

Fascism

Historically, Fascism began at the end of the nineteenth century with a movement called national syndicalism in Italy that grew out of an interaction between socialism, anti-liberalism and anti-rationalism. The leaders of the Fascist movement came largely from secular, progressive, and leftist intellectuals who wanted to overthrow the existing social order. Many of these intellectuals were former Marxist who had become disenchanted with the lack of progress being made by Marxism. In the early part of the twentieth century, these forces came together with nationalist sentiment in Italy as represented by the self-proclaimed socialist Enrico Corrandini. The nationalist movement was an anti-democratic movement bent on rapid industrialization and modernization. Thus, the merger of national syndicalism and nationalism became Fascism.

In the early days of Fascism, the Fascists believed that capitalism and free markets were necessary and that the state should not become directly involved in producing goods. In the early 1920's, a totalitarian view of the state developed which could be called the corporate state. While nationalization was avoided, this new view led to a highly interventionist policy that turned industry into an arm of the state. Along with this view, there developed a strong anti-individualism that was reflected in the belief that each individual in the state was like a single cell in a body. Thus, Fascism was a living organism comprised of a social body directed by the Fascist leader of the state and destined to inherit the earth. The leading philosopher contributing to this anti-individualism was Giovanni Gentile.

This conception of socialism became the foundation for the Third Worldism of the mid-twentieth century. In this movement, dictators like Castro represented their rule as progressive government that would accelerate economic development and prosperity for all.

Adapted from an article by David Steele.