
THE FASCIST: AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

GEBARD DeGEE, Norman

ABSTRACT

An operational definition sets up the empirically verifiable specifications for a construct. The specifications for the definition of Fascism are derived from the observation of what fascists say and do in their natural habitat—the Nazi State. These specifications can then be used to identify Fascist characteristics in persons or populations who are not avowedly or consciously Fascist.

The symbolic descriptive formula, $P_f = \Sigma(I_1 + I_2 + I_3 + \dots + I_N)$, used in this paper to define Fascism means "the degree of Fascism (f) in a population (P) is equal to the sum of its Fascist indices (I)."

These indices are to be derived by a sociological analysis of the basic attitudinal structure of the Fascist community. A preliminary analysis yields four indices which appear to be especially relevant:

1. *Racialism*—a belief in the inborn superiority of certain races as compared to others. The division of mankind into a *master* race and *inferior* races.
2. *Ethnocentrism*—a belief in the innate greater excellence of certain social groups—classes, castes, religious bodies, nations, etc. Types of this belief are crude social Darwinism, theories of *divine right* to rule, beliefs in the *great historical mission* or *divine favor* of certain groups or social strata, etc. The idea of superiority is based on social group membership rather than on race.
3. *"Fuehrerism"*—a mystical theory of leadership based on irrational identification of the leader with mysterious cosmic or historical forces; rather than on rational, traditional, or less hysterical forms of charismatic authority.
4. *Statism*—the systematic destruction of the intermediate social groupings of the community resulting in the atomization, or "massification" of the individual. The Fascist theory of the State as the Highest Good is contrasted

to the legalism-rationalism of liberal theory and the historicoinstrumentalism of Marxism.

All of these indices have a core of *irrational superiorism*, i. e., they all indicate a belief in the innate superiority of certain races, groups, persons, or abstractions on the basis of some mystical principle which transcends empirical reality.

It should be possible to construct attitude tests for determining the degree to which these indices are present in a population. It would then be possible to see how degrees of Fascism correlate with other social phenomena: class memberships, economic fluctuations, personality types, populational densities, educational levels, religious affiliations, etc.

The more rigorous definition of the concept of Fascism in terms of observable and quantifiable indices provides an instrument of prediction and control. The basic methodological principle established by Max Weber—the definition of social concepts in terms of the probability that certain social actions have taken place, are taking place, or will take place—can be extended to the definition of other social phenomena as well. When this principle is combined with the techniques of societal diagnosis of the ideal-typical method and implemented by systematic statistical generalizations it yields a powerful organon of social analysis.
