THE IDEA OF NATION IN FASCISM AND FALANGISM

Abstract

The main goal of this research is to compare Italian and Spanish Fascism in an organic and systematic manner on the basis of a guiding idea - the idea of the nation and its evolution - never used in such a comparison before.

The premise on which the thesis is based is that the myth of the nation embraced all aspects of the Fascist phenomenon since its origins. Starting from this assumption, it is not only possible but very useful on the heuristic level to resort to the idea of nation and its evolution as a parameter to compare diverse Fascist experiences. Hence the choice to use the ideological construction of the nation as the ‘property’ of comparison: namely the yardstick to identify affinities and differences between the ‘objects’ to be compared, which in this case are the Fascist and Falangist political-ideological components within Mussolini’s and Franco’s regimes respectively.

The timeframe of this research dates from the early 1930s to the early 1940s. It was decided to focus on this historical period, because it was a decade of great political effervescence both in Italy and in Spain, as well as internationally. In fact, although the Italian Fascist Party had already existed for some time - while the Spanish one was taking its first steps - the decade saw a significant acceleration in the process of the two States’ fascistization. This was due both to endogenous factors, the most glaring examples of which were Mussolini’s decision to launch Italy into a quest for empire, as well as the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; and also to exogenous factors, primarily the appearance on the European scene of National-socialist
Germany led by Hitler. The study concludes in the biennium 1942-1943. It was in 1942 that the project of Falangist nationalization of the Spaniards effectively ended. This was akin to what happened in Italian Fascism the following year, when Grandi’s Order of the Day on July 25 not only heralded the collapse of Mussolini’s regime, but also the shattering of the dream to realize a great Fascist nation.

The research was conducted mainly on primary sources. Firstly, the texts and certain discourses of doctrinal value of the main leaders and theorists of Fascism and Falangism were studied systematically. Secondly, press sources were examined; specifically, all the issues of the most important theoretical periodicals related to the two countries’ Fascist movements. Along with press sources, programme documents of the Pnf and the Falange, some diaristic sources and normative texts were also analysed. As for secondary sources, there was a constant interaction with the works of the most prominent contemporary Italian and Spanish historians of Fascist and Falangist phenomena. The analysis of articles appearing in the main Italian, Spanish and international magazines on contemporary history in the last thirty years completed the overview of sources for this work.

This thesis develops following a narrative thread in four scans, each relating to a particular phase in the evolution of the idea of nation in Fascist ideology. The first chapter analyses the origins of the idea of nation in Fascism and Falangism, and the ways in which it was articulated in the *destruens* and *costruens* phase of the two movements. The second examines the theme of empire and whether it represented a natural outpouring of the nationalist ideology of the Pnf and the Falange. The third investigates the nature of the relationship between nation and race. Finally, the fourth chapter highlights the Fascist and National-syndicalist positions on the ‘New European Order’ that, at the end of the 1930s, appeared to be on the verge of
coming to fruition; and the role that, according to the *camicie nere* and the *camisas azules*, Italy and Spain should have played in it.