Fascist Corporativism and the Myth of the New State: The Construction of the Totalitarian State in Italy

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Abstract

This thesis approaches the corporative state in Fascist Italy as a case study of the attempt to construct a totalitarian state. In past analyses, corporativism has been interpreted as a façade for an authoritarian dictatorship, content with sharing power with the traditional economic elite and thus not representative of Fascist ideology or a totalitarian orientation. This, however, is a reductionist perspective, analyzing it through its failures instead of how it fit into the wider ambitions of the regime. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more complete understanding of corporativism's significance by employing the culturalist methodology of taking Fascist ideology seriously. This will be applied in the analysis of their rhetoric and policies, particularly the *Carta del Lavoro* and the legal framework of corporativism.

This essay will argue that corporativism was shaped by Fascist ideology, that it served a purpose in the regime, and that it furthered and reinforced its totalitarian ambitions. Corporativism not only suppressed the workers' movement, but was meant to marginalize the influence of the economic elite, subordinating them as organs of the state. Together, this was intended to grant Fascism an unchallengeable monopoly on politic power, simultaneously extending it into the economic sphere. Moreover, corporativism legitimized the regime and mobilized support; through promises of genuine social harmony and direct representation, corporativism formed the cornerstone of the myth of the new state, essential in forming consensus for the regime.

Used as it was by the Fascists, corporativism fulfilled a role in the Fascist effort to construct a totalitarian state, and its examination provides a case study by analyzing the regimes' totalitarian intentions, how the regime made compromises yet strove to overcome them, Fascism's desire to create a new man, and its compromises and the gradualist approach ultimately prevented Fascism from achieving its totalitarian ambitions.

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Introduction

Totalitarianism and the Corporative State

Italian Fascists in the 1920s and 1930s declared at every opportunity that they had constructed a new, totalitarian state, which, according to *il Duce*, Benito Mussolini, incorporated and directed all activities within society. Corporativism – the Fascist form of corporatism, a system in which society is structured into economic organizations from which representatives of workers and employers are arranged into corporations to negotiate legislation affecting all socioeconomic matters – was to be at the center of this new state, championed as the "Third Way" between liberal democracy and socialism. The Fascists promised this system would bring national unity, social justice, direct political representation, and economic development. In reality, none of these objectives would be achieved and the corporative state remained incomplete. Nevertheless, steps were taken toward its creation, and while it was never representative nor provided the promised social harmony, it was shaped by Fascist ideology and represented a part of the effort to construct a totalitarian state.

Much like the corporative state, it is accepted by all scholars of Fascist Italy that a fully developed totalitarian regime never emerged.[1] For decades following the collapse of Fascism, this led many to exclude Fascist Italy from the classification of totalitarian, though this is due to the concentration on totalitarianism as a structure of the total state, not as a type of ideology and

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[1] Alexander J. De Grand, *Italian Fascism: Its Origins & Development*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 169–170; Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 122; David D. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe: Understanding the Poverty of Great Politics* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), 335.

movement. The concept of the totalitarian state is most often applied to the repressive regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin. In comparison, Fascist Italy, given its relatively low amount of terror and compromises, falls short. Yet the aim and ideology of the Fascists, with their intention to direct every realm of existence within a society through the new "total" state they sought to create, is itself totalitarian.

According to preeminent Fascist historian Emilio Gentile, totalitarianism when applied in such a way can best be understood not as a regime which can be fully developed, but rather as an ongoing process; an *experiment*. It is a revolutionary movement with the aim to obtain a monopoly of power in order to create a new, single-party state that seeks to encompass and direct all aspects of society, penetrating and subordinating it to its ideology. The ideology is institutionalized through rituals, and thus takes the form of a political religion which is exclusivist, allowing no other alternative perspectives, and desires to transform society so as to create a new man. In its efforts to achieve this goal, the movement will utilize terror (physical or psychological), "capillary organizations" and a revolutionary party which infiltrates the masses for indoctrination, and mass mobilization through myths, the sacralization of politics and the cult of the leader.[2] This definition thus puts an emphasis on totalitarianism as a political religion and as an ideology of the state, which is to be a permanent entity forever guiding the masses.

In this sense, Fascism *must* be understood as a totalitarian movement, as according to the definition put forth by renowned scholar of fascism Roger Griffin:

> [F]ascism is best defined as a revolutionary form of nationalism, one that sets out to be a political, social and ethical revolution, welding the 'people' into a dynamic national community under new elites infused with heroic values. The core myth that inspires this project is that only a populist, trans-class movement of purifying, cathartic national rebirth (palingenesis) can stem the tide of decadence.[3]

[2] Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology, 1918-1925* (New York: Enigma, 2005), xiv-xv.
[3] Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), xi.

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Under this definition of widely accepted generic fascism,[4] it becomes clear that Fascism is the quintessential totalitarian ideology. Fascism not only embodies the ambition to infiltrate all of society with its quasi-religious political ideology to create a new society, but they additionally envisioned their totalitarian project as a perpetual process to be embodied in the permanent state, which they revered. Indeed, Gentile argues that Fascism represented "an embryonic *ideology* of the State," influenced by philosopher Giovanni Gentile's concept of the ethical state directing all aspects of society.[5] Once again though, it is important to stress that the Fascists failed in their ambitions to create the totalitarian state.

While some[6] deny that Fascism even had a totalitarian drive, others[7] argue it represents a sort of "arrested totalitarianism," asserting it existed initially but was abandoned in favor of forming a conservative authoritarian state centered on the personal dictatorship of Mussolini. On the other hand, it has become increasingly common for scholars to recognize that Fascism maintained its totalitarian ambitions. In this viewpoint, scholars argue the Fascists actively sought to subordinate their conservative allies by overturning former compromises, and thus the regime maintained its totalitarian aim.[8] Moreover, it is typically accepted that the totalitarian drive accelerated after the Ethiopian War and the formation of the empire.[9] With this partial consensus,

[4] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 368; A. James Gregor, "The Problem," in *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. Roger Griffin and Matthew Feldman, vol. 1 (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 344; Philip Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945* (Houndmills [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 97.
[5] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 275.
[6] R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London; New York: Arnold; Oxford University Press, 2002); Payne, *A History of Fascism*.
[7] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*; Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).
[8] Emilio Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo: il partito e lo Stato al totalitarismo* (Roma: Carocci, 2008); Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*; Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*.
[9] Didier Musiedlak, "Mussolini, Charisma and Decision-Making," in *Ruling Elites and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships*, ed. António Costa Pinto, 1st ed, Social Science Monographs (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2009), 14; Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini Il Duce II: Lo Stato Totalitario, 1936-1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 7–15; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New ed, A Harvest Book HB244 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 257.

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historian Philip Morgan has observed that it would be more beneficial to focus on "the 'totalitarian' intentions and goals of the Fascist regime, and the means through which it attempted to realise them,"[10] meaning that the study of Fascism should be broken down to the institutions constructed by the Fascists in their attempt to form their totalitarian state.

Interestingly, although this approach has been applied to various Fascist institutions,[11] it has not satisfactorily been utilized in relation to corporativism. The corporative state has not been approached seriously as an institution in the Fascist attempt to construct a totalitarian state, and no study has demonstrated how the Fascists sought to marginalize the influence of their allies, the economic elite, within it. One of the major works on the consolidation of the dictatorship, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* by Adrian Lyttelton,[12] concentrates primarily on the extension of Mussolini's personal power over the party, and approaches the corporative system as a buttress for a conservative authoritarian regime. Alberto Aquarone takes a similar stance in *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario*, in which he provides a noteworthy study of the regime's structure but falls short by portraying it as Mussolini's personal dictatorship. Aquarone's view represents the typical perspective on corporativism: a façade for a conservative regime and a means to enhance Mussolini's personal power, intended to suppress workers for industrialists.[13] Many with this perspective do not believe that the Fascist regime represented a new state, merely a more repressive form of the pre-Fascist "liberal" state, in place since the unification of Italy in 1861.

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[10] Philip Morgan, "Fascism in General, and Fascism in Particular," *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 1 (February 2003), 113.
[11] See: Victoria De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo*.
[12] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).
[13] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*; Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Payne, *A History of Fascism*.

Others, such as Mussolini's famed biographer Renzo De Felice, do not fully accept this perspective, asserting corporativism was initially a centerpiece of Fascism's revolutionary drive but was bogged down by compromises under the regime.[14] Although Gentile challenges De Felice's argument that the revolutionary Fascist movement was subordinated to the more conservative regime and has written extensively on the totalitarian nature of Fascist Italy, he does not spend much time evaluating corporativism through this lens.[15] Therefore the significance of corporativism within the Fascist state remains unclear, and it is often approached as a sham.

However, as historian David D. Roberts points out, corporativism is commonly approached through a reductionist perspective, analyzing it through its failures instead of examining how it fit into the wider ambitions of constructing a totalitarian state.[16] Certainly, the corporative system was a sham in the sense that it neither provided the promised representation nor social harmony, and it was a main component of Fascist propaganda. Yet to approach it solely as a façade is simplistic and prevents a more complete understanding of the system and the regime; it assumes that corporativism was devoid of purpose and that it was not shaped by Fascist ideology.

This essay will argue that corporativism was shaped by Fascist ideology, that it served a purpose in the regime, and that it furthered its totalitarian ambitions. To be sure, to assert corporativism was shaped by Fascist ideology is not to neglect concessions to employers' associations which slowed corporativism's development and prevented direct economic coordination; it is to suggest that, while certain aspects benefitted employers, corporativism was meant to gradually marginalize and diminish the influence of economic elite while furthering Fascism along its totalitarian path. Corporativism was constructed according to Fascist ideology,

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[14] Renzo De Felice and Michael Arthur Ledeen, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1976), 49.
[15] Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo*.
[16] Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 306, 308.

primarily based on Alfredo Rocco's top-down model of corporativism and Mussolini's own political thought, with influences from the syndicalists on Fascism's Left wing, whose desires largely represented corporativism's propagandized image.

Similarly, to suggest corporativism furthered Fascism's totalitarian ambitions is not to argue that corporatism as a system is innately totalitarian, or that one is dependent on the other; other totalitarian regimes would not employ corporatism while authoritarian and democratic states would. Indeed, corporatism would come in all forms. Common to each of its varieties is the manner in which it structures society according to economic organizations from which representatives meet in a corporative body to collaborate in the formulation and implementation of policy. The relationship between these organs and the degree of involvement in the formulation of policy determines corporatism's nature. Scholars of corporatism have distinguished between liberal corporatism, also known as neo-corporatism, and authoritarian corporatism. Neo-corporatism is a tripartite system, consisting of representatives from autonomous organizations of workers and employers who meet with the state to negotiate. The representatives collaborate and "have a formal role in policy formation."[17] Authoritarian corporatism, conversely, is a bipartite system between employers and the state with workers cut out, and there is less emphasis on representation and more on the implementation of agreed upon policies.[18]

Yet in Fascist Italy, I argue that corporativism – a term which will be applied exclusively to the corporatist system under Fascism – was employed in a totalitarian manner. Corporativism

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[17] Alan Cawson, *Corporatism and Political Theory* (Oxford; New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), 19, 35, 40. Neo-corporatism is only possible in mature, developed capitalist nations. It was adopted by many western nations as a way to coordinate the economy to some measure without imposing state intervention, as in the Fascist and authoritarian models.

[18] Ibid., 19, 40, 69; For more on the various types of corporatism, see: Karl Landauer, *Corporate State Ideologies*, (Research Series 54) (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1983).

was intended to extend state authority over both employers and workers, infiltrate society, and mobilize support, thus representing a totalitarian direction.

Although the subordination of the workers' movement is typically approached as the main consequence of corporativism, suggesting it was an instrument for industrialists, the corporative state seems to have blurred the lines between public and private sectors to such a degree that employers could be considered *de facto* agents of the state, implementing discipline and fostering economic development not only in their interests, but also in the regime's. Moreover, the industrialists' enhanced power seems to have been aligned with Fascism's productivist orientation. Therefore, corporativism appears to have expanded state power not only over the workers, but also over employers, who had enhanced economic power but were unable to impact national policy outside their industries, forced to submit to the national interests as defined by the Fascists.[19]

Corporativism also had significant psychological effects, representing a legitimizing force as part of the myth of the new state. A myth in the Fascist sense, according to historian Stanley Payne, is something "held to be true not as an existing empirical fact but as a metareality of the past and the absolute goal which would be realized in the future."[20] The myth of the new state would hold a central role within Fascism, building consensus for the regime by promising a bright future was on the horizon;[21] yet this myth would not have been sustainable if no steps were taken toward its construction.

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[19] Peter Hayes comes the same conclusion in respect to industries in Nazi Germany, who followed Nazi policies due to incentives of economic gain but also out of fear that failure to do so would result in the direct takeover of their firm by the Nazis or their replacement by another firm. Corporativism in Italy had a similar effect by promising enhanced economic control while simultaneously threatening state intervention where private enterprise proved inadequate. For details, see Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era*, New ed., 2nd ed (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[20] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 215.
[21] Emilio Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo: dal radicalismo nazionale al fascismo* (Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 1999).1

In this approach, and according to Mussolini's ideology, the significance of corporativism seems to be primarily political, not economic. I will still address to a degree its economic significance, such as in the regulation of labor relations. However, due to external circumstances and the existence of competing institutions such as the *Istituto per la Ricostuzione Industriale*, corporativism's economic impact is more difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the study of Fascist corporativism offers a case study of the Fascist regime, illuminating much about Fascism and its efforts to construct a totalitarian state such as Fascism's totalitarian intentions, how the regime made compromises with the old elite yet strove to overcome them and marginalize their allies, Fascism's desire to create a new man and impose a revolution from above, how institutions fit together in the wider effort to construct a totalitarian state, and how compromises and the gradualist approach ultimately prevented Fascism from achieving its totalitarian ambitions.

Framework and Methodology

The importance of corporativism in the construction of the totalitarian system in Italy will be demonstrated through exploring a number of questions surrounding corporativism: what did the various positions within Fascism desire for corporativism, and how were their ideas represented in its final form? What was its purpose according to its legal framework, and how were decisions made in the shaping of its legislation? What was its form in reality and how did it further the construction of the totalitarian state? What does this demonstrate about Fascism?

The first chapter will provide context on the philosophies that ultimately competed in the construction of Fascist corporativism, particularly national syndicalism and Nationalism, as well as Mussolini's own political thought. The second chapter will address the formation of the Fascist Party and the establishment of the dictatorship, examining the professed ambitions of Fascism, the

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compromises of the regime, and what institutional changes were necessary before corporativist reform could begin. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that progress was being made toward corporativism under the coalition government. The third chapter will evaluate the projected principles of Fascist corporativism, particularly through the *Carta del Lavoro*, which was intended to reflect the regime's social policies and thus reflects much about the corporative system. The legislation surrounding the development of corporations will be considered as well to illustrate how corporativism was constructed, its legal function, and its actual function. The final chapter will analyze corporativism implementation, in an effort to evaluate more in depth its significance within the regime as a whole. It should be noted that this examination will be limited exclusively to the interwar period with the exception of Fascism's relevant precursors, and thus corporative reforms during WWII and the Italian Social Republic will not be considered.

In the above examinations, this study will combine intellectual and political history, examining what the Fascists said and wrote as well as their policies in regards to the corporative state. Looking through the lens of totalitarianism as defined by Gentile, corporativism will be viewed as one of the regime's "capillary organizations" extending the reach of the state. Moreover, the mobilizing purpose it serves in the myth of the new state will be deemed an integral element of a totalitarian state and Fascist ideology, not merely an illusion to hide reactionary forces. To provide a deeper understanding, this study will utilize the culturalist approach of taking Fascist ideology seriously, assessing what has in the past been considered mere propaganda as representative of what the Fascists actively believed.[22] This will help provide a more accurate grasp of how the Fascists' viewed and utilized the *Carta del Lavoro*, which will be the main

[22] This approach was spearheaded by George Mosse who stated "only ... when we have grasped fascism from the inside out, can we truly judge its appeal and its power." See: George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, Second printing (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), x.

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primary source of this analysis, and corporativism in general. This will entail using mostly Fascist speeches, writings, and legislation as primary sources.

With this in mind, it is important to remember the wide use of propaganda by the Fascists; while their words must be taken seriously, they cannot be taken at face value. In the interest of not succumbing to Fascist ideology, the methodology of anthropologist Katherine Verdery will be utilized. In her work on totalitarianism in Romania, Verdery has provided insight into the evaluation of documents from totalitarian societies. According to her, the point is not a simple question of how accurately the document represents society. Often, documents are propaganda, doctored to present a specific picture or an idealized version of the society; they do not truly characterize the system. Thus, what is more beneficial is considering what agency and function they fulfilled in the totalitarian system. Verdery's methodology asks, what was their purpose and why was it necessary to create these documents if they did not truly represent society?[23] This question will be applied to the *Carta del Lavoro* and corporativism in general.

To utilize this approach, secondary sources will be heavily employed so as to provide the necessary data and framework to interpret the *Carta del Lavoro* and subsequent corporative reforms. Moreover, many findings and concepts arising from studies on various institutions and relationships under Fascism will be considered when attempting to understand corporativism's purpose.[24]

Through this methodology, the significance of the *Carta del Lavoro* and the subsequent corporative legislation will hopefully become clearer, shedding some light on the meaning of

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[23] Katherine Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2014).

[24] For example, John F. Pollard argues that Fascism was attempting to neutralize and subordinate the Catholic Church, and that at times Mussolini actually thought that he had. I will suggest a similar argument in regards to corporativism and the economic elite. See: John F. Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929-32: A Study in Conflict* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

corporativism as an institution with an integral role in the attempt to construct a totalitarian state. This analysis, aside from hopefully taking a step toward a more complete understanding of the corporative system, will provide a case study into the means through which the Fascists attempted to construct their totalitarian state.

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Chapter 1

The Origins and Philosophy of Corporatism in Italy

Corporatism emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century, advocated by conservatives and Catholics as an alternative to the parliamentary system. The system was meant to establish a representative body based on economic organizations instead of political parties, intended to involve people more directly in the political process by allowing corporations comprised of representatives from worker and employer syndicates to meet in a legislative body forming laws. Based primarily on the concept of medieval guilds, it was considered reactionary and did not gain wide support initially. In the 1890s and early 1900s, however, corporatism was adopted by more radical movements and altered according to their ambitions.[25]

In Italy, corporatism caught on as a replacement for the supposedly inadequate parliament. Radicals on both the Right and Left attacked parliamentarism as divisive, producing an atomized and individualized society and allowing personal interests to take precedent over national ones by allowing too much socioeconomic freedom. The critiques of parliamentarism put forth by the revolutionary syndicalists of the Left and the Nationalists of the Right present insight into the form of corporatism each proposed as an alternative, which would later form the core positions within Fascism, their models competing and blending in the establishment of corporativism.

