of this legislation was to insert Fascistic principles into the body politic and convert Italy from a democratic state into a fascist state.¹²² All the various organs, the crown, the

¹²²Kurt London, Backgrounds of Conflict, Ideas and Forms in World Politics, 148.

executive, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, were properly balanced each with its proper function assigned to it, and which were inspired solely by the interests of the whole community and which would not tolerate crimes against the nation.¹²³

¹²³Luigi Villari, Fascist Experiment, 95.

Mussolini knew that his rule was based on force and not upon the will of the people. So he had come to the conclusion either to abolish parliament or to fill the parliament with Fascist yes-men who would have nothing in common with the concept of representative government. Mussolini used a technique common to all dictators which was to rob democratic institutions of independent life and turn them into mere tools while retaining the old labels and outward form.

Mussolini, before the elections of 1929, stated in the Chamber his conviction that certain people towards whom he had always felt an antipathy would not enter the Chamber. He also declared that he would not allow a pile of ballot papers to stop the future development of the regime towards totalitarianism.

In May and September, 1928, laws were passed which deprived parliament of all functions that reflected the will of the people.¹²⁴ The result of those laws made the entire

¹²⁴For the text of the electoral law see Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 182-194.

kingdom of Italy a single constituency returning 400 deputies. The elections were divided into three periods. The first period was the nominations on the part of legally recognized associations of employers and employees as well as cultural and patriotic organizations. Then secondly there was an appointment of the candidates by the Grand Council of Fascism. Thirdly was the ratification of the candidates by the electorate. The associations of employers and employees together could designate 800 candidates, the number for each being established by law. The additional 200 were nominated by certain non-professional organizations. Then the Grand Council selected 400 out of these 1000 candidates. They did not have to choose any of the 1000 candidates on the list but could propose candidates not mentioned. Only fascists would be proposed as corporations for non-fascists were forbidden in Italy. The final word as to the choice rested with the personal choice of the dictator.¹²⁵

¹²⁵Field, op. cit., 33; Ebenstein, op. cit., 44-55.

The Official Gazette carried the list of candidates selected by the Grand Council. This list was published and posted in every town and village. Only one list was published so that the elections were conducted in the form of plebiscites in which the elector merely voted "yes" or "no" to accept or refuse the list en bloc. Only men were enfranchised and they

had to be twenty-one years old, contribute to one of the legally recognized associations of employers or employees, or pay at least 100 lire in direct taxation per annum, or have some title to a state salary or pension or be members of the clergy. Women were excluded and the fixing of a minimum of direct taxation showed the cultural and the social bias of Fascism.¹²⁶

¹²⁶Benito Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrine and Institutions, 190-192.

If the list of the Grand Council obtained at least one-half of the votes, the candidates were considered elected. If this did not occur new elections took place. There was electoral intimidation. It had taken the form of handing both ballot papers to the workmen and threatening with dismissal all those who did not return their "no" papers after the elections as proof that they did not vote against the government.

Elections for the second Fascist Chamber of Deputies took place on March 25, 1934. This was to be Italy's last parliament under Fascism. One of the main tasks this parliament had to do was to decide its own abolition and transfer its legislative powers to the Chamber of the Fasces and Corporations.¹²⁷

¹²⁷Benito Mussolini, The Corporate State, 21-25.

This election was more farcical than that of 1929. No

pressure was exercised on the voters, Mussolini announced through Achille Starace. The following report from the Manchester Guardian of March 30, 1934, illustrated what Fascist "free" elections were like:

The voters, on entering the polling booths, were given two forms, one in the colors of the Italian tri-color marked "yes" and the other, which was white marked "no." They were told to enter a cabin, fold one of the other form, and then come out and put it in the urn. Most of them, however, declined to enter the cabin, dropping the "no" form on the floor and demonstratively putting the "yes" form in the urn.¹²⁸

¹²⁸Steiner, op. cit., 77; Ebenstein, op. cit., 45.

On October 8, 1938, the Grand Council of Fascism decided to abolish the Chamber of Deputies and replace it by a "Chamber of the Fasces and Corporations" (Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni). This chamber was installed at the expiration of the legislative body in March 1939.

The future showed there was to be no elections of any kind or any other symbols of expressing popular opinion or aspirations. The Chamber of the Fasces would be a perennial body and not one that was renewed, like the old Chamber of Deputies, by elections every five years. Its members would be taken exclusively from the National Council of the Fascist Party or of the National Council of Corporations. As soon as a new man was appointed, a member of the National Council of the Fascist Party or of the National Council of Corporations, he would automatically become a member of the Chamber. In the same way, he would cease to be a member of the Chamber

when he lost his membership in either the National Council of the Fascist party or the National Council of Corporations. All the members of the first were appointed directly by Mussolini on the designation of the Secretary general of the Fascist Party, while the members of the National Council of Corporations were appointed by royal decree on the proposals of Mussolini. It is well not to forget that the credit for giving the death blow to the Chamber must go to Fascism.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Steiner, op. cit., 78.

The Senate had consisted of an indefinite number of senators, appointed by the king on the proposal of the Prime Minister who selected them from among certain categories specified by the constitution—deputies who sat in three legislatures, ambassadors, prefects, members of learned academies, generals of the rank of corps-commander, vice-admirals, persons paying over 3000 lire of direct taxation, and others. There had been from time to time, various proposals for reforming it in order to bring it into closer touch with the country, but none of them had yet materialised. Since the Fascist Government came into power, members of the party had made further proposals in this direction. In 1924, a committee of eighteen eminent men, under the direction and chairmanship of Signor Gentile, had been appointed to examine the general character of the Constitution and suggest certain

reforms calculated to improve the work and the efficiency of the state. Among other matters it went into the question of giving Corporations some form of political representation.¹³⁰

¹³⁰For the text of the law see Schneider, Making the Fascist State, 321-327.

The majority reported in favor of dividing the Chamber of Deputies into two halves, one of which would be elected in the ordinary way and the other formed of representatives of the corporations.

The minority rejected the idea of giving the Corporations any political representation at all. A third proposal, supported by one member alone, Professor Corrado Gini, proposed that the Chamber be left as it was, and that a certain proportion of the Senators should be selected by the corporations. At the meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on October 8th, Roberto Farinacci preferred Professor Gini's proposal which was finally accepted.¹³¹

¹³¹Luigi Villari, The Fascist Experiment, 224.

It has played a passive role in Italy's bicameral system. The Senate was a highly conservative body recruited from the royal family, the aristocracy, the wealthy middle class, and the retired bureaucracy. Royal princes became members upon attaining their majority but seldom participated actively.

Outside of the royal members, the Senate had exactly four hundred members on October 28, 1936. They were appointed by royal decree for life. Acceptance of the appointment signified a desire to relinquish active political ambitions. Its role has been to approve bills sent to it from the Chamber. Its official voice weighed equally with that of the lower house. In 1936, over seventy-five per cent of the senators owed their membership to the Fascist regime. Those senators appointed before 1922 who were not Fascists abstained from attending. Hence, the Senate was a Fascist gathering.¹⁵²

¹⁵²Benito Mussolini, Diacorsi del 1925, 104.

