

## Italian Fascism



## Definition

- Fascism is the totalitarian philosophy of government that glorifies the state and nation and assigns to the state control over every aspect of national life.

## The Origins of Fascism

- Fascism arose as a form of counter-revolutionary politics in early twentieth-century Europe in response to:
  - Rapid social upheaval
  - The devastation of World War I
  - The Bolshevik Revolution.

## The Fasces Symbol

- The name Fascism comes from the Latin word *fasces*. In ancient Roman, the fasces were cylindrical bundles of wooden rods, tied tightly together around an axe. They symbolize unity and power.



## Ideology

- Fascism is a form of extreme right-wing ideology that celebrates the nation or the race as an organic community transcending all other loyalties.

## Subordination to the State

- Fascism seeks forcibly to subordinate all aspects of society to its vision of organic community, usually through a totalitarian state. It uses organized violence to suppress opposition.

## Glorification of Force

- Fascism glorifies force, accepts the tenets of Social Darwinism, and is anti-democratic.

## Cult of State Worship

- In the Italian totalitarian state, which stressed "The Cult of State Worship," the individual had no significance except as a member of the state.
  - The Fascists were taught "To believe, to obey, and to fight" (*credere, obbedire, combattere*).

## The Myth of Rebirth

- Fascism emphasizes a myth of national or racial rebirth after a period of decline or destruction. To this end, fascism calls for:
  - A "spiritual revolution" against signs of moral decay such as individualism and materialism
  - Seeks to purge "alien" forces and groups that threaten the organic community.

## Fascist Ideals

- Fascism tends to celebrate:
  - Masculinity
  - Youth
  - Mystical unity
  - The regenerative power of violence.
- Often, but not always, it promotes:
  - Racial superiority
  - Ethnic persecution
  - Imperialist expansion
  - Genocide.

## Utopian Dream

- Despite the idealistic goals of fascism, attempts to build fascist societies have led to wars and persecutions that caused millions of deaths. As a result, fascism is strongly associated with:
  - Right-wing fanaticism
  - Racism
  - Totalitarianism
  - Violence.

## Benito Mussolini (1883-1945)

- In the troubled postwar period, Benito Mussolini established an organization that:
  - Advocated aggressive nationalism
  - Opposed the Communists and Socialists
  - Dressed in black shirts

## Mussolini's Talents

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- He had a talent for moving crowds of people with his powerful speeches and manipulating public opinion.

## Restoration of Order

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- Amid strikes, social unrest, and parliamentary breakdown, Mussolini:
  - Preached forcible restoration of order
  - Practiced terrorism with armed groups

## National Fascist Party

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- In 1921 he was elected to parliament and the National Fascist party was officially organized.

## March on Rome

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- In October 1922, backed by nationalists and propertied interests, Mussolini sent the Fascists to march on Rome.
- King Victor Emmanuel III permitted them to enter the city and called on Mussolini, who had remained in Milan, to form a cabinet.

## Rise to Power

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- After Mussolini's rise to power, the Fascist state in Italy was ruled by a party elite, which ruthlessly crushed all free expression and banished critics of the regime to penal settlements on islands off the southern Italian Coast.

## Personal Dictatorship

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- As the new premier, Mussolini gradually transformed the government into a dictatorship.
- Opposition was put down by:
  - An efficient secret police
  - A Fascist party militia
  - A strictly controlled press

## Duce

- Mussolini's followers called him *Duce* (leader) by his followers. His ambition to restore ancient greatness to Italy found expression in:
  - Grandiose slogans and speeches
  - Monumental buildings

## Mussolini's Appearance

- Although he was short and stocky, he gave the impression of being tall and powerful.
- He had a massive jaw and his eyes dominated his face. Many women thought his eyes were irresistible.



## Mussolini's Pose

- Mussolini often struck a pose – back stiff, hands on hips – because this was his idea of how a Roman emperor should look.



## National Anthem

- The national anthem of Italian Fascism extols the *giovinetza*, the youth of the Fascist party and its future. On the cover is a full-page sketch of Mussolini by the artist Riva.



## Censorship

- Censorship of the press was established, and a tribunal for defense of the state was set up to punish any individuals not conforming to Fascist practices.

## State Capitalism

- The Fascist system, sometimes defined as state capitalism, aimed to abolish class war through cooperation between capital and labor, by compulsion of the state if need be.
- In Communist theory, labor is the state itself. In Fascism, labor and capital are both instruments of the state.

## Lateran Treaty

- Conflict between church and state was ended by the Lateran Treaty (1929) which stated that:
  - Roman Catholicism was the only state religion of Italy
  - Vatican City was fully sovereign and independent.

