

Fascist manifesto

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(Redirected from The Manifesto of the Fascist Struggle)

The Manifesto of the Fascist Struggle (Italian: *Il manifesto dei fasci di combattimento*) was the initial declaration of the political stance of the founders of Italian Fascism.

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Origins of Italian Fascism

The classic definition of Italian Fascism applies to the latter part of the history of the movement in power, when Italy was firmly under the leadership of Benito Mussolini. Its initial political stance—in the June 1919 Manifesto—includes, however, many elements that would not be normally associated with fascism in the classic definition, including support for democracy (indeed, the fascist manifesto actually called for greater democratic rights) and a limited number of social ideas. All these were slowly abandoned over the following years, as fascism took its recognizable, anti-democratic and anti-socialist shape.

Originally, the leading committee of the Fascist Movement included both former Socialist Party members (among them Mussolini himself) and nationalists. The resulting Manifesto, united in the common aim of overturning the existing system, reflects a clear compromise between these strands. Only subsequently did Mussolini establish outright leadership of the movement.

Given that Fascism is recognised (with a few exceptions) as being dictatorial, it is noteworthy that elements of the Manifesto call for wider democracy. What was enacted during two decades of Fascist government was quite contrary in substance to the demands of the Manifesto. During 21 years of Fascist government, not all Manifesto pledges were achieved, and many were simply ignored; forgotten by the system. Interestingly, many elements were subsequently imposed by the Italian Republic during the post-Fascist era.

Contents of the Fascist Manifesto

The Manifesto (published in "Il Popolo d'Italia" on June 6, 1919) is divided into four sections, describing Fascist objectives in political, social, military and financial fields.^[1]

Politically, the Manifesto calls for:

- Universal suffrage polled on a regional basis, with proportional representation and voting and electoral office eligibility for women;
- Proportional representation on a regional basis;
- Voting for women (which was opposed by most other European nations);
- Representation at government level of newly created National Councils by economic sector;
- The abolition of the Italian Senate (at the time, the Senate, as the upper house of parliament, was by process elected by the wealthier citizens, but were in reality direct appointments by the King. It has been described as a sort of extended council of the Crown);
- The formation of a National Council of experts for labor, for industry, for transportation, for the public health, for communications, etc. Selections to be made of professionals or of tradesmen with legislative powers, and elected directly to a General Commission with ministerial powers (this concept was rooted in corporatist ideology and

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derived in part from Catholic social doctrine).

In labour and social policy, the Manifesto calls for:

- The quick enactment of a law of the State that sanctions an eight-hour workday for all workers;
- A minimum wage;
- The participation of workers' representatives in the functions of industry commissions;
- To show the same confidence in the labor unions (that prove to be technically and morally worthy) as is given to industry executives or public servants;
- Reorganisation of the railways and the transport sector;
- Revision of the draft law on invalidity insurance;
- Reduction of the retirement age from 65 to 55.

In military affairs, the Manifesto advocates:

- Creation of a short-service national militia with specifically defensive responsibilities;
- Armaments factories are to be nationalised;
- A peaceful but competitive foreign policy.

In finance, the Manifesto advocates:

- A strong progressive tax on capital (envisaging a “partial expropriation” of concentrated wealth);
- The seizure of all the possessions of the religious congregations and the abolition of all the bishoprics, which constitute an enormous liability on the Nation and on the privileges of the poor;
- Revision of all contracts for military provisions;
- The revision of all military contracts and the seizure of 85 percent of the profits therein.

The Manifesto thus combined elements of contemporary democratic and progressive thought (franchise reform, labour reform, limited nationalisation, taxes on wealth and war profits) with corporatist emphasis on class collaboration (the idea of social classes existing side by side and collaborating for the sake of national interests; the opposite of the Marxist notion of class struggle).

The Manifesto in Practice

Of the Manifesto’s proposals, the commitment to corporative organisation of economic interests was to be the longest lasting. Far from becoming a medium of extended democracy, parliament became by law an exclusively Fascist-picked body in 1929; being replaced by the “Chamber of Corporations” a decade later.

Fascism’s pacifist foreign policy ceased during its first year of Italian government. In September 1923, the Corfu crisis demonstrated the regime’s willingness to use force internationally. Perhaps the greatest success of Fascist diplomacy was the Lateran Treaty of February 1929: which accepted the principle of non-interference in the affairs of the Church. This ended the 59 year old dispute between Italy and the Papacy.

References

- ¹ ^ "Flunking Fascism 101", WND.com (8 January 2008).

See also

- Constitution of Fiume
- Doctrine of Fascism

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