Gradually it was used as a convenient repository for retired leaders and administrators.¹⁵³

¹⁵³Steiner, op. cit., 71-73.

The dictator's word was not only final in the central government but also in matters of local administration. At the head of each province was a prefect who was almost absolute within his province. He was responsible to the Ministry of the Interior at Rome who appointed and recalled him. In the early years of the dictatorship, the prefects suffered encroachments upon their rights from local fascist leaders who looked upon themselves as the real masters of the provinces of the country at large. In 1927, Mussolini declared that the

prefects were now prefects of the regime, and as such, immediate representatives of the government and their orders were to be obeyed under all circumstances.¹³⁴

¹³⁴Schneider, op. cit., 99-100.

Abolition of local autonomy in the cities was of equal importance. The podestas, appointed by the higher authorities, replaced the sindacos (elected representative). Podestas were officially not paid. In municipalities the podesta could name a borough council (consulta municipale) to assist him. Their number varied according to the population of the municipality. Local corporations proposed the councillors who were appointed by the prefects for the smaller municipalities and by the Ministry of the Interior for those with more than 100,000 inhabitants or which were the capitals of provinces.

Borough councils were purely ancillary. The final decision, as everywhere in Fascist Italy, was taken by those who were not responsible to the people, and in this particular case by the Podesta.¹³⁵

¹³⁵Steiner, op. cit., 81-82; Schneider, op. cit., 101.

The chain of dictatorship stretched unbroken from Rome to the smallest borough. In Rome, the government was in the hands of the dictator; the prefects were appointed and recalled

by the government and the podestas were responsible to the prefects.

In bringing into power these miniature dictators in Italian cities corruption and scandal also followed. Some of these became millionaires overnight and masters of the city. They were not punished in criminal court. When their misdeeds became known they were protected by the Duce.¹³⁶

¹³⁶Ebenstein, op. cit., 55-58.

Local government system of Italy, in spite of pretentious doctrines of municipal liberty, were always subject to strong central control. This was modified, by considerable power being given to the locally elected mayors and municipal councils, the elected provincial councils and the Giunta (which controlled the prefect. The Giunta was composed, in part, by delegates from the various municipalities. Between 1925 and 1928, all elected bodies were abolished and in their place were established committees to cooperate with the prefect in the province and the Podesta (now appointed by the Ministry of the Interior) in the municipality.¹³⁷

¹³⁷Carl Schmidt, The Corporate State in Action, 64-65.

So the Fascist government made the prefect much more powerful. He was dignified by the title of excellency. He

was directly dependent on the Ministry of the Interior, of which Mussolini was the head. The law of 1925 gave him close inspectorial power over the municipalities in his area.¹³⁸

¹³⁸Welk, op. cit., 318-319.

The results of the above system were: first, it gave the head of the government an efficient and pliable instrument for his own purposes; secondly, it imposed and maintained a uniform policy all over the country. It did not encourage the local government activity but whatever energy there was in Italian local government came from the central government.

The central power, as has been mentioned before, came through the energetic members of the Corps of Secretaries-general, the chiefs of the Administrative staff of the municipalities and the secretaries of the Provinces. In 1927, these were made state officials and the subordinate staff were the instruments of power of the State transmitted through Prefect and Podesta who were chosen from the wealthy and upper middle classes.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Ibid., 318.

The local advisory committees, having no real power and being almost exclusively middle and upper class in their composition and also amenable to the Fascist Party discipline, sang the praises of Fascism. The work of the local authorities,

since the establishment of Fascism, had largely been the carrying out of the public works schemes.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰Finer, op. cit., 273-275.

The provisions of the Defense of the State Act of November 1926, stated that it:

forbids the reconstruction of Associations, organizations, or parties dissolved by the government, membership of such bodies or propagation of their doctrines, programmes, and mode of action. It establishes the punishment of imprisonment, loss of citizenship and confiscation of the property of citizens, who being abroad 'diffuse and communicate in any form, rumors or false news exaggerated or tendentious on the internal conditions of the State, in such wise as to lower the credit or prestige of the State' abroad or carry on any activity which will be noxious to national interests.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Finer, op. cit., 241.

The act brought into existence the Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State. Its main purpose was to deal with crimes against the personality of the State. The offenses mentioned in the above act, and the attempts on the life of the King or the Head of the government. Besides this act, there was stated in the Italian Penal Code drastic punishment for those promoting, constituting, organizing, or directing associations for the express purpose of establishing a class dictatorship or violently suppressing any social class, or

in any way subverting the economic and social institutions of the State. These matters were expressly controlled by this Special Tribunal. The act was declared retroactive. Thereby, thousands of persons were placed under police supervision and deported. The purpose was to deprive certain citizens of their liberty even if they had never broken the laws then in force.

It can easily be seen that there were not the usual guarantees which other countries most carefully provided to secure the independence and impartiality of their courts. Even the impartiality of the judges and the spirit of right judgment were undermined. This court sat in Rome and was in actual fact the Ministry for War. Since Mussolini always retained this ministry in his own hands he had the final right to decide against whom the law should act.

The judges or examining magistrates did not have to be law graduates. They were nominated by Mussolini and could be removed by him at any time. It could be actually called a military tribunal because its president and vice-presidents were usually appointed by Mussolini from among the generals, admirals, air-marshals, and leaders of the Fascist militia. These men were dependent entirely upon the will of Mussolini. As members of the militia they were automatically members of the Fascist Party, and every Fascist, upon the admission to Fascist Party, took the following oath:

I vow to obey the Duce's orders without discussing them and to serve the cause of the Fascist Revolution

with all my strength and, if necessary, with all my blood.¹⁴²

¹⁴²Ebenstein, op. cit., 79.

This court was created to act quickly. Immediate arrest followed denunciation. No bail was allowed. There existed no authority to terminate the period of custody before the trial. A preliminary examination was made by a magistrate appointed, dismissible, and instructed by the Ministry for War. The accused was not allowed to have legal counsel until the preliminary examination was over, the stage that legal advice was most needed.¹⁴³ It was at this stage that the

¹⁴³Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, 366.

magistrate was most anxious to secure a conviction. The accused was not entirely free to choose his own counsel because the president of the court had the power to reject his choice and appoint one from among the panel (Fascists of the Court). The defense counsel was not allowed to have the documents until eight days before the trial, and even this term could be shortened. Witnesses for the defense were seldom allowed to appear. Very often high legal fees were charged which made legal advice out of the question for poor defendants. Lawyers would take severest risks if they really pressed their client's cases. Only members of the Party and the Press could enter the court on the rare occasions when it was public.

Then the cases were not reported with any detail in the press.

Finally, in this court there was no jury. The Special Tribunal had the privilege of fixing the date for the trial without having recourse to any ordinary preliminary inquiry. If the court wished, neither counsel for defense nor the accused could take any steps to prepare their case even on charges punishable by death.