## Economic Policy

- The main economic goals of Fascism were:
  - To make Italy more self-sufficient, especially in the matter of food
  - To increase the power resources of the nation
  - To expand foreign trade.

## Social Programs

- The Fascist social program had some commendable features such as:
  - Slum clearance
  - Its offensive against illiteracy
  - Its campaign against malaria
  - Its system of child welfare clinics

## Deficiencies

- But any positive achievements were more than outweighed by its deficiencies:
  - The deification of war
  - Excessive armaments budgets
  - The fraudulent claim of the corporate state to protect the workers while it actually benefited the large landowners and industrialists.

## Cultural Activities

- Prominent cultural activities of the Fascist regime in the fields of architecture, art, commerce, and film are lavishly represented in Italy's version of Life magazine.



## Education

- Fascist ideology governed the educational system. The first sentence pronounced by children at school was "Let us salute the flag in the Roman fashion; hail to Italy; hail to Mussolini."

## Notebooks

- Children were required to use these notebooks with colored Fascist cartoons and quotations from Mussolini on the front and back.



## Textbooks

- Textbooks emphasized:
  - The glorious past of the ancient Romans
  - The limitations imposed upon the present inhabitants by geography and the western nations
  - The imperial destiny that awaited Italy's future development.

## Propaganda

- All public functions and displays of the state were clothed in propaganda, including:
  - Dedication of farm land
  - Displays of military might
  - Gigantic sports rallies

## Politics

- Propaganda pamphlet making the case that Italy is a prisoner in the Mediterranean because it lacks control over Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, and the Dardanelles.



## Agriculture

- An annual agenda produced by the Fascist party for farmers and merchants. Mixed in with the practical illustrations and instruction is much Fascist propaganda with appropriate quotations from Mussolini.



## Family Life

- The Fascist party encouraged the development of large families, here through articles and photographs extolling family life.



## Women

- Although this purports to be a monthly magazine dedicated to the women of the family, it consists mainly of speeches by Mussolini and other Fascist-related articles.



## Women

- Melting down wedding rings to contribute to the war effort.



## Youth

- A propaganda magazine designed for young Fascists and featuring stories and cartoons praising the regime.



## Youth

- Weekly propaganda magazine for young people, intended to spark their interest in flying and to call attention to the prowess of Italian pilots.



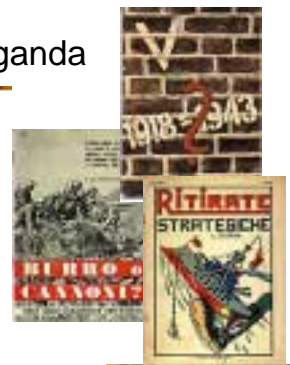
## Anti-Semitism

- This book on Fascism explicitly excludes Jews from being considered of pure ancestral Italian blood and spells out government measures taken against them.



## Wartime Propaganda

- A colorful assortment of Fascist propaganda pamphlets from the early 1940s. The materials attack the Atlantic Alliance, extol the leadership of the Duce, and praise the fighting qualities of the Italian soldier.



## Inevitability of War

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- The concept of the “inevitability” of war:
  - Exalted the state and its “destiny”
  - Advocated expansion of the Fascist state at the expense of other nations.

## Imperialism

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- Mussolini warned the world that Italy intended “to expand or explode”.
- His encouragement of a high birth rate with Italy’s meager territorial and natural resources pointed in only one direction – imperialism.

## Ethiopia

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- After gaining control of Italy from the king, he invaded and conquered Ethiopia. Using machine-gun fire his soldiers mowed down peaceful people who still used bows and arrows.

## Spanish Civil War

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- When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, both Mussolini and Adolph Hitler decided to support the rebel leader, General Francisco Franco.

## France

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- Germany almost completely conquered France in 1940. Mussolini then entered World War II and invaded Southern France. Although France quickly surrendered, the Italian army met disaster after disaster.

## Africa, Greece, Italy

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- In Africa, Greece, and even Italy itself Mussolini’s armies met defeat. The Germans kept Italy from total collapse for a time, but Mussolini was fighting a losing battle.



## Escape to Switzerland

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- In the spring of 1945, the German control of northern Italy collapsed. Mussolini fled with his mistress Clara Petacci and a few other followers, heading to Switzerland. The Italian underground captured them during their escape and gave them a quick trial.
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## Mussolini Shot

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- Both Mussolini and Petacci were shot and hung by their heels in front of a garage for all to see. All through the day, in raw display of hatred, men and women jeered and spit on the mutilated bodies. Finally, Allied soldiers removed the bodies at night.
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