REVOLUTION AGAINST REVOLUTION: FASCISM

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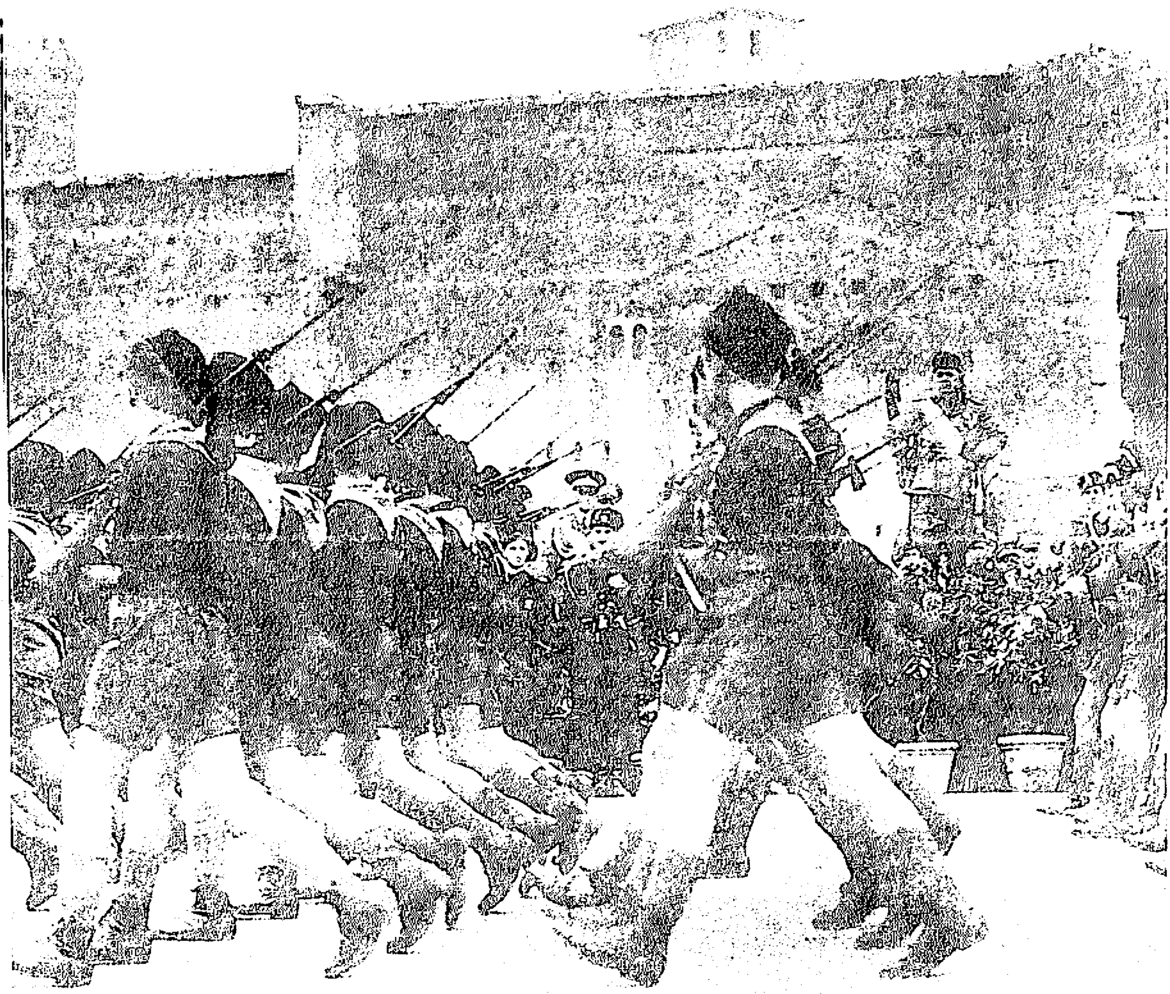
The revolutionary wave in Europe after 1917 generated a counterrevolutionary response at once. But postwar counterrevolution did not mean the return to religion and to social deference with which nineteenth-century traditional conservatives had tried to meet revolutionary threats. There was a new name—*fascism*—and behind it, a new reality. Fascism put together mass movements, nationalism, antisocialism, and antiliberal values in largely unforeseen ways.

Mass politics had entered European history in the nineteenth century on the left. The values of nineteenth-century middle- and lower–middle-class Europeans tended to be liberal: they invested great hopes in the ballot box; in universal, secular, public education; and in the self-determination of nations. In the 1890s, many working-class and lower–middle-class Europeans became attracted to the new socialist parties. Their electoral success enabled Karl Marx's collaborator and successor,



Members of the new Fascist boys' movement, the *Figli della Lupa* (Roman Wolf's Sons), parading with miniature rifles before Benito Mussolini on the twentieth anniversary of the Italian entry into the First World War, May 193

Friedrich Engels, to believe in 1895 that "we shall conquer the greater part of the middle strata of society, petty bourgeois and small peasants, and grow into the decisive power in the land."[1] The broadening of citizen participation in politics, as the middle and lower classes expanded, seemed to promise an indefinite progression of European mass politics toward the left. Nineteenth-century conservatives, with some exceptions, had preferred a passive citizenry. A European familiar with the political landscape up to 1890, suddenly transplanted to a mass rally of the 1920s or 1930s in which an aroused crowd bayed its approval of a uniformed leader's harangue against socialists, intellectuals, foreigners, and Jews, might have believed himself on another planet.

With the advantages of hindsight, it is possible to see a number of ways in which fascism was prepared by late–nineteenth-century developments. We shall look back to these precursors later in this chapter. But first, to recapture the sense of newness and urgency with which fascist movements sprang up in the disorder of postwar Europe, it seems best to take a close look at the movement that provided the name, Italian fascism, and at two important similar movements of the years 1919 to 1923 in Germany and Hungary.

FASCISM IN ITALY

Many Italians were disillusioned at the close of the First World War by the costs of an inconclusive victory, and after the armistice they bitterly confronted one another over social and national issues.[2] The strikes and factory occupations of 1919 and 1920 and the land seizures of 1919 seemed to be leading toward an Italian socialist revolution. Meanwhile, Gabriele D'Annunzio's seizure of Fiume in 1919 proved to militant nationalists that they could shove aside a faltering state and get what they wanted by direct action. In that chaos was born Benito Mussolini's Fascist movement.

Mussolini: From Syndicalism to Fascism

When asked to define fascism, Mussolini liked to say, "I am Fascism." So it is appropriate to begin this discussion with a look at the leader himself. He was born in the traditionally volatile *Romagna* region, northeast of Rome, to a schoolteacher and an anarchist blacksmith, who named him after the Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez. Unlike his German imitator Hitler, Mussolini achieved some prewar status. He was a leading figure on the Italian left before he was thirty. He became editor of the Socialist party newspaper *Avanti!* (*Forward!*) at the end of 1912, and

[1] Friedrich Engels' 1895 introduction to Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850* (New York, 1964).

[2] See Chapter 5, pp. 158–60.

quadrupled its readership to 100,000 over the next two years. In 1913 he was elected to the city council of Milan, Italy's largest industrial city.

By political persuasion and temperament, Mussolini was syndicalist rather than socialist. Syndicalism was an individualistic, antiauthoritarian movement of revolt endemic to rural artisans, agricultural laborers, railroad workers, and miners, in France, Italy, and Spain. Syndicalists were bitterly hostile not only to parliamentary, reformist socialists but also to the Marxist strategy of attempting to take over the state. They wanted to dissolve the state, not take it over. Their strategy rested on bringing down the whole immoral world of property with one apocalyptic "great day," a mass general strike. Then they would replace the state, not with another authority as previous revolutionists (from the Jacobins to the Leninists) had done, but with a free community in which the only organizations would be workers' associations (*syndicats*) exchanging goods and services among themselves. Syndicalism's inchoate, millenarian revolutionism was particularly deeply rooted in the *Romagna*, and as a student the young Mussolini further steeped himself in the French syndicalist Georges Sorel's cult of action, in a vulgarized Nietzschean exaltation of will, and in Bergsonian faith in intuition. It was actually easier for a syndicalist to pass to the far right than to subside into moderation, and through a lifetime of political metamorphoses, Mussolini never lost his impatient contempt for parliaments and his intransigent activism.