It was clear that a sentence by the Special Tribunal depended upon the wishes of the regime and upon upon the violation of the penal code. The harshness of the system was shown by the fact that sentences of death were carried out within twenty-four hours. The judicial authority did not even give notice to the families of the persons sentenced, so that they might at least attend the funeral.

There were no means of appealing the sentences of the Special Tribunal. According to the letter of the law, an appeal was possible if the President of the Court and two consuls of the militia pronounced themselves in its favor, but this provision could not be taken seriously. It was improbable that the judges who had passed the sentences would later disavow their own verdict or that any consul of the militia would support them if they did.

The Special Tribunal did not have the power to confiscate the property of a person appearing before it. But this was easily circumvented by sentencing the accused to imprisonment

and, in addition, to a payment of a fine consuming or exceeding his entire fortune.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴Matthews, op. cit., 311-314; Ebenstein, op. cit., 77-93.

A newspaperman was a government employee, and his duty was to write what was good for the regime. One of the unbreakable dogmas was that Mussolini and Fascism could do no wrong; another was that the axis was a flawless creation. The writers had a set of directives, established for many years and everything was made to fit into these directives. In a given situation the men knew exactly what to write. The exceptions were merely exaggerations of the general rule. Among the most notorious writers were Nicola Paozio and Roberto Farinacci. They went to extremes of vulgarity, jew-baiting, anti-clericalism and attack on the "pluto-democracies."

The Duce, himself a journalist, knew just how to go about assuming control of the press. Once again Italian genius provided the model for all types of fascism. Just after the March on Rome, Mussolini telegraphed to the President of the Press association that he:

intended to safeguard the liberty of the press, provided that the press be worthy of that liberty. Liberty is not only a right; it is a duty¹⁴⁵
I desire that journalism collaborate with the nation.

¹⁴⁵Matthews, op. cit., 256; Ebenstein, op. cit., 61.

By 1928, the press was under the complete control of Mussolini and functioning smoothly as he said:

In a totalitarian regime the press is an element of the regime, a force at the service of the regime That which is harmful is avoided; that which is useful is adopted The freest press in the world is the Italian press Elsewhere newspapers are grouped in the hands of a few individuals who consider the journal as a true and proper industry like steel or leather. Italian journalism is free because it serves a regime.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶Matthews, op. cit., 256.

Newspaper men were held in very little esteem in Italy. But to Mussolini and Fascism that profession furnished the most valuable aid in their development to power and control of the State.

In the penal code, article 662 stated that everyone who carried on a printing business without official permission could be punished either by imprisonment up to six months or a fine up to 5000 lire. Every paper must have a responsible editor whom the Court of Appeal must recognize as such. If the editor was either a Senator or a Deputy, one of the staff was to assume the responsibility of the paper. In the event of a responsible editor being twice punished for offenses against the regulations, the court of Appeal could refuse to recognize him any longer as a responsible editor.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷Oakeshott, op. cit., 183.

The prefect of the province had the power to reprimand the editor or to confiscate the paper, if it had: published false or tendentious news which might disturb diplomatic relations with foreign governments; injured the national credit at home or abroad; thrown the population into a state of unjustifiable alarm; or, in any way caused a disturbance of public peace.

The Prefect could order the confiscation of the paper or reprimand the responsible editor, if the paper incited to crime, class hatred, disobedience to the laws or orders of the authorities; it undermined the discipline of state officials or favored the interests of foreign countries, societies or individuals to the detriment of Italy, if it insulted the King, Country, or Royal Family, the Pope, the state religion, the institutions or armed forces of Italy or its Allies.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 257; Ebenstein, op. cit., 58.

A decree was passed in February, 1928, which stated that only such persons may exercise the profession of journalism as had their names entered on the lists of the Trade Unions of Journalists.¹⁴⁹ Only well tried Fascists were

¹⁴⁹Oakeshott, op. cit., 183.

allowed on these lists so it was well understood that this

was a more effective way to exercise censorship than trying to censor the written word.

A journalist was excluded forever from his profession at the beginning of the following year, if during that year he had infringed on any of the rules. For example, if he merely expressed the slightest criticism of Fascist leaders or institutions, in private conversation, or in pursuance of his profession, he was dropped from the lists. But, even before the anti-Fascist press had been abolished by law, gangs of Fascist terrorists, acting on strict orders from headquarters, had plundered and sometimes demolished the offices of the opposition newspapers throughout the country. It was not necessary to attack Fascism but even pacificism was considered an anti-fascist.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰Salvemini, op. cit., 82-83.

Any type of criticism was severely banned in this "freest press of the whole world." The press was to help dictatorship to maintain a passive, slavish attitude. To all outward appearances the object had been attained, for not a breath stirred in the realm of public opinion. But underground, criticism was all the more vehement. Thousands of satirical verses upon the Duce and the regime proved the Italian's inextinguishable disposition not to forfeit his independence of judgment.

Mussolini, also, set about to control the news services

of foreign papers represented in Italy. All newspaper telegrams from the private telegraph and radio offices were passed on immediately to the Central Post Office. There, a committee of revision effectively censored them by either detaining them so they lost all news value or by complete suppression. It happened frequently that foreign correspondents were expelled when their dispatches displeased the Fascist censors.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹Matthews, op. cit., 256-258.

The correspondents of the great newspapers with world wide circulation, nevertheless, by bribery, obtained much information upon almost all events and maneuvers. These bribes went into the pockets of the employees of the various ministries who often complemented the false or worthless official pronouncement with authentic, if not absolutely, reliable reports.

In regard to the Italian public, it was entirely misinformed about current events at home. Many stirring political events were calmly mentioned by the official news agency Stefani to all the newspapers in the country. Then the newspapers printed them the following day using the identical headlines and the same expressions of praise or blame.

While there was no expression of free opinion allowed, there was much encouragement from the authorities for the papers to surpass each other in the adulation of the Duce.

Another abominable feature which encouraged the low standard of Italian journalism was founded on the fact that they had to accept the collaboration of leading Fascists who did not possess literary or journalistic ability.

Radio and cinema were also two other propaganda means skillfully used by the Fascist Party. It was used to establish obedience and acceptance of the Fascist State rather than the suppression of the opposition. For Mussolini was aware that a constant outpouring of facts and opinions suitably timed was invaluable. So he instituted a propaganda bureau for the purpose of using these means most effectively. On the radio the government had whatever time it wanted for its propaganda, especially in the daily program called "Chronicle of the Regime."

A special organization called "Ente Radio Rurale," financed by the state, was to arrange for the manufacture and sale of cheap radios to schools, local authorities and local fascist groups. Special attention was given to children's programs.¹⁵²

¹⁵²London, op. cit., 166; 168.

The film industry was controlled by the government from the beginning. The amount of money invested in the film industry was regulated by the corporations. In 1924, the government promoted the establishment of a semi-autonomous

film company known as L.U.C.E. to provide newsreels and propaganda films. The subject of most of them was the unrestrained glorifications of Mussolini and all his works.¹⁵³

¹⁵³Finer, op. cit., 238-9; Ebenstein, op. cit., 104-105.

