

FASCISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE¹

FASCIST REFORMS IN ITALY

THE speech delivered at Perugia by Signor Alfredo Rocco, the Italian Minister of Justice, last August, has a special importance in relation to the Fascist movement. Signor Mussolini, indeed, defined it as a 'fundamental speech,' one that contains 'the essence of the Party's policy, and the reasons why Fascism must combat all other Parties, following the most decisive, rational, and systematically intransigent methods.' To understand the ideas that underlie the constitutional system of government that Fascism is building up in Italy, it is therefore necessary to go back to this pronouncement.

Modern political thought, Signor Rocco pointed out, had until yesterday been completely dominated, both inside and outside Italy, by doctrines that owe their origin to the Reformation, their development to the philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their sacrosanct character to the English, American, and French revolutions: the same which, under a variety of forms, sometimes differing widely from each other, colored all the political and social theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries down to the birth of Fascism. These doctrines were all based on an individualistic and mechanical conception of society and the State. Society is only a number of individuals; its aims are therefore only the aims of these individuals. Society

lives for the units of which it is composed, and the well-being and happiness of these units were, by general consent, defined as its goal.

The different schools differed purely and simply over methods. Liberalism, for example, held that the best way of realizing the happiness of the individual was to leave him alone as much as possible, and that the State's task was so to arrange things that everyone should be free without getting in the way of his neighbor's freedom. This regulative function, it insisted, must not be departed from, and nobody's liberty should be curtailed to a greater extent than was strictly necessary. To prevent ministers from abusing their powers, Liberalism hedged them round with a system of controls and checks. The principle of the division of powers was devised as a way of weakening the State as opposed to the individual. It was thus prevented from showing itself in its relations with him in the fullness of its sovereign authority. The individual citizen too was given a share in the legislative function, and so enabled to exercise a direct control over the most important of the powers of the State and an indirect one over government generally. In this system Liberalism was careful to entrust the function of control only to citizens of proved character and capacity. But in this moderation it was illogical, for, if the State exists for all the individuals who compose it, all these individuals must clearly take part in the government and not merely a small minority of them.

¹From the *Round Table* (London Liberal-Imperial quarterly), *March*

There must, in fact, be equality as well as liberty. Liberalism, in other words, leads logically to Democracy, which proclaims the equality of all, and to the dogma of the sovereignty of the people. Logically, therefore, this individualistic theory must inevitably take a further step and lead on to Socialism.

The doctrine of Fascism, on the other hand, stands in direct opposition, not to this or that consequence of the Liberal, Democratic, Socialist conception, but to the conception itself. Liberalism and Socialism disagree as to methods, but Liberalism, Democracy, and Socialism on the one hand, and Fascism on the other, disagree about principles. The Fascist doctrine turns upside down the old relations between Society and the individual. In place of the formula, 'Society for the individual,' Fascism substitutes, 'The individual for society.' This, however, does not mean that Fascism suppresses the individual, but merely that it subordinates the individual to society. Fascism does not suppress individual liberty; it simply has a different conception of it. Fascism agrees that the individual must be guaranteed the conditions that are indispensable for the free development of his faculties, but this is not because it recognizes in him any right that is superior to that of the State, or that can be used against the State, but because it believes that it is to the interest of the State to develop human personality. If the individual is an element — though an infinitesimal and passing one — in the complex and permanent life of society, his normal development is clearly necessary for the development of social life.

So much for civil liberty. As for economic liberty, Fascism recognizes in it the central problem of the modern world; but it does not accept the solution proposed by Socialism — that is to say, the socialization of the means of

production and their collective organization. The chief defect of that method is that it does not take human nature into account, and is therefore often out of touch with reality. In reality, there is no stronger spring in human action than the impulse derived from the self-interest of the individual, and its elimination from the economic field would mean paralysis. But it is impossible, having rejected the Socialist solution, to leave the problem as it is. That would result in serious damage to the public peace and to the authority of the State, such as one finds under a Liberal or Democratic régime. If the various classes are left to defend themselves by means of lockouts, strikes, boycotts, and sabotage, unchecked, anarchy will be the inevitable result. The aim of Fascist doctrine is to do justice between the classes, a fundamental need of modern life, and at the same time to prevent the individual from taking his defense into his own hands, as he used to do in the barbarous ages.