Mussolini was named editor of *Avanti!* in December 1912, after Italian syndicalists won control of the Italian Socialist party machinery from parliamentary socialists, some of whom had discredited themselves by supporting the Italian conquest of Libya. He was expelled from the party two years later, however, when in a characteristic about-face, he urged Italian entry into the First World War on the Allied side. Mussolini had become a "national syndicalist." War seemed to his impatient temperament a more revolutionary state than passive neutrality. His new prowar newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia,* got money from France, although this seems to have come afterward as reward rather than beforehand as bribe, as sometimes alleged.

In 1918 Mussolini was one of millions of veterans finding their way in the dislocations of demobilization. Since he had seen some front-line service, and had been wounded accidentally but painfully when a shell exploded during trench mortar practice (he characteristically dramatized this as "forty-four wounds" by counting every fragment), his *Popolo d'Italia* had some claim to speak for veterans. With the peace settlement at hand, Mussolini joined the annexationist chorus, calling Italy a "proletarian nation" that must expropriate the colonies of rich nations. His social criticism reflected the veterans' bitterness at war profiteers, pacifists, and the comfortable. Mussolini thought that the floating mass of veterans could be harnessed to a movement that would be both left and nationalist.

> The bourgeois revolution of 1789—which was revolution and war in one—opened the gates of the world to the bourgeoisie. . . . The present revolution, which is also a war, seems to open the gates of the future to the masses, who have served their hard apprenticeship of blood and death in the trenches.[3]

Early Fascism

The first *fasci*[4] were formed on March 23, 1919, when Mussolini gathered 145 friends in an upstairs room in Milan. There were a number of old syndicalist faithful who had shared his prowar attitudes in 1914, to whom were added veterans especially oriented toward chauvinism and direct action, such as the former *arditi* (commandos). The Milan *arditi* had their headquarters in the home of the futurist painter Filippo Marinetti, whose adulation of speed and violence helped set the intellectual tone.[5]

The fascist program, which was drafted by the prowar syndicalist Alceste De Ambris, mixed nationalism and social radicalism with impatient yearning to sweep away discredited prewar institutions. It demanded just rewards for Italian victory—acquisition of the lands in the Alps and along the Dalmatian coast that Italian nationalists called *Italia irredenta*, "unredeemed Italy." It also called for a constituent assembly, the vote for women, abolition of the Senate, a tax on capital, an eight-hour day in industry, workers' share in control of factories, confiscation of Church property, and a redistribution of land for peasants. The Italian Socialist party, from which Mussolini had been expelled in 1914, was attacked with a special loathing proper to a syndicalist renegade. Mussolini now joined nationalist war veterans in denouncing socialist moderation on Italian war aims as "renunciation," or betrayal of the soldiers.

Deeds spoke even louder than the caustic words of the *Popolo d'Italia*. Mussolini and Marinetti deliberately wrecked a socialist meeting at La Scala Opera House in Milan on January 11, 1919, and in April a group of *arditi* led by Marinetti sacked and burned the editorial offices of *Avanti!* Still, Mussolini supported workers' demands at the grass roots and publicly backed several sit-down strikes in which the workers themselves carried on production. It was not yet clear in 1919 whether fascism was meant to be a rival to socialism on the left or its enemy on the right.

Early fascism's blend of radicalism and nationalism failed to gain many recruits in 1919. As an independent candidate for parliament from Milan in November 1919, running on a program that mixed

[3] *Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 1919, quoted in Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925* (London, 1967), p. 517.

[4] *Fasci Italiani de Combattimento*. *Fascio* was simply a Latinate word for "bundle," or, by extension to politics, a closely knit band, unlike a party. Its usage had been largely left wing, as in the Sicilian anarchist *Fasci di combattimento* of 1894.

[5] See Chapter 1, p. 39, and Chapter 4, p. 123.

antiliberalism and antisocialism with attacks on big business, Mussolini got fewer than 5000 votes out of 270,000. Less than 1000 members remained active in the *fasci* at the end of 1919.

Fascism's New Course

It was the near civil war of 1919 and 1920 that set fascism on a new course and made its fortunes. Mussolini found that his group's physical attacks on socialists aroused more interest and more support than his radical language. The strikes and land seizures of 1919 had created genuine panic among the factory- and landowners. The turning point came with the workers' occupation of factories in Turin and Milan in August and September 1920.[6] Although Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti had successfully waited it out, so that the "factory council" movement burned itself out quickly, his unhurried calm had heightened the panicky owners' conviction that the liberal state could not save them. After the threat to their property had begun to subside, the owners of factories and land began to take matters into their own hands. To help them, they called on Mussolini's direct-action bands, the *squadristi.*

Mussolini had organized his *squadristi* in the supernationalistic Adriatic frontier territories. They saw their first action in Trieste in July 1920, where they sacked the headquarters of a Slovene nationalist association. It was a simple matter to switch from beating Slavs to beating socialists. Moreover, the *squadristi* received money from the landowners and industrialists for this purpose, as well as trucks and equipment from the Army. Through late 1920 and 1921, they exercised their war-learned brutalities on Italian socialists.

The *squadristi* were most active in the small towns and country villages of northeastern Italy, where local landowners used them to break up farm laborers' unions and cooperatives. Their "punitive expeditions" set off at night in borrowed trucks, manned by nationalist veterans, the unemployed, and sons of threatened landowners. At their destination, they beat socialist or left-Catholic organizers, often administering a near lethal dose of castor oil, or shaving off half a moustache. There were a few fatalities, but mostly the *squadristi* destroyed the offices or presses of their enemies. During the first six months of 1921, to take one period for which there are statistics, Mussolini's toughs destroyed twenty-five cooperative apartment houses, fifty-nine local labor clubhouses, eighty-five cooperatives, thirty-four headquarters of agricultural workers' unions, fifty-one political party headquarters, ten printing works, and six newspaper offices, mostly in rural north-central Italy.

Although Mussolini denied that the Fascists had become "watchdogs of capitalism," some of the economic radicals and revolutionary syndicalists of the first days dropped away, as did Marinetti. Their places were

[6] See Chapter 5, p. 159.

taken by a horde of frankly right-wing newcomers. Membership in the *fasci* mounted to 30,000 in 1920 and to ten times that, 300,000, by the end of 1922.

Governmental Crisis

Premier Giolitti tried to practice on the burgeoning Fascist movement the same coopting strategy that had worked with the reformist left in the course of his long parliamentary career. Giolitti believed that, like the factory occupations in 1920, fascism would lose its vehemence with time and experience. He drew Mussolini into an electoral coalition with his Liberal party and the Nationalists. In Italy's second postwar election on May 15, 1921, Giolitti's National Bloc won 105 seats out of a total of 535, of which Mussolini and the Fascists had 35. At first, Giolitti had reason to believe that he had tamed fascism and yoked it to his parliamentary coalition. Mussolini had already acceded to Giolitti's compromise over Fiume in 1920, and the Fascists had done nothing when Italian troops forced D'Annunzio's volunteers to give up the city. During 1921 Mussolini also made some attempt to curb the *squadristi*. That movement was almost beyond his control, however, and the local militants repeatedly forced Mussolini's hand by undertaking more raids.

At the same time, the parliamentary monarchy was proving incapable of governing postwar Italy. Postwar ministries had been unable to maintain law and order against either the revolutionary left or the vigilante right. The 1921 elections made things even worse by returning a parliament with no possible coherent majority. The center liberal and democratic parties had no majority by themselves. Socialists, with 123 seats, refused to participate in any bourgeois ministry. The most important newcomer on the Italian political scene was the left Catholic *Popolari* party of Don Luigi Sturzo, with 108 seats. But their demands for social reforms like land redistribution made coalition with Giolitti's Liberals impossible. And although some of Sturzo's followers were more radical than some socialists, the Church–state issue blocked any coalition between the *Popolari* and the anticlerical left. Giolitti, the personification of prewar centrist coalition politics, found no stable majority and left office in June 1921 for good at the age of seventy-eight.