The severe press laws did not prevent the anti-fascist press from enjoying a considerable secret circulation. Some of these sheets were manufactured in Italy, others were very cleverly introduced from abroad in many ways. The intelligent newspaper reader had been for so long bored by the everlasting sameness of the official press. He accepted eagerly the anti-fascist papers and pamphlets which were very often only hectographed sheets.

A dictatorship cannot do without its armed force. So the third great organ of the fascist state became the militia. Before the March on Rome, the organization for the militia had been planned. Many hoped Mussolini would get rid of it when the opposition had been conquered; others wanted to keep it localized, as squads of volunteers for emergencies.

Mussolini, on the first of February, 1924, put an end to all those speculations with his statement "whoever touches the militia gets lead."¹⁵⁴ The idea of forming "fasci" as

¹⁵⁴Schneider, op. cit., 134.

instruments or weapons for achieving power had been germinating

in Mussolini's mind for years. His Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria in 1915 were instrumental in bringing on intervention. It had been a good demonstration of the value of a small desperate group in forcing the historic process by means of violence.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Finer, op. cit., 233.

He therefore developed the idea that there was room for a third armed force in the state, between the army and the police. He stated that the army must dedicate itself exclusively to the sacred task of defending the country and should never be called on for police duty. The police had their hands full with the regular function of keeping public order. So he substituted the militia for the Royal Guards that Nitti had created to put down the bolshevist crisis. The militia was many times larger and far more expensive.

The militia assumed its definitive form in the Militia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale (the M.V.S.N.). It was called by Mussolini "the flower, aristocracy and warlike soul of Fascism, the defenders of the inevitable and exorable developments of the October Revolution."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶Matthews, op. cit., 142.

The militia was developed chiefly by Balbo, De Bono and De Vecchi in 1921 and 1922. It adopted from ancient Rome

the lictor, the symbol of authority. Mussolini practically put every man, woman, and child in uniform and nothing was so satisfactory to the average Italian of that time. It brought glamor, pride, an illusion of the martial spirit, and a degree of discipline which could not have been obtained otherwise. But nobody except the most carefully selected party members could get into the militia. Recruits were chosen from volunteers coming from the young Fascists at the age of twenty. They were also selected for political and combative reliability. In case of partial or entire mobilization of the army, or navy, the militia was absorbed by it. The oath that the new militiamen had to take was:

In the Name of God and the Italian Fatherland, in the Name of all those who have died for the greatness of Italy, I swear to consecrate myself, wholly and forever, to the good of Italy.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 101.

These men were to "Credero, Combattere, Obbedire" ("believe, fight, obey") as good fascists. Men of brutal force were favored and intellectuals were disdained or, at best, tolerated. Other rules were:

The fascist militiaman must serve Italy in purity, with a spirit pervaded by a profound mysticism, upheld by an unshakable faith, dominated by an inflexible will, despising opportunism and prudence as cowardice. Rule 4: Honor is for him, as for the knights of old, a law which aims at, without ever achieving, the summits of perfects.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸Ibid., op. cit., 101.

It was their duty to obey without question and their maximum joy was to fulfill their orders. The militia was divided into two main groups. The general militia formed over ninety-five per cent of the total while the special branches formed the rest. The former was unpaid and contributed towards its own clothing and equipment. The members served out of faith to Mussolini and the regime. Their own period of training and service was after their own working hours and during the holidays and week-ends. The teachers of the militia were retired officers of the regular army who were themselves grouped in a Fascist Party association. Civil instruction, or more precisely politico-religious indoctrination, was provided by the special courses of lectures for the army. ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸London, op. cit., 163-164.

In peacetime, the militia was to be on watch for counter-revolutionary activity and, to give premilitary instruction for those between eighteen and twenty years of age. It was compulsory for all Italians by the law of December, 1930, to prepare themselves by proper exercises for mobilization in defense of the regime at any moment. Rifle and dagger were the arms of the members and each battalion had a complement of machine guns similar to those used by the army. Exercises were usually of local scope but often there were wider concerted maneuvers.

The defense of the regime was embodied in the call to preserve "public order." Partial mobilizations could be ordered by the Minister of the Interior, the General Command, the prefects, etc. General mobilization could be ordered only by the Chief of the Government. The militia was given many forms of assistance such as, grants of money, scholarships to orphans of militiamen, gratuities to prolific fathers, etc. For sports activities, the Mussolini cup and sword were given.

Militia served to organize defense against attacks from the air, to watch the coming and going across the frontiers and the coasts, and some of its members assimilated by the army, formed a Libyan Legion. University students usually entered the special groups of university militia, since the authorities recognized that they needed distinctive treatment.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹Schneider, op. cit., 135-138.

The special groups of the militia were paid and attached to appropriate government service. The principal ones were the Railway Militia, the Militia of the Ports, the Forest Militia, the Militia of the Posts and Telegraphs, and the Militia of the Frontier. These men were really Fascist inspectors who acted as paid supervisors.

The regime chose reliable fighters, the physically fit and the unquestioning, the brutal, and the enthusiastic. This organized and disciplined force of 300,000 with machine guns could hold down any country in any crisis short of war

which was not too prolonged. Mussolini spoke with scorn of men who were too intelligent, who were capable of splitting hairs, but could not carry material adventures to a conclusion.

Another special branch of the militia was the OVRA or Organizzazione Vigilanza Reati Anti-Fascisti. It was the secret police, more dreaded in Italy than it deserved to be, for it was not nearly as efficient or as ruthless as the Gestapo. Most Italians, did not even know there was an OVRA--although to many its existence was not a secret at least until December 1930. At that time a communique was issued saying that it had uncovered three anti-fascist organizations. After that time it was very seldom mentioned. It was mentioned when Mussolini wanted to frighten his enemies. It was his private, political army taking orders from him alone, and until war, separate from the regular army. Its chief task had been to "prevent every disturbance of public order, every gesture or attempt at sedition against the Fascist Government."¹⁶⁰ Nobody knew too much about its

¹⁶⁰Matthews, Ibid., 164-165.

organization, pay, or membership. However, many knew of its presence and its spying and denouncing activities. Besides all this the Fascist Militia was relied upon to inform the government of politically improper talk and behavior.

On October 9, 1926, Mussolini assumed personal command of the militia. He sent a telegram of devotion to the King and another to his Black Shirts which said:

Today I assume the command of the Militia. You must certainly understand the import of this deed. The order is: absolute and unquestioning obedience and be ready always and everywhere to defend our regime which today is our country Raise your Standards and your rifles with the cry of our unconquerable faith: Viva il Fascismo! A Noi!¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹Schneider, op. cit., 137.

Chapter VII

THE CORPORATE STATE

Besides making special arrangements to control the state, the Fascists established another set of controls over the economic life of the country. Through the corporate state, Fascism claimed to have solved the problems of the relations between capital and labor.

