

Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945

Philip Morgan



London and New York

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945

‘An excellent brief survey of fascism which treats all the major themes and problems, and is highly recommended.’

Stanley Payne, University of Wisconsin-Madison

‘The first book which makes the era of fascism as a whole fully intelligible to the student and the general reader.’

Roger Griffin, Oxford Brookes University

Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945 surveys the elusive and controversial phenomenon which is still the object of interest and debate over fifty years after its defeat in the Second World War. It introduces recent scholarship and continuing debates on the nature of fascism as well as often contentious contributions by foreign historians and political scientists.

From the pre-First World War intellectual origins of fascism to its demise in 1945, this book examines:

- the two ‘waves’ of fascism – in the period immediately following the First World War and in the late 1920s and early 1930s;
- whether the European crisis created by the Treaty of Versailles allowed fascism to take root;
- why fascism came to power in Italy and Germany, but not anywhere else in Europe;
- fascism’s own claim to be an international and internationalist movement;
- the idea of ‘totalitarianism’ as the most useful and appropriate way of analysing the fascist regimes.

With a timeline of key dates, maps, illustrations, a glossary and a guide to further reading, *Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945* is an invaluable introduction to this fascinating political movement and ideology.

Philip Morgan is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary European History at the University of Hull. His previous publications include *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945* (1995) and *Italy, 1915–1940* (1998).

Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945

Philip Morgan



London and New York

First published 2003

by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada

by Routledge

29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

©2003 Philip Morgan

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-44822-7 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-75646-0 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-16942-9 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-16943-7 (pbk)

This book is dedicated with love to my wife, Glen, in the hope that this time she will get beyond page eleven

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>Chronology</i>	xiii
Introduction: the historical problem of fascism	1
<i>The setting for fascism</i>	5
<i>National tensions</i>	8
<i>The threat from the left</i>	9
<i>Economic difficulties</i>	11
<i>Defining fascism</i>	13
1 The roots of fascism	15
<i>The turn-of-the-century 'counter-culture'</i>	16
<i>Fascism before the war?</i>	19
<i>The First World War</i>	23
<i>The first fascism</i>	26
2 Fascist movements: the first wave, 1919–29	29
<i>The Austrian Heimwehr</i>	33
<i>The Nazis in Germany</i>	35
<i>Hungary</i>	38
<i>The Romanian Iron Guard</i>	41
<i>Fascism in Italy</i>	46
<i>Fascism in France in the 1920s</i>	51
<i>The first wave of fascism</i>	59
3 Fascist movements: the second wave, 1929–40	64
<i>The German Nazi party</i>	65
<i>Austria</i>	71
<i>The Gömbös regime and the Arrow Cross in Hungary</i>	74

	<i>The Iron Guard in Romania</i>	81
	<i>Fascism in Finland</i>	86
	<i>Fascism in Denmark, Norway and Sweden</i>	90
	<i>The British Union of Fascists</i>	93
	<i>Fascism in the Low Countries</i>	97
	<i>Francisme and the PPF in France</i>	102
	<i>Fascism in Spain</i>	109
	<i>The second wave of fascism</i>	114
4	The fascist regimes in Italy and Germany	119
	<i>Fascist 'totalitarianism'</i>	124
	<i>Charismatic leadership and fascist systems of rule</i>	131
	<i>Fascism at war, both home and abroad, 1936–39</i>	144
5	Fascist internationalism	159
	<i>The model of Italian Fascism in the 1920s</i>	161
	<i>The two models of fascism in the 1930s</i>	163
	<i>The fascist International</i>	167
	<i>The Axis</i>	172
	<i>Nazi Germany during the Second World War</i>	177
	<i>The 'final solution'</i>	179
	<i>The Nazi New Order in Europe</i>	181
	<i>Fascist collaborationism</i>	183
6	The phenomenon of fascism	190
	<i>Fascism and modernisation</i>	190
	<i>Fascism and Marxism</i>	194
	<i>The context of fascism</i>	197
	<i>Glossary</i>	200
	<i>Notes</i>	204
	<i>Guide to further reading</i>	205
	<i>Bibliography</i>	208
	<i>Index</i>	211

Illustrations

Maps

1	European frontiers and the post-war settlement, 1919–37	2
2	European governments, 1919–37	3

Figures

1	Corneliu Zelea Codreanu	42
2	'If You Tolerate This, Your Children will be Next' poster	164
3	'El Generalismo' poster	165
4	Leon Degrelle	185
5	Ferenc Szálasi	188

Abbreviations

AKS	<i>Akateeminen Karjala-Seura</i> [Academic Karelia Society (Finland)]
ANI	<i>Associazione Nazionale Italiana</i> [Italian Nationalist Association]
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CAUR	<i>Comitato d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma</i> [Action Committee for the Universality of Rome]
CEDA	<i>Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas</i> [Spanish Confederation of the Independent Right]
CONFINDUSTRIA	<i>Confederazione dell'Industria Italiana</i> [Italian Industrialists Confederation]
DAF	<i>Deutsche Arbeitsfront</i> [German Labour Front]
DAP	<i>Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> [German Workers' Party]
DNSAP	<i>Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbejder Parti</i> [Danish National Socialist Workers' Party]
DNSAP	<i>Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei</i> [German National Socialist Workers' Party]
DNVP	<i>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</i> [German National People's Party]
FE de las JONS	<i>Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindacalista</i> [Spanish Falanx of National Syndicalist Assault Groups]
FET	<i>Falange Española Tradicionalista</i> [Traditionalist Spanish Falanx]
FR	<i>Fédération Républicaine</i> [Republican Federation (France)]
GESTAPO	<i>Geheime Staatspolizei</i> [Secret State Police (Germany)]
GIL	<i>Gioventù Italiana del Littorio</i> [Italian Youth of the Lictors]
IKL	<i>Isänmaallinen Kansanliike</i> [People's Patriotic Movement (Finland)]
JAP	<i>Juventud de Acción Popular</i> [Youth for Popular Action (Spain)]

KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> {German Communist Party}
LANC	League of National Christian Defence (Romania)
MVSN	<i>Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale</i> {Voluntary National Security Militia (Italy)}
NCP	National Christian Party (Romania)
NPP	National Peasants Party (Romania)
NS	<i>Nasjonal Samling</i> {National Unity (Norway)}
NSB	<i>Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging</i> {National Socialist Movement (Netherlands)}
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> {National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party}
NU	<i>Nederlandse Unie</i> {United Netherlands}
ONB	<i>Opera Nazionale Balilla</i> {National Balilla Organisation (Italy)}
OND	<i>Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro</i> {National Afterwork Organisation (Italy)}
PCF	<i>Parti Communiste Français</i> {French Communist Party}
PNF	<i>Partito Nazionale Fascista</i> {National Fascist Party (Italy)}
PPF	<i>Parti Populaire Français</i> {French Popular Party}
PPI	<i>Partito Popolare Italiano</i> {Italian Popular Party}
PSF	<i>Parti Social Français</i> {French Social Party}
PSI	<i>Partito Socialista Italiano</i> {Italian Socialist Party}
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> {Storm Troops (Germany)}
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> {Security Service (Germany)}
SDAP	<i>Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij</i> {Social Democratic Workers' Party (Netherlands)}
SFIO	<i>Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière</i> {French Section of the Workers' International (French Socialist Party)}
SIPO	<i>Sicherheitspolizei</i> {Security Police (Germany)}
SNU	<i>Sveriges Nationella Ungdomsförbund</i> {Swedish National Youth League}
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> {German Social Democratic Party}
SS	<i>Schutz Staffeln</i> {Protection Units (Germany)}
VNV	<i>Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond</i> {Flemish National League}

Acknowledgements

The Publishers would like to thank the following organisations for granting permission to reproduce material in this book:

Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, for the photograph of Corneliu Codreanu.
The Photo Collection of the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, for the reproduction of the photo of Ferenc Szálasi, the original of which appeared in *Magyar Futár* on 8 November 1944.