For the next fourteen months, Italians endured a lingering governmental crisis, while postwar internal problems went unsolved. Demobilization and the end of wartime production had thrown Italy into economic depression. Rising unemployment and the defeats of 1919 and 1920 left Italian workers bitter and apathetic. Resentments seethed among returning veterans and a middle class pinched by inflation and fearful of revolution. Italians looking to the government for salvation saw only an unedifying round of fruitless coalition-mending among parliamentary factions. No government at all could be formed during the first three weeks of February 1922, the longest ministerial crisis up to

that time in Italy. After August 1922, there was only a caretaker ministry under a colorless Giolitti lieutenant, Luigi Facta, who governed without a majority.

The *squadristi* helped make Italy ungovernable during 1922. Local Fascists in northeastern Italy had now developed their own momentum of "punitive expeditions." The local leaders, called *ras* after Ethiopian feudal chieftains, resented Mussolini's attempts to curb their activities from his seat in parliament. Encouraged by local conservatives and army commanders, they now took over entire towns, expelling socialist or Communist mayors and councils. In May 1922, Italo Balbo, one of the most brutal of the *ras*, mobilized 50,000 unemployed in a "fascist strike" that held the town hall of Ferrara for a week until the local prefect had promised to hire them all on public works projects. At the end of May, he did the same with the Communist city government of Bologna. In July, Fascists took over Rimini, Cremona, and Ravenna, and in August, briefly, Milan. By the early fall of 1922, Fascists had become the *de facto* local government in parts of northern Italy.

The concentration of early Fascist power in north-central and northeastern Italy (Emilia, Tuscany, Romagna) is significant. It follows rather closely the region of maximum revolutionary agitation and conservative backlash in 1919 and 1920, especially areas where land tenure was threatened, as in the Po Valley. Such workers' strongholds as Turin remained closed to Fascist influence, and the underdeveloped south was almost untouched by it. Where it was strong, however, fascism exposed the incapacity of the Italian government to have its orders carried out.

The "March on Rome"

Mussolini, struggling to remain in control of his followers, heightened the governmental crisis by talking vaguely but incessantly about a "march on Rome." He suggested that, just as the *squadristi* had marched on Ferrara and other cities to clear out leftists, they would march on the capital to clear out incompetents. The Fascist Congress of October 1922 in Naples (the movement's first penetration of the south) went beyond talk. A high command of four Fascist leaders—*quadrumvirs* in the grandiose Latinisms that the movement relished—laid plans for three Fascist columns to converge on Rome during the night of October 27. The *quadrumvirs* themselves were a cross section of what Fascist personnel had become: Italo Balbo, former officer of Alpine troops and *ras* of Ferrara, stood for disgruntled veterans. Michele Bianchi had been a revolutionary syndicalist; he stood for fascism's roots in the antiparliamentary left. General Emilio De Bono came from the regular Army. Cesare De Vecchi, the organizer of fascism in Piedmont, was an avowed monarchist who stood for fascism's more recent recruits among traditional conservatives disillusioned by parliamentary monarchy.

It was not by a "march on Rome," however, that Mussolini became

prime minister of Italy on October 30. He arrived by sleeping car from Milan, after King Victor Emmanuel III had asked him to form a government in due constitutional form. The "march on Rome" was a threat, not a *coup d'état*. The threat exposed Prime Minister Luigi Facta's dependence on dubious Army support for survival. Rather than test that support, the king preferred to ask Mussolini himself to take over the task of maintaining order. The Fascist columns did not conquer Rome by force. Small, dispirited in a steady rain, and still apprehensive of the Army's reaction, they entered the city only after Mussolini had been legally invested with the office of prime minister.

How had this marginal agitator of 1919 become the head of the Italian government in October 1922? Mussolini's success was due partly to the absence of alternatives. A resolutely anti-Fascist government was possible only on condition that the socialists and the Catholic *Popolari* submerge their differences over religion. Only at the last minute, when it was too late, did the reformist socialists express a willingness to participate in an anti-Fascist coalition, but this act split their party. The governmental coalitions that were possible preferred to coopt Mussolini rather than block him. In October 1922, Giolitti was busy behind the scenes directing one more combination to include Fascists in a new ministry, but he offered Mussolini only a few seats, and he negotiated with pre-1914 slowness. Mussolini was encouraged to hold out for more by the fact that wartime Prime Minister Antonio Salandra was simul-

Mussolini and his *quadrumvirs* march in Rome, October 30, 1922. From left to right are Michele Bianchi, Italo Balbo, Mussolini, Cesare De Vecchi, and General De Bono.

taneously bargaining with him to bring the Fascists into a more frankly conservative coalition.

Mussolini's bedraggled *squadristi* might have been kept out of Rome and Mussolini left waiting by his telephone in Milan on October 29, had Prime Minister Facta and the king acted resolutely against them. There is good reason to think that the Army would have obeyed an order by the king to disperse the *squadristi*, whatever the private feelings of many officers. The king bears a heavy responsibility for refusing to test the Army's obedience. Encouraged by the queen, and nervous about reports that his cousin the Duke of Aosta was maneuvering for the crown with Fascist support, Victor Emmanuel refused to countersign Facta's decree of martial law on the morning of October 29. Instead, he appealed directly to Mussolini, who was anxiously waiting in the Milan offices of his newspaper. Mussolini arrived in Rome the following morning, October 30, and began forming his ministry.

Technically, Mussolini had become the prime minister of Italy according to constitutional form. In another sense, however, Mussolini had come to power by force. He had helped to make normal government impossible in 1921 and 1922, until the political leaders of Italy bought him off. Moreover, he had made a violent antisocialist weapon available to those groups in Italy—industrialists, landowners, army officers, and police—who wanted to smash socialism at all cost. By the time the *squadristi* had seized a number of northern and central towns, it would have taken force to exclude the Fascists from power.

The Emergence of Personal Rule

It was not clear in October 1922 whether Mussolini would govern by force or whether he would be "transformed," according to Giolitti's term, into just another parliamentary coalition-monger.

Mussolini's appearance when he stepped from the train reflected that ambiguity. He was wearing the black shirt and trousers of a Fascist, combined with the white spats of a bourgeois. "Your Majesty," he said to the king, "will you forgive my attire? I come from the battlefields."[7] The new cabinet also reflected its mixed origins. It was a coalition of Fascists with the center and right. Although there were only four Fascists among fourteen ministers, the Fascists held the key posts. Mussolini himself was interior minister (who controls the national police in most European countries) as well as foreign minister and prime minister. Three other Fascists held the ministries of justice, liberated territories, and finance. There were even two reformist Social Democrats in the cabinet, and such eminent centrists as Salandra served the regime as representative to the League of Nations. Behind this coalition, however, stood the restless *squadristi*, who began to talk of a "second revolution."

[7]Laura Fermi, *Mussolini* (Chicago, 1961), p. 204.

Fascist blackshirts burn socialist literature following the "march on Rome," November 1922.

How this mixture of elements would sort itself out remained an open question for the next two years. By external appearances, Mussolini reassured those who hoped only for another bourgeois ministry that would be a bit firmer and more antirevolutionary than the last. He appeared in black cutaways in public and instituted no startling innovations. The brutal side showed only in the Corfu affair. When an Italian general and some officers inspecting the Greek–Albanian border were assassinated on Greek territory in August 1923, Mussolini bombarded the Greek island of Corfu and occupied it until the Greeks were forced to apologize and pay an indemnity. Elsewhere, Italian foreign policy gave the impression of moderation, especially when the differences with Yugoslavia over Fiume were settled by treaty in January 1924.

Internally, the major change was the Acerbo Election Law.[8] This election gimmick awarded two-thirds of the seats in the lower house of the parliament to the party that received the largest number of votes (provided it was over 25 percent) and then distributed the rest among the other parties by proportional representation. It was approved by 235 votes to 139 (mostly socialist and communist) in a Chamber that included only 35 Fascists. Clearly, the center and right parties still chose order over electoral democracy, even if the Fascists were the chief gainers. With the machinery of government in their hands, Mussolini's coalition slate won 374 out of 535 seats in the elections of April 1924, of whom 275 were Fascists. It was the last quasi-normal election in Italy for twenty years.