The purpose of this chapter is to give the theoretical background of the evolution of each of these positions, essential to understanding the dominant corporative models within Fascism. Moreover, it will demonstrate each positions' influence on Mussolini, and his own political

[25] Landauer, *Corporate State Ideologies*.

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thought will be evaluated. Through doing so, it will become evident that the top-down elitist version of corporativism, as proposed by the Nationalists, was much more aligned with Mussolini's ideology than the more representative model desired by the syndicalists. Nonetheless, the syndicalists did greatly influence the future *Duce* and aided in his transformation from revolutionary socialist, to a blending of nationalist and syndicalist thought, to Fascism.

Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Syndicalist Alternative for the State

Syndicalism emerged in France in the 1890s as a response to the perceived weakness of reformist socialism. The socialists were seen as too willing to compromise because of their belief that the realization of socialism was inevitable based on the economic determinism of Marxism. The revolutionary syndicalists believed they had been absorbed into the bourgeois system and were thus impeding the socialist revolution. This was further demonstrated, in the syndicalists' view, by the socialists' over-concentration on the economic wellbeing of the masses. The revolutionary syndicalists feared this would merely enlarge the base of the parliamentary system, inhibiting a change in the ruling class.[26]

The revolutionary syndicalists were thus mistrustful of the parliamentary system, and placed their faith instead in workers' syndicates. These organizations were applauded by syndicalists for their discipline and collectivism, and were seen as the instruments of the coming revolution. However, the desired revolution was not merely political and socioeconomic, with the sole aim of improving workers' conditions, but embodied a psychological and anthropological revolution, with the workers developing the "heroic" values of discipline and sacrifice. Yet syndicalists feared these organizations were unable to accomplish this goal on their own and

[26] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 15.

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therefore needed the guidance of an elite vanguard; the syndicalist intellectuals.[27] This would become a dominant tenet in Fascist ideology and is indicative of how the Fascists would attempt a revolution from above, believing the masses were incapable of leading one themselves.

Nonetheless, syndicates were to be the cornerstone of a future system in which the economy would be organized into a confederation of syndicates with workers' representatives from each industry meeting in a legislative body to make laws affecting all socioeconomic conditions.[28] As noted above, the political system would not be comprised of parties, but economic organizations and thus represent a more direct form of democracy, in the eyes of the syndicalists. The masses would be directly involved in the process through their participation in the workplace and everyday organizations, ending the individualistic, uninvolved society syndicalists deplored.

This system was not a reform of the current parliamentary system, but its replacement. Therefore, the revolutionary syndicalists entirely rejected the reformist policies of the socialists in favor of direct action; revolution would be achieved through a general strike in which workers took control of the means of production and forced a radical change in the system, ending the dominance of the industrial class. In this regard in particular, the revolutionary syndicalists were influenced by Sorel's belief in the value of violence, though they were also influenced by many of his criticisms of socialism and economic determinism.[29]

Entering Italy around 1900, syndicalism attracted a number of influential Italian intellectuals who would influence Mussolini's political ideas and join Fascism. However, in Italy, syndicalism would gradually transform according to Italian conditions. As Marxists, albeit unorthodox ones, revolutionary syndicalists believed that capitalism, industrialization, and the

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[27] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 67; David D. Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 58.
[28] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 63.
[29] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 66.

concentration of capital would eventually lead to the realization of socialism; yet many began to wonder why capitalism was not imploding. They decided that not enough capitalist concentration had occurred, and by around 1909 many believed that capitalism needed to develop further, arguing that without a mature capitalism there could be no revolution.[30] This encouraged a turn toward productivism, that is, maximizing production in the interest of the nation.

Revolutionary syndicalists came to view Italy as a poor, underdeveloped country incapable of achieving socialism. Economic growth and the concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands were seen as necessary prerequisites; this was in complete contradiction to Lenin's notion that a socialist revolution can be carried out in the most backward of countries.[31] Lenin's concept, however, was based on the belief that when one socialist revolution occurs, the other European countries would follow, and therefore the more advanced industrial countries would assist the underdeveloped ones in constructing socialism. Conversely, while they remained internationalists in the sense that they encouraged peaceful coexistence among nations, Italian revolutionary syndicalists turned toward nationalism around 1910, believing each nation had to construct socialism on its own.

The process originated with observations by syndicalists like Arturo Labriola, who while abroad witnessed discrimination against Italian workers. For instance, American workers in the United States would bar foreign workers from joining their labor unions in order to protect American jobs and wages. For Labriola, this signified that no international bond between workers existed.[32] Additionally, syndicalist Roberto Michels asserted that the nation was a historical reality, as individuals often shared interests with and defined themselves according to communities outside

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[30] Ibid., 67; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 55–58.
[31] A. James Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism: Chapters in the Intellectual History of Radicalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 204–210.
[32] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 66; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 110.

their economic groups, such as those based on religious heritage, historic traditions, language, and culture – what Michels conceived of as the nation based culture.[33]

This trend was furthered during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911, known in Italy simply as the Libyan War. During the war, revolutionary syndicalists like Michels and Angelo Oliviero Olivetti came to question the concept that the working class had no fatherland and no interest in war. Both recognized that national sentiment had mobilizing potential, and also that it was capable of instilling the masses with the "heroic values" necessary for revolution.[34] Furthermore, they came to accept that expansion promoted industrialization through the acquisition of space and resources, producing a stronger and wealthier nation. With this understanding, some revolutionary syndicalists supported the war in Libya.[35]

Nationalism was ultimately embraced by the revolutionary syndicalists in their support for intervention in WWI, becoming "national syndicalists." Not only did the war persuade those unconvinced by the Libyan War that defensive wars furthered the establishment of a syndicalist order, it proved to them that the international solidarity of socialism was indeed a sham and that nationalism was a reality to reconcile with.[36] It thus became clear that Italy had to build socialism on its own.

During this time national syndicalists solidified their productivist orientation, insisting further industrial development and education of the masses were necessary before any sort of revolution could take place. The error of Lenin's approach appeared confirmed by the Bolshevik Revolution, perceived as bringing economic ruin, chaos, and dictatorship to Russia. Sergio Panunzio, Olivetti, and other prominent syndicalist leaders concluded that a premature workers

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[33] Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism*, 193.
[34] Ibid., 199–202.
[35] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 68.
[36] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 104; Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 25.

revolution in Italy would end similarly.[37] Furthermore, revolutionary syndicalists had long acknowledged the complexity of modern industry and had come to realize that workers did not have the proper expertise necessary to administer factories, and therefore recognized employers as essential elements in the process of production.[38] Consequently, Panunzio and the others turned away from class struggle in favor of collaboration. There now entered a hierarchical aspect into the syndicalists' thought, as it was considered necessary to have both worker and employer syndicates represented in the political-economic system; the system was thus transformed from a syndicate structure to corporatism.

The form of corporatism desired by revolutionary syndicalists was much more representative than the form which emerged under Fascism. Nevertheless, it must be noted that syndicalists nonetheless desired a strong state. Panunzio, for instance, insisted on one which would extend into the socioeconomic sphere and provide the discipline and collectivism necessary for corporatism. While he did intend for the corporations to be autonomous and self-governing, he considered it vital that they have state sponsorship, meaning the state would mediate any conflicts between the labor and employer syndicates and also enforce negotiated contracts. Moreover, the state would ensure universal, mandatory membership in the syndicates, and provide discipline to prevent a premature revolution. All of this would be enforced by a "labor police."

Nevertheless, the process was imagined to be democratic by the national syndicalists, as the masses would be directly involved in the decision-making process of socioeconomic policies. It has thus been termed "participatory totalitarianism" by David D. Roberts.[39]

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[37] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 154.
[38] Ibid., 70.
[39] Ibid., 264–271.

Corporatism and the Italian Nationalist Association

The *Associazione Nazionalista Italiana* (Italian Nationalist Association, ANI) was formed in 1910 and largely consisted of monarchists, traditionalists, and conservatives seeking to maintain the status quo in Italy while simultaneously modernizing the nation. Formed by Alfredo Rocco, Luigi Federzoni, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Costanzo Ciano, the movement was largely given its doctrinal base by Enrico Corradini, who had been promoting national pride since the Italian defeat at Adowa in 1896 had dashed its hopes of adding Ethiopia to its African colonies. Corradini made it his mission to bring nationalism to the masses and introduce a populist element into the movement, mainly by appealing to the middle class.

Naturally, at the core of the Nationalist's ideology was the supremacy of the nation. According to Rocco, society was an organism, and the aims of society surpassed those of the individual. The nation was conceived of as the ultimate form of society in the modern era and was based on common objectives, language, territory, and ethnicity. For the Nationalists, the nation transcended the individual and class, and all were expected to sacrifice everything for the nation.[40]

In the early 1900s, Corradini, along with other pre-ANI nationalists, such as Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, would lament the deplorable state of the Italian nation and the lack of national sentiment. At the root of the "degradation of the nation," as Corradini put it in a 1903 article from his journal *Il Regno*, was socialism, denounced for its apparent placement of one class above all others and its promotion of class struggle which prevented national harmony.[41] Papini and Prezzolini similarly rejected socialism, [42] although they were more radical than

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[40] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 178.
[41] Enrico Corradini, "Article from Il Regno, 1903," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 137.
[42] Giovanni Papini, "A Nationalist Programme, February 1904," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 111;

Corradini, later collaborating with radical socialists and revolutionary syndicalists in their journal *La Voce*, founded in 1908.

Yet the nationalists did not blame socialism alone; the bourgeoisie was seen as collaborating in its own demise. Allegedly compromised by humanitarian ideals and socialist equalitarianism, the bourgeoisie was seen as incompetent. Moreover, it was apparently kept weak by the parliamentary system, its reverence of the individual, and its belief in the majority, perceived as alienating the masses from politics and the nation. Indeed, Rocco would later identify the primary antagonism between liberalism and Nationalism as the lack of state authority in the former.[43] In order to be strong, Papini claimed a society needed discipline, hierarchy, and a ruling elite, as a "society is not an organization unless it contains a minority that gives the order."[44] Furthermore, the nationalists encouraged expansionism, necessary for nations to provide room for their burgeoning populace, remain relevant, and achieve glory.[45] To accomplish this, class collaboration and national rejuvenation were necessary.

For this to be possible, nationalism had to appeal to the masses. This was particularly difficult because the Left, including syndicalists before their turn toward nationalism, argued the proletariat had no nation. In 1909, Corradini began to construct a worldview that would help to alter this, largely based on the Social Darwinist principle of international conflict as perpetual and inevitable. The world, according to Corradini, was divided into rich nations and "proletariat nations," which were discriminated against and kept inferior. Italy, naturally, was a proletariat nation, meaning that the entire country, not just the toiling masses, was proletariat.[46] His solution

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Giuseppe Prezzolini, "An Aristocracy of Brigands, 1904," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 121.
[43] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 172.
[44] Papini, "A Nationalist Programme," 108.
[45] Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism*, 152.
[46] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 64.

was unity and modernization, both necessary to build an Italy capable of challenging other nations. It was therefore not a class revolution but a national one that was needed.

Many others adopted and promoted this idea. In *La Voce*, for instance, Papini and Prezzolini argued Italy was threatened by perpetual inferiority, and that class in itself was an inadequate source of revolution, arguing as the revolutionary syndicalists also came to see that the proletariat was unprepared to lead society. Instead, they too would stress unification, modernization, and education.[47]

It was these objectives that would ultimately be supported by the ANI, although Papini and Prezzolini would never join it, rejecting, among other things, its imperialism. At its core was the Social Darwinist concept of perpetual conflict between nations, and thus the nation needed to prepare for war. This concept gave the impetus for class collaboration, promoting the transcendence of class in the interest of industrial growth. To aid in this, production needed to be subjected to the interests of the nation. Economic coordination was intended to eliminate what was viewed as wasteful internal competition, directing production toward preparation for war. In fitting with his notion of Italy as a "proletariat nation," Corradini would explain it to the First Nationalist Congress on 3 December 1910 by stating that "just as socialism taught the proletariat the value of the class struggle, we must teach Italy the value of the international struggle."[48]

In this program the rejection of the liberal state was clear. The Nationalists' desire for economic coordination was incompatible with liberalism's detachment from socioeconomic matters. To this end, Luigi Federzoni advocated a totalitarian control of society and the economy,

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[47] Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism*, 151.
[48] Enrico Corradini, "Report to the First Nationalist Congress in Florence on 3 December 1910," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 147.

providing the necessary discipline and directing the economy.[49] At the Nationalist congress in 1914, Rocco gave Federzoni's notion shape in his proposal for state sponsored syndicates of workers and employers in nationally organized corporations.[50] The proposal was supported by Corradini and adopted by the ANI, as the Nationalists believed it would help Italy modernize and recognized that syndicates were realities to come to terms with. Unlike the alternative version proposed by the revolutionary syndicalists, however, this was a top-down and statist form of corporatism intended, as Roberts puts it, to "cement a permanently hierarchal system" within society, solidifying the dominance of the bourgeoisie.[51] Nonetheless, this model provided the Nationalists with their own alternative to the parliamentary state.

Keeping with Corradini's efforts to bring nationalism to the masses, Rocco's state was meant to have a level of popular involvement. Although participation would be superficial, devoid of any real political value, the Nationalists recognized the modern era as one of mass politics and therefore acknowledged that any effort to modernize the nation required broad, constant participation and enthusiasm. The desired involvement and unification would be achieved by a "spiritualization of the economy" and making production a collective act cast as benefitting all of the nation regardless of class.[52] Indeed, in Nationalist thought, the nation transcended class. In this manner as well, Rocco's corporatist model was even more totalitarian than that of the revolutionary syndicalists, who provided for more dispersed decision-making and legitimate representation.

Although it would be altered according to Mussolini's own ideas, the corporative state that would emerge under Fascism would largely take the form as envisioned by Rocco. As such, Fascist corporativism is often misunderstood as reactionary and an instrument for industry. In some

[49] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 143.
[50] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 65.
[51] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 144-5.
[52] Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 293.

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regards, this seems logical, as the corporatism adopted by the ANI was intended to enhance the power of industrialists, reestablish the absolute authority of the state, and protect the status quo, and therefore Gentile, Roberts, De Grand, and others perceive it as reactionary.[53] Yet Stanley Payne argues that while Rocco's form of corporatism was not revolutionary because it sought to maintain the position of the old elite, it was not reactionary. To support this, Payne points out that the system was not a return to medieval guilds but was intended to promote modernization and economic coordination.[54] Moreover, although it would not produce a social revolution, Rocco's corporatism does represent drastic institutional change from the liberal state, albeit much more elitist and top-down than the revolutionary syndicalists' model.

However, regardless of how Rocco's corporatist state is conceived, it will be shown in Section 3.2 that while Rocco was its primary architect, Mussolini manipulated its structure according to his own political thought so that Fascist corporativism would neither solidify the economic elite nor be a mere tool of industry.

Mussolini's Ideology, Revolutionary Syndicalism, and Nationalism

In order to understand why Mussolini adopted corporatism and how he manipulated it, it is necessary to understand his own political ideology. To be sure, Mussolini was no ideologue and his ideas were not original. He was also an inconsistent thinker and often hesitant, and was certainly more pragmatic than doctrinal. However, this has resulted in Mussolini being cast as a mere opportunist, devoid of political thought mostly concerned with personal power; many historians have adopted this paradigm, such as RJB Bosworth and De Grand, to name a few.

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[53] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 193; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 145; De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 69.
[54] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 65.

Yet this perspective goes too far. Mussolini's pragmatism is not a reflection of a lack of political thought. Indeed, his emphasis on being a "man of action" was not to encourage any spontaneous action, but action spurred by thought. It was more to demonstrate his opposition to the deterministic perspective of socialism and to portray that he was willing to accept any policy if it provided a solution.[55] Moreover, he was surely concerned with the tenure of his political power, and this was certainly motivated by personal ambition, but it was also to prolong the reign of Fascism and ensure the achievement of its goals (as defined by him). Nevertheless, he desired radical change, and, as Emilio Gentile observes, can only be construed as a conservative in the most simplistic of concepts. As Mussolini put it: "Every revolutionary becomes a conservative at a given time . . . I have come to stay as long as possible."[56]

Furthermore, Mussolini was greatly influenced by a variety of philosophies and intellectuals. In fact, in *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, Gentile enumerates a set of core ideas Mussolini held throughout his life. Among these are Mussolini's often insistence on the primacy of politics and his aversion to economics; with this in mind it is not surprising that he was influenced by the criticisms of socialism put forth by Sorel and the revolutionary syndicalists who saw socialists as too focused on materialist gains, desiring instead an anthropological revolution instilling new values. Moreover, this notion makes the primarily political, not economic, nature of corporativism more understandable. In relation to this concept, Mussolini also viewed politics as an art, and therefore moldable.[57]

In addition to his perspective of politics, Mussolini was greatly influenced by the Sorelian emphasis on the use of myths to mobilize the populace. This was an element of his elitism and his

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[55] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 16.
[56] Quoted in: Ibid., 31.
[57] Ibid., 3.

contempt for the masses, who he was always suspicious of. Like the Nationalists, Mussolini recognized that in the modern era the masses were a political reality that had to be dealt with. But, much like his perception of politics, he viewed the masses as moldable. Influenced by the ideas of French sociologist Gustave Le Bon, as well as by Sorel, Mussolini began to see the masses primarily as emotional, not rational, meaning myths were their primary motivation and that through the use of myths, a leader can mold the masses.[58] Moreover, Mussolini's contempt for the masses and his lack of faith in their rational capacities caused him to reject the possibility of the spontaneous organization of the masses to achieve collective aims, and thus was heavily influenced by the revolutionary syndicalists' notion that a vanguard of an elite minority was necessary to lead the people, a role which Mussolini naturally envisioned for himself.

Mussolini's suspicion of the masses was not merely a lack of confidence in their rational and organization abilities; he was also greatly pessimistic about human nature. According to him, the masses were drawn toward evil and idleness if there was no superior entity guiding them.[59] In many ways, this was an influence from Giovanni Gentile's concept of the "ethical" state, directing the masses and giving them purpose. In this idea, as well as those detailed above, it is not difficult to see Mussolini's emphasis on the inevitable hierarchical structure of society and why he adhered to the belief in the necessity of a guiding elite. Only through this elite, according to Mussolini, was the palingenesis and rejuvenation of society possible.

If we acknowledge these principles as the core of Mussolini's political thought, it is not difficult to understand why he was influenced by both syndicalism and Nationalism nor why he wielded power as he did. Mussolini turned toward syndicalism as early as 1902-4 when he interacted with many of its leaders during exile in Switzerland. Moreover, syndicalists, such as

[58] Ibid., 3, 15; Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 22.
[59] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 3.