The problem, so put, admits of only one solution. The State that has for centuries substituted its own justice for the right of individuals to defend themselves must itself do justice between the different classes. In order to make the economic problem susceptible of a similar solution Fascism has created a syndicalism of its own. To suppress the right of classes to defend themselves is not the same thing as suppressing their defense. Class-organization is a fact and a necessity, and, as such, cannot be ignored by the State, but it must be disciplined and controlled, and brought within the compass of the State. According to the Fascist conception, the syndicate, instead of being the revolutionary instrument that the Socialist system made it, becomes an instrument of legal defense.

Such, briefly but objectively put, is

the Fascist doctrine as expounded by Signor Rocco. It springs, he claims, from a pure Italian tradition, represented by Machiavelli, Vico, and Cuoco, in contrast to the Liberal, Democratic, and Socialist doctrines which are admittedly of foreign origin. In any case, it is the doctrine that has inspired the so-called super-Fascist laws which have lately been approved by Parliament, and now form the *corpus juris* of Fascism.

The law which embodies the Fascist principles relating to economic life is the Syndicates Law, and it is the most important of the super-Fascist laws. Its main provisions are as follows: An association of employers and employed, whether engaged on manual or brain work, *may be legally recognized* if — in the case of employers — it includes at least *one tenth* of the workers residing in the district in which the association operates and belonging to the category for which the association was formed; or if — in the case of workmen — those on its roll represent at least *one tenth* of the workers residing in the district and belonging to such a category. To obtain legal recognition, however, associations must do more than look after the economic and moral interests of their members; they must also assist and instruct them and attend to their moral and national education, and the leaders must guarantee their capacity, probity, and *firm national faith*. A condition of admittance to such an association is *good political conduct from the national point of view*. The law empowers recognized associations to represent *all* employers, workers, artists, and professional men who belong to the same categories within a district, *including those who are not members*. As an association has to have on its roll only a tenth part of the workers of a given category in a given district to obtain legal recognition, it follows that it may

in actual practice legally represent nine tenths of the workers who are not members. Recognized associations impose an annual contribution not exceeding, in the case of employers, five lire for every worker employed, and, in the case of workers, artists, and professional men, the equivalent of a day's earnings, or thirty lire. All have to pay this sum, even those who have not been admitted into the association, or who have deliberately kept outside it. *Only one association can be legally recognized for each category*. There may be other associations, but one only, the legally recognized association, is entitled, under the law, to represent the category.

Every association has to have a president or secretary to manage its affairs, and their names *must be approved* by royal decree — that is, by the competent minister in agreement with the Minister of the Interior. The presidents and secretaries are assisted by managing boards elected by the members; but the prefect may dissolve the board and concentrate all power in the hands of the president or the secretary for a period not exceeding one year. Collective labor contracts agreed to by recognized associations apply to all whom they represent, *non-members as well as members*. A copy of every such contract must be lodged with the local prefect. Trade-unions of State employees or of employees of provincial or municipal bodies or of public philanthropic institutions cannot obtain legal recognition.

All disputes with regard to collective agreements are under the jurisdiction of the Courts of Appeal acting as a Labor Court. This jurisdiction is compulsory in all disputes between employers and employed that relate to the application of existing contracts. Where, however, the dispute relates to the fixing of new labor-conditions, it is only compulsory in the case of agricul-

tural and industrial undertakings, and of public works or works of public utility. In other cases the consent of both sides has to be obtained, but once established the jurisdiction becomes compulsory. An employer who declares a lockout with the object of forcing his employees to agree to modifications of their agreements is punished with from three months' to a year's imprisonment and a fine of from ten thousand to a hundred thousand lire. In the same way three or more employees who leave their work or *act in such a way as to disturb its continuity or regularity* in order to secure better terms from their employers get from one to three months, and ringleaders not less than one or more than two years, as well as a fine of from two thousand to five thousand lire.

The Syndicates Law, if one can judge by the importance attached to its adoption by the original nucleus of the Fascist Party, is of all super-Fascist laws the most typical. It may therefore be of interest to relate the circumstances that attended its passage through the Chamber. Fascism is like a great river fed by tributaries. Nationalists, Plutocrats, Agrarians, and others have all helped to swell its waters, but it originally started as a little syndicalist stream. Signor Mussolini himself, when editor of the *Avanti*, was more of a syndicalist than of a reformist Socialist.