[8]Named for its sponsor, the Fascist deputy Giacomo Acerbo.

Another brutal act of *squadrismo* soon forced Mussolini to choose between personal rule or defeat. On June 10, 1924, an emerging young leader of the parliamentary socialists, Giacomo Matteotti, was abducted and murdered by five Fascist thugs on the payroll of Mussolini's press secretary, Cesare Rossi. Although there is some reason to think that Mussolini had not directly ordered the killing, Matteotti's murder brought into the open the major issue of whether Mussolini was capable of even controlling the violence he had unleashed. Some centrist supporters of Mussolini broke with him, and the left opposition began to revive. For some months, Mussolini was disoriented and uncertain, exposing the vacillator under his tough mask.

Mussolini eventually saw that he must assume total power or lose the power he had. He spoke to the Chamber in a new, defiant mood on January 3, 1925: "We wish to make the nation fascist." At the same time, the militia was mobilized, a police crackdown was ordered on the growing liberal and socialist opposition, and restraints were removed from the *squadristi*. A series of decrees transformed Italy from a parliamentary monarchy into a one-party dictatorship. By the end of 1926, all parties except the Fascists had been dissolved, the death penalty, abolished in 1890, had been restored, controls had been imposed on the press and local government, and Mussolini was on his way toward the "second revolution" for which his more impatient followers had clamored.

NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN GERMANY

In Germany, defeat had followed the military triumphs of the spring of 1918 with dizzying suddenness. The German Empire had been overthrown, the kaiser exiled, and a new republic created whose ability to protect German property, German values, and German borders was doubted by conservatives and nationalists. The victors were busy carving off great slices of former German territory. The German Communist party was preparing further revolutionary steps. The Allied blockade made food scarcer than ever in the months following the armistice. Prices and unemployment were rising. Humiliation, hunger, and fear were the daily companions of many Germans during 1919 and 1920.

It was under these conditions in 1920 that a demobilized corporal named Adolf Hitler joined a nationalistic workers' society that had been formed in Munich in January 1918 to support the war effort, and was now trying to unite demobilized veterans and working men in a nationalistic but economically radical program.

Postwar Antirevolutionary Activity

Munich had become a gathering spot for radical right fringe groups and angry nationalists by 1920. The revolutionary pendulum had swung farthest to the left in Munich with the Soviet Republic of April 1919, and

then far to the right with that brief regime's destruction by the Army and General Franz X. von Epp's *Freikorps* in early May 1919. In 1920, the armed forces restored power, for the moment, to the moderate Social Democrats, who had governed in Bavaria since November 1918. Many of the officers, however, had only contempt for the new republic, which was bowing to the Treaty of Versailles. The *Freikorps* were even more passionate and less disciplined in their hatred of it.

As noted earlier, the General Staff had created these volunteer units to help control Berlin in December 1918, with the acquiescence of Social Democrats like Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske, who dominated the provisional government.[9] There was no difficulty finding *Freikorps* volunteers among the unemployed and among the swollen numbers of demobilized officers now adrift. The *Freikorps'* experience in putting down workers' uprisings in Berlin, Leipzig, and Munich in the spring of 1919 sharpened their antisocialist edge, and those who held the Baltic frontiers against the Russian Bolsheviks in 1919 and 1920 identified antisocialism with defense of the national territory. The *Freikorps* mixed together a poisonous brew of attitudes drawn from the young middle-class antibourgeois style of the prewar German hiking clubs (*Wandervögel*), the wartime hardening of the "front fighters," and the postwar crusade to save Germandom on the Baltic or in the streets of cities held by revolutionaries.

These armed enemies of the infant Weimar Republic could not destroy it by a frontal attack. They tried to do so in the "Kapp *Putsch*" of March 1920. When the republic attempted to demobilize some of the *Freikorps* units, one unit, the Erhardt Brigade, which had helped "clean up" Munich in May 1919, rebelled and marched into Berlin wearing its swastika symbol. Powerful antirepublicans, such as General Walther von Lüttwitz and Wolfgang Kapp, a nationalist politician who had helped found the Fatherland party in 1917, hoped to use Erhardt's men to unseat the government. When the Army commander in chief, General Hans von Seeckt, refused to divide the Army by ordering it into action against the Erhardt Brigade, the government left Berlin to the mutineers. Kapp's attempt to form a new government failed, however, when career civil servants refused to carry out his orders and when the most widespread workers' general strike of modern German history paralyzed the economy. After four days, Kapp gave up, and the Weimar Republic resumed its functions in Berlin.

In Munich, meanwhile, the local army command finally pushed aside the Social Democratic Bavarian state government and installed a more amenable nationalist state government under Gustav von Kahr, a conservative supporter of Bavarian autonomy. In the climate of the early Weimar Republic, "autonomy" meant not carrying out the federal government's efforts to control the insurrectionary right in the early 1920s.

[9]See Chapter 5, p. 150.

Those efforts were meager enough, for the republic's leaders had chosen to leave the reconstruction of the German Army under the Versailles restrictions to General Seeckt, whose political "neutrality" in March 1920 had opened Berlin to the Erhardt Brigade. In Munich, the Army did not even pretend to be neutral.

The Emergence of Hitler

The army command in Munich set up political instruction programs to guard its soldiers against subversive propaganda. One of the instructors was Adolf Hitler, a demobilized corporal now adrift in Munich. Hitler was the son of an Austrian customs official, a moody, solitary youth who had spent his early twenties in Vienna failing to get into architecture school, soaking up the German nationalism and anti-Semitism of the Vienna crowd, and feeling sorry for himself. Gifts from his mother and eventually an inheritance kept him from real want, although he chose to describe his Vienna years later in his autobiography *Mein Kampf* (1925) as a misunderstood young artist's struggle against poverty and subversive anti-German ideas. The outbreak of the First World War found him in Munich, where he had emigrated to avoid the Austrian draft. In 1914 Hitler volunteered in the Bavarian Army. The war gave him the first real fulfillment of his life. As a runner carrying messages between the front and headquarters, he spent four years in some physical danger. He was awarded the Iron Cross, a rare award for a corporal. Blinded temporarily by gas in 1918, he experienced hallucinations during which he claimed to have received a mystical summons to save Germany.

The Second Army's Political Department in Munich ordered Hitler in 1920 to investigate the German Workers' party as an undercover agent. The party had been founded in Munich in January 1918 by a locksmith eager to win his fellow workers from socialism to nationalism. Hitler joined the movement with card number 555, came to dominate it, and eventually dropped his army job to spend full time with the party. He changed its name to National Socialist German Workers' party.[10] Under Hitler, the party took on new dynamism and drew many new members from the same sources as the *Freikorps*. He bought a newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*Peoples' Observer*).[11] The party's paramilitary direct-action squad, the *Stürmabteilung* (SA.), or storm troopers, fought socialists in the streets and kept up the *Freikorps* tradition of the chosen band sworn to a single leader.