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Panunzio, often published articles in his journals. However, despite this early draw toward syndicalism, it was superficial. In truth, he was not genuinely a syndicalist, as he never had faith in the masses and was never a democrat; yet its influence helps to explain his criticism of reformist socialism, motivating him to identify himself as a "revolutionary" and "aristocratic" socialist during the years prior to WWI when he was a member of the Italian Socialist Party.[60] Moreover, many elements of syndicalism were clearly adopted into his political thought: its praise of action and violence; its principle of the vanguard; its language and philosophy in his attacks on reformist socialism; its stress on direct action like the general strike; its use of myth; its call for a new state; and its emphasis on an anthropological revolution and the creation of a new man.[61]

Nationalism also greatly influenced him. In fact, according to Roberts it was ultimately more influential on Mussolini than syndicalism.[62] His earliest influences from nationalism came from *La Voce*, the journal of Papini and Prezzolini. Although it would take WWI for Mussolini to fully embrace nationalism, by 1909 he began to accept cultural nationalism. During WWI, he followed the same transition as syndicalists, rejecting the "myth" of internationalism and turning completely to the Italian nation. It was the national rally after the defeat at Caporetto in 1917 that convinced him that the nation transcended class and was capable of mobilizing the masses.[63] Nation, not class, became the main protagonist of history for Mussolini, superior to all else.

One influence that would play a vital role in the formation of Fascist corporativism came from both movements: productivism. Due to the syndicalists he began to see even before the war that capitalist development was not yet complete in Italy. An unorthodox Marxist, he was nonetheless convinced that opulence through excessive production was essential before any sort

[60] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 83.
[61] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 8–9.
[62] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 184.
[63] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 23.

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of socialist society could be realized.[64] However, he was also influenced by Corradini's notion of Italy as a "proletariat nation," and WWI and its aftermath convinced him of the imperative of preparing the nation for war, as the Versailles peace conference demonstrated Italy's relative weakness among the great powers, which he believed only unity and imperialism could change. Thus, this productivism would ultimately bring Mussolini closer to the Nationalists' position.

Concluding Remarks

All of these positions should be considered equally legitimate precursors to Fascist. At the same time the syndicalists were being influenced by nationalist ideas, the ANI was incorporating syndicalist ones, producing a national syndicalism of their own. While they retained major differences, their anti-systemic ambitions, corporatist and productivist philosophies, elitism, and their willingness to use violence to achieve their goals made them very compatible movements.

In addition, separate but clearly linked to corporativism was the ambition to transform man. Fascists from both backgrounds would view Socialists and much of the working class as "trapped in 'bourgeois materialism.'"[65] Although the Right-wing of Fascism was not as concerned with the creation of a new man as the syndicalists, they too desired a transformed one, less focused on material improvement and completely devoted to the nation, instilled with "heroic" values necessary for the desired economic development and, of course, war. In regards to these ideas, these positions influenced Fascism in more ways than their philosophies on corporatism.

In the pursuit of these objectives, members from these positions who joined Fascism would advocate a strong state at the center of the corporative system in order to provide discipline and a

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[64] Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism*, 235, 281-4.
[65] Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.

monopoly for state-recognized syndicates. In the Commission of 18, established by the Fascist Grand Council to debate the future structure of the state, Gino Arias warned prophetically that this would lead to the replacement of collective bargaining by the rule of decree, but was ignored.[66] Similarly, free market economics was rejected in favor of coordination. With minimal exceptions, the majority of Fascists from both positions agreed that eliminating internal economic competition would increase production the most. Moreover, free market economics would necessitate granting unions greater autonomy, which the Fascists were skeptical of, afraid it would create a state within a state. Instead, labor was to be subordinated, controlled, and disciplined in the interest of production and to avoid the establishment of an organization capable of challenging the state.[67]

The Fascist corporative system was thus always intended to be a hierarchical one. Moreover, while corporatism is not innately totalitarian, both syndicalists and Nationalists in Italy developed totalitarian models of corporatism centered on to total state. Albeit, the Nationalist's top-down model was much less representative than that of the syndicalists, yet the syndicalists' version cannot be considered democratic as no alternative avenues of representation were to be allowed outside of the Fascist syndicates. However, they did desire to grant the workers a genuinely collaborative role, in contrast to the Nationalists. It is questionable, though, if the syndicalists' model could ever be implemented under Mussolini, due to his elitism and contempt for the masses. The following chapters will discuss the system of corporatism which emerged under Fascism, corporativism, as well as the implementation of corporative reforms and how these ideas were reflected within them.

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[66] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 321.
[67] Ibid., 323.

Chapter 2

Corporativism and the Establishment of the Fascist Dictatorship

Although Fascism would rise to power in October of 1922 following its famed March on Rome, it would be five years before the *Carta del Lavoro* was published and seven before any corporative reform. The delay was due to the gradualist approach adopted by Fascism, in which it slowly made alterations to the state from within a coalition government from 1922 to 1925, in order to maintain an air of legality. Such appearance was necessary to avoid provoking unnecessary resistance or dismissal from the monarch. Nonetheless, Fascism moved toward the establishment of a dictatorship and a corporative state from the beginning, solidifying its rule through electoral reform and eventually banning competing parties. During the same time, the Fascist Party used violence and other means of coercion to grant the Fascist syndicates, or trade unions, monopolies in negotiating labor relations.

This chapter will provide background on the formation of the Fascist Party and the dominant positions on corporativism within it. Furthermore, it will discuss the pre-corporative reforms under the coalition government that were necessary before any of these ideas could be implemented. This will not only illuminate why corporative reform was delayed, but also grant a deeper understanding of the coalition between Fascism and the economic elite. It will also demonstrate, particularly though the analysis of integral syndicalism, that corporative reforms were always intended, with Mussolini playing the various forces off of each other for his own goals. Ultimately, all of this worked toward a totalitarian solution, meant to solidify Fascism's dictatorship, establish corporativism, and neutralize the members of the economic elite.

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The Dominant Positions within Fascism on Corporativism

The ideas discussed in the first chapter would give form to Fascist corporativism, with Mussolini mediating between the competing syndicalist and Nationalist models according to his political ideology as well as pragmatic concessions to industry. Fascism as a movement first emerged in 1919 as an amalgamation of various interventionist movements, including the national syndicalists and those revolutionary socialists who followed Mussolini, under the title *fascio di combattimento*. Its program blended nationalist and syndicalist ideas and called for radical institutional change,[68] but as it preformed terribly in the 1919 elections due to its ambiguity, it moderated its program to the Right to appeal to the middle class.

To a large extent, this push to the Right was motivated by the anti-Socialist violence carried out by the Fascist paramilitary organization, known as the *squadristi* or the Blackshirts. This so-called "war on Bolshevism" which took place throughout the massive labor upheavals during the *biennio rosso* ("red biennium") of 1919-20, genuinely perceived at the time as threatening a Bolshevik-style revolution, attracted a large following in the more Right-leaning middle class.[69] This trend would be furthered following the Fascists' electoral victory in 1921, when its ascendance to a national party forced the movement to define itself as a full-fledged party.

The *Partito nazionale fascista* (PNF) which emerged was a fusion of ideas from the Right and the Left, though it ultimately advocated a more nationalist, Right-leaning agenda. Considered desirable were a strong, republican state, a disciplined functional hierarchy, imperialism instead of coexistence, productivism, protection for labor, and free trade, which they predicted would wean out ineffective firms. Furthermore, the new program called not for the replacement of the

[68] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 91.
[69] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 70; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 96.

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parliamentary system, but for the existence of corporatism alongside the parliament, ensuring both individuals and producers would be represented.[70]

In 1923, after the Fascists had taken power, the Nationalists of the ANI were absorbed into the Party. The Nationalists should not, however, be considered opportunists but genuine Fascists. Although they had numerous differences, particularly over social policies, the exact form of the state, and the Nationalists' apparent obsession with imperial expansion, they nonetheless desired a radical transformation of the state and its replacement with corporativism. Moreover, like the Fascists, they too glorified violence, as could be seen by their own use of paramilitary violence against the Socialists. Regardless, there remained great differences in their desires for the corporativist state.

Those on the Left of Fascism included former revolutionary syndicalists such as A.O. Olivetti, Sergio Panunzio, Agostino Lanzillo, and Edmondo Rossoni. Aside from having their own corporatist tradition, these Fascist syndicalists were heavily influenced by Gabriele D'Annunzio, who, with the support of nationalists and irredentists, sought to claim the city of Fiume for Italy and led a government there from 1919 to 1920.[71] His action greatly furthered nationalism in Italy and furthered the image of the liberal state's incompetence as it was unable to control its own people or guard its interests against competing great powers. Moreover, D'Annunzio's state in Fiume offered the first example of a post-liberal corporatist state, proclaiming Europe's first corporatist constitution, the *Carta del Carnaro*.[72]

The *Carta del Carnaro*, the work of syndicalist Alceste De Ambris, was not merely expressing intentions and social policies, as the *Carta del Lavoro* later would, but was meant to be

[70] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 65.
[71] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 152; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 12.
[72] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 45; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 92.

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the constitution of the new state in Fiume, establishing corporatism as its base. Work was considered to be the center of society and corporations were to be democratic, representing freely organized syndicates. Equality was guaranteed for all.[73]

D'Annunzio's experiment profoundly influenced Fascism as a whole, not just the Fascist syndicalists. In Fiume, D'Annunzio spearheaded what would later become the "Fascist style," incorporating the black shirts, Roman salute, the leader cult, and the liturgy which would be later adopted by Fascism.[74] Not surprisingly, the corporatist ideas enshrined in the *Carta del Carnaro* also had a monumental impact. Although those on the Left of Fascism would champion the democratic and libertarian nature of *Carnaro*, many would reject it outright. Nonetheless, it gained corporatism wide popularity and support within Italy, particularly among radicals who would later flock to Fascism. Naturally, this placed corporatism at the center of the debates on the structure of the future Fascist state.

Many Fascist syndicalists desired to implement a similar, if not identical, corporatist constitution. This is not surprising as revolutionary syndicalists had been involved in the writing of the *Carta del Carnaro*. Still, there were a few desired alterations. Panunzio, for instance, who Roberts identifies as the most influential syndicalist theoretician within Fascism, advocated compulsory unions instead of free association with a strong state and labor police ensuring discipline.[75] Rossoni likewise desired a monopoly for Fascist unions, and supported greater state arbitration to limit the influence of industry.[76] While there was much variation amongst the syndicalists, most desired this form of corporativism; compulsory, state-sponsored but

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[73] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 150.
[74] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 92.
[75] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 20, 271.
[76] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 69.

autonomous syndicalists with genuine representation for both labor and industry in the corporations.

Those on the Right-wing of Fascism primarily came from the former ANI or were attracted by Fascism's turn toward the middle class. Typically, while they supported the nationalism and irredentism of D'Annunzio's movement, they rejected the libertarian principles of the *Carta del Carnaro*. They did not desire autonomous syndicates with a voice in politics, but the subordination of the workers' movement to class collaboration in the interest of the nation.[77] As noted above, Alfredo Rocco would be the primary spokesmen for this branch of Fascism, proposing a top-down model for corporativism which would incorporate syndicates as organs of the state and coordinate production in the interest of economic growth. This position tended to favor industry and employers over the working class. Mussolini, for his part, tended to think more like the Nationalists with their rejection of the libertarian *Carta del Carnaro* and in fact had distanced himself from D'Annunzio's Fiume excursion.[78]

The third dominant position was proposed by those who, like Giuseppe Bottai, had been influenced by both syndicalism and Nationalism. Bottai advocated a corporative state guided by a bureaucracy of technocrats and managers, which would collaborate with associations of laborers and employers to direct the economy. State authority would be supreme, with no syndicate able to challenge its authority, but there would be greater representation than Rocco's model while still granting employers some private initiative.[79]

Mussolini remained uncertain with no corporative model of his own. Yet he accepted the development of corporations as a historical fact, as revealed in an article in *Da Gerarchia* on 5

[77] Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 184, 321.
[78] Bosworth, *Mussolini*, 143; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 143.
[79] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 70.

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May 1925, and desired to coordinate their development with the aims of the state, much like Rocco. He saw corporativism as the "expression of national solidarity" and considered it the most efficient manner for the development of production. Asserting that corporativism allowed for the reconciliation of labor and capital, he insisted it would transform production into a collective action and would not abolish capitalism, but "unleash and enhance it."[80] From this, we already see less emphasis on social harmony and more on production and development, as would be reflected in the *legge sindacale* and later corporativist reform, to be discussed in the following sections and in Section 3.2.

These positions were not as united as presented here; the descriptions above represent the basic viewpoints and commonalities of each perspective, in the interest of remaining brief. Moreover, some corporativist philosophers, such as Ugo Spirito, will not be considered because, while they had their own philosophies and desires, they did not bear any influence on the construction of the system itself and thus remained abstract models, irrelevant to this analysis.[81]

Furthermore, it should be noted that there were other economic ideologies within Fascism that will not be considered for similar reasons. Nonetheless, briefly considering what linked the various strands within Fascism helps to illuminate the relationship between Fascism and corporatism and the mutual influence they had on each other in shaping the Fascist regime and corporative state. Historian Alexander J. De Grand insists accurately that what bound the various positions together was not corporatism, but the common ideological strains of ultra-nationalism,

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[80] My translation: Benito Mussolini, "Sindacalismo Fascista, 23 October 1925," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 21 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1956), 327–9.
[81] For information on Spirito, see: Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 220; Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 300. For a broader view of corporativist positions, see: Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*.

elitism, collectivism, and authoritarianism,[82] the last of which I reject and would replace with the insistence on a top-down model for society and a strong, unchallengeable state.

While not exhaustive of the various positions' commonalities, this list demonstrates corporatism and Fascism were not interdependent from the start. Corporatism as a system merged well with Fascism's collectivism and elitism and seemed to offer a means to strengthen the nation, which explains why corporativism was adopted as the centerpiece of the Fascist state so early on; for some this was out of genuine ideological conviction, while for others it was due to an acknowledgment that corporativism served Fascism's ambitions and would help to establish the desired total state.

Additionally, corporatism's versatile nature meant it could be molded according to Fascist ideology into what would become corporativism. In the last chapter, I detailed the ways in which corporatist philosophies would ultimately influence and shape Fascism, yet the reverse is also true. The elitism and top-down model for society envisioned by the various positions within Fascism overshadowed syndicalism's more representative model, determining the form corporatism could take under its regime, resulting in the top-down, totalitarian model embodied in the Fascist corporative system.

From Coalition Government to Dictatorship

Before any of these changes could take place, however, Fascism had to solidify its dictatorship, which it moved toward from the start. Although some Fascists genuinely desired to work within the system, the apparent abandonment of the destruction of parliamentarism – declared in the 1921 program advocating the existence of corporativism alongside the parliament

[82] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 146.

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– seems to have been a necessary ploy for participation in parliamentary politics. Already in 1922, the Fascists would adopt two main myths: the creation of a new Roman Empire to restore the glory of Italy, and the creation of a new state, the second clearly depicting Fascism's ambition to destroy the existing system. Moreover, by this time Mussolini had not only denounced socialism and liberalism, but democracy entirely, advocating an "'aristocratic' century of new elites."[83]

Following Mussolini's ascension to prime minister, *il Duce* made it clear he did not intend to rule with parliament. In his first speech to parliament he threatened to replace it with Fascists, insinuating it only remained by his good grace. He then requested and received the right to rule by decree for a year. With this extensive power, we must ask why, if Mussolini was committed to institutional change from the outset, he accepted a coalition government and a period of semi-constitutional rule maintained from 1922 to 1925.

To begin with, Mussolini was uncertain of the form the future state should take. Having no clear vision himself, he was further hampered by the fact that there were competing blueprints within the party, detailed in the previous section. Furthermore, regardless of Mussolini's threat to parliament, Fascism in truth still represented a parliamentary minority and was forced to accept that coalition government was unavoidable at the time. Mussolini's power was therefore far from untouchable, and thus incremental change was necessary to avoid dismissal by the monarch. Before Mussolini could move past this, a more stable power base was needed.[84]

To this end, the Acerbo Law was passed, thanks to the imposing presence of the Blackshirts in parliament and deputies foolish enough to think it would normalize Fascism. Under this law, the proportional electoral system, which since 1919 had assigned parties parliamentary seats proportional to the votes they received nationally, was replaced with one in which two thirds of

[83] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 106.
[84] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 80–87.

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the seats were awarded to any majority so long as they obtained over 25% of the vote; the remaining third was proportionally dispersed among the remaining parties. The system essentially redefined collaboration to mean Fascistization, as it discouraged dissent by marginalizing any party that opposed Fascism. Moreover, as Lyttelton puts it, the law "would allow Mussolini to use parliamentary and legal methods as a cover for the transformation of the State, which, once the majority was safe, could be carried through without any formal break in constitutional continuity."[85] Simply put, a break with legality prior to this may have provoked resistance from the king; the Acerbo Law cast a cloud of legality over the regime's institutional changes, increasing the king's reluctance to act.

Nonetheless, Mussolini remained hesitant to enact true institutional change, out of fear of being dismissed. True, the establishment of the Fascist Grand Council (FGC) in 1923 as the party equivalent of the Council of Ministers nominally transferred many important decisions to the Party, and along with the incorporation of the *squadristi* into the state represented the beginning of the Fascistization of the state. However, the major institutions of the old system remained in place. It was not until the Matteotti crisis that things would change.

On 10 June 1924, Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti was kidnapped after criticizing the Fascists for the violence and fraud utilized in the recent election. For two months no body was found, but it was clear to everyone he had been taken by the *squadristi*. Resistance to Fascism grew widespread, representing a true crisis for the Party, but the opposition withdrew from parliament which made it impossible for them to directly challenge Mussolini. Moreover, it remained weak and divided, so the king, believing he had no other viable option, did not act against Mussolini. Mussolini was depressed and unable to act, but the implicit support from the King and

[85] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 132.

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the demands for action from the Fascist radicals emboldened him to officially launch the dictatorship in a speech to parliament on 3 January 1925.[86]

It was this crisis which revealed to Mussolini that even with the Acerbo Law, the political base of Fascism was insecure. The enormous opposition during the crisis exposed that it was possible for significant anti-Fascist sentiment to arise, which could then take the two-thirds majority from Fascism. This, as well as the demands from Fascist radicals to implement institutional change, provided Mussolini with the impetus for radical change and the construction of the corporative state.[87]

Integral Syndicalism and the Legge Sindacale

It would be wrong to think, however, that the delayed implementation of corporativism and Mussolini's uncertainty about the future structure of the state meant there was ever any doubt a form of corporatism would be present; every blueprint detailed above envisioned corporatism at the heart of the new system. Moreover, to say that the construction of the legal framework of corporativism only began after the Matteotti crisis is not to say that no progress was made toward its implementation. It is simply to say that any steps taken toward the creation of corporativism were done through the PNF and the Fascist unions, not the state.