The Imperial War Museum, London, for the two Spanish Civil War posters.

Every effort has been made to trace ownership of copyright and adhere to publishing conventions. We will be glad to make any suitable arrangements with copyright holders whom it has not been possible to contact.

Chronology

1890–1914

- 1890 Publication of Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Teacher*.
1893 Foundation of the Pan-German League.
1895 Publication of Le Bon's *Psychology of Crowds*.
1898 Barrès coins the term 'socialist nationalism' in a French election campaign.
1899 Maurras founds *Action Française*.
1901 *Les Jaunes* ('yellow unions') become a national union movement in France.
1908 Publication of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*; Papini, Prezzolini and Soffici found the journal *La Voce* in Florence, Italy.
1909 Marinetti issues his 'Futurist Manifesto'.
1910 Corradini and Federzoni found the Italian Nationalist Association.
1911–12 Meetings of the *Cercle Proudhon*.

1914

- August Outbreak of the First World War.
November Mussolini is expelled from the Socialist party, and joins the interventionist campaign in Italy.

1915

- May Italy enters the war on the side of Britain, France and Russia against Austro-Hungary and Germany.

1917

- February The first Russian revolution: the Tsar is overthrown.
April The USA enters the war on the Allied side.
September Formation of the nationalist pro-war Fatherland Party in Germany.

- October The second Russian revolution: the Bolsheviks take power.
October– The Italian military defeat at Caporetto.
November

1918

- January US President Wilson announces the 'Fourteen Points'.
Socialists set up a revolutionary government in Finland, sparking a civil war.
May Anti-communist 'Whites' defeat the 'Reds' in Finland's civil war.
October The Habsburg monarchy collapses; a Republic is declared in Austria.
November Mutinies in the German navy.
The Bavarian monarchy is overthrown, and a Republic is declared.
The German emperor abdicates, and the German Republic is declared in Berlin.
December Formation of the German Communist party.

1919

- January Paris Peace Conference opens.
A Communist 'Spartacist' rising in Berlin is put down by *Freikorps* units.
The first *Heimwehr* units are formed in the Austrian countryside.
February The Covenant of the League of Nations is approved.
March The Soviet Republic is set up in Hungary.
The Comintern is founded.
The first Italian *fasci di combattimento* are formed.
April The Soviet Republic in Bavaria is proclaimed.
May The Bavarian Soviet Republic is overthrown by the army and *Freikorps*.
June The Versailles treaty with Germany is signed.
August The constitution of the German democratic (Weimar) Republic is formally passed.
The Hungarian Soviet Republic is overthrown by Romanian, Czech and Yugoslav troops, and Hungarian counter-revolutionary forces.
September The treaty of St Germain is signed with Austria.
D'Annunzio seizes the contested Adriatic port of Fiume.
Hitler joins the German Workers' Party in Munich.

1920

- February The German Workers' Party is relaunched as the National Socialist German Workers' Party.
- March The Kapp military mutiny and attempted coup against the Weimar Republic in Germany.
- June The treaty of Trianon is signed with Hungary.
- September The high point of the 'Red Two Years' in Italy, with the workers' occupation of their factories.
- October A peace treaty brings an end to the Russo-Finnish war.
- December Horthy is elected regent and head of state in Hungary.
The Italian government expells D'Annunzio and his followers from Fiume.

1921

- January The Italian Communist Party is formed.
- March The end of the Russo-Polish war.
- May Thirty-five Fascists, including Mussolini, are elected to the Italian parliament in national elections.
- June Completion of the anti-Hungarian Little Entente alliances between Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.
- November The creation of the Italian Fascist party.

1922

- October Mussolini stages the 'March on Rome', and is appointed Prime Minister.

1923

- January The occupation of the Ruhr by French and Belgian troops begins.
The Italian Fascist squads become the Militia.
The Italian Fascist Grand Council is created.
- March The Italian Nationalists merge into the Fascist party.
- August Gömbös helps to form the Party of Racial Defence in Hungary.
Italy temporarily occupies the Greek island of Corfu.
- September Primo de Rivera's military coup in Spain.
- October Abortive Communist risings in central Germany.
- November The abortive Nazi-led 'Beer Hall' coup in Munich.
- December The Palazzo Chigi agreement between the Fascist government, Fascist syndicates and Italian industrialists.

1924

- April Hitler is imprisoned for sedition.
The Acerbo electoral law gives the Italian Fascists an overwhelming majority in parliament.
The Dawes plan revising reparation payments is agreed.
- May The *Cartel des Gauches* election victory in France.
- June The abduction and murder by Fascists of the Socialist deputy, Matteotti, after his criticism of Fascist violence during the April election campaign in Italy.

1925

- January Mussolini's speech resolves the Matteotti crisis by announcing the Fascist dictatorship.
- October The signing of the Locarno treaties.
- November Valois forms *Le Faisceau* in France.

1926

- February– Valois's attempted 'rolling coup' in France.
- July Formation of the Austrian National Socialist German Workers' Party.
- April The Italian Fascist syndical laws are approved.
Pilsudski's military coup in Poland.
Military coup in Portugal.
- May The Ministry of Corporations is created in Fascist Italy.
- July The Ministry of Corporations is created in Fascist Italy.
- September Germany enters the League of Nations.

1927

- April Socialist gains in the Austrian national elections provoke a general strike, and the *Heimwehr's* counter-mobilisation.
- June Codreanu forms the Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania.

1928

- April Valois winds up *Le Faisceau*.

1929

- January King Alexander's royal coup in Yugoslavia.
 February The Lateran Agreements between the Italian Fascist government and the Vatican are signed.
 June The Young Plan on reparations is issued.
 October New York Stock Exchange collapse, precipitating the Great Depression.
 November Formation of the Lapua movement in Finland.

1930

- March Brüning is appointed Chancellor in Germany, governing by Presidential decree.
 May The 'Korneuberg Oath', the programme of the Austrian *Heimwehr*, is agreed by the movement's leaders.
 June King Carol returns to Romania from exile.
 September The Nazis make their electoral breakthrough in the German parliamentary elections, winning just over 18 per cent of the total vote.

1931

- April A parliamentary Republic replaces the monarchy in Spain.
 May Pope Pius XI issues *Quadragesimo Anno*, his encyclical on social Catholicism.
 August The 'National Government' is formed in Britain.
 September Britain abandons the Gold Standard.
 The Styrian *Heimwehr* attempt a coup in Austria.
 December Formation of the Scythe Cross movement in Hungary.
 Formation of the Dutch National Socialist party.

1932

- May Brüning is replaced as German Chancellor by von Papen.
 The *Cartel des Gauches* wins the elections in France.
 June Formation of the People's Patriotic Movement in Finland.
 July The Nazis win 37 per cent of the votes in the German national parliamentary elections.
 September Preto founds the National Syndicalist movement in Portugal.
 October Gömbös becomes Prime Minister in Hungary.
 The Italian Fascist regime's ten year anniversary celebrations of the 'March on Rome', including the opening of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution.

