Benito Mussolini: *What is Fascism*? 1932

Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) over the course of his lifetime went from believing in Socialism to the leadership of a new political movement called "fascism" [after "fasces", the symbol of bound sticks used a totem of power in ancient Rome]. Mussolini came to power after the "March on Rome" in 1922, and was appointed Prime Minister by King Victor Emmanuel. In 1932 Mussolini wrote (with the help of Giovanni Gentile) and entry for the Italian Encyclopedia on the definition of fascism.

1. Fascism . . . believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. . . . War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have courage to meet it. All other trials are substitutes, which never really put men into the position where they have to make the great decision -- the alternative of life or death....

In other words . . .

1. ...Fascism [is] the complete opposite of…Marxist Socialism, . . And above all Fascism denies that class-war can be the preponderant force in the transformation of society....

In other words . . .

1. Fascism combats the whole complex system of democracy . . . Fascism denies that the majority can direct human society . . it affirms the immutable, beneficial, and fruitful inequality of mankind, which can never be permanently leveled through universal suffrage [everyone voting]

In other words . . .

1. [Although] the nineteenth century was the century of Socialism, of Liberalism, and of Democracy . . . the twentieth century [will be] a century of Fascism [it will be] the century of the State....

In other words . . .

1. Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. The Fascist State is itself conscious and has itself a will and a personality.

In other words . . .

1. ...The Fascist State organizes the nation, but leaves a sufficient margin of liberty to the individual; the latter is deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual, but the State alone....

In other words . . .

1. ...For Fascism, the growth of empire, that is to say the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality. But empire demands discipline, the coordination of all forces and a deeply felt sense of duty and sacrifice:

In other words . . .