Indeed, while the dictatorship was still under construction, what has been termed "integral syndicalism" was emerging. Without the help of legislation, pressure was applied on independent organizations, typically through *squadristi* violence, in an attempt to "subject all interest groups to a process of totalitarian co-ordination."[88] The process was meant to organize syndicates of workers

[86] For an excellent account of the Matteotti crisis, see Chapter 10 in, Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*.
[87] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 237; Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology*, 220.
[88] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 221–4.

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and employers in every branch of industry, forming a *de facto* corporativism coordinated not by the state but by the Confederation of Fascist Unions. In March 1923, this process was approved by the FGC with Edmondo Rossoni heading a top-down integral syndicalism appointing local leaders and subordinating the masses, that was nonetheless supposed to represent the spontaneous and voluntary organization of unions.[89] While some argue that Mussolini was never enthusiastic about corporative reforms, it should be noted when considering motions such as this passed by the FGC that Mussolini directed these meetings, coordinating not only when it would meet but who was on the FGC and what would be discussed.[90]

Such *de facto* monopoly on union representation was necessary before they could be turned into state organs in the corporative system, but the effort was not limited to workers; employer associations were also meant to be included in the process. To this end, the Confederation of Agriculture was merged into the *Federazione italiana sindicati Agricolori*. Yet the incorporation of the industrial employer's confederation, *Confindustria*, proved much more difficult as it not only resisted absorption, it even resisted acknowledging the Fascist unions and the implementation of binding contracts.

Initially, *Confindustria* refused to adopt the title of Fascist, and thus remained outside of the FGC, reserved for Fascist organizations. Yet in time its leaders saw that closer cooperation with Fascism was the only way to avoid forced integration into the system, and thus the president of *Confindustria*, Antonio Stefano Benni, attended his first FGC meeting in July of 1923. However, *Confindustria* remained an independent organization for the time being and this was only after Mussolini came out in *Corriere della Sera* to state that "*Confindustria* must not be touched."[91]

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[89] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 84.
[90] In fact, De Felice argues Mussolini was enthusiastic about corporativism: Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini Il Duce I: Gli Anni Del Consenso 1929-1936* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), 177.
[91] Quoted in Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 229.

Though there is no document confirming it, it seems likely, in my opinion, that Mussolini did not want to provoke resistance from the monarchy and realized he could not fight the workers' unions and the employers' associations simultaneously, and therefore sought to compromise and integrate industry in another manner. On one hand, Lyttelton accurately notes that this represents that the Fascists acknowledged the power of *Confindustria*,[92] but the reverse must also be recognized; *Confindustria* realized Fascism could in fact incorporate it by force if it refused to cooperate. The allotment of autonomy to *Confindustria* represents one of the primary compromises within the Fascist regime in regards to corporativism, one which Fascism would work to gradually overturn.

In response to this concession, Rossoni and the union leaders launched a labor offensive in the north which coincided with a visit by Mussolini to Turin. The labor upheavals infuriated Mussolini and proved to him once and for all that labor was irreconcilably hostile to Fascism and that it was foolish to let labor ruin relations with industry.[93] Hereafter it seems very unlikely, in my opinion, that a form of corporatism in which the masses had a genuine voice could ever emerge under Mussolini, although tighter constraints on employers through state coordination of production remained a possibility.

Yet his contempt for the masses did not prevent Mussolini from using the syndicates against the various employer associations to get what he desired. As Alexander de Grand argues, "One of the weapons used by Mussolini to intimidate the fellow-travelers in industry was to allow more freedom to the Fascist unions."[94] This is evident in his negotiations with *Confindustria* over exclusive bargaining rights for Fascist unions. In December of 1923, the Palazzo Chigi Pact had

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid., 229–230.
[94] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 60.

seemed to achieve this goal in return for recognizing the autonomy of *Confindustria*.[95] However, the pact was frequently broken and was ruined by labor upheavals during the Matteotti crisis.

Between the signing of the pact and its future replacement, strikes increased from 200 in 1923 to 355 in 1924, culminating in a Fascist-led strike in 1925.[96] The labor agitation sufficiently convinced *Confindustria* of the need to cooperate, and the monopoly of Fascist unions in industry was cemented in the Palazzo Vidoni Pact in October 1925.[97] Thus, Mussolini would threaten union agitation in order to force the cooperation of employers, suppressing it once he got what he desired. This sort of negotiation always benefited the regime and employers, but rarely workers; as the pact granted the Fascist unions a monopoly, all other unions proved meaningless and soon dissolved. Instead of negotiating with *Confindustria* as equals, as the pact provided for in theory, workers' representatives were barred from the factories and workers were deprived of any alternative for collective bargaining than the Fascist unions, which naturally surged in membership.

The granting of exclusive rights to Fascist unions signaled that corporative legislation could begin. Immediately after the pact was declared, Mussolini had Rocco begin on legislation to solidify Palazzo Vidoni into law. This took the form of the law on the legal regulation of labor relations, commonly referred to as the *legge sindacale*, or the syndicalist law, enacted on 3 April 1926. The law made it so that the right to negotiate collective contracts was granted only to syndicates formally recognized by the state, which naturally meant only those organizations which had accepted Fascist domination, either in title or implicitly as *Confindustria* had. Additionally,

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[95] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Il Patto di Palazzo Chigi," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 435–36.
[96] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 60.
[97] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Patto di Palazzo Vidoni," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 439.

labor strikes and lockouts were banned, with special labor courts set up meant to arbitrate disputes and thus render labor agitation unnecessary;[98] in reality the courts were rarely utilized.[99]

Concluding Remarks

Mussolini's gradualist approach, far from indicating he had settled for an authoritarian compromise with the old elite, was seen as necessary in order to avoid provoking resistance and dismissal from the monarch, as Mussolini's position was not yet untouchable. It was only after the Acerbo Law that genuine institutional change could begin. Still, it seems likely that Mussolini, due to his uncertainty and caution, would have delayed corporative reform had the Matteotti crisis not demonstrated that even with the Acerbo Law, the Fascist dictatorship was precarious, meaning that only corporative reform would solidify it.

However, this is not to say that prior to the Matteotti crisis, Mussolini was uncertain about corporativism; integral syndicalism demonstrates that although its exact form remained uncertain, corporativism was always to be the future form of the state. This is further evident from the fact that each of the various blueprints for the state placed corporativism at its center. The exact form the corporative state would take, however, remained uncertain.

The *legge sindacale* reflects this uncertainty, as it left corporativism's form unclear since it was not a genuine corporative reform. This represents another concession to *Confindustria*, who resisted the immediate implementation of corporativism. Indeed, the incremental establishment of corporativism (discussed in the next chapter), clearly represents the power of *Confindustria*, and

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[98] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Legge 3 Aprile, N. 563, Sulla Disciplina Giuridica dei Rapporti di Lavoro," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 442–51.
[99] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 106–7.

the *legge sindacale* actually benefitted the confederation by allowing it to solidify and extend its dominance over private industry, enabling it to incorporate firms it had not in the past.[100]

Conversely, it was also resigned to adopt the title of Fascist and, as it will be shown in Section 4.1, the expansion of *Confindustria* was desired by Fascist corporativists, who believed the concentration of capital was beneficial, either as a means to improve the wellbeing of the entire nation or as more efficient, as discussed in Chapter 1. It should therefore be considered a step toward corporativism, even though no corporations were legally established. Still, Payne has argued that this law represents the "first pillar of the corporate state."[101]

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[100] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 69; Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 107.
[101] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 115–6.

Chapter 3

The Formation of the Corporative State

Immediately following the passage of the *legge sindacale*, the industrialists were able to maintain their independence from Fascism, for the most part. For instance, the FGC authorized the Ministry of Corporations (established in 1926), along with the Ministry of Interior and the party, to purge the corporations in an effort to further fascistize them. Yet this was applied much less to *Confindustria* than to agriculture and the unions. Moreover, the *legge sindacale* had allowed the employers too much maneuverability, who often negotiated individual contracts instead of granting Fascist unions priority in employment.[102] Rossoni and other syndicalists therefore demanded greater regulation of labor relations and the guarantee of protection for workers.

It was in response to this demand and frustration in the unions that the *Carta del Lavoro*, or Labor Charter, would be published in *Il Popolo d'Italia* on 23 April 1927. Approved by the FGC, it was intended to represent the regime's social policy. The Fascists, for their part, often referred to the *Carta del Lavoro* as representing the "spirit of corporativism" and the centerpiece of the system.[103] Yet among scholars there is much debate over its significance, as it was neither a decree nor a law, and it remains unclear as to if it should be considered a program representing genuine intent for the future or it is was merely propaganda. The uncertainty is made worse by the

[102] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 330.

[103] My translation: Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, eds., "La Prima Riunione per lo Studio dello Carta del Lavoro, 11 February 1927," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 22 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1957), 522; Benito Mussolini, "Discorso all'Assemblea Quinquennale del Regime, 10 March 1929," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 24 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1958), 8; Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, eds., "85° Riunione del Gran Consiglio del Fascismo, 11 November 1927," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 23 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1957), 64.

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fact that the principles enumerated in the *Carta del Lavoro* are often not reflected in the corporative reforms that followed.

The confusion has led Lyttelton to declare that it is "impossible to determine . . . how far this high-sounding initiative was originally intended as a real solution to the problems raised, and how far as a propaganda diversion," though he himself tends to support the latter.[104] Roberts similarly views it as a propaganda effort to placate the syndicalists and mobilize them as myth-makers, spreading the perception that the new state was taking shape.[105] Morgan, on the other hand, believes that it represented intent encouraging improved labor relations while indicating a possibility for the future.[106]

I, however, would suggest a middle ground; while it certainly served some propagandistic purposes, in some regards it reflected the intentions of the regime and may have even threatened more radical changes to the economic elite. Through closely analyzing the *Carta del Lavoro*, the subsequent corporative reforms, and the functions of the PNF related to labor relations, as will be done in this chapter, we come closer to understanding the charter and its significance. Upon doing so, it seems plausible to suggest that the *Carta del Lavoro* genuinely represented the productivist orientation of the regime, which naturally favored employers, while simultaneously intimidating them with the threat of greater state intervention in labor relations, which remained propaganda to the masses as long as employers cooperated. This is reflected in the form taken by corporativism, which would never provide the promised representation and social harmony, but would instead increase and extend state authority and grant employers, as organs of the state, greater control over their industries.

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[104] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 330.
[105] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 283.
[106] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 108.

The Carta del Lavoro: Propaganda or Program?

The uncertain significance of the *Carta del Lavoro* is in part due to its ambiguous nature, as it was not a decree and, while often referenced, was hardly reflected in corporative reform. Rossoni and the unions desired a legally binding document and set regulations for labor relations, while the employers, particularly those in *Confindustria*, wanted merely a "platonic statement of intent."[107] In this aspect, the employers won. Yet still, in the text itself, their interests remained to be balanced. This job was originally given to Giuseppe Bottai, Mussolini's undersecretary in the Ministry of Corporations, but while he managed to settle many of the disputes, in the end he was unable to placate both sides, particularly the industrialists. The final draft was ultimately made by Rocco, although Mussolini himself made some alterations to push it further to the Left to reflect the ambitions of the syndicalists.[108]

The influence of the employers' associations ensured the rejection of a national minimum wage in each sector of the economy, the eight hour work day, severance pay, and also insurance for the workplace. Less concessions were made to labor, which received paid holidays and, in theory, dismissal was to be more difficult. In general, there were vague assurances for labor protection and state-led coordination of the economy to ensure production was in the interest of the nation. Production was to be a collective action, involving both the worker and the employer, with any conflict mediated by the labor courts, which would subordinate opposing interests to the "superior interests of production."[109]

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[107] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 70.
[108] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 330; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 282.
[109] My translation: Alberto Aquarone, ed., "La Carta del Lavoro," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 477. For the Italian and translated versions of the *Carta del Lavoro*, see the appendix on page 87 of this thesis.

On paper, the *Carta del Lavoro* transcends class conflict. Yet it seems plausible that many of the articles concerning improvements of labor conditions were primarily suggestions to the employer and mostly represented propaganda; although it was projected as the heir to the more libertarian *Carta del Carnaro*, the *Carta del Lavoro* did little to improve social relations. Aside from not being a legal document itself, meaning its social policies were not officially adopted, the assurances it gave to labor were always for the future, prefaced with phrases such as, "The Fascist State proposes to bring about . . . ."[110] Yet no details on how this would be achieved were included in the document and the Fascists never implemented them. For instance, important decisions over wages and hours were not discussed in the *Carta del Lavoro* and were not to be handled by the state, but were left to future collective contracts.

The improvement of working conditions were thus delegated to the employer, as shown not only in the *Carta del Lavoro* but also in a speech by Mussolini to industrialists in Cesena a year later on 8 June 1928. In his speech, he stressed the need for greater collaboration with the workers, casting the relationship between workers and employers as akin to that between soldiers and officers on the battlefield. He therefore encouraged the employers to take care of them and even pay them higher wages, emphasizing it would benefit all by fostering consumption.[111] However, the state never intervened to improve labor relations, which was instead left to the PNF to enact, as will be demonstrated later.

Additionally, other assurances it gave, such as mediation through labor courts and the corporations controlling employment, were never realized, as the labor courts hardly ever handled labor disputes and the control of employment was abandoned by the FGC in 1927. While it is

[110] My translation: Ibid., 481.
[111] Benito Mussolini, "Discorso agli Industriali, 8 June 1928," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 23 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1957), 192–97.

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certainly possible that more corporative and labor reforms might have been implemented had the regime continued and the industrialists been further marginalized, it must be acknowledged that as early as 31 October 1928 Mussolini was instilled by the Council of Minister with the power, as the head of government, to enact regulations realizing the social policies enumerated in the *Carta del Lavoro*,[112] but these powers would go unused.

As far as defending and improving the rights of labor, the *Carta del Lavoro* falls short, leaving too much ambiguity and to be done in the future. It therefore seems likely that Roberts and Lyttelton are correct that these articles were indeed propaganda, meant to demonstrate to labor that genuine change was coming that would improve their situation. Its propagandistic values were not limited to workers, however, but also served as propaganda abroad, as well as within the party itself, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Indeed, Roberts points out that although syndicalists had some reservations about the *Carta del Lavoro*, they supported it because they saw it as opening the path toward the development of corporativism and believed it genuinely represented the regime's desire to grant labor the same protection as the entrepreneur class.[113]

The fact that these guarantees were mostly propaganda and suggestions to employers about respecting labor is further demonstrated by those articles which legitimately represent the orientation of the regime, namely its productivism. Work, according to the *Carta del Lavoro*, was a social *duty*, not a right. This underscores the discipline stressed by the Fascists and emphasized in the charter, discipline which was to be enforced through fines, suspension, and even dismissal without compensation; this does not sound like a defense of labor but its subordination. Moreover, while article fourteen described policies meant to ensure fair salaries and article twelve vaguely

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[112] Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, eds., "246° Riunione del Consiglio dei Ministri, 30 October 1928," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, vol. 23 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1957), 240–46.
[113] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 265, 283.

assured living wages, article eight stressed that the employer is *obliged* to "promote in every way . . . the reduction of costs," without excluding wage reductions. Combined with the fact that, according to article seven, the "direction of [the productive process] is the right of the employer,"[114] it seems foreseeable that workers' rights would be cast aside in favor of production, with no recourse against the employer.

This perhaps becomes most clear when considering the third article, which granted those syndicates recognized by the state the right to "guard their interests."[115] In many ways, this clause seems positive, providing labor and employer syndicates the ability to defend their interests and negotiate. However, in order to achieve this, the worker and employer syndicates had to be equal; either both needed to be subordinated to the state, or both needed autonomy with their own centers of power for leverage. This would never be the case in Fascist Italy. The employers, particularly those represented in *Confindustria*, would be granted much more autonomy than the labor unions ever would, and thus were more than capable of defending their interests. Indeed, according to the *Carta del Lavoro*, private initiative embodied "the most efficient and useful instrument" in production for the nation. Thus, "only when private initiative is lacking or is insufficient" would the state intervene, typically granting employers great autonomy.[116]

In contrast, the Fascist unions drew their authority only from the state, meaning that they had no ability to represent their interests. This was furthered by the division of the Confederation of Fascist Unions in November of 1928 into six smaller branches: industry, commerce, banking, agriculture, land transport, and maritime and air transport. While Lyttelton approaches this primarily as a concession to *Confindustria*, it was actually desired by most Fascists as Mussolini

[114] My translations: Aquarone, "La Carta del Lavoro," 478–9.
[115] My translation: Ibid., 477.
[116] My translation: Ibid., 478.

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and many others feared that such a large organization could challenge the authority of the state, while corporativists such as Bottai believed the CFU was organized along class lines, not corporate, and thus needed to be broken up before any corporativist reform could be achieved.[117] It was therefore in line with corporativist goals, however it would ultimately prove harmful for labor as it greatly reduced the leverage of the labor force, limiting their ability to counter the influence and power of the employers and making them completely dependent on the state.[118]

Far from being mere concessions to industrialists, this greater autonomy awarded to employers and the emphasis on production at the cost of the worker is completely aligned with Mussolini's ideology. Mussolini's elitism had always stressed a minority leading the masses, and at that early stage in the regime no Fascist technical class had arisen capable of replacing the old elite in the administration of industry. Moreover, in a speech on 10 March 1929, Mussolini championed the employer class as vanguard in the cessation of class antagonism, asserting that they had become "free from class mentality" and truly devoted to civic responsibility.[119] Conversely, in a speech given only shortly after the publication of the *Carta del Lavoro* applauding Fascism's first five years in power, Mussolini condemned the unions, insisting that the slow construction of corporativism was due to the fact that the unions were still against the state.[120] Therefore, Mussolini remained suspicious of the masses while he had come to view the employers as cooperative agents of the Fascist system.

Nonetheless, the *Carta del Lavoro* should not be seen as giving free reign to employers; indeed, it seems plausible that the document could be considered a veiled threat to them. In other

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[117] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 108; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 289.
[118] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 71.
[119] My translation: Mussolini, "Quinquennale del Regime," 8–9.
[120] Benito Mussolini, "Prefazione a 'il Gran Consiglio nei Primi Cinque Anni dell'Era Fascista,' 10 July 1927," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 23 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1957), 13.

words, the same clauses that were propaganda to workers were threats to employers. By portraying many of the more radical and revolutionary ambitions of various Fascists, it demonstrated what could be made law if employers failed to cooperate with the state. Moreover, although private initiative was given preference, there existed a looming threat of state intervention where private enterprise was deemed inadequate by the state.[121] Therefore, while employers, especially those in *Confindustria*, were granted enhanced economic control, there was an implicit assertion that production should be in accordance with national interests. This would become clear later in the regime, particularly as war approached, as will be shown in Section 4.1.