- November The Nazis win 33 per cent of the votes in more German national elections; von Papen resigns as Chancellor.
December Von Schleicher becomes German Chancellor.

1933

- January Hitler is appointed German Chancellor.
Creation of the Institute of Industrial Reconstruction in Italy.
March Dollfuss suspends Austria's parliament, to govern by decree.
The Nazis win 44 per cent of the votes in German national parliamentary elections.
The Enabling Act passes through the German parliament.
Goebbels launches the new Nazi Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.
April Salazar's 'New State' constitution comes into effect in Portugal.
May Formation of Quisling's National Union movement in Norway.
September Bucard founds the *Franciste* movement in France.
October Formation of the Flemish National Front.
Formation of the *Falange* in Spain.
Germany withdraws from the League of Nations.

1934

- February The 'Stavisky riots' in France.
The corporations are formally set up in Fascist Italy.
May Austria's new authoritarian constitution is promulgated.
July Austrian Nazis murder Dollfuss in an abortive coup.
August With President Hindenburg's death, Hitler is declared Führer.
September The Soviet Union enters the League of Nations.
December The international meeting of European fascist movements at Montreux, Switzerland.

1935

- March Szálasi forms the Party of the National Will in Hungary.
May The Franco-Soviet treaty is signed.
August The Soviet Union confirms a 'Popular Front' strategy at a Comintern meeting.
September The discriminatory anti-Jewish Nuremberg laws are announced in Germany.
October Mussolini invades Ethiopia.
November Formation of the Rex movement in Belgium.

1936

- February A Popular Front government is formed in Spain.
 March Hitler re-militarises the Rhineland.
 May The Popular Front government is formed in France.
 Mussolini announces the conquest of Ethiopia.
 June Doriot launches the *Parti Populaire Français*.
 The military rebellion against the Republic in Spain, and the start of the Spanish Civil War.
 July An Austro-German agreement recognises Austria as a 'German' state.
 August Hitler formulates the 'Four Year Plan' to prepare the German economy and armed forces for war.
 October Gömbös dies.
 November Mussolini announces the formation of the Rome–Berlin Axis.

1937

- April Franco forms the *Falange Española Tradicionalista* in the Nationalist zones in Spain.
 May The creation of the Italian Fascist Ministry of Popular Culture.
 November Fascist Italy joins Nazi Germany and Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact.

1938

- February King Carol of Romania suspends and then abolishes the country's parliamentary constitution.
 March Hitler invades and annexes Austria to Germany.
 The fall of the second Popular Front government in France.
 July Anti-Semitic race laws are decreed in Fascist Italy.
 September The Munich conference, resulting in the German annexation of the Czech 'Sudetenland'.
 November Codreanu is murdered in prison by the Romanian police.
 The Axis-arbitrated Vienna agreement allows Hungary to regain Slovakian and Ruthenian territory from Czechoslovakia.

1939

- March Germany occupies the rest of Czechoslovakia.
 May The Hungarian Arrow Cross wins 25 per cent of the vote in national elections.
 Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany sign the 'Pact of Steel'.
 August The Nazi–Soviet pact is signed.
 September Germany invades Poland, starting the Second World War.

October Himmler, head of the SS, is appointed the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Ethnic Germandom, making the SS responsible for racial policy.

1940

April–June Germany invades, defeats and occupies Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and France.

June Mussolini enters the war on the side of Nazi Germany.

The USSR reclaims Bessarabia from Romania.

July The Vichy regime under Pétain is set up in unoccupied France. Formation of the *Nederlandse Unie* movement in German-occupied Netherlands.

August A second Vienna agreement allows Hungary to reclaim Transylvania from Romania.

September King Carol leaves Romania; the Iron Guard shares power with the army in a 'National Legionary State'.

October Fascist Italy invades Greece.

1941

January Antonescu disarms and represses the Iron Guard in Romania, after the latter's attempted coup.

April Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.

June Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union.

December The NSB is recognised by the Germans as the only political party in the occupied Netherlands.

1942

January Nazi leaders decide on the genocide of Europe's Jews at the Wannsee conference.

February Quisling, the Norwegian fascist leader, is appointed minister-president of Norway.

November The Germans occupy Vichy France, after Allied landings in North Africa.

1943

January German forces surrender at Stalingrad.

May Axis forces in North Africa surrender.

July Allied landings in Sicily; Mussolini is removed as head of government and arrested by the king.

September Italy and the Allies agree an armistice, and Italy changes sides; Mussolini is rescued by the Germans and returns to Italy as leader of the Italian Social Republic.

October Franco declares Spain to be 'neutral', rather than a 'non-belligerent'.

1944

June Allied forces land in France.

August The fall of Antonescu's pro-German government in Romania.

October Szálasi is made leader of a rump Hungary by the Germans.

1945

February The liberation of Hungary from German occupation.

April Northern Italy is liberated; Mussolini is arrested by Resistance fighters and executed; Hitler commits suicide in Berlin.

May The German armed forces surrender to the Allies.

Introduction

The historical problem of fascism

Fascism is the only major new political movement and ideology to develop in twentieth-century Europe. This book aims to provide a comparative historical analysis of fascism in Europe in the inter-war and wartime periods. There were fascist movements in practically every European country, varying greatly in political weight and significance, which in itself suggests that fascism was a characteristic phenomenon of these years, with its own typical set of political aims, organisation and methods. The challenge of the book is to make historical sense of fascism in Europe, when the range and number of its various national manifestations have led some historians to the extreme nominalist position which is exactly the opposite of the premise of this book, of 'fascism' not really existing at all, other than in the self-serving imaginations of historians and political and social scientists, who recognise a good thing when they see it (Allardyce 1979).

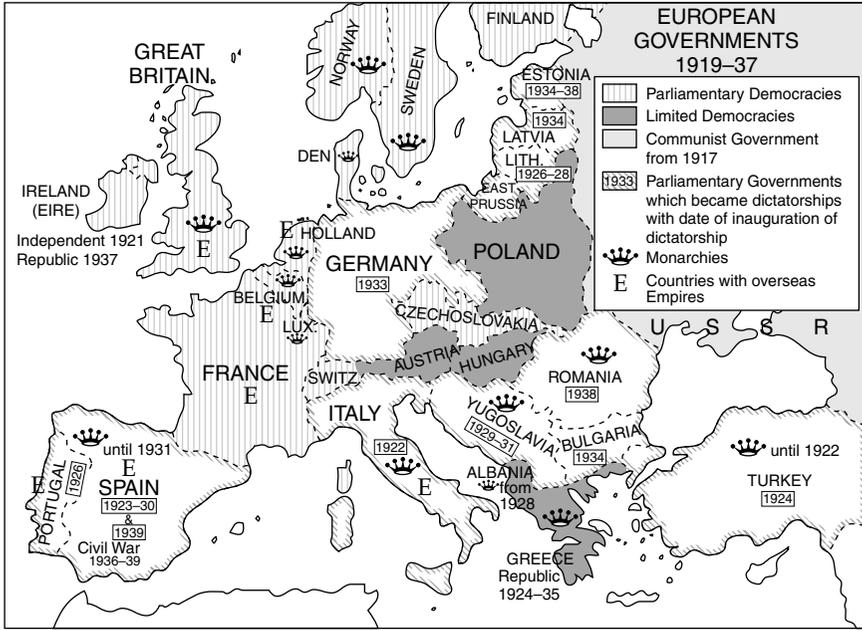
The study of fascism *is* an academic industry, and the appearance of this book may well indicate a crisis of over-production. My treatment unavoidably owes a lot to two of the best and most recent studies, but it is different from them and offers different things. It is not as comprehensive and dense as Stanley Payne's magisterial *A History of Fascism, 1919–1945* (Payne 1995), and does not cover fascism as a worldwide and as a post-1945 phenomenon, so avoiding the thorny issue as to whether fascism was, by definition, epochal and European. It is not as schematic and theoretical as Roger Griffin's impressive and ingenious rescue of the idea of a generic fascism, *The Nature of Fascism* (Griffin 1993), which deals in 'ideal types'. In his hands, this is a useful tool of analysis, because by accentuating or distilling the characteristics of the phenomenon to its 'pure' form, it gives us a very clear sense of what was distinctive about fascism, particularly in relation to other authoritarian political movements and systems of rule in Europe in this period. But in adopting this approach, fascism to an extent becomes an abstraction, with the attendant risks, in less careful hands, of reification, of treating the 'idea' as a real 'thing', a danger to which all the 'isms' are exposed.