The Corporative State was divided into three main divisions. The first division consisted of: the Syndicates or Confederations which were developed with respect to and in terms of categories of capital and labor. They were developed on local, provincial, regional, and national lines. The second division included: the Corporations which were interested primarily in the administrative field which coordinated and controlled the economic machinery of the State. They were the corporations, the Ministry of Corporations, and the institutions related to them. The third division comprised agencies not included in the first two groups. These were the Fascist Party, the land reclamation agencies, and the social-insurance institutions.

The above descriptions are very general and do not always adequately describe the agencies because all these organs functioned interdependently and participated in each other's work. So, it may be said that all the economic processes in all its various ramifications were theoretically synthesized

into the Corporative State.¹⁶²

¹⁶²Steiner, op. cit., 109.

A theory of labor based on national syndicates and corporations which was to be a unique and important feature of all fascist regimes was syndicalism. The syndicates were to be national and they were to remain within the capitalistic structure. It was a break from the syndicalism of Georges Sorel, who believed that antipatriotism was an essential element of syndicalism and inseparable from it.

Mussolini, writing for the newspaper, Gerarchia, in 1925, pointed out that Fascist syndicalism differed considerably from the Socialist form in that it was nationalistic and pro-capitalist. He said: "The corporations can hope to better the lot of their syndicates if capitalism is strong, and not if capitalism is weak, static, afraid."¹⁶³

¹⁶³Ibid., 96.

On November 18, 1925, Alfredo Rocce stated the matter clearly when he said to the Chamber of Deputies:

Fascism understood that the problem of the organization of social groups--that is, of syndicalism--was by no means necessarily connected with the movement designed to destroy capitalistic economy, which is based on the private organization of production, so as to substitute for it a Socialist economy, based on the community organization of production. It saw the necessity of isolating the syndical phenomena from

Socialism, which had complicated it with all the anti-national, international, pacifistic, humanitarian, rebellious ideologies of its political doctrine, that had nothing to do with syndical organization. Thus, Fascism, created a national-syndicalism, inspired wholly by sentiment for the fatherland and by national solidarity.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴Matthews, op. cit., 96.

Alfredo Rocco was the man who gave form to the law and regulation of 1926 and may be credited with the paternity of Fascist ideas on corporativism. Separate organizations of capital and labor existed and flourished in Italy long before the Fascist Corporative State. These organizations existed in various forms. We find that capital had its chambers of commerce, chambers of manufacturers, and associations of landed proprietors.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵Salvemini, op. cit., 376.

Labor, on the other hand had three competing types of unions; the syndicalists, in the Sorel tradition, socialists in the Marxist tradition, and the confederationist in the younger tradition of the Catholic Church.

That national syndicalism was not invented by Fascism was well known. It was merely taken over, and through it a number of radicals, headed by Edmondo Rossoni, came into the Fascist movement. Mussolini had favored this movement from

the start of Fascism.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 6-7.

There had been several unsuccessful attempts to include the workers' organizations in the Fascist Party. Mussolini's joining his party with those of the Italian Syndicalists under Rossini, became known as the Fascist Syndicates as early as 1922.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷Fausto Pitigliani, The Italian Corporative State, 6-15.

The Fascist party, in accordance with the rest of its program, used force to disperse the Marxist and Church unions. The first Fascist syndicate was formed on February 28, 1921 in San Bartolomeo in Bosco in the province of Ferrara. Then, on April 3, the fully formed principle was adopted in the program of the Bologna Regional Congress where the meeting "recognized the immediate necessity of the State making the syndicates participators in the legislative power in the field of labor problems. This is the only means by which the organized masses can adhere to the national state."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸Matthews, op. cit., 96; Salvemini, op. cit., 4.

Certain economic class lines were maintained in the syndical system. Proprietors could affiliate with only capital

groups while labor groups were open to employees only. Legal recognition was granted to a capital syndicate when, with the proprietors syndicate, the members employed at least ten per cent of the workers in that field.

Legal recognition was granted to a labor syndicate when with the workers' syndicate its membership included at least ten per cent of the workers in that field of work. The territorial boundaries could have been as small as a commune or as vast as the nation. The intermediate field was usually the provincial or interprovincial organization.

The syndicate could speak in the name of all the persons in an occupation and in the same area whether they were members or not. It also collected obligatory financial contributions from them whether they belonged to it or not. These contributions were collected according to a set formula. For the proprietors an amount was fixed which considered the value of their investment, the amount of business and the size of their profits. The workers had to contribute in proportion to their wages.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹Steiner, op. cit., 110; Salvemini, op. cit., 59-60.

The vigorous Fascist organization drive of 1922 to 1926 produced an official Fascist syndicate in nearly every line of economic activity. The law of April 3, 1926, which the Fascists considered as the most revolutionary of its kind ever enacted, brought in a new conception of the State and

the relationship between the citizens and the State.¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁷⁰For the text of the Law see Benito Mussolini, The Corporate State, 89-90.

individual was no longer an abstract figure but a part of a category, according to his work. This law gave juridical recognition to syndicates and regulated their activity which was subordinated to the superior aims of the nation. It provided for the collective labor contract and the magistrature of labor. It ended the class struggle and abolished strikes and lockouts.

Thus the Syndicate became the basic unit of the Corporate State. There existed one for each commune, province, region and profession and in each case there was an employer's syndicate. It concluded collective contracts for the whole category, appeared before labor courts, and disciplined members.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹Matthews, op. cit., 95-99.

Functionaries had special rules and were directly controlled by the Fascist party, while other categories including the armed forces, were not allowed to have syndicates. All the directors and officials of all the syndicates were fascists whose appointments had to be approved by the government and the Fascist party. In theory, the capital and labor syndicates were supposed to be representative associations which elected

their own officers and governing councils. But as was mentioned before all such elections were subject to the will of the Minister of Corporations. There was no autonomous or independent will or action whatsoever.¹⁷²

¹⁷²Salvemini, op. cit., 50-53.

There was no possibility of developing another competing or non-fascist syndicate even though the ten per cent or more of the workers might want to affiliate with this competing group because the official syndicate had a monopoly in its field. In new syndicates only those organizations which met party approval were granted recognition.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Ibid., 21.

A task of the syndicates was to foster the patriotic and moral education of their members in addition to their economic functions.

The original plan was to have separate categories for capital and labor in the six major fields, in addition to a single syndicate for professional workers.

The syndicates were organized in 1926 into national confederations, covering important groupings. Later they became the twenty-two corporations that gave their name to the Corporative State. It required thirteen years to complete

the corporative structure starting with the April 3, 1926 law and ending with the law of February 14, 1929.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴Steiner, op. cit., 109-113.

The original intentions, according to the royal decree of July 1, 1926, had been to create in each of the seven basic categories a corporation which would serve as an instrument to coordinate the two confederations (capital and labor) in industry, agriculture, commerce, inland communications, maritime and air transport and credit, and insurance. The confederation of professional syndicates was alone to constitute a corporation. So out of thirteen confederations were to be built seven corporations under the direction of the ministry of corporations.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵Salvemini, op. cit., 18-19.