The Nazi Party

Hitler's new party was only one of the nationalist anti-Semitic direct-action groups that flourished in Germany in 1920. But it was more

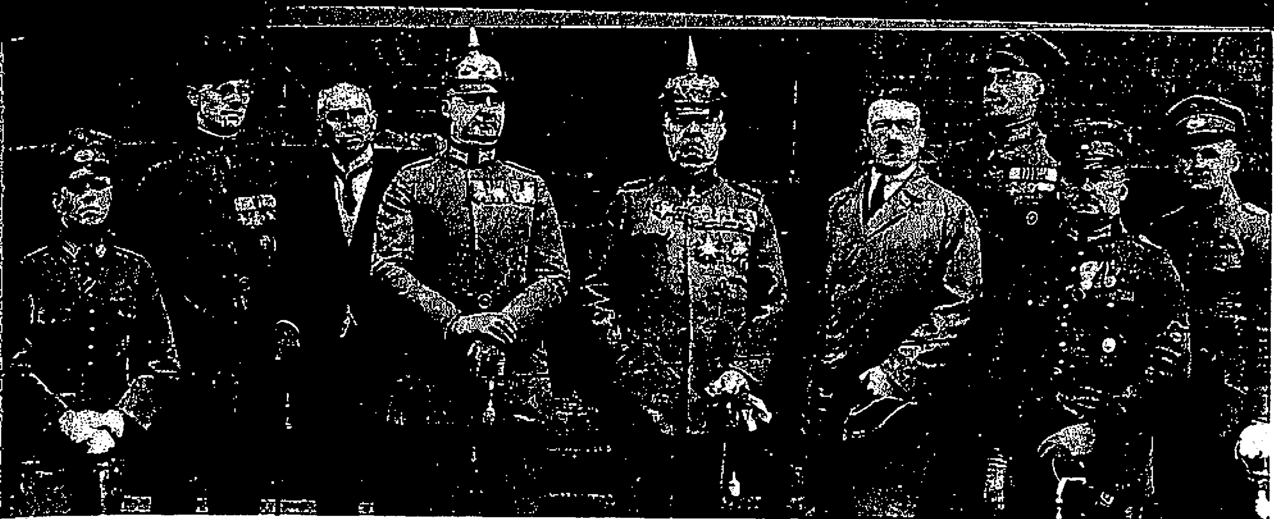
[10]NSDAP, *National-sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or "Nazi" Party for short.

[11]The German adjective *völkisch* is imperfectly translated as "peoples'." It refers to one's own ethnic stock in both racial and cultural terms, a meaning developed in nineteenth-century German nationalist writing.

successful than the others. Hitler managed to recruit a social cross section, one of the hallmarks of a fascist movement. In addition to the small craftsmen with which the movement had begun, there was support from the highly placed and the wealthy. Hitler enjoyed support from politically minded army officers, such as Captain Ernst Röhm and General von Epp, the *Freikorps* leader who had "liberated" Munich from the soviet in May 1919. Half the purchase money for the *Völkischer Beobachter* came from them, as well as useful protection and publicity. Other wealthy supporters were two women, Frau Bechstein (the piano-manufacturing family) and Frau Bruckmann (publishing), whom Hitler had met through Putzi Hanfstaengl, a Harvard-educated art dealer's heir and Munich café intellectual. There were drifting veterans, such as Captain Hermann Göring, the much-decorated fighter pilot who had succeeded Baron Manfred von Richthofen as commander of Germany's most famous fighter squadron and who was now unemployed and taking drugs. And there were ethnic Germans from the lost eastern borderlands, such as Alfred Rosenberg from the Baltic.

The Nazi party's program was set forth in the Twenty-Five Points, adopted in February 1920 when the party was still a small movement of artisans and craftsmen. Its content was a mixture of ardent nationalism, anti-Semitism, and anticapitalism. The program called for the abrogation of the Versailles Treaty and union with Austria in a Greater Germany, that is, a state larger than 1914 Germany. Jews were to be excluded from citizenship and office. The anticapitalism of the Twenty-Five Points, for which Hitler's predecessors in the German Workers' party were responsible, was not socialist in the sense of opposing private property or calling for socialist revolution. It was rather an assertion of the small man's grievances against his creditors and the rich. It called for abolition of unearned income, confiscation of war profits, nationalization of trusts, and regulation of the profits of large corporations. The Nazis proposed to "communalize" department stores in order to rent out their premises to groups of small tradespeople. They called for land reform, prevention of land speculation, and expropriation of land "for communal purposes."

The Twenty-Five Points were more noteworthy as an expression of lower-middle-class grievances than as a guide to later Nazi action. Once in power, a decade later, Hitler pursued quite different social policies. Even at the beginning, however, the Nazis put more stress on the techniques of mass mobilization than on programs. Mass parades and assemblies may have entered European politics on the left, but the Nazis turned them into an art form in the service of nationalism, antisocialism, and anti-Semitism. Uniforms, banners, and night rallies by torchlight touched many German emotions. The party openly mocked the Weimar Republic's efforts to control public order, as in the parade of 800 SA men in Coburg in October 1922 in defiance of a ban on demonstrations.



Hitler and his fellow conspirators in the Munich "beer hall Putsch" during their trial for high treason, February 24, 1924. General Erich Ludendorff is at the center next to Hitler, and Captain Ernst Röhm, commander of the SA., is second from right.

The direct actions of the SA. in breaking up enemy meetings gratified hatreds directly or vicariously, and provided publicity even in the hostile parts of the press.

The "Beer Hall *Putsch*," 1923

The German political climate grew stormy again in 1923. The French had occupied the Ruhr, the Communist party attempted to take power in the states of Saxony and Thuringia, and the currency inflated out of sight. Despair and scorn for the Weimar Republic pushed a tide of support toward the Nazis. General Ludendorff, the First World War commander, now stood at Hitler's side at rallies. Buoyed by such support, Hitler decided to force the nationalist state government of Bavaria to serve as his base for overthrowing the Weimar Republic. Invading a meeting in the Munich *Bürgerbräukeller* (a large beer hall) on November 8, 1923, the Nazis seized the Bavarian Governor Gustav von Kahr and senior local army and police officials and forced them to pledge public support to Hitler's appeal for a national revolution. Although Kahr and the others repudiated Hitler as soon as they were set free, Captain Ernst Röhm and his SA. men succeeded in occupying the Bavarian War Ministry with the complicity of army officers. Hitler led a march on other government buildings on November 9, confident that the presence beside him of General Ludendorff would neutralize the army and police units guarding them. The army commanders in Bavaria supported legal authority, however, and when Hitler and Ludendorff approached the government's barricades at the head of their column, the police fired. Sixteen Nazis and three policemen were killed. Hitler was arrested, and although he made use of his trial as a public platform ("I wanted to become the destroyer of Marxism"), he was sent to prison.

During 1924, the Weimar Republic managed to stabilize itself, and the tensions and vigilantism of 1923 greatly diminished. Nazism seemed to

Hitler returns the salute of one of his followers during a Nazi parade in the town of Weimar, 1926. Party Secretary Rudolf Hess is just behind Hitler's left elbow, and Captain Hermann Göring is partly hidden by the saluting member of the SA. at the front of Hitler's Mercedes.

be in decline. But the ingredients it contained were still latent in German society and values, ready to be summoned forth in the event of any future crisis.

COUNTERREVOLUTION IN HUNGARY

Hungary, too, was ripe for a mass, anti-Marxist, nationalist movement after the First World War. Proportionally, Hungary was the greatest territorial loser of the war. Once a ruling state lording it over minorities of Slovaks, Romanians, and South Slavs, Hungary was now a starveling remnant barely one-third its prewar size. Three million Magyars were now themselves minority subjects in Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. Every political movement, from Marxist to royalist, rejected the Treaty of the Trianon (Hungary's part of the Paris peace settlement) and called for national restoration. Nearly every Hungarian was revisionist and nationalist. Their response to Hungary's postwar status was the slogan *Nem, nem, soha* (no, no, never).

The British historian A. J. P. Taylor had some reason for calling Hungary "the first breeding ground of fascism."[12] Postwar events had poisoned liberal values in Hungary, for the October Republic of Prince

[12]A. J. P. Taylor, "Introduction," in Michael Karolyi, *Memoirs. Faith Without Illusion* (New York, 1957), p. 7.

Michael Karolyi,[13] even more than the Weimar Republic for German nationalists, spelled national humiliation and social disorder. The soviet regime set up in 1919 gave a nasty fright to the ruling gentry and aristocracy, who had always enjoyed the most one-sided land distribution in Europe outside of Romania and southern Spain.[14] The desperately land-hungry peasants hated "communists and gentlemen" equally.[15] A large uprooted and frightened mass of demobilized army officers and of Hungarian officials expelled from the lost two-thirds of the kingdom, further swelled by business and professional people bankrupted by territorial amputation and postwar economic dislocation, built up both anti-Semitic and anti-Marxist sentiments. They resented the extremely large role of Jews in Hungarian banking and commerce,[16] as well as Béla Kun's soviet regime.