This is really the problem with much of the mono-causal social and political science explanations of the fascist phenomenon, including the Marxist



Map 1 European frontiers and the post-war peace settlement, 1919–37.

Sources: M. Gilbert (1970) *Recent History Atlas, 1860–1960*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 43; R. and B. Crampton (2001) *Atlas of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, London and New York: Routledge, 36.



Map 2 European governments, 1919–37.

Source: adapted from M. Gilbert (1970) *Recent History Atlas, 1860–1960*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 48.

ones. People started to interpret fascism as soon as the first fascism, Italian Fascism, became a significant political force. Mainly coming from the Marxist left, these interpretations had a very immediate political purpose, to understand the enemy so as to draw the appropriate lessons for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat (Beetham 1983). The official line in the late 1920s of the USSR-dominated international organisation of Communist parties, the Comintern, was so mistaken in its over-simplified view of fascism as ‘capitalism in crisis’ and intrinsically no different from other political forms of class domination, that it contributed directly to the coming to power of Nazism in Germany. Proceeding on the grounds of the worse, the better, the German Communist party, the KPD, did not defend democracy against Nazism in the early 1930s, and in 1932–33 was, with the Nazis, part of the negative majority in the German national parliament, the *Reichstag*, which made Germany ungovernable by democratic parties. The success of fascism in Germany can hardly be put down entirely to the failure of the left. But it helped, as much as the Comintern’s change to a Popular Front strategy after Hitler’s coming to power contributed to the defeat of fascism elsewhere, in France if not in Spain, as should be clear later in the book.

4 *Introduction*

The Marxist underestimation of fascism in the 1920s was revealed in the tendency of all Marxist historiography, then and since, to regard fascism as an epiphenomenon, something secondary to the real thing, which was capitalism, and only intelligible in relation to that real motor of political change. This way of interpreting fascism can only explain fascism by connecting it to some other, more important phenomenon and by seeing it as functional to the realisation of some 'higher' historical purpose or end. This approach is also characteristic of the major non-Marxist interpretation of fascism, which relates it to the process of modernisation, the transition, in other words, from 'traditional' to 'modern' societies. Confusingly, the application of the template of modernisation has produced very divergent positions, and some historians and social scientists have seen fascism as being intrinsically 'modernising', while others have found it essentially 'anti-modern'. The fact that the use of the same explanatory framework can produce such opposed conclusions about the one phenomenon suggests that the former should be ditched as a way of understanding fascism. More will be said about this in the concluding chapter.

Both the main strands of interpretation, therefore, in some sense deny that fascist movements and regimes were autonomous, independent political forces for change. This study looks at fascist movements and regimes in their own right, in their time, and on their own terms, as history, in other words, rather than as a concept, necessarily abstracted from and independent of the evidence of the actual words and actions of political leaders and their movements.

This is a dangerous game to play, because it means taking seriously what fascists said and did at the time. Renzo De Felice was the recently deceased author of a mammoth unfinished biography of the Italian Fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, happily still not translated into English, and the historian largely responsible for provoking the equivalent in Italy of the German 'historians controversy' over the nature of Nazism. He has been condemned by his fellow historians, sometimes justifiably, for a dangerously over-literal and naïve reading of Fascist sources, which came close to passing off Fascist propaganda as the reality, marking his inability or unwillingness to see behind the words for the 'real' meaning of Fascism.¹ We should, I suppose, be cynical about what any politician says he is doing or wants to do, but it is noticeable that historians often do not extend any benefit of the doubt to inter-war fascist leaders. They are usually portrayed as political opportunists (what politician is not?), politicians of action whose actions did not marry with their words, which were literally propaganda, and fixated on power 'for its own sake'. It is difficult to shake off the impression of Mussolini as a political adventurer and gangster, which emerges from the brilliantly sustained and entertaining biography by the British historian, Denis Mack-Smith (Mack-Smith 1981).

Of course fascists were 'action men', and their activism and willingness to use violence against their political opponents and against their own societies, in some cases amounting to a cult of violence, distinguished them

from most other contemporary political movements. But fascist leaders and movements did have an ideology, understood as a body of ideas or principles inspiring and informing political action, and political programmes and policies which embodied the ideology. This history will bring them out, and show the connections between them, as well as being sensitive to the often considerable gaps between fascist aspirations and reality.

These will emerge most clearly in the treatment of the two fascist regimes in Italy and Germany, where the goal of a 'totalitarian' organisation of society for war was only partially achieved, and was probably impossible to achieve. The two dictators, Mussolini and Hitler, presided over partially 'fascistised' societies, a sometimes messy and unresolved co-habitation of elements of the world they wanted to create and of the survivors of the world they had inherited on coming to power. But the historical conclusion that the fascist regimes were a political compromise should not disguise the fact that an attempt was made to forge a fascist 'new order', and that in the totalitarian state, the regimes had equipped themselves with the means to make the attempt.

The book does not accept the widely held view of Zeev Sternhell, the French intellectual historian of fascist ideas, that the only real fascism on display in the inter-war period was embodied not in the fascist regimes, but in the fascist movements, whose 'pure' fascism was unsullied by the exigencies and compromises inherent in the exercise of actual political power (Sternhell 1979). For one thing, compromises, tactical alliances with the existing political and economic establishments and other right-wing movements and parties were very much part of the history of fascist *movements*, both the few that actually came to power and the majority of those which did not. In often crowded political scenes, fascist movements, as newcomers to that scene, had to make these kinds of alignments in order to make any political headway at all, let alone take power. Once in power, the Italian Fascist and German Nazi governments did use that power to shape politics and society according to fascist beliefs and principles. This was a *process*; the 'fascistisation' of Italy and Germany proceeded at different rates, for various 'national' reasons which will be explored in the book, and some would justifiably argue that the Italian Fascist regime remained conditioned and held back by the compromises with other centres of power in Italian life, which it made in order to come to power. But we still need to invert Sternhell's view: what fascism was, was best revealed when it came to power. The coming to power marked the point at which the fudging compromises could be shaken off, not necessarily the point at which the enjoyment of power corrupted the purity of the ideological goals of the movement.

