

Mussolini, Benito. *The Doctrine of Fascism*. Translated by _____. New York: Howard Fertig, Publisher, 2006.

Benito Mussolini, (1883-1945) was dictator of Italy during World War II. Mussolini was a violent and intelligent youth, repeatedly ejected from schools. After being wounded in World War I, Mussolini commenced a political career that made him Italy's youngest prime minister. Italians welcomed his dictatorship, and he resolved long-standing problems the nation faced. Italians were less enthusiastic with the international outrage at Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Mussolini found an ally in Adolf Hitler. Mussolini's Italy proved militarily hopeless, and Hitler rescued Italian forces in Greek and North African misadventures. Mussolini chafed at being Hitler's lieutenant. The Italians deposed Mussolini and imprisoned him. *Il Duce* ("the leader") was rescued by German glider pilots from a hilltop hotel "prison" and spirited to Munich. But the dictator eventually returned to Italy, humiliated as a German puppet. Later attempting to escape Italy in German uniform, Mussolini was shot and killed along with his mistress, Claretta Petacci, who refused to leave his side. The first section of *The Doctrine of Fascism* was ghost-written by philosopher Giovanni Gentile, despite Mussolini's express claim that he "dictated" the doctrine (Note 1). The second section of *The Doctrine of Fascism* was written by Mussolini himself. The text was first published in 1932 as an entry in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. The term "fascism" derives from the Italian word "fascis," meaning group or bundle.

Fundamental Ideas. [Gentile's text is amply annotated with illustrative snippets from speeches by Mussolini.] Fascism is thought about life's fundamentals in action. Every state acts out a view of life. (In Note 1, Mussolini denies that all fascists are violent men. Some fascists are contemplative, but agitated, people.) (In Note 3, Mussolini asserts that in Italian fascism, competent, powerful government replaces weak, inept structures. The movement is spiritual, reasserting values of religious faith and patriotism.) Humanity exists not only as individuals, but also as nations. Man finds his highest place in duty, denial of instinctual urges, self-sacrifice, and death. The fascist knows he, by his will, fashions the world. (Note 4 declares that all human life is struggle.) Fascism emphasizes culture and work; these are ways man erects a world. Fascist life is hard, spare, and value-laden. Ease is not in the fascist vocabulary. (Note 6 asserts that fascist life is ceaseless struggle.) Fascism does not use religion; it is a religion. Fascism is, however, realistic. Tradition creates a social life, but never arrives at peace. (Note 9 declares that fascists do not believe in salvation or happiness.) Everything evolves through constant changes. So, fascism rejects Renaissance and Enlightenment individualism, and classical political liberalism as well, with its misplaced emphasis on the individual. Individuals find their existence within the State, not in opposition to it. (Note 12 asserts that "Catholicism completes Fascism.") Only in state participation does the individual find liberty. Fascism is totalitarian; it brooks no competing social institutions. (Note 15 recounts a slogan of Italian fascism: "Everything in the state; nothing against the state, nothing outside the state.") All serve the state. Fascism opposes socialism and, its attack dog, trade unionism. The majority is not the nation. A state may begin in one person, then spread to the nation. Italy is a people preserving itself. (Note 19 indicates that "race" is mostly an emotion, not an existing thing.) The state becomes a corporate personality of the people. The administrative state creates the nation. Peoples have a right to political independence because of their states. States must be active; they may expand their borders. The state becomes part of the identity of its citizens, reaching the most fundamental levels of consciousness. Fascism creates institutions, but also guides spiritual life. Fascism reconstitutes its citizens. (Note 20 argues that a nation's greatness depends more upon the spirit of its people than on the breadth of its borders. The state makes of its people a nation, and can afford, when necessary, to be against everyone.)

Political and Social Doctrine. Mussolini named fascism because it identified groups of men organized for political action, not some writer's theory. At first, the fascists had no theory at all, only action. Fascists knew how to fight and die for fascist faith. Fascism rejects pacifism. Only war presses men to their utmost, and brings forth their inner mettle. One fights for a fascistic future. Fascists advocate educational rigor.

Fascists oppose Marxism. No economic theory can encompass the glory of heroic or sacral motives. Fascism rejects the idea that class struggle drives history, and that material well-being makes people happy.

Fascists reject democracy. Majorities have no inherent right to rule. Democracy is a means of hiding the fact that many little kings rule beneath the shroud of suffrage. Democracy erodes high culture and learning, and degenerates toward vulgar pleasures for the majority. People are not equal, even politically. Democracy leads to governmental laxity. Progress is not boundless.

Fascists deride classical liberalism. Liberalism prevailed for only fifteen years of the nineteenth century. It led directly to a world war. Liberalism is naïve and anti-active.

With socialism, democracy, and liberalism evaporating, fascism puts in their place a regime of authority and communal effort. Fascists proffer no once-and-for-all ideology. Ideas come and go. Peoples persevere. The twentieth is the century of the state. Fascism is not a doctrine, but life acting to sustain itself in the face of opposition. The state is fascism's core idea. The state has a life of its own, all apart from its citizens. The state transcends its members in time and scope, transmitting from one generation to the next the spirit and culture of a people. Fascist government controls political parties, undoes parliaments, makes responsible decisions, controls the economy, and teaches patriotism. Fascism unleashes the vital energy of its citizens. A fascist government outlaws dangerous freedoms, but leaves individuals wiggle room. A fascist government supports and defends Catholicism. Fascism follows the Roman view of power; it is not only about land and armies, but also about ethics and the human spirit.

People of the twentieth century crave authority and order. This age will be fascist.