

Benito mussolini's doctrine of fascism



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DOCTRINE OF FASCISM Benito Mussolini outlines several essential characteristics of his preferred political ideology, Fascism, in what has become known as the Doctrine of Fascism. In this paper, Mussolini outlines his vision of the ideology, and explains the major issues that Fascism will address once it becomes the leading political system in Italy. Mussolini's major points as outlined in the Doctrine included an extreme emphasis on nationalism, organization and modernization of the state, persistent focus on religion, life as a struggle, and the notion that individuals exist only for the improvement of society as a whole.

Wolfgang Schieder, after reviewing the Doctrine of Fascism, explains Mussolini's success based on it and clarifies what exactly Adolf Hitler adopted from the Italian Fascist ideology to incorporate into his own Third Reich. One of the fundamental tenants in Mussolini Doctrine of Fascism is the strong sense of nationalism, which he wants the Italian people to embrace. As a result, he calls for a unification of all Italians over his Fascist regime. Mussolini truly thought that the Italian nation was preordained for greatness, and that the only way to fulfil this destiny was through extreme social cooperation under Fascism.

To that end, Mussolini advocated a mass modernization of the Italian state, centralization of government and creation of a state in "spirit, not territory." Mussolini wanted Italy to leave its mark on history through the fascist system, so his Doctrine emphasised cultural contributions such as art and philosophy. Mussolini believed that a nation's power was derived from its people, who had to be "numerous, hard working, and well regulated" in order to succeed. A further crucial element of Mussolini's Doctrine was that

he constantly stresses the role of the state and government in a Fascist state.

As opposed to other political systems such as socialism, the state in a fascist society does not act as a mere " watchdog" or " night watchman," simply protecting its citizens and facilitating material gains. Rather, the state according to Mussolini is the spiritual, moral and political apex of each human being. Its duties are to give a " concrete form to the political, juridical and economical organisation of the country" through a series of practical actions. Mussolini sees the state as an actual physical manifestation of all positive aspects of the human spirit, and furthermore acting as an " immanent conscience of the nation. Moreover, The Doctrine of Fascism goes on to explain that through the state, human beings are transformed from primitive tribal beings to glorious emperors, gaining level of power that would be impossible to achieve as an individual or small group. Finally, Mussolini establishes that the only way for one to immortalize themselves, and be remembered within a nation was through beneficial contributions to the state. One particular notion within the Doctrine that seems peculiar at first glance is the importance that Mussolini places on religion, specifically the Catholic Church.

For such a modern and practical-based system, it seems rather surprising that Mussolini not only tolerates religion, but respects and facilitates its progression. Mussolini's official reasoning for this is that similar to the state, religion is effectively a " manifestation of the spirit," and so the Catholic Church and Mussolini's fascism share this commonality. In actuality, the real reason Mussolini was so tolerant of the church likely goes far beyond that.

Wolfgang Schieder, whose ideas will be developed further on, explains that Mussolini required the Church's support in order to gain the unwavering support of the Italian people.

Mussolini was considered the first national socialist to repair the damaged link between the state and church, and was rewarded for it with full support of the Pope and Catholic Church. Mussolini was a man obsessed with the notion of empire, and this is reflected in his Doctrine. The concept of force and discipline was stressed not simply in military conquest, but every aspect of life for the average Italian. War is inevitable, as it is simply the manifestation of the strength and vigour of the Italian people that wishes to expand itself, never looking back.

Peace was considered as merely a "mask to surrender and cowardice." Mussolini stressed that Italians required "forces, duty, and sacrifice" in order to rise again to their former greatness, that of the Roman Empire. This is also Mussolini's rationale for harsh and severe actions against any who would resist or try and undermine fascism. Finally, there remains perhaps the most basic and yet most profound idea present in the entire doctrine; being the notion that life is a struggle. The entire doctrine constantly discusses this concept, and in fact Mussolini uses it to justify the entire doctrine.

Mussolini states that, "fascism wants a man to be active and absorbed in action with all his energies," a desire which he considers synonymous with fascism's own desire to be constantly progressing. Italians were not only encouraged to frequently be taking action, but it was considered their "duty to conquer out of life what was really worthy to them." Mussolini is essentially stating that he believes that a virtuous Italian should be

constantly struggling with his life, never becoming complacent and always fighting to better himself.

Fascism, being an extension of the human spirit, naturally mirrored these qualities. Wolfgang Schieder, analyzes Mussolini's political success and what he the extent to which Mussolini facilitated Hitler's rise to power in Germany. According to Schieder it largely because of what he calls the ' Philo-Fascist climate'which was present in Germany during the early 1930's. During this era Germany's economy was in ruin largely die to war reparations, and the nation as a whole was not in very good shape.

The German peoples experiment with democracy through the Weimar Republic was in many ways viewed as a failure, and people were looking to alternative models of governments. Fascism was being presented as a viable alternative to a ' discredited Parliamentary system' What is important to note is that Schieder thinks that the pro-Fascist atmosphere of Germany at the time was largely because of Mussolini himself. Mussolini was a very charismatic figure, and he was especially adept at handling the media in Germany.

He often surprised them by speaking German, and by the end of any interaction with the German press Mussolini left them in awe of himself as a person and of the Fascist system, which he had implemented. In the early 1930's according to Schieder there was no other form of dictatorship in the world that was as widely accepted as Fascism was. This created an environment in which Hitler stood to profit from pro-Fascist sentiment, the more he moulded his political strategy in that direction. According to

Schieder there were two developments, which enabled Hitler's acceptance by the German elites.

Firstly, the Great Depression had opened the discussion about implementing a 'new economic order', and in this face of rising left-wing economics happening during this time made such a development even more necessary. Moreover, the German elites at first didn't appreciate Hitler for what he truly was, and in many ways they underestimated him. In a time of economic chaos, the 'Italian Experiment' was viewed as a success, and its implementation in Germany was being justified under the context that 'Hitler was not Mussolini', and that if he became chancellor he would easily be manipulated by the German elites.

Mussolini paved the way for Hitler because there was a tremendous amount of admiration for Mussolini within Germany, and the more Hitler aligned himself with Mussolini, the more he stood to benefit from this in a highly fragmented society. The manner in which Germany embraced Fascism can be best represented by two people at the time: Emil Ludwig and Theodore Wolff. The two men were high advocates of democracy in Germany, who shifted their support to Mussolini and his Fascist Doctrine.

They did so out of the necessity to temporarily establish temporarily establish an authoritarian regime rooted in Fascism to offer Germany a political way out of their precarious situation. Although German understanding of Fascism can be characterized by 'selective readings', it was nonetheless the perfect political system for Germany given their historical circumstances. Given Fascism's highly nationalistic nature, it was ideal for a nation like Germany that was still rebuilding from World War 1.

Moreover, the German elites saw Fascism as a better political alternative to democracy, or even worse, socialism as was being pursued elsewhere in the world. As this paper has tried to illustrate, the correlations between fascism as it developed in Germany and Italy are not merely coincidental dictatorships, but there is much more to the story. After all, Hitler did view Mussolini as his political mentor.

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