The setting for fascism

The argument so far is that to understand fascism, you have to write its history, or histories. An historical, rather than an a priori and static

6 Introduction

conceptual approach, is probably the best way to trace the dynamics and trajectories of fascist movements and regimes. Historians look at the particular and the contingent, but they still have to make connections, generalise, even, eventually, conceptualise. Part of that historical generalising involves, crucially, providing the context or surroundings for the fascist phenomenon, which a concept, abstracted from the actual events and happenings whose essence it is meant to convey, often does not. The context, or setting, for fascism was the crisis of what contemporaries called the 'Versailles system', in other words, the post-First World War economic and political order, which was based on a capitalist economy and parliamentary democracy internally, and the League of Nations internationally. This was the order which appeared to emerge or be endorsed in the peace treaties of 1919–23, imposed by the major victorious powers, Britain, France, Italy and the USA, on the major defeated powers, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

The First World War of 1914–18 had revolutionary effects on the political geography of Europe, pushing on the process of democratisation of European societies and making possible a new national and international order. This became evident in 1917, when the eventually victorious alliance of powers finally articulated their war aims, and made the war, a war for democracy against the autocracies of Europe. The expression of democratic war aims came late in the day, and were the governments' response to the lengthening war which, with already massive casualties and expenditure of resources, made popular support and commitment to the war effort ever more vital, and yet more fragile. There were signs of a general war weariness, and governments needed to find a good reason for the war and for continuing it, and did so in the promise and reward of a better post-war society.

The first Russian Revolution of February 1917 was the outcome of a general crisis of legitimacy of a partially reformed but still absolutist, monarchical system of rule induced by the strains of war mobilisation. This led to the fall of the Tsar and a parliamentary interregnum, and allowed the *Entente* powers of Britain, France, Italy and Russia to pose unequivocally as the defenders of democracy. The Communist Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 brought the parliamentary experiment to an end. But making the world safe for democracy was even more the binding element of the remaining *Entente* powers, as the alternative to Bolshevism and the prospect of a revolutionary war, of war being transformed into social revolution.

The entry of the USA into the war in April 1917, which tipped the balance in favour of the *Entente*, led to the adoption of President Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis of a new democratic post-war order, even though their principles cut across the secret alliances for territorial aggrandisement which had, for instance, brought Italy into war on the *Entente* side in 1915. Wilson's Fourteen Points specifically mentioned only Polish independence, and envisaged the federal reform of the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire rather than its dismemberment. But the pressures of war

on the ground meant that, by August 1918, the Western allies were calling for new national states in Central and Eastern Europe, granting official recognition to the self-styled Czech, Polish and 'Yugoslav' governments-in-exile. This was clearly a way of paralysing the Austro-Hungarian empire and accelerating the dissolution of the empire with its military defeat, and it indicated that national self-determination was to be the principle behind the post-war settlement in Central and Eastern Europe. National self-determination meant that each nation should have a state, qualified, where necessary, by economic and strategic viability, and that the 'people' should govern through democratic political institutions.

So the peace settlement, embodied in the immediate post-war treaties, could be portrayed as the triumph of democratic nationalism and internationalism. This was a Europe which the nineteenth-century Italian nationalist and Europeanist, Giuseppe Mazzini, would have aspired to create. There was national unification, the liberation of independent national states from the prison of oppressive multinational empires, but within a new international order of democratically-run national states, embodied in and guaranteed by a new international organisation, the League of Nations, founded in 1919 as part of the peace settlement. Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, both the defeated and the victors of the war, the victims and beneficiaries of the eventual Versailles settlement, adopted democratic constitutions soon after the armistices which ended the fighting. War and revolution had brought about not a change of governments, but more fundamentally, a change of political system.

For those that were already national states, the pre-war assumption of the natural progress of political democracy, in the shape of a widening popular franchise and representative parliamentary government, had been strengthened and accelerated by the war, both in countries which were at war, and those which were not. Between 1915 and 1921, full political democracy, for men at least, came to Britain and Italy, of the countries at war, and of the neutral countries to the Netherlands and Denmark, and for women as well in Norway and Sweden. The outcome was a Europe which, fleetingly, was more politically unified around similar democratic parliamentary systems than at any time before. With a Europe of democratic national states, in a League of Nations framework resting on an abstract equality of member states, there was harmonisation between how each European country ran its affairs, and how they conducted their relations with each other.

If this was the triumph of parliamentary democracy and national self-determination, it was a passing one. By 1938, parliamentary democratic systems were still functioning in the countries of Northern and Western Europe. But they had largely disappeared in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, giving way to fascist dictatorships in Italy and Germany, authoritarian rule in Portugal, Spain, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and to limited democratic systems in Hungary, Poland and Greece. More tellingly, of the new national states

created after the First World War, democracy survived only in Ireland, Finland and Czechoslovakia. By 1942, a tendentious date because it marked the high point of the conquest and occupation of Europe by the fascist powers, only Britain, Ireland, Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland were democracies. So what had appeared to unite Europe politically in the immediate post-war period, national states run as parliamentary democracies, came under severe threat and challenge thereafter. Fascism was one of the challenges and alternatives to the Versailles system, and if success was measured by the taking of power, not the most successful of the alternatives to parliamentary democracy. We shall see how the drift to more authoritarian politics in Southern and Eastern Europe, while apparently providing an ambience in which fascist movements could flourish, was ultimately a greater obstacle to fascists taking power than parliamentary democracy.

National tensions

The destabilisation of parliamentary democratic systems of government in the inter-war period came from three sources, which led to conflict and tension both within and between countries. For one thing, national-ethnic issues in Central and Eastern Europe were accentuated rather than eased by a post-war settlement apparently based on national self-determination. The mix of nationalities living in the areas of the pre-war multinational empires made it impossible to carve out viable single nationality states. The so-called 'successor states', the products of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire in military defeat and revolution, were no less multinational than the empire they replaced. The difference was that instead of the reasonably neutral or divide-and-rule imperial government, which had helped the different peoples more or less to rub along together, there were governments which represented the interests of one or a few of the ethnic groups living in the new states.

These governments understood national or state integration as securing the dominance of the main ethnic group, both resenting and ignoring the protection of minority rights built into their democratic constitutions. At the same time, many of these countries adopted the French model of republican democracy, with governments tied to winning and then maintaining majorities in legislatures elected on the basis of adult male suffrage and proportional representation. This necessitated government by coalition, and invited the representation in parliament of a plethora of parties, many of them ethnically based, even when they matched the other political cleavages of modern European societies, religion and class. So, in Poland, there were Polish and Ukrainian peasant parties, unlikely to cooperate politically as agrarian parties because of the ethnic divide, land reform in Eastern Poland requiring Polish landowners to concede to their Ukrainian peasant tenants. Even in Czechoslovakia, the one country in Central and Eastern Europe where the workings of the parliamentary system successfully managed to

reconcile the interests of its national groups, there were separate Czech and German Social Democratic and Christian Democratic parties.

This was a recipe for political instability, and the presence of so many parties complicated and frustrated the normal political bargaining behind the formation and survival of governments. The protracted political horse trading involved in government formation itself shredded the credibility of parliamentary institutions for politicians and electorates which had little or no experience of the normality this represented. But it was the sheer intractability of national issues, by their nature not susceptible to the bargaining and compromise which was, and is, the essence of a democratic parliamentary system, which led directly to the 1926 military coup in Poland and the strengthening of the executive arm of government against a parliament where thirty-two parties were represented, and to the royalist coups and supranational dictatorships in Yugoslavia in 1929 and Bulgaria in 1934–35.