Postwar Hungary was formed in counterrevolution. Even during the October Republic of 1918, before Kun's 133-day soviet regime, demobilized officers and uprooted civil servants were forming secret societies devoted to replacing Western ideas with "Hungarianism," a vague mixture of racist and hierarchical social ideas expressed in romantic neomedieval language. The town of Szeged, on the southern border and behind the protection of French armies, was the center of these movements. From here sprang the "circle of the twelve captains," antiliberal young army officers who furnished part of the interwar Hungarian leadership. They soon formed such underground activist groups as the Awakening Hungarians or the EZSZ (Etelköz Association), which claimed to be an imitation of early Hungarian tribal society, complete with an oath to seven tribal chiefs and commitment to "a great, Christian, and racially pure Hungary."

The most eminent personage at Szeged was Admiral Miklós Horthy, the last commander in chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy. But the most dynamic figure was one of the "twelve captains," Captain Gyula Gömbös, who organized a volunteer anti-Bolshevik army under Horthy's command. Gömbös, born to a schoolteacher and a farmer's daughter in a German-speaking district, stood outside the gentry families that had traditionally ruled Hungary, and even outside a fully Hungarian cultural inheritance. He compensated for this, however, by the vehemence of his opposition to the Paris peace settlement, his devotion to Hungarian cultural revival, and his attacks on Marxism as "a destructive heresy foisted on simple workers by self-seeking international Jews."[17]

[13] See Chapter 5, pp. 155–56.

[14] C. A. Macartney, *The Hapsburg Empire, 1790–1918* (New York, 1969), pp. 713, 716. About 4000 great families owned about a third of the arable land in prewar Hungary.

[15] Istvan Deak, "Hungary," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right* (Los Angeles, 1965), p. 385.

[16] "In 1910, 21.8% of salaried employees in industry, 54.0% of self-employed traders, and 85.0% of the self-employed persons in banking and finance were Jews." (*Ibid.*, p. 368.)

[17] Quoted in Eugen Weber, *The Varieties of Fascism* (New York, 1964), p. 90.

Gömbös was already calling himself a national socialist in 1919: national, in his determination to restore Hungarian values and frontiers to what he imagined was their historic right; socialist, in his proposal to expropriate international financiers to make jobs for Hungarian workers and expropriate great estates to give land to Hungarian peasants. Unlike the Hungarian gentry, Gömbös had no use for the Habsburg ruling house. He was later to block all attempts to restore Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl as king of Hungary during the 1920s, and when he became prime minister in 1932, Gömbös formed the first cabinet in modern Hungarian history that contained no aristocrats. Gömbös' Party of Racial Defense became a rallying point for demobilized junior officers, angry nationalists, and anti-Semitic lower-level civil servants and businessmen. He drew inspiration after 1922 from Mussolini's platform style and was in touch with Hitler as early as 1923.

Another Hungarian counterrevolutionary center in 1919 was Vienna, where an anti-Bolshevik Committee was formed under Count Istvan

Admiral Miklós Horthy, regent of Hungary, 1919–44.

Bethlen, a great landowner from the Calvinist aristocracy of eastern Hungary. Bethlen spoke for a more aristocratic, tolerant, and cultivated milieu of great landowners who were more sympathetic than Gömbös to the limited parliamentary traditions of the late–nineteenth-century ruling families of Hungary.

From these two counterrevolutionary centers—Szeged and Vienna—came the forces that occupied Budapest after the Romanians had driven Béla Kun out on August 1, 1919. The retaking of Budapest was accompanied by a "White Terror" that took the lives of 2000 persons more or less indiscriminately identified as socialists or Jews. Admiral Horthy began a landlocked second career as "regent" of a Hungarian monarchy whose throne was vacant.

The predominant influence at first lay with the "racialist dynamism and the anti-Red fury" of Szeged secret societies and young "captains." By 1921, however, the social fever had diminished. Horthy made Count Bethlen prime minister. Although the Bethlen regime was free from the more strident anti-Semitism and mysticism of the Szeged officers, it tried to restore gentry rule. Bethlen reduced eligible voters to 27 percent of the population, for example, and restored public balloting in the rural precincts so that landlords could know how their peasants voted. He permitted labor unions to function again in cities, but this bargain forbade them to try to organize agricultural workers. A form of oligarchic parliamentarism thus took over from the Szeged groups for the rest of the 1920s.

A CLOSER LOOK AT FASCISM

The three groups examined above—Italian fascism, German National Socialism, and Hungarian counterrevolutionary movements—were not the only popular, violence-prone, antiliberal, and anti-Marxist movements active in Europe at the end of the war. There were many smaller, less successful examples. The Frenchman Georges Valois broke with the monarchist Catholic *Action française* after the war, in search of a more radical nationalism and antiparliamentarianism with which to draw French workers away from Marx. His *Faisceau* was an attempt to adapt the Italian *fascio*, or band of brothers, directly to French conditions. A longer lasting French movement was *Jeunesses patriotes* (Patriotic Youth), a direct-action squad of nationalist students and veterans, founded in 1924 by the champagne manufacturer Pierre Taittinger. The Romanian student Corneliu Codreanu's National-Christian Socialism movement of 1920 was devoted to strikebreaking, the disruption of liberal professors' classes, and a campaign to restrict the number of Jews in Romanian universities and professions. Such movements were widespread, novel, and important. What did they stand for, and how did they come about?

The Meaning of Fascism

Fascism was not simply the far right. The terms *right* and *left* were first applied to politics during the French Revolution.[18] They belong to the political vocabulary of nineteenth-century struggles over popular sovereignty, individual liberties, and property. With fascist movements, we find ourselves in a strange landscape where familiar signposts like *right* and *left* do not give very precise directions.

Much about the early fascist movements seemed insurrectionary and hostile to traditional rightist conservatism. Like the left, fascism was a mass movement. Its marching ranks wearing identically colored shirts, its plebeian leaders full of contempt for kings and aristocrats, its strident rallies, and its appeals to action, were worlds away from the hereditary hierarchies and deferential, passive lower orders that traditional conservatives longed for. No one would mistake Captain Gömbös for the polished Count Bethlen, or Mussolini for an Italian aristocrat or wealthy industrialist. Many fascists were hostile to the Church (although less so in Romania and Hungary).

Early fascist platforms called their movements "national syndicalist" or "national socialist," and leveled bitter attacks on international capitalism, department stores, banks, and, in some cases, on large land holdings. They recruited former syndicalists who hated the Socialist party, young bourgeois who hated their parents' generation, veterans who hated those who had sent them to war and then not provided them with jobs, intellectuals who hated modern mass culture, and desperate marginal shopkeepers and professional people. Because all of them wanted sweeping, violent changes, it has been tempting to consider fascists revolutionaries. "National Socialism," wrote Hermann Rauschning, a former Nazi leader in Danzig who broke with the party, "is an unquestionably genuine revolutionary movement in the sense of the 'mass rising' dreamed of by Anarchists and Communists."[19] This revolution was aimless, Rauschning thought, except in terms of grasping and consolidating power, but it was no less destructive of the *status quo*.

On the one hand, the anticapitalist and antibourgeois rhetoric would appear to make the fascists opposed to the right. On the other hand, all fascist movements without exception saw Marxism as the enemy and flabby liberalism as the enemy's main accomplice. Fascist violence was directed against socialist and left-Catholic parties and unions and against ethnic "enemies." The regimes that fascists wished to overthrow were the ineffective liberal or reformist regimes that they judged inadequate to maintain national power, jobs, and order.

[18] In the converted riding stable used for the National Assembly of 1789, seats were arranged in the shape of a fan, rather than facing each other as in the chapel long used by the British parliament. The French king's supporters fell into the habit of sitting on the speaker's right, his opponents on the speaker's left.

[19] Hermann Rauschning, *Revolution of Nihilism* (New York, 1939), p. 19.