The original bill sanctioned compulsory arbitration for agriculture and the public services, but not for industry. The syndicalist wing of the Fascist Party, however, insisted upon its being applied to industry as well. The industrialists resisted for a long time, and the ranks of Fascism itself were split by a regular duel between the industrialists, supported by the Nationalists and other elements of the Right Wing, on the one hand, and the syndicalists and

other elements of the Left; on the other. The industrialists were anxious lest the law — if applied impartially — should result in severity or even in injustice to themselves. In the end, however, they capitulated — no doubt they had assurances as to the way in which the law would be interpreted under the Fascist régime. The Fascist deputy, Signor Benni, who is also the president of the Italian Confederation of Industries, expressed his conviction in the Chamber on December 9, 1925, that the 'first effect of the recognition of the syndicates will certainly be to give to the workers, more than to the industrialists, a magnificent instrument for increasing their efficiency as a public and social economic factor.' With regard to compulsory arbitration, he added that it would be 'absolutely impossible for a Labor Court magistrate to form any idea of the multiform and continually changing conditions of industry,' and he finished up with the prediction that 'the application of compulsory arbitration to industry as well would be the beginning of the end for Italian industry.'

Two days later Signor Mussolini himself took up the defense of this law in a powerful speech. The industrialists should, he insisted, accept compulsory arbitration like other people, and the dangers to which Signor Benni had called attention need arouse no anxiety. 'Those who hesitate should,' he continued, 'bear in mind the [Fascist] régime and the Government. The workmen's syndicates are Fascist, and if they wish to bear the name of Fascist, and to move under the shade of the lictor, *they must control their actions and do nothing to diminish the productive efficiency of the nation, or to create difficulties for the Government.* Hence, besides the control that the Fascist syndicates must exercise over themselves, *there is also the sovereign control of the*

Government. This assurance satisfied Signor Benni. He withdrew his opposition and accepted compulsory arbitration for industry.

The apparent capitulation of the industrialists was not, however, unconditional. The General Confederation of Industry has become the *Fascist Confederation of Industry*, but by way of compensation it has obtained a seat on the Grand Council, the highest body in the Fascist hierarchy, and Signor Benni will there be able to protect industrialist interests against Signor Rossoni, the deputy who represents the Fascist workmen's syndicates. It would have been interesting to know what the workers really think of the new law, but this is impossible. The Confederation of Labor has not, like the sections that it used to represent, been formally dissolved; but no Labor journal is any longer in a position to express independent criticism, and congresses and referendums are out of the question. All that can safely be said is that the old leaders of the trade-unions that adhered to the Confederation remain faithful to the ideal of *free* trade-unions, and that they object in particular to two articles in the new law. The first is the position given to the secretary or president of a trade-union. It is not clear if they are to be elected by the workers, or nominated by the prefect; but it is in any case certain that they must be *personæ gratæ* to the prefect, as the latter has the right to annul their appointment. Secondly, it is considered monstrous that workers should all be obliged to pay their annual quota to the syndicates without having the right of joining them. A worker can be refused admission for *political reasons*.

Just as Fascist doctrine, as explained by Signor Rocco at Perugia, has found its expression on the economic side in the Syndicates Law, on the political side it is represented by a series of en-

actments that, by different paths, all make for the same end — the curtailment of the liberties of the individual and the strengthening of the prerogatives of the State and of the Executive. The Government has officially declared its intention of introducing a bill at an early date for the reform of the Senate. It would make the latter an entirely elected body, and have its members elected by the syndicates. Of the fate of the Chamber nothing certain is known, though a strong element in Fascism would like to see it abolished.

But the most open attack that has been made on the representative principle is in the municipal sphere. The Fascist Government held that 'municipalism is an Italian sore, and that the present condition of the small municipalities shows the way in which factious local struggles destroy all sense of the collective good, all respect for justice, and all criterions of economy and wise administration.' It decided to abolish elections and councils in all municipalities with not more than five thousand inhabitants, and to entrust their administration to a podesta nominated by the Government through the prefect of the province. The podesta holds his post for five years, but his term may be extended. A podesta may also be nominated for municipalities with a larger population when for some reason or other their councils have been dissolved twice in two years. The prefect may allow the podesta the assistance of an advisory committee, one third of whose members are directly nominated by himself and the other two thirds by economic bodies, syndicates, and local associations selected also by himself. The functions of this committee are, however, only advisory. Out of 9148 Italian municipalities — ranging from Clavières, with fifty-eight inhabitants, to Milan, whose present population is eight hundred and forty

thousand — 7337 will have a podesta, and only 1811 the old elected municipal councils. Thus this new law will bring all local autonomy to an end in 7337 municipalities. The podesta will simply be an official of the central Government. He will exercise plenary powers, and the citizens will no longer have any voice in the administration.