The heart of Fascism's social and economic theory was the ideal of functionalism or as it was called by the Fascists, corporativism. It was impossible for the corporative principle to manifest itself as an undemocratic authoritarian, autocratic, quasi-feudal state. It served to concentrate authority. It was the logical outcome of the whole structure of fascist dictatorship to be able to use the corporative idea in the ideal society of reactionaries, the police state.

The constitution promulgated by Gabriele d'Annunzio for the city of Fiume in 1919 could be said to have been a forerunner of the Fascist Corporative system. The idea was that the people were to be organized on a functional principle; employers, merchants, and workers were to work together for the development of production and all possibility of class war was to be eliminated. This idea served as a pattern but Mussolini changed it to suit himself. Under d'Annunzio's plan the corporations were autonomous whereas under Fascism they had become "obedient instruments of the State no longer capable of any independent impulse."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶Ebenstein, op. cit., 137.

These syndical-corporative associations were the cornerstone of the Fascist State. They were inseparable from the regime because they identified it, differentiated it and distinguished it from all the others. The totalitarian idea was that politics and economics were inseparable. So the corporative state was briefly defined as the institutional device for regimenting and controlling the agencies of national production. The basic mechanism of the Corporative State was the system of Corporations. These corporations were not created until 1934-5. They had little effect on the economic policies which took form in earlier years and had little actual contact with Italian economic life. We must remember that:

A corporation, in the Italian sense, is not an association; it is a council, or committee in which the representatives of the various groups both of workers and employers in a given branch of activity collaborate in order to devise the necessary organization and establish the suitable conditions of production demanded by the national economy. These corporations will be fostered according to two fundamental objectives: As expressions of national solidarity, and as a means to develop production. Fascist syndicalism accepted, 'the concept of capital, not as an element to be suppressed, but to be freed and developed.'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷Matthews, op. cit., 97.

The Fascists tried to convince the worker that he was helping history, whereas previously the Socialists had convinced them to seek only material benefits, now he was to give up all these material benefits as higher wages, the right to strike, for spiritual virtues of Fascism. In general, the workers did not agree with them. So Mussolini had no choice but to eliminate the unions. This policy was arrived at after painful floundering because Mussolini knew nothing about economics and had no economic policy.

On March 20, 1930 a decree brought into existence the National Corporative Council to replace the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁷⁸ It was to function as a Fascist economic legis-

¹⁷⁸For text of the law see Mussolini, The Corporate State, 98-104.

lature with powers only to advise and recommend. The General Assembly of the National Corporative Council from 1930 to

1934 included approximately 175 members among whom were representatives from each of the thirteen national confederations, the Fascist Party, and other agencies. Its meetings, under the presidency of Mussolini himself, were formal in character. The purpose of the meetings was to hear expositions of economic policy on the part of the Head of the Government. The main function of the audience was to listen. Great pomp and ceremony attended these meetings but there were no apparent reasons for them except to prepare the Italian people for the abolition of the Chamber of Deputies and to give expression to the unity of Italian economy.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹Steiner, op. cit., 113-120.

The Central Corporative Committee was a small body of fifty members. It could be called a steering committee for the large assembly.¹⁸⁰ It contained the most important

¹⁸⁰William Welk, Fascist Economic Policy, 70-71.

dignitaries of the regime in the economic field: all the ministers and the more important under-secretaries; the secretary and vice-secretaries of the Fascist Party; the chief officers in such Fascist institutions as the Dopolavaro and the National Association of Combatants; the presidents

of the twenty-two category corporations.¹⁸¹ The Central

¹⁸¹The twenty-two category corporations are as follows: Eight corporations for cycles of production embracing agriculture, industry and commerce: 1. Corporation of Cereals; 2. Corporation of Fruit, Vegetables, Flowers; 3. Corporation of Viticulture and Wine; 4. Corporation of Sugar-beet and Sugar; 5. Corporation of Edible Oil; 6. Corporation of Live-stock and Fisheries; 7. Corporation of Forestry, Lumber and Wood; 8. Corporation of Textiles; Eight corporations for cycles of production embracing industry and commerce: 9. Corporation of Metal and Engineering; 10. Corporation of Chemical Trades; 11. Corporation of Clothing Trades; 12. Corporation of Printing, Publishing, and Paper; 13. Corporation of Building Trades and Housing; 14. Corporation of Water, Gas and Electricity; 15. Corporation of Mining and Quarrying; 16. Corporation of Glass-ware and Pottery. Six corporations covering occupations productive of services: 17. Corporation of the Arts and Professions comprising four sections: legal professions; medical professions, technical professions; the arts; 18. Corporation of Inland Transports, comprising four sections: railways, tramways and inland navigation; transports by motor; traffic auxiliaries; communications by telephone, radio telephony and cable; 19. Corporation of Sea and Air Transports; 20. Corporation of Hotel Industry; 21. Corporation of Credit and Insurance, comprising three sections: banks; savings banks and public institutions; insurance; 22. Corporation of Entertainments.

Mussolini, The Corporate State, 113-114.

Corporate Committee held a position in the corporative structure similar to that of the Fascist Grand Council in the politico-constitutional structure. Almost half of the latter's members were also members of the Central Corporate Committee. Discussions in the Central Corporate Committee produced the Law of Corporations in 1934. After that year it was the most active of all the organs in the corporative system. It

discussed problems of economic policy and examined projects in detail. In its meetings in 1936 it discussed the reorganization of the merchant marine and in 1937 regulations for the control of the munitions and chemical industries. Mussolini presided. Whereas the general assembly of the National Corporative Council was attended in the uniform of the Fascist militia, responded to the Fascist salute, heard Mussolini's speech, and returned home, the Central Corporative Committee was a working body which maintained secrecy in their discussion and adopted resolutions which were seldom disregarded.

The Ministry of Corporations became the most concrete manifestation of the corporate state. In it were concentrated the administrative agencies of control over economic affairs. The National Corporative Council was attached to this ministry. The Ministry of Corporations was organized around five "general directives" and "two offices" which were formed along bureaucratic lines. The general directives were: the General Directive of Personnel, Insurance and Employment which supervised the social insurance program and regulated the official employment agencies; the General Directive for Labor which combined with the Secretariat for the Corporations was concerned with the welfare of labor; the General Directive of Professional Associations was interested in directing professional and art workers; the General Directive of Industry which supervised economic affairs of interest to industry, and the General Directive of Agriculture which gathered pertinent

data for agriculture.¹⁸² The two offices were: The Office

¹⁸²Pitigliani, op. cit., 117-119.

for Studies and Research which employed many first rank economic experts and maintained a large scale publication program and the Legislative Office which studied the trend of economic legislation in foreign countries and prepared the legislative proposals and decrees sponsored by the Ministry.

The personnel of the Ministry of Corporations comprised the best talent in Italy. It assumed full responsibility for the routine supervision of economic affairs. The purpose of the Ministry was to combine all the productive activities of the nation under one ministry in order to give them unity of aim.¹⁸³

¹⁸³Ibid., 122; Steiner, op. cit., 121-122.