Anticapitalist and antibourgeois rhetoric, moreover, was not universal to fascist movements, and it was always a selective anticapitalism they preached. Their grievances were those of a middle class squeezed by inflation and caught between growing capitalist corporations and growing trade unions. When they called for the nationalization of the banks to which they were indebted, to "break the capital-interest yoke" (Point 11 of the Nazi Twenty-Five Points), they wanted easy credit and low interest for their small businesses, not socialism. When they called for the nationalization of the trusts whose competition threatened them, they wanted to protect small property, not abolish property. Their call for an organized economy meant the dissolution of independent trade unions, not the end of free enterprise. Despite the antibourgeois rhetoric of some of its intellectuals, fascism wanted a revolution to protect the middle class, not to install the proletariat in power. "Things must change if they are going to remain the same," says one of the characters in Giuseppe de Lampedusa's novel of Sicilian society, *The Leopard* (1956).

In any event, fascist rhetoric was much less important than fascist practice. The one fascist movement to gain power in the 1920s, Italian fascism, did so with the aid and complicity of traditional conservatives. Once in power, it forgot its early rhetoric and came to terms with king, aristocracy, Church, and business (as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 9). German National Socialism made similar alliances to reach power. To claim, as have some Marxists, that fascism was merely a device created by capitalists for the dual purpose of beating back Marxism and organizing a chaotic world economy, is to underestimate the popular roots of fascist movements.[20] But it is difficult to deny that fascists and traditional conservatives often struck up fruitful alliances. Fascism belongs on the right clearly enough, but it was a new right.

The proper placement of fascism on a right–left scale is further complicated by its claim to cut across class lines. Fascists promised to cancel out the class struggle in a fervent national reconciliation. That was one of its appeals to the traditional right. That claim was not altogether spurious. Although the middle class provided the most recruits, fascism did indeed attract some workers, mostly those outside the pervasive socialist culture of the European working class: patriotic antisocialists, the youthful unemployed, and the unorganized poor in areas like Eastern Europe and southern Italy, where the poor had never received the attentions of a mass movement.

In some ways, youth distinguishes fascism better than does class or political ideology. Fascism tapped the rebellious rejection of the young outsiders of a generation that had come of age in the trenches of war or in the street demonstrations and unemployment lines of the immediate postwar days. Mussolini's *squadristi* marched off singing *Giovinezza*

[20]Serious Marxist interpreters of fascism have avoided this error. See Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London and New York, 1974).

(Youth). Captain Gömbös was thirty-three in 1920; Codreanu was twenty; Hitler thirty-one.

Fascism leaves behind the nineteenth-century world in which middle- and lower–middle-class Europeans were usually liberal. In times of emergency, such as economic depression, national defeat, or inadequate access to political redress, middle-class Europeans had tended to polarize toward the left, as in the revolutions of 1848. In fascist movements, lower–middle-class Europeans moved toward a radical antisocialist, antiliberal authoritarianism. They found wanting the predominantly liberal or socialist values of their fathers. This is the larger historical transformation that students of fascism must examine.

The Roots of Fascism

Although fascism in its fully developed form burst on the world only after the shocks of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, it is possible to discern a number of ways in which the terrain had been prepared in the late nineteenth century.

A first step was some conservatives' acceptance of mass politics. In the mid-nineteenth century, activist authoritarians like the French Emperor Napoleon III and the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck adopted universal manhood suffrage as a tactic for recruiting mass support over the heads of the upper-class liberal parliamentary opposition.

The Catholic Church, too, accepted the necessity for mass politics, and began to make its peace with anticlerical liberals who were sufficiently antisocialist. In the days of Pope Pius IX (1846–78), the main enemies of the Church had been the new, militantly anticlerical French Republic, which took public education out of the Church's hands in the 1880s, and the new, unified Kingdom of Italy, which had seized Church lands in 1870. Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) nudged French Catholics toward acceptance of the French Third Republic in the 1890s. Leo's successor, Pius X (1903–14), made an even more conspicuous departure in 1904 when he authorized Italian Catholics to vote in cases where their ballots could block a socialist candidate. It was the first Italian election since 1870 in which Catholics had been permitted by the Church to take part. The clerical issue was not dead, as a bitter squabble over separation of Church and state in France in 1905 proved. But it was one of the nineteenth-century divisions whose significance was becoming eclipsed by the growing power of socialism. By the end of the nineteenth century, many European conservatives preferred to adapt to mass politics rather than follow the traditional conservative aim of trying to keep the masses out of politics.

This tactic made sense, of course, only if mass support for conservative interests was forthcoming. There were signs at the end of the nineteenth century of the exhaustion of liberalism as the organizer of the European middle and lower middle classes. On the political level, as

socialist parties began winning substantial numbers of parliamentary seats through manhood suffrage in the 1890s,[21] some middle-class Europeans began having second thoughts about the efficacy of parliamentary democracy. On the economic level, many middle-class Europeans felt no love for a laissez-faire, free-market economy that pinched them between increasingly organized capitalists and increasingly organized labor. Small property, the individual shop or craft, had been the chief lower–middle-class route to independence. But such property came under permanent pressure in the late nineteenth century: small shops suffered from the competition of new forms of retailing through chains and department stores; craftsmen suffered from industrial competition. These pressures were intensified during periods of cyclical business depression in the 1880s and early 1890s.

The resentments of small businessmen and craftsmen could not be expressed very well through existing parties, either Marxist or liberal. Liberal political economists still resisted state intervention in the economy. Marxists opposed all private property in production and commerce, while advocating continued industrialization as the necessary preparation for the next stage of socialist, collectivized abundance. Middle-class opponents of laissez-faire capitalism were groping confusedly before the war for some "middle way" or "third way,"[22] neither liberal nor Marxist. Only something new seemed able to protect small property from both big business and big labor. That was the kind of new formula that Charles Maurras was already putting together in the *Action française* movement of the early 1900s. One of his precocious campaigns, for example, attacked a dairy chain that threatened the livelihood of small grocers.

While the independent lower middle class slowly and painfully contracted in Europe before the First World War, the salaried lower middle class grew rapidly, providing another potential mass clientele for fascism. Karl Marx had expected industrial progress to produce an ever-larger proletariat. Instead, the proportion of factory workers in northern and western Europe leveled off at around one-third of the total populations in the 1890s. Although the absolute numbers of industrial workers continued to increase, their relative numbers were kept down by enormous increases in the lower middle class, or what has been called the tertiary sector of the economy: white-collar employees, clerical workers, workers in sales and distribution, and lesser civil servants. These groups have constituted the fastest growing segment of the population of industrialized and urbanized European countries in the twentieth century. Although they worked for wages like any factory worker, many

[21] The number of French socialist deputies increased from twelve to forty-one in the election of 1893; the German Social Democratic party's voters grew from 763,128 in 1887 to 3,010,771 in 1903, or from 10.1 percent to 31.7 percent of the total vote.

[22] These phrases recur in the political discussions of the 1920s and 1930s. See Chapter 11, pp. 327–28.

white-collar employees clung to some sign of middle-class respectability. The German or Austrian petty civil servant, black suit worn shiny at the elbows, briefcase containing only a lunchtime salami, is, like many caricatures, close to reality. This new middle class supported democracy as long as it promised them security or progress. In a crisis, however, they were terrified of dropping into the proletariat. Although many of them hated their bosses, they hesitated to become socialist, which meant accepting proletarian status. The European lower middle class had supplied mass recruits for the revolutionary barricades of 1848; they supplied even more mass recruits for the fascist right in the twentieth century.

The exhaustion of liberalism was apparent also on the intellectual plane before the war. This did not mean the victory of liberalism's old enemies. By the end of the nineteenth century, traditional conservatives' challenge to liberalism in the name of faith and the divine right of hereditary authority was no longer taken very seriously. The important change was a dissipation of liberal confidence in human progress and the universality of human reason within liberalism's former stronghold, the educated middle class. An earlier chapter examined the many levels—the visual arts, philosophy, psychology, and science—in which nineteenth-century liberal assumptions were being challenged.[23] Some of the challengers themselves, such as the futurist painter Marinetti, joined enthusiastically and directly into the action and the contempt for liberal values that Mussolini's fascism offered. Other Europeans were prepared more subtly and indirectly for fascism by the disintegration of the familiar liberal intellectual universe. Some felt a sense of foreboding at the century's end. Some felt revulsion at the ugliness of urban, industrial society, at the shrill destructiveness of intellectuals, and at the bland optimism of unthinking philistines. They were frightened by a feeling that Europe was decadent. The fear of decadence easily turned into a cosmic historical pessimism. Maurras' Frenchmen could measure the decline of their nation's power under the flabby Third Republic; Italians looked back to a vanished Roman Empire; Georg von Schönerer's Austrian-Germans saw their people being swallowed up in a sea of Slavs and Jews. One remedy appeared to be the kind of national revival in which racial purity, mass fervor, and authoritarian rule somehow reinforced one another.