When examined closely, the emphasis of the *Carta del Lavoro* therefore does not seem to be harmonious labor relationships, although it may encourage it; the focus instead is on production in the interest of the nation. Coordination of production, while desired by many syndicalists and Nationalists alike, is not entirely necessary; the primary goal is production and the creation of wealth itself. Therefore, enhancing the productive capabilities of the industrialist was desirable to Mussolini in the interests of the nation, so defined by him. In direct accordance to the Fascists' "embryonic ideology of the state," the nation was identified with the state, which ultimately means that, as Roberts asserts, the Fascists were "not turning the state over to special interests, but exerting the state's sovereignty over them."[122]

In regards to labor relations, the *Carta del Lavoro* does seem to have an economic significance. Regardless of its assurances to labor, it demonstrates the intent to subordinate workers, disciplining them and removing avenues for labor agitation. Moreover, the regime's ambitions to enhance the economic elite's control over the workplace and production is evident.

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[121] Aquarone, "La Carta del Lavoro," 478.
[122] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 265.

Together, these represented the regulation of labor relations and Fascism's emphasis on production, and therefore the *Carta del Lavoro*, and corporativism by extension, do have economic importance.

However, for reasons detailed in the introduction, its economic significance beyond this is difficult to assess. Indeed, its political impact is more approachable. According to my analysis of the *Carta del Lavoro*, it is plausible to argue that the charter was meant to transform the economic elite in to *de facto* organs of the state, fulfilling production in the interest of national economic growth. Simultaneously, the subordination of workers would help protect the regime and also serve to regiment the masses, while the labor assurances presented a benevolent regime. With this understanding, the *Carta del Lavoro* seems to be reflective of many of the regime's policies, particularly its productivist orientation. Its more ambiguous assurances for more radical reforms, however, seem to be propaganda for the workers and a threat for the employers.

The Gradual Establishment of Corporativism

True institutional change began with the announcement in late 1927 of the corporativist reform of the Chamber of Deputies. Instead of national elections including all citizens, 1000 nominees would be selected only from those professional groups, agencies, and syndicates officially recognized by Fascism. The Fascist Grand Council would then choose 400, to be approved in a simple yes or no public "election," who would then serve as the new deputies.[123] The FGC justified this process by arguing essentially that fascistization was incomplete and a period of supervision was necessary to ensure committed Fascists with a national consciousness

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[123] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Riforma della Rappresentanza Politica, Legge 17 Maggio 1928, N. 1019," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 489–92.

were "elected."[124] In truth, this ensured that the Chamber of Deputies was meaningless and loyal to Mussolini, as the FGC was comprised of people directly appointed by Mussolini.

Fascist syndicalists desired more but agreed with the rationale and so supported the reform, as long as it was only a temporary measure. The subsequent corporative reforms established during the 1930s were to a large degree motivated by the Great Depression, which for many demonstrated the inadequacy of laissez faire capitalism. The first of these was the National Council of Corporations (CNC), established as a genuine effort undertaken by Bottai during his tenure as minister of corporations to grant corporations more importance. In theory it represented a corporative parliament, comprised of a three tiered system with the corporations at its base, a general assembly of representatives from the syndicates, the party and other organizations in the middle, and headed by the Central Corporative Committee under Mussolini himself.[125]

Bottai desired the CNC to be an institution with consultative and deliberative functions in which the state could set the parameters for production.[126] It was thus granted extensive powers for organizing production, regulating prices, and being a body for self-governance and inter-class collaboration, at least on paper. Indeed, the CNC could have had real power if *il Duce* had allowed it to, but little ever came of it.[127] In part, this was justified at the time by the fact that actual corporations were still nonexistent.

Yet in 1934, when twenty-two corporations representing every sector of the economy were established, it became more difficult to justify the corporations' lack of self-governance and representation. According to the Constitution and Function of the Corporations, decreed 5 February 1934, the corporations were granted the powers enumerated in the *legge sindacale* and

[124] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 288.
[125] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 80.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 157; Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 293.

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were, according to the legal framework, intended to regulate collective contracts, discipline labor, and coordinate production.[128] Indeed, when Rocco gave his report to the Chamber of Deputies introducing the bill, he portrayed it as providing corporativism precise form, granting the corporations space for economic coordination and self-governance of the economy by producers.[129] Their self-interests, according to Rocco, would be employed by the state for the achievement of its own goals.

These corporations, however, had little direct economic power and there was absolutely no collaboration between workers and employers on production. In fact, this coordination of production was deliberately circumscribed by the government; with Mussolini as the head of the CNC, only he could approve measures to regulate economic affairs, and he chose not to interfere with production.[130] Rocco's speech emphasizing self-governance and production being regulated by the producers themselves should not be considered mere propaganda though. It simply reveals that in his ideology, the term producers favored employers, and thus in his model, self-governance and regulation was not to be a collaborative act.

This is evident in Mussolini's political thought as well, which would not allow for him to delegate economic decisions to self-run organizations incorporating the masses, and he was never enthusiastic about economic coordination. Private initiative, aligned with national interests, would be regularly emphasized in his speeches, such as those to industrialists following the *Carta del Lavoro* and his speech to the senate regarding the corporative state, in which he declared, "The corporative economy respects the principle of private property. . . . The corporative economy

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[128] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Costituzione e Funzioni delle Corporazioni, Legge 5 Febbraio 1934, N. 163," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 535–37.
[129] Alfredo Rocco, "The Formation and Function of the Corporations, 1934" in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 292.
[130] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 158.

respects individual initiative," referencing the *Carta del Lavoro* and stressing that intervention was to be utilized only where private enterprise was inadequate.[131] Decisions were thus made by employers with Mussolini's approval.

As it was now clear that the CNC was not the representative body desired by syndicalists, many became disillusioned with the reforms. Therefore, Bottai and other leading corporativists initiated reform that would culminate in the creation of the Chamber of Fasce and Corporations in 1939. The Chamber would replace the Chamber of Deputies and included the National Council of the PNF, the CNC, and also the FGC, and the law granted all deliberative authority to the senate and this reformed chamber, completely removing the king from the law making process.[132] On the surface, it can be considered a serious attempt to replace the rule through decree which had characterized the dictatorship, and it therefore gave syndicalists a false hope that a representative institution was emerging.[133] In reality, by comprising the Chamber of Fasce and Corporations of the PNF's National Council, the CNC, and the FGC, the Fascists made it so that all of its members were appointed directly by Mussolini himself, completely removing any sort of genuine representation and elections and enhancing Mussolini's authority.

The corporative system therefore entrenched the Fascist dictatorship and Mussolini's position, granting Fascism a complete monopoly on political power. It furthermore completely deprived the masses of any direct political representation, insisting instead that the Fascist leadership, particularly *il Duce*, represented the general will of the nation. By neutralizing labor agitation and eliminating all other political parties, there were no political alternatives or practical

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[131] My translation: Benito Mussolini, "Discorso al Senato per lo Stato Corporativo, 13 January 1934," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 26 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1958), 150.
[132] Alberto Aquarone, ed., "Istituzione della Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni, Legge 19 Gennaio 1939, N. 129," in *L'organizzazione dello Stato Totalitario*, vol. 2 (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 567.
[133] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 299.

means to demonstrate displeasure with the regime, enabling the Fascists to portray themselves as succeeding in their ambition to represent the nation. However, this system was only viable because it was imposed and supported by violence and coercion; in reality it was a sham in regards to representation. Nonetheless, it should be evident that Mussolini achieved totalitarian control in the political realm, and, as it will be demonstrated in Section 4.1, corporativism allowed for the extension of state power not only over workers, but also over the economic elite.

The PNF and Intersyndical Committees

Parallel to the corporative system of the state was the intersyndical committees organized by the PNF. Organized by various provincial party branches in 1926 following the syndicalist law, they were extended to the entire nation a year later. The committees consisted of representatives from the employers' and workers' syndicates and were places to negotiate contracts, settle disputes, and ensure political control was maintained over the associations;[134] their purpose was to enforce the agreements between the state and employers and, following the *Carta del Lavoro*, served as the PNF's instruments to encourage the suggested labor reforms. [135]

Although corporativism allotted employers an extensive amount of economic freedom, its legislation and the *Carta del Lavoro* were, according to historian Victoria de Grazia, "premised on the self-reform of organized industry and its abiding cooperation with the state."[136] This is clear in the speeches Mussolini made noted above in Section 3.1. As stated above, the state did little to enforce the implementation of these suggestions; this task was left up to the Party.

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[134] Philip Morgan, "'The Party Is Everywhere': The Italian Fascist Party in Economic Life, 1926-40," *The English Historical Review* 114, no. 455 (February 1999): 89.
[135] De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent*, 68.
[136] Ibid.

The PNF would use intimidation to pressure firms to self-reform and improve the conditions of the workers, albeit minimally. Often these reforms took the form of company stores and housing. For instance, the Strambino Cotton Mills offered housing for 200 of its 650 workers, the Borgosesia Wool Works housed 400 of its 2,000 workers, and the Marzotto Wool Firm exceptionally provided housing for all of its 1,200 employers.[137] However, these were low quality dorm- or barrack-like buildings and were used to justify low wages and a lack of consumer products. These reforms offered superficial improvements to the quality of life meant to distract workers from the fact that their conditions were not truly improving. At other times, the coercion of the Party was utilized to "encourage" contributions directly to the PNF and the regime.[138]

In any case, the pressure from the PNF for self-reforms served to remind the employers that many Fascists desired much greater reform, and that it had little choice but to cooperate with the regime. The intersyndicalist committees were typically the platform through which the PNF would threaten employers and negotiate these self-reforms. Lacking legal authority, they were utilized to varying extents throughout Italy. For instance, in the province of Genoa they were often the first choice for arbitration, while in other provinces, such as Rieti, it was a last resort, indicated by the fact that in 1931 only two of a recorded 346 industrial disputes were arbitrated by the committees.[139]

Regardless of this variation, labor disputes in general were settled by the PNF's committees, with the corporations handling only those over contracts already in place.[140] Typically, it was cases of political importance in which the committees would intervene, such as when factories dismissed

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[137] Ibid., 85.
[138] See Ibid., 69–70. De Grazia discusses how the PNF coerced contributions for the construction of the *casa del fascio* in Lecore Signa in Tuscany, as well as those directly to the Party and Mussolini himself.
[139] Morgan, "The Party Is Everywhere," 98.
[140] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 309; Morgan, "The Party Is Everywhere," 89–90.

workers who were officials in the syndicates or when the syndicates threatened to break the ban on strikes. In situations such as these, the committees would step in and settle the disputes, not always in the favor of the employer. For example, they averted a 15 percent wage cut in a factory in Perugia in 1930 and resolved an issue of unpaid wages in Piacenza in 1933.[141] Yet these victories only ever represented marginal improvements for the workers to offset the more general productivist orientation of the regime, which would always favor the creation of wealth over its distribution, aligning it more with the employers.

Nonetheless, the intersyndical committees demonstrate that self-reform within the industries and, more importantly, cooperation with the Fascists, were aspects of the corporative legislation which support conceiving of the *Carta del Lavoro* as a threat to employers. The employers surely knew that the situation could be made much worse for them if the negotiations taking places in these committees became legally recognized organs of the corporative state.

Yet the committees' significance is not limited to this; the Party's involvement in labor relations, a realm nominally reserved for the state's corporative system, represents the sort of party-state tension and institutional chaos present in any totalitarian system. In fact, in Fascist Italy the Party, Ministry of Corporations, and the syndicates all blamed the interference of the others for corporativism's slow development and wanted to push the others out. This allowed for Mussolini, as the head of government, simply to preside over the competing institutions and intervene to select a course of action, much like Hitler would in Nazi Germany. This not only solidified the indispensable position of *il Duce* but also maintained the drive toward totalitarianism.

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[141] Morgan, "The Party Is Everywhere," 99.

Concluding Remarks

Above all else, the corporative reforms increasingly concentrated power into the hands of Mussolini, granting him control over decision-making in the regime. Although it never realized the coordination powers desired by Rocco, Fascist corporativism nonetheless extended the reach and authority of the state, primarily for its executive, Mussolini, who became separated from the parliament, severing any sort of accountability. The state structure provided by corporativism was thus directly aligned with Mussolini's elitist mentality and suspicion of the masses, causing him to believe that the masses must be led by a minority representing an elite vanguard, which he naturally led. While it would be inaccurate to assert that from the beginning Mussolini had a full-fledged plan envisioned for the Fascist state, it should be acknowledged that this general structure fits well with his ideology and it thus seems quite plausible that this was always his intention.

This is demonstrated by Mussolini's heavy involvement in the shaping of the corporative state. As head of government, Mussolini was able to dismiss and appoint state ministers and top officials in the party as he saw fit, giving him complete control over the Council of Ministers and the Fascist Grand Council. The members of each were aware that their power was dependent on *il Duce*, and as such their positions were precarious. While he would often entrust the ministries to others, with the understanding that they would follow his direction, Mussolini took control of a greater amount of ministries during each corporative reform, as demonstrated in Table 3.1 on the following page.

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Table 3.1: Number of Ministries Held by Mussolini per Year[142]

1927-8	7
1929	9
1930-1	2
1932-3	4
1934	7
1935-6	8
1937-9	6
1940-2	5

As the table demonstrates, with the exception of 1930 when the CNC was established, Mussolini held at least six ministries out of a total of sixteen when each of the major corporative reforms were enacted: the *Carta del Lavoro* in 1927; the corporative reforms of the Chamber of Deputies in 1929; the 1934 creation of corporations; and the 1939 establishment of the Chamber of Fasce and Corporations. By being head of many ministries simultaneously, and appointing the remaining members of the FGC, *il Duce* dominated both the Council of Ministries and the FGC, directing debates and having the final say. Indeed, by holding on average six ministries, he only needed three others for the power of veto.[143] Therefore, although there were clearly concessions to employers, most notably the piecemeal creation of corporativism, it seems as though the form it ultimately took was largely directed by the political thought of *il Duce.*

Yet corporativism also served other purposes in the regime. For instance, the corporations really did represent places in which representatives of workers and employers could meet, under the supervision of officials from the Party and the Ministry of Corporations directing in the national interests. But only the employers were granted real representation, allowed to select technical experts to guard their interests. The representatives of labor, on the other hand, came from the PNF

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[142] Numbers from: Goffredo Adinolfi, "Political Elite and Decision-Making in Mussolini's Italy," in *Ruling Elites and Decision-Making in Fascist-Era Dictatorships*, ed. António Costa Pinto, 1st ed, Social Science Monographs (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2009), 29.
[143] Ibid., 28–9; Musiedlak, "Mussolini, Charisma and Decision-Making," 8.

and the corporation's bureaucracy, not the workplace. The productivist tone always granted preference to the proposals of the employers, as is clear in the *Carta del Lavoro*.

Indeed, the state often relied on the technical expertise offered by organizations such as *Confindustria*, which offered plans for the desired national economic growth. Corporativism thus primarily took the form advocated by Rocco, which was more aligned with Mussolini's elitism and contempt for the masses than the more representative form proposed by the syndicalists. Naturally, this entailed the Fascist state siding more frequently with the employers, while the state and the *Carta del Lavoro* only ever suggested improving the conditions of workers. The Party, through its intersyndical committees, was left to enforce this "self-reform" of the work place, using the intimidation of state intervention threatened by the *Carta del Lavoro* to foster cooperation. In this way, the state-party tension vital to the drive toward totalitarianism was maintained.

Corporativism nonetheless represents a gross enhancement of the economic powers of employers. Lyttelton approaches this as a sort of organized, state-capitalism. This is in some regards aligned with Mussolini's reference to corporativism as "super-capitalism"[144] and Rocco's assertion that "the Fascist economy is . . . an organized economy. It is organized by the producers themselves, under the supreme direction and control of the state."[145] From this approach, corporativism represents a fundamental change in the institutional structure of the state, extending it into the economic realm and representing a move toward the totalitarian control of society. Integral to this was the incremental marginalization of the economic elites; corporativism was not intended to solidify their positions, as Rocco desired, but, as it will become clear in the final chapter, transform them into agents of the state, co-opting them for their own purposes.

[144] My translation: Benito Mussolini, "Discorso per lo Stato Corporativo, 14 November 1933," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 26 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1958), 87.
[145] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 202.

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Chapter 4

The Significance of the *Carta del Lavoro* and Corporativism

The corporative system would never serve to coordinate the economy, embody a legitimate form of representation, nor provide social harmony. However, instead of demonstrating that corporativism was devoid of significance within the Fascist state, this suggests that the system was intended for other purposes; indeed, upon evaluation of the system, it becomes evident that its significance was not in economics, but in politics.

In this chapter, I will evaluate the political and economic effects of the corporative system on employers and laborers alike. Moreover, I will consider its role in Fascist propaganda, particularly in the myth of the new state. By doing so, we will hopefully gain a greater understanding of the significance of the corporative state, as well as the *Carta del Lavoro*, within the wider Fascist system and its efforts to construct a totalitarian state, demonstrating that corporativism was meant to marginalize the political influence of employers and the economic elite, subordinate the masses and force unity, and provide legitimization for the dictatorship, largely fulfilling political roles in the regime.[146]

Mussolini asserted in *The Doctrine of Fascism* that "Fascism desires the State to be strong, organic and at the same time founded on a wide popular basis."[147] Fascism, it seems, was intended

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[146] My argument builds on and expands David D. Roberts' approach to corporativism, who argues it was meant to expand state power, politicize the economy, and mobilize the populace, although he nonetheless finds difficulty in granting it significance and does not recognize the marginalization of the economic elite. See: Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, 273, 318.

[147] Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 55.

for the era of mass politics. Political scientist and historian Antonio Costa Pinto argues that a primary purpose of corporativism was to provide the regime with legitimization.[148] As neither improvements for the working class nor a genuine form of representation were emerging, it was unlikely the regime would gain widespread support spontaneously. It thus employed diversions and utopian imagery, a common propaganda tool of totalitarian movements.

Fascist Italy was not alone in its employment of corporatism to legitimize a dictatorship. It was, however, the only one to use it toward a totalitarian goal.[149] Corporatism in itself was not totalitarian, and they are not dependent on each other; to be totalitarian is not to have a corporatist structure, and the reverse is also true. For instance, Franco in Spain employed corporatism in an authoritarian manner, demobilizing the populace and sharing power with the economic elite, allowing for limited pluralism.[150] The corporative system in Italy, based on its legal framework, could have been employed in a similar way. When considering the Italian case, however, we must remember Mussolini's ideology which conceived politics and institutions as moldable, meaning that how they are used, not their framework, is what gives them meaning.