The Prefects Law, like the Podesta Law, is intended to increase the vigilance and strengthen the control of the Executive over every kind of provincial activity. It also imposes upon the prefects of the provinces the duty of taking steps 'to ensure, *in harmony with the general policy of the Government*, unity of political action in the development of the various services.' The prefect must accordingly keep in close touch with officials in his province so as 'to impart to them the instructions that are considered expedient.'

We now come to the last of the constructive laws — the one that Fascists proudly claim to be the most anti-democratic of all, the Prime Minister Law. Under it the Italian Chambers can no longer even take notice of bills unless they have the approval of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister may at any time have passed any measure he wishes, even when the opinion of the Chamber is unfavorable.

The latest super-Fascist law is the Press Law, which endows the prefects with plenary powers to enforce drastic measures, such as sequestration, warn-

ing, suspension, and suppression, which are put into effect for political reasons, without any of them being followed by a regular trial. Their effect, and that of a campaign conducted by other methods, has been completely to silence the Opposition press. The great newspapers, whose proprietors have in several cases been forced to dispose of their shares and 'clear out,' have had either to pass over to Fascism or to pledge themselves not to oppose it in any way. No newspaper that dares to call itself Liberal, Democratic, or Constitutional is allowed to appear, and two or three working-class journals, like the Socialist *Avanti* and the Communist *Unità*, whose circulation has been reduced by boycotting methods, appear without comments. If they were to make any they would be sequestered. The so-called Fascistization of the press was completed last December. Doubts about its expediency or wisdom were expressed by several Fascist writers, and on December 30, 1925, the *Popolo d'Italia*, Signor Mussolini's own organ, in order to still such qualms, published an article that required no signature to reveal its author. After reminding its readers that 'in the life of to-day all the old margins are reduced to an extraordinary degree,' and that 'there is no longer any room for many things that were excellent in other times,' the article concluded with the words: '*To-day, among the things for which there is no room must be included the Opposition.*'

SHOT DOWN BY THE BRITISH¹

A ZEPPELIN OFFICER'S STORY

BY OTTO MIETH

THE sixteenth of June, 1917, was a bright, beautiful summer day. Our naval airport, Nordholz, near Cuxhaven, lay enbosomed in idyllic heath-country amid clumps of pines and birches. Its gigantic sheds and grounds basked in the sunshine as if there were nothing but peace and goodwill on earth. Suddenly a wild, warlike shriek, beginning with a deep rumble and rising into a long, shrill tremolo, rent the dreamy atmosphere. Thrice did the siren call.

Thus Mars suddenly strode into the tents of peace, for this was the summons for a raid against England. Files of attendants rushed out of the barracks to the airship sheds, whose doors suddenly yawned wide open as if they had been burst out by the rising roar of the motors within. A moment later two giant Zeppelins slowly emerged. One was the L-48, the newest airship in the navy, to which I had been assigned as watch officer.

As I directed the operation of bringing her out, I studied with proud delight the slender, handsome lines of the giant, six hundred feet long and sixty feet through at its greatest girth. Four gondolas, one on either side, and one fore and one aft in the centre, were suspended below its body. They contained five motors, while the front gondola was reserved for the steersmen

¹ From *Frankfurter Zeitung Illustriertes Blatt* (Liberal daily, pictorial supplement), February 28

and their instruments. Our regular crew consisted of twenty men, including two officers, but to-day we carried an attack commander, Captain Sch——.

Black is the color of night, and black was the color of our ship. Our shield was Darkness, for when she enwrapped the earth and nature and man on moonless nights she announced the hour for us to rise to lofty altitudes and to attack the enemy behind his ancient walls of water.

We did not look forward expectantly to the devastation we planned to wreak. That was in the line of duty, for which we risked our lives. But the real joy in our service was, after all, the charm of nature, the sense of isolation in infinite space in our fragile ship — alone with the heavens above and the waters beneath the earth.

As soon as I boarded the ship, our mooring lines were loosened, propellers began to whirl, and the L-48 rose quickly but majestically in the air. A last wave of the hand, a shout of 'Back to-morrow!' and the North Sea rolled beneath us.

Our course lay due west. We were in the best of spirits, and, though our sailors were superstitious, no one recalled the fact that this was our thirteenth raid. Our sealed orders were opened. They read briefly: 'Attack South England — if possible, London.' Wilhelmshaven appeared on our port side. The vessels of our high-sea fleet,