

Mussolini's Legacy – Yesterday's propaganda and today's fake news

“Repeat a lie a hundred, a thousand times and it will become true” explained the ministry of Propaganda of the Third Reich, Joseph Goebbels, to his closest friends, depicting his personal idea of totalitarian information. A formula that today, with the aid of the web and the spread and replication of real and false news, has become a close-to-perfect weapon, or at least one that is difficult to stop.

Hence, we trace back the cause and try to understand how the “**consent factory**” brought to life by Il Duce and his friends actually worked. A highly structured system of **propaganda** organized by the Ministry of Popular Culture, aiming at the masses' unconditional support, which quickly hit the opposers and, soon thereafter, Italian Jews. This was an innovative way of doing politics which, with symbols and myths-making, was able to involve the vast majority of the population in the regime's organization, while generating widespread support also among social classes that, until then, had been uninterested or left out.

On the centennial anniversary of the march to Rome (October 28th, 2022) this film shows the mechanism of fake news and the myths of a regime that was indeed oppressive and violent, but above all inadequate.

Fascism has been made into mythical entity. This has made it dangerous as it's removed from reality. Many are the myth's images: from the warlord-like statesman Duce to the duce who reclaims the land, all the way to the Duce as the founder of social welfare, to the Duce as a developer. Myth is also known to feed itself and, in truth, many of the lies regarding fascism were borne out and carried on by fascism itself. Umberto Eco reminded us that “Mussolini had no philosophy, only rhetoric”. It is therefore normal that fascism, with time, aligned itself to a public narrative rather than a historical ideology. It was not based on a continuity of ideas, but rather on the myth of long-lost happiness. While conveniently forgetting, among so many things, the Matteotti murder, a devastating war with 350.000 casualties, the death penalty dealt out by the Special Court with 4596 sentenced to death, of which 697 were minors, the end of the freedom of speech and of the freedom of the press, the submission of women to men, the passing of the Rocco Law, the impunity of honour killings, etc...

In the documentary, we will contrast, documents at hand, the falsehoods that continue to circulate about the Fascist period, while leaving room for debate between the different

positions. Without preconceptions, and also by listening as much as possible to scholars and witnesses with different points of view on the various issues. As the film unfolds, through the testimonies of its protagonists – those who formerly supported and those who opposed the regime, on opposite sides of the fence – we will shed light on Mussolini, ultimately framing him in his historical essence: as a man who was not only a dictator and an exceptional promoter of himself and his beliefs, but also a mediocre strategist, a terrible administrator, a man not of unimpeachable honesty, and all in all an inadequate economist.

The story will highlight the mechanism of propaganda, the ubiquitous role of fascist education, as well as the design of regime ceremonies, sports events, the manipulation of the press, Cinecittà, Istituto Luce, and the spread of antisemitic culture set in motion by racial laws. All of those were crucial tools for the new fascist ritual, the new fascist cult. Just as it is implied by the book's title, which this documentary is loosely based on, it's an undeniable fact that fascism, like other tyrannical regimes, did some good – and perhaps in twenty years it would have been impossible not to – but it ultimately resulted in a progressive decline of the country, an exponential increase of violence, and a general impoverishment of the Italian people.

And let's not forget its two fatal mistakes: the introduction of racial laws and having dragged Italy into a destructive war.