Many, including historian Stanley Payne and sociologist Michael Mann, approach Fascist corporativism as authoritarian in nature, parsing out economic authority in the regime's overall division of power and subordinating the masses *for* the economic elite.[151] Analyzing the structure of the regime during the 1920s and early 1930s, this seems correct. Yet applying this understanding to the entirety of corporativism, including its intention and direction, misses the fact that the system, while maintaining a hierarchal division of society, was nonetheless meant to subordinate *everyone*,

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[148] António Costa Pinto, *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (Boulder; New York: Social Science Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2012), 120.
[149] It was also utilized under Engelbert Dollfuss in Austria, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal, Francisco Franco in Spain, and the new Baltic States. See: Ibid., 119–20. Alternatively, no other totalitarian state utilized corporativism.
[150] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 267.
[151] Mann, *Fascists*, 209; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 119-21.

regardless of class, to the state and exclude all from political participation. Corporativism was not a space for pluralism, but one meant to gradually diminish it by extending the state over the economic elite, just as the regime attempted to neutralize the Catholic Church and the monarchy.

Cartelization and Compartmentalization: Marginalizing the Economic Elite

The subordination of the working class and the emphasis placed on private initiative, evident in the *Carta del Lavoro* and the corporative system's structure, greatly enhanced the economic power of employers. The system allotted them an extensive measure of economic autonomy, at least initially, in contrast to the suppressed masses, and this discrepancy, along with the widespread unemployment which further inhibited workers' power to resist, granted employers absolute freedom in employment. Employers were able to dismiss workers and rehire them at lower wages, and wage reductions were commonplace.[152]

This enhanced economic power was not only allowed by corporativism, but supported by the state. Indeed, under the Fascist regime there was an immense growth of state-sponsored cartelization in private industry, particularly in heavy industry. State aid came in the form of legislation passed on 16 June 1932 which enabled firms controlling the majority of production in their industry to force other firms into cartel agreements in order to more completely dominate the field. Then, on 12 January 1933, the state prevented new firms from being established or smaller ones from expanding by requiring state approval for the construction and expansion of plants.[153] These laws allowed one or two firms to dominate each industry and encouraged cooperation

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[152] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power*, 329.
[153] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 84.

through economic incentives. Corporativism was integral in the cartelization of industries, as it was through the corporative boards that the cartels allocated materials to their members.[154]

From this information, the corporative system appears to be clearly in favor of the entrepreneur class and a demonstration that Mussolini had resolved to share power in an authoritarian compromise. However, although cartelization and the elimination of rivals benefited employers, it was also in the interest of the regime. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the syndicalists, Nationalists, and Mussolini all believed that the concentration of capital and production in the hands of fewer and fewer was necessary, viewing it as the path to mass production and economic development. Syndicalists considered it essential to improving the conditions of the entire nation, while Rocco saw cartelization as an aspect of strengthening the nation and preparing it for imperialist conflict, as he revealed as early as 1918; internal economic competition, he asserted, was incompatible with international grandeur and competition.[155]

For Mussolini, who tended to think more like Rocco on this issue, economics was second to politics, a means to make the nation strong enough for war and independent of other nations; his productivist orientation emphasizing economic development meant that the distribution of wealth was much less important than its accumulation. This helps to explain the regimes' lack of interests in employers' large profits while the working class suffered, as well as Mussolini's willingness to delegate the control of production, a matter he considered less important, to the employers themselves.

The delegation of economic power to the industrialists should not be considered a mere division of power, in contrast to the assertion of many that corporativism ensured the dominance

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[154] Ibid., 106.
[155] Alfredo Rocco, "The Political Manifesto, 1918," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 280.

of private interests and protected the economic elite Fascism had allied with. [156] Any enhancement of private power and concessions to employers were temporary measures seen as necessary, while the ultimate goal was to co-opt the economic elite, diminishing their influence and transform them into "capillary organizations" of the state, subordinated to its will; by transforming them into state agents, their enhanced authority also meant enhanced state authority.

The gradualist approach toward this ambition can be understood for a number of reasons. For instance, the persistence of the monarchy as well as the economic power of industrialists encouraged such an approach to avoid provoking resistance before the regime was untouchable; as the power of these two traditional centers of power decreased, Fascism would become more radical. Additionally, the intentions of Mussolini were bound to displease the working class, and his regime could not function if the economic elite was against him as well. Moreover, their technical and administrative expertise made them necessary for economic development.

The first step in the gradual marginalization of the entrepreneur class was to subordinate them to national interests. As the employers' monopolies were supported by the state, they were essentially dependent on it in a way that aided this by integrating them as organs of the state.[157] Moreover, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, employers were coerced into cooperating with the regime and, within corporativism, the threat of state intervention and more radical reforms always loomed in the background, as made clear by the *Carta del Lavoro*.[158] Had an employer refused to cooperate as an agent of the state, the Fascists could have undermined them by granting

[156] See: De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 162; Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 116; Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 13–14. This is in line with the typical approach to corporativism, as representing the division of power among Fascism and the economic elite, enhancing their power and Mussolini's personal dictatorship in an authoritarian regime.

[157] Pinto, *The Nature of Fascism Revisited*, 93.

[158] Aquarone, "La Carta del Lavoro," 478. The *Carta del Lavoro* stated that state intervention would be utilized wherever private initiative was deemed inadequate, or, in other words, when employers failed to cooperate. For more information, see Section 3.1.

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greater state aid to a rival firm through the laws detailed above. This threat engendered cooperation, which in reality meant obedience and subservience to the regime, and the enhanced power of *Confindustria* forced conformity to maintain discipline; fortunately for the employers, their interests in production often paralleled those of the state.

While this agreement certainly benefitted employers at times, it seems plausible to suggest that the Fascists were using the employers just as the employers sought to use the Fascists, all the while marginalizing their influence and absorbing them into the state. This characterized many of Fascism's relationships with the various traditional elites and institutions: according to historian Alexander De Grand, by delegating some level of power in certain aspects of society to various interest groups, such as the Catholic Church in education and the employers in economics, Fascism created "fiefdoms" within the nation, which they then compartmentalized in order to marginalize their influence. Indeed, it was nearly impossible for these fiefdoms to exercise influence outside of their allotted domain.[159]

Politically and economically, compartmentalization was implemented through corporativism. Its limitation of employers' influence outside of specific industries is represented primarily by the turn toward autarchy and Italy's involvement in WWII. In some ways, the policy of autarchy was circumstantial, as it was brought on by the protectionism all countries adopted during the Great Depression as well as the trade sanctions from the League of Nations over the war in Ethiopia, which made Germany Italy's primary trade partner. Nevertheless, Italy could have been moved out of this and returned to international trade, a move greatly encouraged by *Confindustria* and even some anti-German Fascists.[160] It was rejected, however, as it would have necessitated an abandonment of imperial expansion and an improvement of the relations with the

[159] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 109.
[160] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 205.

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West. The maintenance of autarchy thus demonstrates a significant loss of influence for employers, as industrialists could do nothing to alter this course.[161] Similarly, the industrialists would not be able to resist involvement in the war, as Mussolini paid little attention to their opposition.[162]

Compartmentalization does not, however, represent the carving up of society in the interest of sharing power and establishing a conservative authoritarian dictatorship, as De Grand argues. Instead, it seems more likely that it was Fascism's method of choice in its attempt to neutralize these traditional and powerful interest groups by subordinating them to the state. As the institutional reforms increasingly marginalized the monarch, and as the Fascists sought to subordinate the Catholic Church,[163] corporativism was meant to integrate employers into the regime as organs of the state, subjected to the national interests. The corporative system therefore represented a totalitarian effort to subject *everyone* to the state.

The turn toward autarchy and war demonstrate this, as they do not represent a division of power with Mussolini directing foreign policy and delegating on other matters. Indeed, in Fascist Italy, foreign policy and domestic issues were increasingly intertwined. The decision for autarchy and war affected the economy and production, and thus represent a curtailment of the autonomy of employers. Directed by the national interest of preparation for war, production transitioned from manufacturing what was most efficient and essential to producing what was necessary for war. Moreover, as a consequence of autarchy, items which could be purchased abroad for much less were produced at high-costs.[164] This was impractical for Italy's level of industrial development and was adverse to industrialists' desires.

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[161] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 108.
[162] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 210.
[163] See: Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism*.
[164] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 207.

War and expansion were intended to further radicalize the regime and move it toward its totalitarian ambitions by further curtailing the traditional elites and undoing the compromises preventing the regime's intentions.[165] For instance, historian Philip Morgan argues that the monarchy would have been abolished if Italy had been victorious in WWI.[166] It therefore does not seem altogether implausible to suggest that the economic elite would, through corporativism, be further marginalized, subordinated to the state, and perhaps even eventually replaced.

Policies to this effect can be seen even before the war, such as the reinstatement of representatives from the workers' syndicates in the workplace in 1939.[167] Workers' representatives had been barred from factories since the Palazzo Vidoni Pact of 1925, a compromise with the economic elite which had been affirmed numerous times throughout the regime despite the demands of Fascist syndicalists and the unions. The exact rationale for such a change is unclear, as it could have been an effort to foster more support among workers for the regime, a concession to syndicalists, or a means to involve the regime more directly in production. What is clear, however, is that this represented a negation of a compromise with the economic elite and a state encroachment on their prior autonomy.

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the enhanced economic power initially granted employers was in their interests, as was the incremental construction of corporativism. However, as discussed in previous chapters, the gradualist approach enabled Mussolini and the Fascists to enact institutional change while retaining an air of legality thus averting resistance. In this manner, through collaboration, "the gradual transformation of the ruling class [would occur] in the context

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[165] De Felice, *Mussolini Il Duce II*, 7–15; Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 193; Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 324.
[166] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 169.
[167] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 87.

of the 'normative state.'"[168] The entrepreneur class was negotiated with under this understanding, as well as out of necessity because Fascism had thus far failed to produce a new technically-oriented Fascist elite capable of replacing them and therefore needed the entrepreneur class to foster economic growth.

Nevertheless, it seems as though the benefits granted to the employers were also in the interest of the Fascist regime and, moreover, allowed for the compartmentalization of the economic elite, as they became increasingly unable to influence policy outside of their own industries and would eventually be fully subordinated. The Fascists were therefore utilizing corporativism to further their totalitarian control on society by subordinating the economic elite, which in turn helped to suppress the masses.

Forced Unity and Creating the "Uomo Fascista"

Contrary to its portrayal as a system meant to uplift the working class and provide social harmony, corporativism was intended to suppress the masses and keep them out of politics while at the same time presenting the image of national unity. The workers' syndicates, in contrast to those of the employers, were completely integrated into the state and deprived of any leverage independent of state power, as they had no right to strike. By doing so, the workers had no political voice in the corporative system and their representation was meaningless.

The lack of representation for the workers should not, however, be considered a concession to the employers, although it was clearly beneficial to them. Upon analyzing the political thought of Mussolini and other leading Fascists, it becomes clear that it was aligned with Fascist thought, with the exception of Fascist syndicalists who desired genuine representation for the worker.

[168] Musiedlak, "Mussolini, Charisma and Decision-Making," 1.

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Indeed, in *The Doctrine of Fascism*, Mussolini would assert that the corporative state was meant to reconcile the syndicates into the state,[169] an accomplishment he had claimed for Fascism as early as 1925.[170] Moreover, directly aligned with the totalitarian infiltration of society, the integration of the syndicates into the state simultaneously meant the infiltration of the state into the syndicates, demonstrated by the fact that the workers' representatives in the corporations would always come from the PNF and the Ministry of Corporations.[171]

Of course, to integrate the syndicates into the state is not to necessitate a lack of representation, as the Fascist syndicalists desired both (see Section 1.1). Yet Mussolini's elitism, which placed a minority vanguard leading the masses, as well as his contempt for the masses, made anything other than a top-down version of corporativism unlikely. As early as 1922, Mussolini had rejected not only the parliamentary system, but democracy, announcing that "the democratic justice of universal suffrage is the most blatant injustice,"[172] and indeed, with the reforms to the Chamber of Deputies in 1928, only those "active elements of the life of the nation" could participate in elections, limiting the vote to those in the Fascist syndicates, although even this would be meaningless.[173] He seems to have always envisioned a system with a more limited level of meaningful political involvement, from which the masses were always to be excluded.

The subordination of the masses was not to be limited to the political realm, however; the corporative system, while it performed reasonably well on a national scale in comparison to other

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[169] Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," 42.
[170] Mussolini, "Sindacalismo Fascista."
[171] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 157–8.
[172] Benito Mussolini, "Which Way the World Is Going, 25 February 1922," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 65.
[173] My translation: Susmel and Susmel, "85° Riunione del FGC," 61.

countries during the interwar period, according to Payne,[174] the economic situation of the working class decreased substantially.[175] High unemployment, low wages, and less hours characterized the Fascist era for workers. Between 1929 and 1933, unemployment rose from 300,000 to over 1 million, and the increase in the costs of living outpaced the increase in wages between 1936 and 1939. To offset unemployment, work hours and wages were decreased so that more would have jobs.[176]

Instead of making genuine efforts to improve the conditions of the working class, such as increasing wages, the Fascists often attempted to distract them from their plight, such as the housing projects discussed in Section 3.3. To this end, the National Recreational Organization (*Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro,* OND) was established in 1925 as a state agency, though in 1927 it was transferred to the party. The original purpose of the OND was to aid in the Fascistization of the populace and create a "supraclass national identity," or, in other words, to force unity and collaboration. Ultimately, however, it was an attempt to distract the workers and blunt social tensions.[177] Knowing that they were failing them in the workplace, the Fascists sought to use the OND to appeal to workers by making it seem as though the regime was compensating for lower wages. The OND thus provided leisure activities, access to media and shows, and attempted to manipulate consumer habits.[178]

The intention, however, was never really to improve the economic situation more than marginally, as demonstrated in the section on intersyndical committees in Chapter 3. Although

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[174] Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 225–6, 478. Payne points out that Italy's annual economic growth rate, while lower than the average for Western Europe, was higher than the UK's, and its total production and output per worker grew greater between 1913 and 1938 than those of France and Germany. See pages 225 and 226.
[175] R. J. B Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy: Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 2, 276.
[176] De Grand, *Italian Fascism*, 81, 87, 111.
[177] De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent*, 2–3.
[178] Ibid., 75, 155, 164–70.

low wages were often cast as temporary measures, with a "utopia of unlimited consumption" on the horizon,[179] their economic situation would never improve. In reality, the weakened economic situation made it easier to extend the regime over the workers and subject them to the state. Moreover, with employment so precarious, many were afraid to resist; as historian Tracy H. Koon asserts, "For most Italians the ultimate sanction was not fear of death but loss of income."[180]

To be sure, none of the Fascists, Rocco and Mussolini included, desired the economic turmoil and lowered living standards that occurred under Fascism. However, the syndicalist and Nationalists had both always stressed a functional hierarchy, considered necessary for production. Rocco, the architect of the *Carta del Lavoro* and other major corporative reforms, went further to assert even before the rise of Fascism that the corporative state he desired was to represent the "disciplined control of inequality," naturally with the masses on the bottom.[181] Indeed, according to Emilio Gentile, the "social harmony" desired by Fascists actually represented the working masses accepting and even *embracing* their function and position in the hierarchy. [182] This appears to accurately assess Mussolini's ideology, who states in *The Doctrine of Fascism* that, "We want to accustom the working classes to being under a leader, to convince them also that it is not easy to direct an industry or a commercial undertaking successfully."[183] Until the masses accepted this, the system had to force unity and project social harmony, made easier by the weakened position of the masses which resulted in less public social turmoil and a large degree of passive acceptance.

The seeming disinterest in the economic improvement of the working classes was not mere disinterest or contempt, however. It was due instead to the influence of syndicalism on Mussolini's

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[179] My translation: Mussolini, "Discorso per lo Stato Corporativo," 90.
[180] Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*, 217.
[181] Rocco, "The Political Manifesto," 259.
[182] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 251.
[183] Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," 45.

political thought. As noted in Chapter 1, the syndicalists and Mussolini rejected socialism because they believed it was too focused on materialism and the economic improvement of the masses. The syndicalists argued that this would prevent the true revolution by merely turning the working class into members of the bourgeoisie, and thus expand the base of the parliamentary system. What was needed, they asserted, was an *anthropological* revolution instilling new values.[184] This idea became entrenched in Mussolini's ideology and the effort to create the *uomo fascista*, or Fascist man, was ever present.

This ambition of Fascism is evident within corporativism, representing an influence from syndicalism and devoted corporativists like Giuseppe Bottai. Bottai desired to educate and alter man's very nature, and greatly influenced Mussolini with his notion that man could be transformed.[185] The influence of this idea on Mussolini was evident as early as 1925, when he insisted in an article published in *Da Gerarchia* that in order to make production a collective act, thus making corporativism work, the fascistization of the populace through education and various Party institutions was necessary.[186] This would be a constant theme in regards to discussions on corporativism. For instance, at the eighty-fifth meeting of the FGC on 11 November 1927, Bottai would enumerate many obstacles to the system, primarily related to coordination of production, social harmony, and the discipline of workers. The solution advocated by all was an increased focus on propaganda and education, emphasizing the workers' duties to the nation and that the value of the nation predominated those of class.[187]

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[184] See Chapter 1 for more information, or see: Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 58; Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 227.
[185] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 226.
[186] Benito Mussolini, "Fascismo e Sindacalismo in Da Gerarchia, 5 May 1925," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 21 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1956), 335.
[187] Susmel and Susmel, "85° Riunione del FGC," 65.

Thus, corporativism was directly linked to the efforts to construct a new *uomo fascista*, a clear indication of Fascism's totalitarian nature with its desire to transform men themselves, demonstrating that the desired Fascist revolution was primarily moral in character. Not only is this evident in the Fascists' efforts to create a new technical class of Fascists capable of managing the factories and replacing the entrepreneur class, but also because the very structure and principles of corporativism sought to "spiritualize the economy" by involving everyone in the collective action of production for the nation;[188] this necessitated a new type of man completely devoted not to class interests but to the those of the nation, subjecting himself to it willingly and enthusiastically. To this end, the subordination of workers provided by corporativism served to regiment the populace, necessary for production to become a collective action and to harden the masses for war. It moreover represents a more general characteristic of totalitarian regimes and an objective that various Fascists institutions would work toward.

It would be only through the transcendence of class consciousness and its replacement with a national one devoted to Fascism that unity and collaboration would be achieved within corporativism. Furthermore, by suppressing the workers' movement, the Fascist elite aimed to replace workers as the revolutionary instrument in the transformation of society, attempting to impose a revolution from above instead of fostering one among the populace at large. Failing to construct such a national identity and transform man, however, corporativism would serve only to eliminate class consciousness, sever community ties, and produce a divided and atomized society. Regardless of its failure, corporativism sought to encourage such national devotion and support for Fascism through its myth of the new state, which will be demonstrated in the remaining section.

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[188] Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 305, 308.