The provincial councils operated on the provincial level as the national organs did on the national level. These councils, organized in 1926, were called provincial Councils of Corporative Economy.¹⁸⁴ The provincial prefect was the

¹⁸⁴Salvemini, op. cit., 109; By the decree of June 18, 1931, they were called Provincial Corporative Councils, and by a decree of April 28, 1937, they were renamed Provincial Councils of Corporations.

president of a provincial council which included representatives

of the important syndical and party organs in the province. The purpose of the provincial councils was to coordinate economic activities and adjust differences of a local character. In actual practice, however, meetings were infrequent and the councils were taken over by the provincial intersyndical committees of the Fascist Party. The price fixing powers were transferred from the provincial intersyndical committees to the provincial councils of corporations.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵Field, op. cit., 139.

The provincial offices of corporate economy, subject to the control and supervision of the Ministry of Corporations, collected data concerning the provincial economy and supervised the registration of economic establishments.

The Permanent Committee for Price Control, an important party organ, was concerned with prices and formulated, with the approval of the secretary of the party, the economic policy of the party which involved the issuance of rules to be observed in the drafting of collective labor contracts and in the conciliation and settlement of disputes between capital and labor. This work was done in the provinces by the Provincial Intersyndical Committee.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶Steiner, op. cit., 122-123.

The Charter of Labour or the "Declaration of the Rights

and Duties of the Producer" was proclaimed on April 21, 1927, by the Grand Council of Fascism,¹⁸⁷ then still merely a

¹⁸⁷Mussolini, The Corporate State, 65.

private council of the Party. It was not a law in the formal sense, but a law of December 13, 1928, gave the government the power to make rules having the force of law for the complete fulfilment of the Charter. Already on July 28, 1928, the Court of Cassation had decided that those parts of the Charter which had not yet passed through the formal process of law, were nevertheless principles which, "inspired by the most noble criterion of raising the moral and material level of the most numerous classes, could not fail to exercise their action on the interpretation of the laws already existent, relating them to the principles enumerated."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸Finer, op. cit., 503.

The whole spirit of the Charter of Labour was superficially regulated capitalism with private property as its fundamental basis. The interests were subjected to the government. The government was supreme and in the name of the welfare of ensuing generations did exact sacrifices. The Charter plunged into long generalizations regarding the relationship of individuals to society. It said in article 2: "Work is

a social duty and only because of this it came under the control of the State¹⁸⁹ In articles 7 and 9 is the

¹⁸⁹Mussolini, The Corporate State, 65.

essence of the economic theory of the Charter. Article 7 states:

The Corporative State considers private initiative in the field of production as the most efficacious and most useful instrument in the interest of the nation. Since the private organization of production is a function of national concern, the organizer of the enterprise is responsible to the State for the direction of production. The reciprocity of rights and duties derives from the collaboration of the productive forces. The employed, whether technician, salaried or manual worker is an active collaborator in the economic enterprise, the direction of which belongs to the employer and who bears the responsibility thereof

Article 9 added:

The intervention of the State in economic production occurs only when private initiative is lacking or is insufficient, or when the political interests of the State are involved. Such intervention may assume the form of control, encouragement and direct management.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰Mussolini, The Corporate State, 67.

Great controversies have arisen about the meaning placed on the term, "in the interests of the nation," and "function of national concern."

In practice the theory of laissez faire has been followed. Employer's associations and trade unions have lost their freedom. Article 3 states that:

Syndical or profession organization is free. But only the legally recognized syndicate, subjected to the control of the State, has the right to represent legally all the category of employers and employed.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹Mussolini, The Corporate State, 65.

It became a crime to stage a strike or a lockout so they decreased rapidly. The Fascist Government congratulated itself on this decrease. It was jubilant over the technical advantage to production of reduced interruptions of work but it could not deny that the pressure of class differences persisted. Force triumphed over overt acts but not over the state of mind or the justification of those acts.

The rank and file had no effective rights of election and control of their secretaries and officials. The hierarchical, that is, dictatorial method in the associations, was definitely imposed and kept in existence by the Fascist Party.¹⁹²

¹⁹²Ibid., 503-507.

In conclusion, the Charter of Labour is merely a collection of abstract principles, equivocal propositions, laudable intentions, and meaningless words.

When on October 2, 1925, Farinacci, the Secretary General of the Fascist party, called together the heads of rival confederations a pact was signed known as the Pact of Vidoni Palace. This pact laid the foundation for labor legislation

as the two confederations recognized each other as the official and exclusive representative, the one of labor, the other of industry. They had agreed that

All contracts between industrialists and labor leaders must be made between dependent organizations of the Confederation of Industry and those dependent on the Confederation of Corporations. Consequently, internal commissions in the factories are abolished and their functions devolve upon the local syndicates, which will exercise them only in connection with the correspondent industrial organizations.¹⁹³

¹⁹³Sehneider, op. cit., 177; Salvemini, op. cit., 15-16.

This agreement was legalized by a royal decree and thereby recognized legally the collective contracts even before the syndicates themselves had been recognized. The recognition of collective contracts marked the beginning of the breakdown of individualism for it was but a small step from the regulation of labor conditions by the national syndicate of the Fascist party to outright governmental control.

A law of April 3, 1926 entitled "The Legal Discipline of Collective Labor Relations" became almost the equivalent of a new constitution for the Fascist State.¹⁹⁴ By it the

¹⁹⁴For the text of the law see Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrines and Institutions, 75-82.

Fascist Syndicates and the Confederations and their collective contracts were legally recognized; compulsory labor tribunals

were established; and strikes and lockouts were prohibited. The legal enforcement of the contracts was guaranteed. In such contracts all workers and employers of a given category were included whether or not they were members of the syndicates.¹⁹⁵ But workers were not adequately represented by

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 77, art. 5.

their syndical delegates because they had to be good fascists first and labor delegates second. It was an important function of the Fascist State to regulate the relations between employer and employees, to prevent strikes and lockouts and to give sufficient pay to workers to keep them satisfied. On the other hand capital had to be compensated so it would continue operating. The state through its various agencies and labor courts assisted conciliation between labor and capital. If they refused, the penal law was utilized.

The recognized syndicates and confederations of syndicates spoke in the name of all persons, employers and employees, in their respective categories. The collective labor contract was the instrument through which capital and labor were to adjust their differences. In actual practice the terms of the contract had to agree in detail with the national government's program.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶Field, op. cit., 100-101.

So the state strictly supervised all the terms of the contracts and how they were enforced. The terms of a particular contract were defined by the Fascist Party through its agency called the Central Price Control Committee that was maintained in each province under the control of the Federal Secretary.

In every contract the Fascist party drew up the complete contract and submitted it for the acceptance and formal signing by both contracting parties.¹⁹⁷ These contracts were

¹⁹⁷Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrines and Institutions, 136-140.

of two general types. The first, was the type contracts which as its name implied, was very general with principles applicable in concrete situations. The second type, as was more frequently the case, was a specific contract for a particular industry or branch of industry and included all the minute details.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸Field, op. cit., 102-107.

