

its tacit acceptance by a large portion of the population by the mid-1930s, at least according to local police reports.

Nevertheless, public support for Mussolini and Fascism remained considerably more shallow and tenuous in the Piedmontese capital than elsewhere on the Italian peninsula. The regime found its solidest base of support among the city's lower middle classes, especially those employed in the public sector or in the corporate bureaucracy of Fiat, who saw their incomes rise during the inter-war era. These groups provided the most enthusiastic and committed participants in the organizational activities and public ceremonies of the Fascist party and its affiliated organizations. Mussolini had considerably less success capturing the hearts and minds of Turin's industrial workers. The failure of his regime to maintain, let alone improve, their standard of living limited its appeal in the neighborhoods on the periphery of the city. While the local Fascist labor organizations, or syndicates, could claim nearly 230,000 card-carrying members by 1940, contemporary observers all agreed that worker participation in them remained perfunctory at best. Deprived of independent representation and the right to strike, the rank and file had no effective means of protecting their jobs, working conditions, and wages. As a result, their attitudes toward Fascism and its institutions oscillated between hostility, if not rebelliousness, on the one hand and indifference and sullen resignation on the other. The workers of Fiat, for instance, gave Mussolini a coolly silent reception, when he came to the Piedmontese capital in the late 1930s to celebrate the opening of the company's huge new Mirafiori plant.

Although the regime encountered comparable attitudes in other urban centers of the north, its difficulties were compounded in Turin by the competition from industrial giants like Fiat, which offered its workers wage packages, leisure-time perks, and other benefits that the Fascist syndicates or party could not possibly match. Consequently, the local population continued to view Agnelli as the real boss in Turin, a man whose power and prestige seemingly permitted him to negotiate as an equal with Mussolini. Even the city's industrial elite, who were among the chief beneficiaries of the regime's economic and social policies, provided at best only what a frustrated Mussolini described as "a purely formal commitment" to the Fascist order.

The dictator encountered similar difficulties in his efforts to win over the luminaries of Turin's culture and intellectual life. A few prominent figures like Vittorio Cian and Curzio Malaparte migrated over to Fascism from the Nationalist movement, but on the whole the local party was not able to develop a significant group of intellectuals or to pro-