Irredentism and counter-irredentism, claiming or resisting the transfer of national enclaves from the rule of a foreign state, was the near-inevitable outcome of the peace settlement, which rewarded the victors of the First World War with the territory of the defeated. International cohabitation, let alone international co-operation, was practically out of the question in these circumstances. The so-called Little Entente, an alliance of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, united the beneficiaries of the post-war settlement against its victim, Hungary, which was, after the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, near enough an ethnic Magyar state, and had territorial–ethnic claims on each and all of them.

In Central Europe, the defeated Germany had lost territory in the east and the west, but it had been spared occupation, partition and dismemberment. A defeated and largely territorially intact Germany was still capable of being the strongest continental European power, if only by natural political and economic weight or potential. ‘The German problem’, the terms and conditions on which Germany could exercise its naturally pivotal position in European affairs, was *the* divisive European issue in the period 1918 to 1945. The continuity of the problem should not obscure the fact that its dimensions were changed by the Nazis taking power in Germany in 1933.

The threat from the left

The second source of political instability in the inter-war period was the threat from the left. The most significant event of the period was the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia in October 1917. A proletarian socialist revolution was no longer a prospect, but a reality, subversive of the political and socio-economic systems of much of Europe, whose success was a tremendous stimulus to socialist revolutionaries elsewhere. Marxist socialist revolution was never meant to be contained by state frontiers, and this was particularly so, when the revolution had occurred in Russia, which as Lenin

and the Bolshevik leadership realised, was the weakest and most backward link in the capitalist chain. Conditions for the creation of socialism were not immediately present in Russia, and for the revolution in Russia to last, it had to spread to the more economically advanced industrial countries to the west.

The prospect of general European revolution, arising as in Russia, from the extraordinary strains of war on countries' economies and societies, had probably disappeared by 1923, perhaps as early as 1920. Bolshevik Russia fought and lost a war with the new Polish state in 1919–21, which finally settled Poland's Eastern frontier and was thought at the time to have halted the spread of revolution westwards. There were short-lived Soviet republics in Bavaria, Hungary and Slovakia in 1919–20, what appeared to contemporaries to be the real threat of a socialist revolution in Germany in 1918–19 and in Italy in 1919–20, a nasty civil war in Finland in 1917–18, where the anti-communist forces defeated the communists, and communist-inspired working class agitation in most places in the immediate aftermath of the war. The final fling came in abortive communist risings in central Germany and in Bulgaria in 1923.

Although the threat of European revolution appeared to have been contained, it was difficult for other states to treat the Soviet Union as if it was another state in a system of states. This was not only because the USSR had territorial disputes with its neighbours, including Finland and Romania. In these countries, the USSR was both the national and the social enemy; it held or claimed contested territory, and it threatened social revolution internally, as it did to all non-communist states. It was the exemplar of a new universal order which was opposed to the political and socio-economic systems of other European countries.

Ideological antipathy entered the conduct of diplomacy between states, and it eroded the principle and practice of pluralist democratic systems. In East European countries, local communist parties were barely, if at all, afforded legal existence. Elsewhere, it was difficult to accept as normal political players, movements which were systematically opposed to the political systems they participated in, and were bound to an international revolutionary organisation, the Comintern, which was run from and by the USSR. Governments in the 1930s faced this same classic dilemma of democratic societies with respect to fascist movements as well. The PCF, the French Communist Party and one of the most 'bolshevised' of the West European Communist parties, was always regarded as the stooge of Moscow, and this perception and antipathy on the French right were important dimensions in both the domestic and foreign policies of French governments in the late 1930s.

On the political right, the threat from the left in the inter-war period was generalised and broadened from Bolshevism to any political and social advance of the organised socialist left. Mass electoral politics allowed socialist parties to make significant political gains, and across Western and

Northern Europe, from Norway to Spain, socialist parties entered government for the first time. This, of course, was one way of dealing with the threat from the left. One of the most significant political developments in inter-war Europe was the successful accommodation of an eventually non-revolutionary, social democratic left to a capitalist economy and democratic parliamentary system, which in turn, contributed to the defeat or containment of fascism. But concession to and bargaining with the enemy on the left as the logic of democratic politics worked its way through, did not happen everywhere. The threat from the left was both the reason and opportunity for the emergence of fascist movements, which took the alternative route to taming the left, violence and coercion.

Economic difficulties

Economic difficulties were the third source of political instability in the inter-war period. The concern here is to look at the political fallout of Europe's persistent economic problems, rather than to explain their causes, but some brief general remarks on Europe's inter-war economic crises should be made. After a very difficult transition from wartime to peacetime economies between 1918 and 1924, which sharpened the political conflict and sense of political crisis in Italy and Germany especially, there was a period of economic growth until the late 1920s.

But the European economies were disrupted by the impact and consequences of the First World War, which were political as much as economic in origin. The Versailles settlement had endorsed the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire, which had, in effect, been a natural area of free trade, into separate, competitive national states, each set on building up their national economic power with their own currencies and behind protective tariff barriers. Protection, and the removal of industry and agriculture from their sources of supply and markets because of the existence of new states, reduced the level of trade between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Loss of revenue from intra-regional trade made things even more difficult for governments struggling anyway to set up the infrastructures of new states, and which preferred to raise money by printing it rather than by taxing their populations. The price inflation, and plummeting of currency values which ensued, were overcome by stabilising the currencies with foreign loans.

But the new states of Central and Eastern Europe faced economic depression throughout the period, because of the small size and potential of their domestic markets, and also because they were mainly producers of agricultural products and raw materials. There was a worldwide depression in agriculture, marked by over-production, falling demand and, consequently, falling prices, a situation partly attributable to the self-evident effects the war had on the rate of population growth after the war.

The disappearance of Russia from the European and world economy as a

result of war, revolution and the consolidation of a communist regime, together with the economic depression of the successor states in Central and Eastern Europe, had direct repercussions on the more industrial economies of Western Europe, reducing their exports and export potential in the rest of Europe. This was particularly serious for Germany, which had to export more if it was to start paying off the unrealistically massive reparations for war damage imposed by the victorious allies in the Treaty of Versailles. The occupation of the industrial Ruhr areas of Germany by France and Belgium to enforce payment of reparations in 1923 turned already high inflation into a progressive collapse of the value of the German currency, restored only in 1924 with the help of foreign loans and the scaling down of reparation payments.

But there was no escaping the fatal connection of reparations to the international repayment of war debts. In order to sustain war mobilisation, France, Italy and Russia had borrowed heavily from Britain, which in turn, was forced to borrow from the USA. Debt repayment meant the post-war societies had to meet the costs of the war, and France and Britain used tax revenue which could have been more productively deployed elsewhere in the economy. But the assumption was that German reparations would allow the Allies to pay off their war debts to each other and the USA. This only happened to the extent that the USA kept on lending money to Germany, enabling her to pay reparations to France, Britain and Italy, and these to pay their debts to the USA. The breaking of this cycle, with a financial crisis and economic downturn in the USA in 1929 cutting off US markets to European exports and US investment in Europe, was one of the reasons why the depression in the USA spread to Europe.