The Myth of the New State: Mobilizing Support for the Regime

Corporativism was a centerpiece of Fascism's promised utopian future, representing the cornerstone of the myth of the new state.[189] As elaborated in Chapter 1, the Fascists rejected the parliamentary system and promised to replace it with something more participatory and providing social harmony, projecting the vision of the Fascist syndicalists. This trend continued throughout the regime, with Mussolini portraying it as a central aim of Fascism, stating the parliamentary "method of political representation cannot be sufficient for us, we wish for a direct representation of individual interest."[190]

Indeed, early into the regime, it was claimed corporativism was *already* providing social harmony: "Labor and capital," according to Mussolini, had "ceased to consider their antagonism as an unbeatable fatality of history."[191] To demonstrate Fascism's commitment to social justice, the *Carta del Lavoro* was regularly referred to in speeches and documents, portrayed as representing the true social policy of the regime and the centerpiece of corporativism.[192]

In this regard, the *Carta del Lavoro* served a purely propagandistic purpose, both domestically and internationally, as it was claimed that the "social legislation of the Fascist regime is the most advanced in the world;"[193] in reality the corporative system only exacerbated class tensions and any class collaboration was superficial and forced. Nonetheless, Mussolini's rhetorical commitment to representation and social harmony fostered the image that it was the

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[189] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 237.
[190] Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," 46.
[191] My translation: Mussolini, "Quinquennale del Regime."
[192] Ibid.; Mussolini, "Discorso Al Senato"; Susmel and Susmel, "246° Riunione Del CM"; Benito Mussolini, "Discorso All'assemblea Generale Del Consiglio Nazionale Delle Corporazioni, 10 June 1932," in *Opera Omnia Di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 25 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1958), 113–14.
[193] My translation: Mussolini, "Quinquennale del Regime," 8. See also: Benito Mussolini, "Indirizzi Corporativi, Published in Il Popolo d'Italia, 19 June 1934," in *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, vol. 26 (Firenze: La Fenice, 1958), 266, in which Mussolini portrays Fascist corporativism as an example for the world.

regime's ultimate goal. Moreover, the appearance that this mythic new state was approaching was furthered by the incremental establishment of corporativism, which seemed to promise a more just society would emerge with further reforms. This illusion was meant to encourage enthusiastic support for the regime, a goal not limited to the masses but intended for those within the PNF itself.

Had the form of corporativism desired by Mussolini been known to all in the PNF, the Fascist syndicalists would have become disillusioned from the start, as they would be later on. This was unacceptable, as the regime needed the syndicalists to project their model as the face of corporativism to gain support. Thus, as historian David D. Roberts asserts, the illusion that the new state was being created was also to mobilize the syndicalists as "myth-makers," spreading the myth of the new state through lectures, articles, and books[194] and insisting that Fascism was committed to its realization.[195] This not only served to mobilize the populace, but provided a "safety-valve" for discontent within the regime.[196]

Although not a syndicalist, the renowned philosopher Giovanni Gentile was similarly mobilized as a myth-maker for the regime. Fascist Italy was the only regime to champion its supposed totalitarian nature with its all-encompassing state, as reflected in Mussolini's infamous profession, "everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state." Within Fascism, the totalitarian state was envisioned as a positive entity, based on Gentile's concept of the "ethical" state guiding the masses, which heavily influenced Bottai and Mussolini.[197]

While Mussolini's concepts of society and the state can hardly be deemed ethical, *il Duce* was influenced by Gentile's notion of the state granting society value, and the Fascist state was

[194] See, for instance, Guido Bortolotto, *Lo Stato e la dottrina corporativa*, 1931; Giuseppe Bottai, *Esperienza corporativa*, 1934; Guido Zanobini, *Corso di diritto corporativo*, 1942. Although there were exceptions; Roberts brings attention to A.O. Olivetti, "Le corporazioni come volontà e come rappresentazione," *La stirpe* 9, no. 4 (April 1931), which was very critical of the system. See: Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 318.
[195] Roberts, *The Syndicalist Tradition*, 283.
[196] Ibid., 294.
[197] Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo*, 219.

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envisioned as one leading the masses. Moreover, the projected objectives of the regime were aligned with Gentile's own ambitions. He therefore was an influential supporter of the regime, acting as a myth-maker just like the syndicalists. For instance, in *The Origins and Doctrine of Fascism*, Gentile portrayed the Fascist corporative state as genuinely democratic and populist.[198]

The myth of the new state, as propagated by the Fascist syndicalists, Gentile, and Mussolini himself, was thus an integral aspect of the regime. Its primary intention was to foster the support and participation necessary for the legitimization of the regime and also for the corporative state to work, which came both from the belief that the new, representative corporative state was on the horizon, and also by projecting Italy as the first nation in the world to reconcile labor tensions and provide social harmony, which provided Italy with national glory and thus support for the regime.

In this manner, the corporative state did have immense psychological effects on many, as many believed that it represented a venue for real change and opportunities.[199] Sociologist Michael Mann questions how such a myth can be a mobilizing force in a regime.[200] However, as a totalitarian movement, myth was only one component in the construction of consensus; there was violence behind it as well as a lack of alternatives. Moreover, in the context of the widespread disillusionment with liberalism, politically after WWI and economically due to the Great Depression, it is not unthinkable that such a myth would gain wide support, as it did under Fascism.

Indeed, it has been argued first and most famously by Renzo De Felice that the new society Fascism promised to create fostered support for the regime during the early 1930s, which De Felice has termed, "gli anni del consenso," or "the years of consensus." While he has also acknowledged that the consensus in part stemmed from a lack of alternatives, violence, and the security Fascism

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[198] Giovanni Gentile, "The Origins and Doctrine of Fascism, 1934," in *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton, trans. Douglas Parmee, Roots of the Right (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1975), 311.
[199] Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, 253.
[200] Mann, *Fascists*, 12.

provided many, De Felice asserts that it nonetheless achieved broad consensus which extended even to the youngest members of the working class.[201]

Ultimately, this support turned out to be passive consensus, or what historian Victoria de Grazia has called "static acceptance."[202] De Felice acknowledged this limit in the consensus as well, stating that it could "easily dissolve in a prolonged stalemate in social progress,"[203] and now this consensus has come to be understood more as no overt opposition to the regime.[204] Since the regime would not offer the new society and state which it promised, it turned to war in its efforts to accelerate its totalitarian ambitions and fascistize the populace. However, more was needed than the static, unenthusiastic support for the regime to fight in the Second World War, which would ultimately lead to the regimes downfall and the abolishment of the corporative system.

Nonetheless, the attempt to mobilize the populace and achieve enthusiastic support and participation for the regime, however superficial, is reflective of a totalitarian state. Although authoritarian regimes attempt to provide themselves with legitimization, they are characterized by a lack of participation; totalitarian ones, in contrast, seek to mobilize its subjects. Fascism accepted as fact that modern society meant mass politics. Moreover, participation was necessary for its productivist vision of corporativism and imperialist expansion. The mobilization characteristic of totalitarian states was therefore desired and attempted by Fascism. The myth of the new state centered on corporativism was thus an integral part of the regime and its totalitarian ambitions.

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[201] De Felice, *Mussolini Il Duce I*, 192–3, 201. While his thesis initially provoked widespread controversy, it was ultimately corroborated by many others; see: De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent*; Emilio Gentile, "Fascism in Italian Historiography: In Search of an Individual Historical Identity," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21, no. 2 (April 1986): 179–208.
[202] De Grazia, *The Culture of Consent*, 226–7.
[203] Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 181.
[204] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 151; Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 318.

Concluding Remarks

The concessions the Fascists made to the economic elite are not inconsequential, yet they should not be considered to have been intended as permanent agreements nor as reflecting the orientation of the regime. Indeed, they were seen as necessities in order to avoid resistance, as the regime was sure to dissatisfy much of the working class initially and could not survive resistance from both the masses and the economic elite. It therefore decided to collaborate with this elite in the subordination of the working class before subordinating the elite themselves. Furthermore, this approach was necessary because the Fascists, lacking their own administrative elite, needed employers to foster economic development essential to strengthening the nation and preparing for war. As it took this gradualist approach in the construction of the corporative system and the marginalization of employers, it did maintain a degree of pluralism for a while and, moreover, it never fully overcame these concessions to achieve a totalitarian state.

Nevertheless, the inability of employers to prevent a realignment of foreign policy toward Germany and involvement in the war demonstrates how their influence was decreasing; pluralism was diminishing within the Fascist state, in part thanks to the corporative system which compartmentalized employers and, by threatening state intervention and radicalization with the *Carta del Lavoro*, encouraged cooperation, which under Fascism meant obedience. The trajectory of the regime was thus totalitarian.

Moreover, corporativism was employed in a totalitarian manner toward the masses. The suppression of workers weakened their position, furthering the Fascist's attempt to create a new man. At the same time, it forced national unity, albeit at the cost of social harmony. Such unity is integral to all totalitarian regimes, which gain their legitimacy by posing as representing the entire populace. In Nazi Germany, unity was achieved through the racial community; in Fascist Italy it

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was through corporativism. Additionally, in contrast to other countries which employed corporativism, the Fascists mobilized their populace for participation in the system, however superficial and manipulative. Central to this mobilization and the creation of consensus was the myth of the new state, built largely around the corporative system and its propagandized image.

While the corporative system only represents one institution in the larger effort to construct a totalitarian state in Italy, one which cannot be considered to have ever been fully developed, it nonetheless served as an integral part in the attempt by gradually marginalizing and subordinating the economic elite, suppressing the working class and forcing unity, and mobilizing support for the regime through propaganda. The corporative system thus furthered and reinforced the totalitarian ambitions of the regime and although the two systems are not innately intertwined in theory, they were in Fascist Italy; according to Mussolini, in order to employ corporativism as the Fascists did, a nation must have only one party, to discipline and connect the populace through a "common faith," as well as a "totalitarian state, that is to say the state which absorbs into itself, to transform and strengthen it, all the energy, all the interests, all the hopes of the people."[205]

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[205] My translation: Mussolini, "Discorso per lo Stato Corporativo," 96.

Conclusion

Fascist Corporativism: Toward a Totalitarian State

On 25 July 1943, with the inevitable defeat of the Axis evident, the Fascist Grand Council voted to remove Mussolini from power. Although they desired to maintain the Fascist dictatorship and grant more legitimate functions to various institutions, including the corporations, the king intervened and established a military dictatorship which subsequently eliminated all organs of the Fascist regime.[206] By this decree, the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations was dissolved, bringing an end to the corporative state. The system was officially abolished by the 1946 constitution.

While a voluntaristic and autonomous version of corporatism is democratic, the top-down, totalitarian nature of Fascist corporativism was incompatible with democracy. Indeed, it was a farce in regards to representation, allowing no avenue for debates and political opposition, imposing the will of Mussolini and the Fascists upon the masses instead. In Chapter 3, the top-down, elitist nature of corporativism was detailed in the examination of its legal framework and its function, which largely served to solidify the Fascist dictatorship and extend the authority of Mussolini and the state. It is clear that corporativism thus primarily took the form advocated by Rocco and the Nationalists who comprised Fascism's Right-wing. The viability of this system is doubtful, and it should be recognized that it only survived and functioned because it was imposed and supported by force. Nonetheless, it seems that corporativism as it was developing was directly

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[206] Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1915-1945*, 222–3.

aligned with Mussolini's own ideology. Therefore, corporativism was largely shaped by Fascist ideology and fulfilled a purpose in the regime.

Approaching corporativism through its propagandized image, this appears to be false as the professed intentions do not match corporativism's functioning. Yet its projected objections were reflective of the ambitions of the Fascist syndicalists, who desired a more representative form of corporativism. The desires of the Fascist syndicalists, however, were rarely implemented and the syndicalists largely served as myth-makers for the regime. In truth, it is doubtful as to if their model could ever have been established under Mussolini, whose elitism and contempt for the masses was much more compatible with Rocco's vision.

Nonetheless, upon analysis it becomes clear that it is its implementation, not its framework, which makes corporativism totalitarian. This is evident considering the use of corporatism by other regimes which remained authoritarian while in Fascist Italy corporativism was meant to further and reinforce the regime's totalitarian ambitions. Totalitarianism and corporatism are not dependent on each other, as other totalitarian states would not employ corporatism. Yet in Fascist Italy, it represented an integral institution in the attempt to construct a totalitarian state. Economically, corporativism served to regulate labor relations, neutralizing labor agitation and co-opting the elite into cooperating with the regime. Through enhancing the economic power of employers, corporativism was intended to turn the economic elite into organs of the state, thus enhancing its own power through the enhancement of private power. State intervention in the economy blurred the lines between the private and public sector to such a degree that employers were in fact transformed into such agents of the state.

Yet this served a political purpose as well, arguably more important. Indeed, it was essential in granting Fascism its monopoly on power, subordinating the working class and

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removing them from the political process. Furthermore, corporativism compartmentalized the economic elite, making it nearly impossible for them to influence policy outside of their industries. However, as the regime progressed, the state began to encroach on their domain as well, as foreign policy intertwined with domestic issues and began to dictate all aspects of society, and employers became increasingly subordinated to the interests of the state with the economy being directed toward war. The economic elite could do nothing to stop this. Corporativism was thus working to subordinate all to the state.

By doing so, corporativism was creating a system in which there were no avenues for political representation. The likelihood of overt and publicized opposition was greatly decreased because of the lack of political alternatives, discouraging the working class from rising up against the regime. Additionally, by subordinating the masses and disciplining them, corporativism had a role in the wider effort to regiment society, making them accustom to a leader and hardening them for war. Consequently, social cohesion and national unity were forced, achieved at the cost of social harmony and justice. Yet this seems to be aligned with Fascism's call for a functional hierarchy with the masses accepting their position and being led by an elite vanguard. Moreover, the subordination of the workers demonstrates how the Fascist state sought to claim the revolutionary role typically assigned to the working class for itself, desiring instead to impose a revolution from above in the goal of creating the *uomo fascista*.

The transformation of society was a key ambition of Fascism and was clearly reflected within the corporative system. The solution to issues within corporativism was always the education of the populace and increased propaganda; a new man was necessary in order for the system to function properly. This was because, as stated above, Fascism desired the working class to embrace its function in society and sacrifice the interests of its class in the interests of the nation.

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Complete devotion to the nation and self-sacrifice were necessary in order for the worker to accept his low wages and living-standards, content that he was improving the nation as a whole. The Fascists therefore attempted a "spiritualization of the economy," as David D. Roberts puts it, and corporativism was Fascism's "attempt at totalitarian collective action."[207]

For this ambition, the myth of the new state was absolutely essential, of which corporativism was the cornerstone. The myth was meant to convince the populace that a bright future was on the horizon, in which a representative system would emerge and provide social harmony, unity, and prosperity. In other words, it projected the ambitions of the Fascist syndicalists. Through this myth, the Fascists desired to mobilize the populace, achieve support for the regime, and convince workers to embrace the corporative system and sacrifice their own interests. Considered altogether, corporativism's significance in the regime seems to have been largely political, as its economic impact is much more difficult to approach due to competing institutions. Upon such reflection, the corporative system reflects Fascism's totalitarian direction.

The Fascists, however, were unable to realize their ambitions. They did not establish a totalitarian state, nor create a new man, failing even to create a technically-oriented Fascist elite. Furthermore, corporativism and the myth of the new state only created passive consensus and eventually led to disillusionment as the regime failed to achieve its propagandized goals. As the promises of corporativism were revealed as empty, and the gap between rhetoric and reality became apparent, more of the populace were pushed toward the opposition. Considering the disillusionment produced by corporativism and the regime as a whole, it is questionable to what degree Fascism would have been able to transform society and create its new man even if the regime had not met its end in the Second World War.

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[207] Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment*, 308–14.

Moreover, although the corporative system should be understood as gradually working to overturn the compromises it made with the economic elite, these concessions ultimately prevented the full development of the corporative and totalitarian state. Furthermore, the turn toward war to further these ambitions led to the downfall of the regime, and the failure to fully establish corporativism enabled Fascism's demise at the hands of the monarch, which was marginalized but remained. The monarch's persistence, however diminished in influence, demonstrates that while corporativism succeeded in protecting the regime from the masses and the economic elite, it nonetheless had failed to make it untouchable.

Nevertheless, regardless of its failures, corporativism was intended to solidify the dictatorship and further it toward its totalitarian ambitions, both of which it was doing; it must be remembered that although it was the monarch who ultimately abolished the Fascist regime, it was only after the FGC removed Mussolini from his position that the king was able to do so. Corporativism moved Fascism toward these goals by extending the authority of the state over both the economic elite and the working class, forcing unity and aiding in the creation of a new man, and mobilizing the populace in support of the regime. The *Carta del Lavoro* is indicative of all of these ambitions.

Under examination, the *Carta del Lavoro* seems to reflect the productivist orientation of the regime, demonstrating its emphasis on economic development and the creation of wealth over its dispersal. Naturally, this aligned the regime more with employers than workers. Moreover, its "assurances" for social harmony and protection for workers seems to be largely propaganda to placate the syndicalists and appeal to the masses, as they were never acted upon. Yet this propaganda, as an aspect of the myth of the new state, was integral to the regime in the construction of consensus. Furthermore, read closely and in consideration of the policies which followed, the

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same clauses which were propaganda for the masses could be considered threats to the economic elite, threatening radicalization and state intervention if they did not cooperate and obey. In both regards, employer and worker organizations alike were to become an extension of the state. With this understanding, the *Carta del Lavoro* appears more reflective of Fascism's intentions and nature than it has been granted in past studies.

This thesis by no means attempts to exhaust the discussion on corporativism; its study can be improved upon and also expanded by extending it into WWII and radicalization under the Italian Social Republic. Additionally, the impact of corporativism and the *Carta del Lavoro* on the political and economic culture of post-Fascist Italy could be analyzed. Similarly, corporativism's influence on post-Fascist models of corporatism could be considered more in detail, as it could be that corporativism's example demonstrated that the state needed to be more removed from corporatism in order for it to be a viable system, that workers' and employers' associations need to be autonomous and equal, and it should not replace parliamentarism but exist alongside it. Taking these topics into account, this thesis could be expanded.

Nonetheless, this thesis attempts to build upon the works of others in order to challenge long-held notions about corporativism and provide a nuanced understanding of the system. In approaching the corporative state as it has been here, it becomes a case study for the regime in general and Fascist ideology. It reflects its anti-systemic nature as well as its pseudo-legal but ultimately violent nature, as much of its policies were enforced through *squadristi* violence under the guise of constitutional reform. It is also indicative of the ambition to create a new man and its use of myth to mobilize society. Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates Fascism's aspiration to establish its desired but never realized totalitarian control of society, subordinating *all* to the state. Simultaneously, however, it reveals the regime's compromises and its ultimate failures.

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Appendix

La Carta del Lavoro[208]

The *Carta del Lavoro* was published in *Il popolo d'Italia* on 23 April 1927. The version transcribed below is from pages 477 through 481 in Alberto Aquarone's, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario.* The English text next to the Italian is my own translation.

