



The 1930s were characterized by the second part of the twenty-year Fascist period. For Mussolini, cinema was "the strongest weapon"; in fact, it proved to be a very powerful weapon of mass manipulation. The fascist regime invested a lot in cinema: just think of the foundation, in 1935, of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Center of Cinematography), one of the oldest schools of cinema in Europe, and of the creation of the Cinecittà studios in 1937, based on the model of the Hollywood studios so admired by Mussolini. The Fascist dictatorship tried to influence, condition, shape, and penetrate every aspect of society, it did so with propaganda works. Some of them were very overt, but other were quite subtle, as is the case for *1860* by Alessandro Blasetti.

The film can be defined as "historical" in that it narrates the events of Garibaldi's expedition of the Thousand in Sicily. The film is not explicitly propagandist, except for the contemporary ending of the original version, later cut in the 1951 re-release, in which a parade of fascist phalanxes is shown in front of Garibaldi's veterans, against the backdrop of the Foro Mussolini.

The film is, however, fully compliant to the regime's official policy, and in fact contains revisionist elements on the Risorgimento. The dominant interpretation sees the unification of Italy achieved by aristocratic and bourgeois elites, rather than by the people. In Blasetti's version, on the other hand, the peasant masses are represented as already revolting before the arrival of Garibaldi, who used their revolutionary strength to achieve victory.