We may now see the so-called Great Depression of 1929–33 as a cyclical downturn in the global economy. But it was the watershed event of twentieth-century Europe. For one thing, its effects made parliamentary politics very difficult to operate, in some cases, including Germany, impossible to operate, to the point where they were destroyed altogether. In an expanding economy, all individual, group and sectional interests could be successfully met or traded off; politics was about the distribution of plenty. This was why in pre-war Western Europe, where industrial growth seemed to guarantee an ever-expanding economic prosperity, liberal politicians often assumed that a dynamic capitalist economy would underpin progress towards political democracy. But the reverse was true, when the economy took a downturn. Politics became a matter of allocating scarcity, a painful process with too many losers and too few winners, in the end straining the political system through which the trading-off of interests was conducted.

All democratic governments struggled to distribute the costs of the Depression in society, and in Germany could not do so at all. The last properly democratic and parliamentary coalition government of the post-war Weimar Republic, headed by the SPD, the Social Democratic party, fell in 1930 as the result of the SPD's dispute with its centre and right coalition

partners over the continued state funding of the workers' unemployment insurance scheme. Similar hard and politically divisive choices over economic and social policies to meet the Depression were being faced by each and every democratic government.

The outcome of the political paralysis in Germany in the face of the Depression, a Nazi dictatorship, indicated that there was more at stake than a change of government within the parliamentary system; it was the legitimacy of the system itself. The Great Depression was a recession of such depth and spread that it effectively provoked the collapse of the global economy. To contemporaries, it was not a crisis in the capitalist system, but the crisis *of* the system, and as such, led to a general questioning throughout Europe of the functionality of capitalism and democratic parliamentary government. By making incredible the claims of capitalist economies and political democracies to deliver the good life to the people of Europe, the Great Depression had the effect of highlighting the rival and competitive political alternatives to these systems in the 1930s, those of communism and fascism. The Depression helped to make fascism an international phenomenon, most notably in the triumph of Nazism in Germany, and also in the emergence of new fascist movements in various European countries. Mussolini, the Fascist dictator of Italy, and in power since 1922, could move under the impact of the Depression from a position in the mid-1920s that fascism was not for export, to one in the early 1930s which proclaimed a 'universal' fascism, capable of replacing in all countries demonstrably bankrupt and dysfunctional democratic and capitalist systems.

Defining fascism

Once fascism is placed in its setting of a general European crisis, that of the Versailles system, it is possible to identify two 'waves' of fascism accompanying the periods of most acute crisis. The first fascist movements, and the first fascist government, emerged in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Their appearance can be related to the impact of wartime mobilisation in belligerent countries, and particularly to the threat from the left in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and to ethnic-territorial conflict in Central and Eastern Europe, where the 1919 settlement had imposed new and contested state boundaries and superimposed by international treaty parliamentary institutions on 'backward' political cultures. Fascist movements then proliferated throughout Europe, and existing movements 'took off', with Nazism coming to power in Germany, under the impact of the Great Depression, which seemed to be the structural crisis of the European political and social order.

Setting the historical context also makes it possible to provide a passable working definition of fascism. Fascist movements were radical hyper-nationalist cross-class movements with a distinctive militarist organisation and activist political style. In a climate of perceived national danger and

crisis, they sought the regeneration of their nations through the violent destruction of all political forms and forces which they held to be responsible for national disunity and divisiveness, and the creation of a new national order based on the moral or 'spiritual' reformation of their peoples, a 'cultural revolution' achievable only through the 'total' control of society, and on class-collaborative, regulatory forms of socio-economic organisation, often of a corporatist nature. Their aims of forging internal national unity were often linked to, and were premises for, national territorial expansion and empire, a connection seen most explicitly in the totalitarian mass-mobilising organisation of their societies for war by the two fascist regimes in Italy and Germany.

1 The roots of fascism

Some contemporary observers and historians saw fascism as a kind of bolt from the blue, the extraordinary product or outcome of the impacts of the First World War on European society and politics. The most famous, or notorious, one-word definition of the first fascism in Italy, as a 'parenthesis', came from one of Italy's most influential intellectuals, Benedetto Croce.¹ He might have used the word 'aberration' in his deliberate attempt to minimise the importance of fascism in Italy and deny that it belonged to Italy's history from the political and territorial unification of the country in 1870. The 'parenthesis' view literally puts the fascist period in Italy into brackets, separating it off from what came before and what came after. So, under its liberal political leadership between 1870 and 1915, and particularly under Giovanni Giolitti, Prime Minister of various governments in the early 1900s, Italy was developing into a modern industrial nation with democratic parliamentary institutions, keeping, in other words, to the 'normal' pattern of development of West European countries. This development was brutally interrupted by the coming to power of Fascism, the consequence of the impact of the First World War on Italian and European society. Normal service was resumed with the military defeat of Fascism by 1945, when the country was once again enabled to take the road of parliamentary democracy. For Croce and others, then, the Great War was the break in continuity of the political development of Italy and Europe.

Other historians, and this is now the more consensual view, see the origins of fascism in cultural and intellectual changes which occurred in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, *before* the First World War, and trace a basic continuity in ideas from the pre-war period, through the war and into the inter-war years. The French historian of ideas, Zeev Sternhell, in his important book on the pre-war 'revolutionary right' in France (Sternhell 1978), argues that there was a fully fledged fascist ideology in existence in France by 1914. His view that fascism had a history before it had a name was then trumped by his even more controversial study of fascism in France in the inter-war period (Sternhell 1986). This book, which landed Sternhell in the law courts, saw the 'fascist' ideas of the 1890s being replicated in the France of the 1930s, and permeating French inter-war

political and intellectual life to such an extent that many intellectuals who went nowhere near actual fascist movements were, nevertheless, because of the 'fascist' ideas they professed, 'fascists' without realising or admitting it, a view which virtually confined anti-fascism to the orthodox Marxist and socialist left.

This chapter will argue that an understanding of the origins of fascism can come from a synthesis of these two approaches.

The turn-of-the-century 'counter-culture'

The new ideas circulating among the intellectual and cultural avant-garde in the Europe of the 1890s and early 1900s were a reaction and challenge to what was and remained the dominant and widespread assumption of and belief in 'progress'. Economically and socially, 'progress' in pre-war Europe meant the spread of industrial production and urban living, holding out the prospect of material prosperity for all, as the appliance of science, specifically electricity as an energy source, expanded both industrial manufacturing and its transportation while literally bringing light and communication to an ever widening range of people in their public and private activities. Culturally, 'progress' was science, and the application of reason, the scientific method, not only to material production but also to the management of society. The years before the war marked the emergence of modern social scientific studies in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology and criminology. The accepted mode of analysis across the natural and human sciences was positivism which, working from the assumption that everything was knowable through the use of reason, rejected metaphysical speculation and took as true and real only those things which could be tested and proved empirically: 'facts' before 'faith'. Politically, 'progress' was the advance of political democracy and representative parliamentary government, the successful working models of which were the French Third Republic and the British 'constitutional' monarchy.