In these contracts, provisions were made for (1) forms and terms of employment, including all training periods; (2) terms and conditions of discharge, suspensions, and various degrees of punishment to which an employee was to be subjected; (3) the hours and conditions of labor, included compensation for overtime, annual vacations and rest days; (4) the wage

scale was defined with a very detailed description for every type of work performed, with provision for wage increases or decreases according to a general plan, and (5) the agencies for settling individual or collective controversies were various. The agencies of syndical arbitration or conciliation through the Ministry of Corporations, or adjudication by labor courts were those consulted depending whether it was (a) the interpretation of obligations under the contract or (b) demands for a revision of its terms.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹Pitigliani, op. cit., 48-49; Field, op. cit., 108.

The contracts were made usually for a period of one or two years but could be replaced any time by negotiation of the parties concerned or by a ruling of the government. Most contracts were found on the provincial level and many times they extended beyond provincial boundaries for those industries that went beyond those boundaries.

The labor contract was a real unit in corporative state although the terms and the conditions under which it was enforced were not always in agreement. Thousands of contracts were in effect. For the corporative state to exist it would have to regulate capital-labor relations. So the collective contract was the ideal instrument to do this.

The Fascists did not invent the collective labor contract, but they probably brought its formation under more effective

public control than elsewhere.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰Salvemini, op. cit., 371-372; Finer, op. cit., 98-103.

The settlement of disputes was vested in the law courts. The sixteen courts of appeal acted as labor courts in collective disputes. Three professional judges and two experts made up the special section in each court of appeal. This panel was appointed for a year from names proposed by the local economic council. The experts were chosen from masters' and workers' associations. They had to be at least twenty-five years of age and of irreproachable moral and political conduct. They had to possess a university degree or its equivalent. Cases could be brought before the courts only by legally recognized associations and against such associations.²⁰¹

²⁰¹Pitigliani, op. cit., 78-81; For the text of the law see Mussolini, Fascism, Doctrines and Institutions, 115-128.

If a group belonged to a Federation, Confederation, or Corporation, then no action was taken until conciliation was first attempted. When judgment was passed it applied to all members of the associations and to all workers and employers who were not members but worked in that industry and commerce.²⁰²

²⁰²Field, op. cit., 120-121.

If the action related to existing contracts, the ordinary jurisprudence applied. If the arguments arose out of making

new contracts, the court judged on the bases of equity but subjected all interests to the "higher interests of production." The Court did its best with the statutes available which they obtained from the Ministry of Corporations to settle the dispute. Both sides usually demanded double what they expected and the Court seemed to divide the difference between them.

There was no judicial independence of judges. They were like all other Civil servants and could be removed if they acted unfavorably to the Government's policy. A representative of the government had to be present when a case was called. He was to be given an opportunity to give the government's point of view. No judgment of the case was given until this representative had delivered an opinion. The serious problems were discussed first by the Fascist Officials at the head of the associations. Then, if still not settled, then the offices of Ministry of Corporations, the Inspectors of Corporations, or the Prefects were called in.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Schneider, op. cit., 182-183.

In the individual disputes the plaintiff had to notify the association concerned that he was about to take action. Expert laymen were not included unless a demand was made for them at once. The most serious defects of the Courts were that the procedure was quite complicated and the Courts had so many cases that they were far behind in their work. In

the first place, the worker did not always know the law. He could ask for aid from the Depolavoro and the Party, if he were a member, and the Trade Union Party secretary. This was not encouraged and often made more trouble for him. He, usually, had to make his complaint to several people who were not elected by him nor would support his case. Many of these disputes never came before the courts.

Then, too, the employer would be able to afford better legal assistance than the worker. There was always the constant fear of dismissal and other ways that employers could get revenge. So, as to protecting the workers' rights the efforts were usually meager and much more should have been done for the worker.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴Field, op. cit., 125; Finer, op. cit., 510; Schneider, op. cit., 333.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the fascist structure reveals several striking elements. The fact that it declared itself against something was one element. It opposed the whole machinery of government and all of the ideals of the democratic state. In their places, it adopted and used the idea of the nation-state.

Fascism employed patriotic and militaristic virtues to restore Italy to its former glory. The first consideration was the supremacy of the state. The corporate or totalitarian state brought firmness and authority where tolerance and liberalism once existed. Regimentation stamped out all opposition. It established a hierarchy at the apex of which stood the leader of the party and the guardian of the state. It developed a myth of cultural development which had its background in the Roman imperialist tradition, the Risorgimento, Marinelli's futurism, and Mussolini's own zest for youth and contempt for old age.

The fascist leaders knew that creators of ideologies must control and manipulate hatreds as well as loyalties. They must control emotions and prejudices in order to direct them into politically useful channels. The leader must arouse and control the masses with his oratory. He must be eulogized and romanticized as a superman. Fascist propaganda penetrated churches, clubs, schools, and trade unions. It won over the

police and the army. The leader organized a well disciplined party with local units and leaders and created, equipped, and maintained a private army. The real backers of fascism in Italy were the industrialists, the large landowners, and the bankers. Mussolini and these groups had common hatreds and a common national zeal.

With an ideology, leadership, organization, financial support and the enthusiasm of the middle classes and vested interests, only one obstacle remained in their progress to power. That was the suppression of opposition. This was accomplished by "squadrist," that is, terrorization by bands roving through the countryside or by squads descending suddenly upon a trade union headquarters and destroying it. They kidnapped and maltreated troublesome objectors. Such violence frequently got out of the control of the leaders themselves. Mussolini tried to stop it. He successfully detached himself from specific acts of violence as he did in the Matteotti case. The opposition was destroyed or eventually driven underground.

The next step was the creation of the dictatorship. In government offices, employees were replaced by party members. This rewarded loyal party men and assured the dictatorship of obedience. The one party system was installed through local party organizations. Party propaganda was then directed toward the youth of Italy.

To be successful, a dictatorship must control not only the political but also the economic and social life of a

nation. To accomplish this, the corporate state was established. It was based on the organizations of economic groups or associations which competed for the distribution of the national income with the government holding the balance of power. Strikes and lockouts were banned and the labor movement was nationalized. Fascism promised to give capital a steady income and to protect it against labor conflict.

In an editorial in Popolo d'Italia, April 19, 1935, Mussolini declared that a revolution which was not world wide was no revolution at all. He wanted a world wide diffusion of fascist principles. In these there was a vision of life, a political faith, and a solution to the problems peculiar to all western civilization.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵Finer, op. cit., 138.

What made fascism so plausible? The frankness with which it faced the facts of a dynamic world which was passing through one of its major historical transitions was very convincing. The deceptive measure of its outward success undoubtedly influenced many serious minded people to experiment with it.

It cannot be said that fascism in Italy was a total failure. Many public works were undertaken and completed. Industrialization and production were increased. Labor was given more assistance and security than existed in many other

countries. Illiteracy was reduced considerably. Laws were codified. On the debit side, however, Italy suffered in World War II such military and economic ruin that it will be many years before the results of fascism can be eradicated. So it can be said that Mussolini and Fascism solved nothing and created nothing but destroyed much of great value to civilization.

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