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Fascism/Communism readings-use this to help fill in your chart

Fascism: political ideology and mass movement that dominated many parts of central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1919 and 1945 and that also had adherents in western Europe, the United States, South Africa, Japan, Latin America, and the Middle East. Europe's first fascist leader, Benito Mussolini (Italy), took the name of his party from the Latin word fasces, which referred to a bundle of elm or birch rods (usually containing an ax) used as a symbol of penal authority in ancient Rome. Although fascist parties and movements differed significantly from each other, they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy and political and cultural liberalism, a belief in natural social hierarchy and the rule of elites, and the desire to create a Volksgemeinschaft (German: “people's community”), in which individual interests would be subordinated (held to be less important) to the good of the nation. At the end of World War II, the major European fascist parties were broken up, and in some countries (such as Italy and West Germany) they were officially banned. Beginning in the late 1940s, however, many fascist-oriented parties and movements were founded in Europe as well as in Latin America and South Africa. Although some European “neofascist” groups attracted large followings, especially in Italy and France, none were as influential as the major fascist parties of the interwar period.

Fascist intervention in the economy was designed to boost prestige and military strength. In the early years the Fascists compromised with the business establishment and rescued failing banks. However, in 1926 the lira was suddenly revalued for political reasons, and Italy suffered all the usual consequences of an overvalued currency. Exports fell sharply, unemployment rose, wages were frozen or even cut, and prices fell. The steel, electricity, and chemical industries expanded, for their markets were domestic, and they were helped by cheaper raw material imports; industries producing textiles, food, and vehicles, which depended on foreign markets, declined.

When the Great Depression came after 1929, these deflationary processes were accentuated, although the government increased spending on building roads and on welfare in order to provide employment. The leading banks, which had lent heavily to industry, had to be rescued in the early 1930s, as did many large industrial companies. Two new state-run holding companies, the Italian Industrial Finance Institute (Istituto Mobiliare Italiano; IMI) and the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale; IRI), were set up to bail out failing firms and to provide capital for new industrial investment; they also provided trained managers and effective financial supervision. Italy thus acquired a huge, state-led industrial sector, which was especially important in banking, steel, shipping, armaments, and the supply of hydroelectricity. However, these firms were not nationalized. Instead, they operated in the market as private companies and still had many private shareholders. In the long term they gave Italy a modern infrastructure—including roads and cheap energy—a sounder financial sector, and some efficient modern industries in expanding sectors such as chemicals and synthetic fibres. Most industrial development, and most workers, remained in northern Italy, although by this time large steelmaking and shipbuilding plants had been started at Naples and Taranto. After 1931 vast tracts of land were reclaimed through the draining of marshes in the Lazio region, where gleaming new towns were created with Fascist architecture and names—Littoria (now Latina) in 1932, Sabaudia in 1934, Pontinia in 1935, Aprilia in 1937, and Pomezia in 1938. Peasants were brought from the regions of Emilia and the Veneto to populate these towns. New towns, such as Carbonia, were also built in Sardinia to house miners for the revamped coal industry.

After October 1925 the Fascist syndicates, or trade unions, were the sole recognized negotiators for workers' interests. Strikes and lockouts became illegal, and wages fell between 1927 and 1934, but the syndicates had considerable political influence. They secured a shorter workweek (40 hours in November 1934), higher welfare benefits (such as family allowances, also introduced in 1934), and public works schemes, and they also helped run leisure and social activities. In 1934 the Fascists also set up “corporations”—mixed bodies of workers and employers—to resolve labour disputes and supervise wage settlements. Despite much rhetoric and propaganda

about them, they had little impact in practice and virtually none on industrial management or economic policy making.

Socialism/Communism: social and economic doctrine that calls for public rather than private ownership or control of property and natural resources. According to the socialist view, individuals do not live or work in isolation but live in cooperation with one another. Furthermore, everything that people produce is in some sense a social product, and everyone who contributes to the production of a good is entitled to a share in it. Society as a whole, therefore, should own or at least control property for the benefit of all its members.

This conviction puts socialism in opposition to capitalism, which is based on private ownership of the means of production and allows individual choices in a free market to determine how goods and services are distributed. Socialists complain that capitalism necessarily leads to unfair and exploitative concentrations of wealth and power in the hands of the relative few who emerge victorious from free-market competition—people who then use their wealth and power to reinforce their dominance in society. Because such people are rich, they may choose where and how to live, and their choices in turn limit the options of the poor. As a result, terms such as individual freedom and equality of opportunity may be meaningful for capitalists but can only ring hollow for working people, who must do the capitalists' bidding if they are to survive. As socialists see it, true freedom and true equality require social control of the resources that provide the basis for prosperity in any society. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made this point in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) when they proclaimed that in a socialist society “the condition for the free development of each is the free development of all.”

This fundamental conviction nevertheless leaves room for socialists to disagree among themselves with regard to two key points. The first concerns the extent and the kind of property that society should own or control. Some socialists have thought that almost everything except personal items such as clothing should be public property; this is true, for example, of the society envisioned by the English humanist Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516). Other socialists, however, have been willing to accept or even welcome private ownership of farms, shops, and other small or medium-sized businesses.

The second disagreement concerns the way in which society is to exercise its control of property and other resources. In this case the main camps consist of loosely defined groups of centralists and decentralists. On the centralist side are socialists who want to invest public control of property in some central authority, such as the state—or the state under the guidance of a political party, as was the case in the Soviet Union. Those in the decentralist camp believe that decisions about the use of public property and resources should be made at the local, or lowest-possible, level by the people who will be most directly affected by those decisions. This conflict has persisted throughout the history of socialism as a political movement.