Stato Corporativo	The Corporative State
I. La Nazione italiana è un organismo avente fini, vita, mezzi di azione superiori a quelli degli individui divisi o raggruppati che la compongono. È una unità morale, politica ed economica, che si realizza integralmente nello Stato Fascista.	I. The Italian nation is an organism, having aims, life, and the means of action superior to those of the single or grouped individuals that compose it. It is a moral, political and economic unite that is realized completely in the Fascist State.
II. Il lavoro, sotto tutte le sue forme intellettuali, tecniche e manuali è un dovere sociale. A questo titolo, e solo a questo titolo, è tutelato dallo Stato. Il complesso della produzione è unitario dal punto di vista nazionale; i suoi obbiettivi sono unitari e si riassumono nel benessere dei produttori e nello sviluppo della potenza nazionale.	II. Work, in all of its forms, intellectual, technical, and manual, is a social duty. In this sense, and only in this sense, it is protected by the state. All of production is a unit from the point of view of the nation; its objectives are unitary and are to take on the well-being of producers and the development of national strength.
III. L'organizzazione professionale o sindacale è libera. Ma solo il sindacato legalmente riconosciuto e sottoposto al controllo dello Stato ha il diritto di rappresentare legalmente tutta la categoria di datori di lavoro o di lavoratori per cui è costituito, di tutelarne, di fronte allo Stato o alle altre associazioni professionali, gli interessi; di stipulare contratti collettivi di lavoro obbligatori per tutti gli appartenenti alla categoria, di imporre loro contributi e di esercitare rispetto ad esso funzioni delegate di interesse pubblico.	III. Professional or syndicate organizations is free. But only the syndicate legally recognized and subjected to the control of the state has the right to legally represent the entire category of employers and workers for which it is constituted, to guard their interests before the state or other professional associations; to stipulate collective labor contracts obligatory for all belonging to that category, to impose their contributions on them and exercise the functions delegated to them of public interest.

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[208] Aquarone, "La Carta Del Lavoro," 477–81.

IV. Nel contratto collettivo di lavoro trova la sua espressione concreta la solidarietà fra i vari fattori della produzione, mediante la conciliazione degli opposti interessi dei datori di lavoro e dei lavoratori e la loro subordinazione agli interessi superiori della produzione.	IV. In collective labor contracts, the solidarity between the various factors of production finds its concrete expression through the reconciliation of opposing interests of employers and workers, and in their subordination to the superior interests of production.
V. La Magistratura del Lavoro è l'organo con cui lo Stato interviene a regolare le controversie del lavoro, sia che vertano sull'osservanza dei patti e delle altre norme esistenti, sia che vertano sulla determinazione di nuove condizioni di lavoro.	V. The labor court is the organ through which the state intervenes to regulate labor controversies, whether they relate to the observance of contracts and other existing standards, or to the determination of new labor conditions.
VI. Le associazioni professionali legalmente riconosciute, assicurano la uguaglianza giuridica tra i datori di lavoro e i lavoratori, mantengono la disciplina della produzione e del lavoro e ne promuovono il perfezionamento. Le Corporazioni costituiscono l'organizzazione unitaria della produzione e ne rappresentano integralmente gli interessi. In virtú di questa integrale rappresentanza, essendo gli interessi della produzione interessi nazionali, le Corporazioni sono dalla legge riconosciute come organi di Stato. Quali rappresentanti degli interessi unitari della produzione, le Corporazioni possono dettar norme obbligatorie sulla disciplina dei rapporti di lavoro ed anche sul coordinamento della produzione tutte le volte che ne abbiano avuti i necessari poteri dalle associazioni collegate.	VI. The legally recognized professional associations ensure the legal equality between employers and workers, maintain the discipline of production and of labor, and promote its perfection. The corporations constitute the unitary organizations of production and fully represent their interests. In virtue of this integral representation, and since the interests of production are national interests, the corporations are by law recognized as organs of the state. As representatives of the unitary interests of production, the corporations may dictate obligatory standards on the regulation of labor relations and also on the coordination of production every time that they have the necessary powers of the affiliated associations.
VII. Lo Stato corporativo considera l'iniziativa privata nel campo della produzione come lo strumento piú efficace e piú utile nell'interesse della Nazione. L'organizzazione privata della produzione essendo una funzione di interesse nazionale, l'organizzatore dell'impresa è responsabile dell'indirizzo della produzione di fronte allo Stato. Dalla collaborazione delle forze produttive deriva fra esse reciprocità di diritti e di doveri. Il prestatore d'opera - tecnico, impiegato od operaio - è un collaboratore attivo dell'impresa economica, la direzione della quale spetta al datore di lavoro che ne ha la responsabilità.	VII. The corporative state considers private initiative in the field of production the most efficient and most useful instrument in the interest of the nation. The private organization of production, being a function of national interest, the organizer of the enterprise is responsible to the state for the direction of production. The collaboration of productive forces is derived from the reciprocity between rights and duties. The person undertaking the work - technician, employee, or worker - is an active collaborator in the economic enterprise, the direction of which is the right of the employer, who has responsibility for it.

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VIII. Le associazioni professionali di datori di lavoro hanno obbligo di promuovere in tutti i modi l'aumento e il perfezionamento dei prodotti e la riduzione dei costi. Le rappresentanze di coloro che esercitano una libera professione o un'arte e le associazioni di pubblici dipendenti concorrono alla tutela degli interessi dell'arte, della scienza e delle lettere, al perfezionamento della produzione e al conseguimento dei fini morali dell'ordinamento corporativo.	VIII. Professional organizations of employers are obliged to promote in every way the increase and improvement of production and the reduction of costs. The representatives of those who exercise a liberal profession or an art and the associations of public employees, contribute to the protection of the interests of art, science, and letters in the improvement of production and in the obtainment of the moral aims of the corporative system.
IX. L'intervento dello Stato nella produzione economica ha lungo soltanto quando manchi o sia insufficiente l'iniziative privata o quando siano in giuoco interessi politici dello Stato. Tale intervento può assumere la forma del controllo, dell'incoraggiamento e della gestione diretta.	IX. The intervention of the state in economic production takes place only when private initiative is lacking or is insufficient, or when the political interests of the state are at stake. Such intervention may assume the form of control, encouragement, or direct management.
Contratto di lavoro.	Labor Contracts
X. Nelle controversie collettive del lavoro l'azione giudiziaria non può essere intentata, se l'organo corporativo non ha prima esperito il tentativo di conciliazione. Nelle controversie individuali concernenti l'interpretazione e l'applicazione dei contratti collettivi di lavoro, le associazioni professionali hanno facoltà di interporre i loro uffici per la conciliazione. La competenza per tali controversie è devoluta alla Magistratura ordinaria con l'aggiunta di assessori designati dalle associazioni professionali interessate.	X. In collective labor disputes, legal action cannot be commenced if the corporation has not had first attempt at reconciliation. In individual disputes concerning the interpretation and application of collective labor contracts, the professional associations have the right to intervene and attempt reconciliation. The jurisdiction for such disputes is transferred to the ordinary judiciary with the addition of councilors designated by the relevant professional associations.

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XI. Le associazioni professionali hanno l'obbligo di regolare mediante contratti collettivi i rapporti di lavoro fra le categorie di datori di lavoro e di lavoratori, che rappresentano. Il contratto collettivo di lavoro si stipula fra associazioni di primo grado sotto la guida e il controllo delle organizzazioni centrali, salvo la facoltà di sostituzione da parte dell'associazione di grado superiore, nei casi previsti dalle leggi e dagli statuti. Ogni contratto collettivo di lavoro, sotto pena di nullità, deve contenere norme precise sui rapporti disciplinari, sul periodo di prova, sulla misura e sul pagamento della retribuzione, sull'orario di lavoro.	XI. Professional associations have the duty to regulate by means of collective contracts labor relations between the categories of employers and workers which they represent. The collective labor contract stipulated between associations of the first grade, under the guidance and control of central organizations, may in part be substituted by associations of superior grade, in cases provided by the laws and the statutes. Each collective labor contract, under the penalty of nullity, must contain precise rules on disciplinary relations, periods of probation, the measure and payment of wages, and work hours.
XII. L'azione del sindacato, l'opera conciliativa degli organi corporativi e la sentenze della magistratura del lavoro garantiscono la corrispondenza del salario alle esigenze normali di vita, alle possibilità della produzione e al rendimento del lavoro. La determinazione del salario è sottratta a qualsiasi norma generale e affidata all'accordo delle parti nei contratti collettivi.	XII. The action of the syndicates, the conciliatory work of the corporations, and the sentences of the labor courts will guarantee the correspondence of wages to the needs of ordinary life, to the possibility of production and the productivity of labor. The determination of wages is not subjected to any general standard but is entrusted to the agreement between the parties in the collective contract.
XIII. Le conseguenze delle crisi di produzione e dei fenomeni monetari devono equamente ripartirsi fra tutti i fattori della produzione. I dati rilevati dalle pubbliche amministrazioni, dall'Istituto Centrale di Statistica e dalle Associazioni professionali legalmente riconosciute circa le condizioni della produzione e del lavoro, la situazione del mercato e del lavoro, la situazione del mercato monetario e le variazioni del tenore di vita dei prestatori d'opera, coordinati ed elaborati dal Ministero delle Corporazioni, daranno il criterio per contemperare gli interessi delle varie categorie e delle varie classi fra di loro e di esse coll'interesse superiore della produzione.	XIII. The consequences of production crises and monetary phenomena must be shared equally between all the factors of production. The data collected by government administrations, by the Central Institute of Statistics and of the legally recognized professional associations about the conditions of production and labor, the situation of the labor market, the situation of the monetary market and the variations in the standards of living of employees, coordinated and processed by the Ministry of Corporations, will give the criteria to balance the interests of the various categories and classes with the superior interests of production.

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XIV. Quando la retribuzione sia stabilita a cottimo, e la liquidazione dei cottimi sia fatta a periodi superiori alla quindicina, sono dovuti adeguati acconti quindicinali o settimanali. Il lavoro notturno, non compreso in regolari turni periodici, viene retribuito con una percentuale in piú, rispetto al lavoro diurno. Quando il lavoro sia retribuito a cottimo, le tariffe di cottimo debbono essere determinate in modo che all'operaio laborioso di normale capacità lavorativa, sia consentito di conseguire un guadagno minimo oltre la paga-base.	XIV. Where payment is established by piecework, and the clearance of piecework is a period longer than a fortnight, adequate payments are due fortnightly or weekly. Night work, not included in regular periodic shifts, should be paid as a percentage greater in comparison to day work. When the work is paid at piece rates, the rates for piecework much be determined such that for the worker working at the normal working capacity, it is possible to obtain a minimum gain over the pay-base.
XV. Il prestatore d'opera ha diritto al riposo settimanale in coincidenza con le domeniche. I contratti collettivi applicheranno il principio tenendo conto delle norme di legge esistenti, delle esigenze tecniche delle imprese e nei limiti di tali esigenze procureranno altresí che siano rispettate le festività civili e religiose secondo le tradizioni locali. L'orario di lavoro dovrà essere scrupolosamente e intensamente osservato dal prestatore di opera.	XV. The employee has the right to a weekly day of rest, Sunday. Collective contracts apply the principle of taking into account the standards of existing laws, the technical demands of the enterprise and, in the extent of those demands, shall endeavor to comply with civil and religious holidays according to local traditions. Work hours must be carefully and intently observed by the employer.
XVI. Dopo un anno di ininterrotto servizio il prestatore di opera, nelle imprese a lavoro continuo, ha diritto ad un periodo annuo di risposo feriale retribuito.	XVI. After a year of uninterrupted service in companies functioning with continuous work, the employee has to an annual holiday with pay.
Uffici di collocamento.	Employment offices.
XVII. Nelle imprese a lavoro continuo, il lavoratore ha diritto, in caso di licenziamento senza sua colpa, ad una indennità proporzionata agli anni di servizio. Tale indennità è dovuta anche in caso di morte del lavoratore.	XVII. In companies functioning with continual work, the employee has the right, in the event of dismissal without his own fault, to compensation proportionate to the years of service. Such compensation is also due in the event of the death of the worker.
XVIII. Nelle imprese a lavoro continuo il trapasso dell'azienda non risolve il contratto di lavoro ed il personale ad essa addetto conserva i suoi diritti nei confronti del nuovo titolare. Egualmente, la malattia del lavoratore che non eccede una determinata durata, non risolve il contratto di lavoro. Il richiamo alle armi o in servizio della MVSN non è causa di licenziamento.	XVIII. In companies functioning with continual work, the transfer of the firm does not affect the labor contract and the people in charge retain their rights against the new owner. Likewise, the illness of the worker does not cancel his employment contract. The call to arms or service in the MVSN is not cause for dismissal.

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XIX. Le infrazioni alla disciplina e gli atti che perturbino il normale andamento dell'azienda, commessi dai prestatori di lavoro, sono puniti, secondo la gravità della mancanza, con la multa, con la sospensione dal lavoro e, per casi gravi, col licenziamento immediato senza indennità. Saranno specificati i casi in cui l'imprenditore può infliggere la multa o la sospensione o il licenziamento immediato senza indennità.	XIX. Infractions of discipline and acts disturbing the normal functioning of the company committed by the employees are punished according to the gravity of the misdemeanor, with a fine, the suspension of work, or in grave cases, with immediate dismissal without compensation. Contracts will specify in cases in which the employer may impose a fine or suspension or immediate dismissal without compensation.
XX. Il prestatore d'opera di nuova assunzione è soggetto ad un periodo di prova, durante il quale è reciproco il diritto alla risoluzione del contratto col solo pagamento della retribuzione per il tempo in cui il lavoro è stato effettivamente prestato.	XX. Newly hired employees are subject to a period of probation, during which there is a mutual right to cancel the contract with only the payment of wages for the time in which work was actually performed.
XXI. Il contratto collettivo di lavoro estende i suoi benefici e la sua disciplina ai lavoratori a domicilio. Speciali norme saranno dettate dallo Stato per assicurare la pulizia e l'igiene del lavoro a domicilio.	XXI. Collective labor contracts extend its benefits and its discipline to the workers at home. Special rules will be dictated by the state to ensure the cleanliness and hygiene of work at home.
XXII. Soltanto lo Stato può accertare e controllare il fenomeno della occupazione e della disoccupazione dei lavoratori, indice complessivo delle condizioni della produzione e del lavoro.	XXII. Only the state can ascertain and control the phenomenon of employment and unemployment of workers, since these are the complete indexes of the conditions of production and work.
XXIII. L'ufficio di collocamento a base paritetica è sotto il controllo degli organi corporativi. I datori di lavoro hanno l'obbligo di assumere i lavoratori inscritti a detti uffici e hanno facoltà di scelta nell'ambito degli inscritti agli elenchi, dando la precedenza agli inscritti al Partito ai Sindacati Fascisti secondo la loro anzianità di inscrizione.	XXIII. The employment office is under the control of the corporations. The employers have the obligation to hire workers enrolled in these offices, and have the freedom of choice among those inscribed except that, other things being equal, priority shall be given to those enrolled in the Fascist Party and the Fascist syndicates according to seniority of registration.
XXIV. Le associazioni professionali di lavoratori hanno l'obbligo di esercitare una azione selettiva fra i lavoratori, diretta a elevarne sempre di piú la capacità tecnica e il valore morale.	XXIV, Professional associations of workers have the obligation to exercise a selective action between members, to direct and increase the technical capacity and moral value.
XXV. Gli organi corporativi sorvegliano perché siano osservate le leggi sulla prevenzione degli infortuni e sulla polizia del lavoro da parte dei singoli soggetti alle associazioni collegate.	XXV. The corporations shall supervise to ensure that the observance of laws on the prevention of injury and cleanliness of the workplace.

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Previdenza e istruzione.	Welfare and education.
XXVI. La previdenza è un'alta manifestazione del principio di collaborazione. Il datore di lavoro e il prestatore d'opera devono concorrere proporzionalmente agli oneri di essa. Lo Stato, mediante gli organi corporativi e le associazioni professionali, procurerà di coordinare e di unificare, quanto è più possibile, il sistema e gli istituti di previdenza.	XXVI. Welfare is a manifestation of the principle of collaboration. The employer and the employee must contribute proportionally to the costs of it. The state, by means of the corporations and the professional associations, shall endeavor to coordinate and unify, as much as is possible, the system and the institution of welfare.
XXVII. Lo Stato Fascista si propone: 1) Il perfezionamento dell'assicurazione infortuni; 2) il miglioramento e l'estensione dell'assicurazione maternità; 3) l'assicurazione delle malattie professionali e della tubercolosi come avviamento all'assicurazione generale contro tutte le malattie; 4) il perfezionamento dell'assicurazione contro la disoccupazione involontaria; 5) l'adozione di forme speciali assicurative dotalizie per giovani lavoratori.	XXVII. The Fascist state proposes to bring about: 1) the improvement of accident insurance; 2) the improvement and the extension of maternity insurance; 3) the insurance of occupational illnesses and tuberculosis as the foundation of general insurance against all diseases; 4) the improvement of insurance against involuntary unemployment; 5) the adoption of special marriage endowment for young workers.
XVIII. È compito delle associazioni di lavoratori la tutela dei loro rappresentati nelle pratiche amministrative e giudiziarie relative all'assicurazione infortuni e alle assicurazioni sociali. Nei contratti collettivi di lavoro sarà stabilita, quando sia tecnicamente possibile, la costituzione di Casse mutue per malattia con contributo dei datori e dei prestatori di lavoro, da amministrarsi da rappresentanti degli uni e degli altri, sotto la vigilanza degli organi corporativi.	XVIII. It is the duty of workers' associations to protect their members administratively and legally in accident and social insurance. In collective labor contracts, whenever technically possible, health insurance funds will be established with contributions from employers and employees, to be administered by representatives of one and the other under the supervision of the corporations.
XXIX. L'assistenza ai propri rappresentati, soci e non soci, è un diritto e un dovere delle associazioni professionali. Queste debbono esercitare direttamente con propri organi le loro funzioni di assistenza, né possono delegarle ad altri enti od istituti se non per obbiettivi d'indole generale, eccedenti gli interessi di ciascuna categoria di produttori.	XXIX. Assistance provided to its representatives, whether members or not, is a right and duty of professional associations. These functions of assistance must be exercised directly through their corporations, and cannot be delegated to other entities or institutions except for objectives of a general nature that exceed the interests of each category of producers.
XXX. L'educazione e l'istruzione, specie l'istruzione professionale dei loro rappresentati, soci e non soci, è uno dei principali doveri delle associazioni professionali. Esse devono affiancare l'azione delle Opere nazionali relative al dopolavoro e alle altre iniziative di educazione.	XXX. The education and instruction, especially vocational instruction, whether member or not, is one of the main duties of the professional associations. They should support the actions of the National Recreational Club and other education initiatives.

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