The generous nationalism of the early nineteenth century, which envisioned the self-determining nations as a future happy family, had become much more closed and exclusive in the late nineteenth century. At the same time, the concept of race gained greater currency. Liberal intellectuals had put uppermost those qualities of all humanity that united people across the artificial barriers of title and rank, but the explorers, travelers, geographers, and anthropologists of expanding

[23]See Chapter 1, pp. 36–41.

nineteenth-century Europe rediscovered humanity's diversity, most of which they attributed to race. Racial thinking spread among less-educated Europeans in the form of anti-Semitism. Efforts by the Russian tsars to "Russify" all their minorities after the 1880s helped stimulate popular passions against the Jews concentrated in the Pale of western Russia and Poland, to which they were restricted by law. Pogroms, attacks on Jewish shops and settlements, caused thousands of deaths after the 1880s; the most vicious single pogrom before the war was the murder of over 300 Jews in Odessa, in October 1905, while the authorities stood by. The emigration of Orthodox Jews from Russia aroused antagonism to these outsiders in Western Europe in the 1890s. Medieval Christian hostility to Jews was now reinforced by notions of racial difference and the fear that Jews weakened the homogeneity of any nation that harbored them.

All the ingredients of fascism were thus present before 1914. The First World War was a catalyst of fascism rather than its creator. In a number of different ways at once, the war experience magnified and fused these disparate elements. The war so discredited the entire prewar European dispensation, particularly among the young, that the search for a "new way" took on new urgency among all those unwilling to accept the Soviet model for change. The war also revealed depths of human evil and irrationality that confirmed the prewar critique of liberal assumptions.

The war multiplied by many times fascism's potential clientele. A whole generation had gone off to war, and some of these young men had returned hardened and embittered with the "front fighter" mentality of those who had been through the "steel bath" of the First World War. Italo Balbo, Mussolini's future associate, recalled that

> when I returned from the war—just like so many others—I hated politics and politicians, who, in my opinion, had betrayed the hopes of soldiers, reducing Italy to a shameful peace and to a systematic humiliation Italians who maintained the cult of heroes. To struggle, to fight in order to return to the land of Giolitti, who made a merchandise of every ideal? No. Rather deny everything, destroy everything, in order to renew everything from the foundations.[21]

These veterans, unassimilable into peacetime drudgery, sought ways to keep alive the hard, pure masculine camaraderie of the trenches. By themselves they would have merely created marginal street gangs. A mass clientele was provided, however, by wartime social change: dislocations threatened the status of whole masses of formerly secure members of the middle class. The workers' rise frightened the status conscious, and the enormous impetus given to industrial concentration by total war frightened the small businessman. But the major engine of dislocation for the middle classes was inflation.

Wartime price rises did not stop in 1918. In France, after a brief

[21]Quoted in Herman Finer, *Mussolini's Italy* (London, 1935), p. 139.

postwar stabilization, the franc fell on international exchanges during the years 1924 to 1926 to a fraction of its prewar value. When the franc was stabilized in 1928 at one-fifth of its prewar international exchange value, the French middle class, whose savings were now worth only twenty centimes for every prewar franc saved, felt they had paid a disproportionate share of war damages. Inflation was still worse in Italy, and far worse in the truncated remnants of Austria-Hungary. In Austria, in July 1919, it cost about 2500 crowns to buy a month's supply of food for a family of four; in July 1922, it cost 297,000 crowns.[25] In Germany, the currency simply ceased to buy anything in the runaway inflation of 1923. Anyone with a fixed income was reduced to charity, and the underpinnings of middle-class independence—savings, investments, and annuities—were simply wiped out.

The final catalyst to fascism was the threat of revolutionary socialism. A map of emerging fascism fits the map of revolutionary emergency in 1919 and 1920 fairly well, although not perfectly. Some Europeans still put their faith in traditional conservatism. After the intense labor strife of 1917 to 1920 in Spain, a military dictatorship under General Primo de Rivera governed the country without any fascist trappings, under the ultimate authority of King Alfonso XIII. The Portuguese Republic was overthrown in 1926 by a military junta without any clear program except disgust with party politics. The victor nations of Britain and France resolved their postwar problems within their existing parliamentary framework. By 1923, only one European nation—Italy—had a regime of the new style, and although some other Europeans imitated the uniforms, the colored shirts, the rhetoric, and the tone of fascism, it was not certain how widely it would spread.

Fascism remained available, however, for future emergencies. If faced with disintegration of the economy in depression or inflation, disintegration of the culture in modern decadence, and disintegration of the nation in class struggle, frightened Europeans might well turn to a forcible integration of economy, culture, and classes within a fascist state.

[25]Charles A. Gulick, *Austria from Habsburg to Hitler*, vol. 1 (Los Angeles, 1948), p. 153.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

A good starting point is the narrative of Francis L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism,** 2nd ed. (1980). Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right** (1965), contains interesting essays on each nation's right-wing conservatism, broadly interpreted.

Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy, 1919–29* (1973), is the most penetrating study of the Fascist takeover in Italy, though Angelo Tasca, *The Rise of Italian Fascism, 1918–22* (1938), the classic work of an ex-Communist exile, remains indispensable. Paul Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara* (1975), is an illuminating case study.

Denis Mack Smith's richly detailed *Mussolini* (1982), is the most up-to-date biography in English. Michael A. Ledeen provides a glimpse of Mussolini's main Italian biographer in "Renzo de Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 1975). Both give more weight to personality and chance in Mussolini's career than do the works cited in the preceding paragraph. Gaudens Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making* (1938), is still interesting for the early years.

Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny,** revised ed. (1962), is still the most successful biographer in weaving the life into the larger historical context, but there is additional detail in later biographies, the most satisfactory of which is Joachim Fest, *Hitler** (1974). The early years of the Nazi party are explored in institutional terms in Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party,* 2 vols. (1969–73), and in sociopolitical terms by Jeremy Noakes, *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, 1921–33* (1971), and Geoffrey Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria* (1973). Harold J. Gordon, Jr., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch** (1972), explains how Hitler gained ascendancy over other nationalist leaders in the 1920s.

The beginnings of Hungarian fascism are suggestively introduced by Istvan Deak in the Rogger and Weber volume mentioned above and colorfully elaborated in Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green-Shirts and the Others* (1970).

Numerous works attempt to provide a general interpretation of fascism. Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (1977), surveys the field, with preference for non-Marxist viewpoints. Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition** (1980), offers a "descriptive typology" based on well-informed comparison. Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide** (1976), contains important discussions of recent controversies about interpreting fascism. Stein U. Larsen et al., eds., *Who Were the Fascists?* (1980), combines probing general essays with detailed study of various national movements.

Eugen Weber, *The Varieties of Fascism** (1964; reprint ed., 1982), enriched by an excellent selection of fascist texts, argues for the movement's ideological and revolutionary character. John Weiss, *The Fascist Tradition** (1967), stresses fascism's links to traditional conservative elites. Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism** (1969), probes for fascism's roots in the exhaustion of liberal, universalist values. Stuart J. Woolf, ed., *The Nature of Fascism* (1968), and *Fascism in Europe** (1981), contain helpful articles, as does Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse, eds., *International Fascism, 1920–1945* (1966).

Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (1961); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology** (1964; reprint ed., 1981); and Peter G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (1964), all discuss some of the cultural precursors and preconditions of National Socialism. A. James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism: The Rationale of Totalitarianism* (1969), provides a valuable description of fascist programs, although he takes them too literally as a guide to understanding fascist policies.

Konrad H. Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism** (1982), helps explain why Hitler won so strong an early following among students.