The major works of the two key figures in the development of the late nineteenth-century minority counter-culture, the English naturalist Charles Darwin and the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, had appeared a generation earlier. Darwin's ground-breaking theory of the evolution of animal, plant and the human species by a process of natural selection, where the fittest survive through successful adaptation to environment, was applied or misapplied to contemporary human societies, as well as to the study of heredity in the new science of genetics. This 'social Darwinism' was permeating mainstream European culture by the beginning of the twentieth century, in part because the apparently 'scientific' justification it gave to cultural and racial superiority, imperialism and war, corresponded to the reality of the growing global economic, military and imperial rivalry among Europe's and the world's industrial and industrialising powers. All of the turn-of-the-century intellectuals had read in some form or another the works

of Nietzsche, writing in the 1870s and 1880s. From him, they took a general anti-establishment and non-conformist stance, a willingness to question and challenge all facets of the conventional bourgeois way of life, the sense of the atrophy of this 'civilisation' and of the need for a new rejuvenating morality which might have to be formed and imposed by a new breed of uninhibited supermen.

Besides the common grounding of Darwinism and Nietzsche, the intellectual reaction against the idea and assumption of rationally ordered 'progress' drew on the findings of the new social sciences which, in the rational pursuit of knowledge about human society and mentality, were showing up the irrationality of much of human behaviour and actions. One of the most influential of these 'scientific' studies was Gustav Le Bon's work on the psychology of crowds, which had a very contemporary resonance at the beginning of the age of mass politics, and was something which most inter-war fascist leaders claimed to have read or heard about. Le Bon's study seemed to show that what drove and inspired people en masse to collective action were their emotions and feelings, not rational discourse and argument. So if a speaker wanted to arouse and excite his listeners, what mattered was not the quality or logic or 'truth' of his argument, but his ability to tap into the subconscious will and soul of his audience.

As the example of Le Bon makes clear, the rational revelation of the irrational could be swiftly translated into political thinking and technique. On the left, some revolutionary syndicalists, already rather out of step with Marxist orthodoxy, revised Marxist socialism in the light of these discoveries by the new sciences or pseudo-sciences. Marxism, of course, was a materialist set of ideas, with a materialist conception of historical and social development. What determined changes in society and politics were changes in the economic system of production. Political systems and ideologies, religion, moral values, were 'topping', shaped by economic realities, the way things were produced and the relations of domination and subordination which existed between the various people involved in the productive process. In common with his revolutionary syndicalist sympathisers, the French thinker Georges Sorel thought that the Marxist socialist parties and labour movements of late nineteenth-century Europe were in danger of being domesticated, losing their revolutionary élan and becoming part of the system they were committed to overthrowing, through their involvement in democratic parliamentary politics.

Sorel wanted socialism to recover its revolutionary 'soul', and so emphasised the need for violence in the revolutionary process, a purgative and regenerative violence smashing the old order. He wanted people to be moved emotionally, inspired by socialism to act, recognising that there was more to human motivation than material concerns. Violence, in itself, was both a sign of the will to take action and a source of motivation. A violent act, for Sorel, was a kind of collective male-bonding session, the shared risk and responsibility helping to forge a sense of togetherness and solidarity

which could fuel further action. He thought much the same mobilising functions would be achieved by the use of political 'myths', understood as visionary sets of beliefs which could be conveyed by words and images. The efficacy of the 'myth' lay in its capacity to evoke a mass response, to inspire political action, not in its objective 'truth'.

Sorel had a great influence on the pre-war revolutionary syndicalist movements of Italy and France, and on other unconventional socialists, including Benito Mussolini, a revolutionary socialist leader in Italy before the war. Mussolini's pre-war socialism was, in effect, his attempt to combine Marxist class struggle and revolution with the European and Italian critiques of the dominant rational and positivist culture, including Nietzsche and Sorel. So, even as a socialist, Mussolini saw the need for leadership of the masses by a dynamic revolutionary elite, and for the preparation of those masses for revolution by direct action and the pushing of ideals whose value lay in generating popular enthusiasm and commitment to the cause. It was this will to action, and the belief that man could shape his destiny by action, contrasting with the determinism and caution of the orthodox Marxists in the Italian Socialist Party, and marking Mussolini's assimilation of the cultural reaction against reason, which he took into post-war fascism.

On the right, straddling politics and culture, were the Italian Futurists, a movement of cultural iconoclasts who promoted an art and a politics, or politics-as-art, which celebrated the dynamism, speed and excitement of the modern machine age, and condemned everything that was old, established and traditional. Their taste for violence and the idea of the 'beauty' of war as the supreme measure of personal and national worth, were shared by the rather more sedate intellectuals writing for the pre-war Florentine journal, *La Voce*, another of Mussolini's stopping-off places. It looked to a national spiritual and cultural transformation built on a renewed sense of national consciousness among Italians, to be achieved by war for the conquest of empire. *La Voce's* concerns had a personal form in the self-dramatising nationalist poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio, the Nietzschean hero incarnate, who lent his name, his poetry and his presence to nationalistic campaigns, including, famously, that for Italian intervention in the First World War in 1914–15, and became Mussolini's only serious rival for leadership of the nationalist camp after the war.

These ideas took a more coherent political form in the nationalist movement founded in 1910, the *Associazione Nazionale Italiana* (ANI), which wanted a monarchist–authoritarian and corporatist political and economic system, capable of pushing through the industrial development and modernisation of the country, providing the resources for, and uniting the nation around, imperialistic war. The French equivalents and predecessors were *Action Française*, founded in 1898, which was more like a *salon* of the writers for and readers of the journal of the same name than an organised political movement, and the rather more active and sometimes insurrectionary patriotic and anti-Semitic leagues.

Certainly for the Italian Nationalists and Futurists, there was a whole-hearted embracing and adaptation of modern industrial society, a recognition that in the modern world, national unity, power and expansion depended on the economic muscle provided by industrial development. In other areas of the pre-war European right touched by the late nineteenth-century counter-culture, especially in Germany and the Austrian empire, a *völkisch* nationalism celebrating a 'superior' and distinctive ethnic German 'folk' culture and way of life, was developed as a rejection of what was taken to be the soulless materialism and rootless individualism and anonymity of mass urban industrial society, no more than an aggregate of isolated individuals without any sense of belonging to a community. This kind of so-called 'organic' or 'integral' nationalism saw the ethnic nation as a 'living' and developing 'natural' community, with a 'life' course and trajectory of its own, which was a way of connecting the nation's history and traditions with its present and future existence, and of saying that the nation was a society which functioned like the human body, a co-ordinated and integrated whole, rather more than the sum of its parts. *Völkisch* nationalism was often racist, with Germanic 'blood' seen by Julius Langbehn, one of its most widely-read exponents, as quite literally the carrier and transmitter of the German people's moral virtues and qualities.

In pre-war Germany and 'Austria', *völkisch* ideas were expressed in a finished form in any number of popular academic books, and passed on in the secondary schools and universities by a generation of teachers and lecturers. Politically, *völkisch* nationalism had a place in various anti-Semitic movements and parties in the German-speaking areas of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and in Germany itself, where the Pan-German League, an umbrella organisation for a variety of racist and middle-class special interest and pressure groups, was the rough edge to a conservative political bloc increasingly alarmed at the electoral advances of the German socialist party from the 1890s.

The late nineteenth-century cultural reaction against 'reason', while not replacing the dominant positivistic viewpoint, developed furthest and spread widest in France, Italy, Germany and German 'Austria', but its presence was felt in practically all European countries before the war. In ways which shocked at least some of the theorists and practitioners of the new social sciences, the 'scientific' discovery of the irrational forces behind human actions fed the justification in politics of elitism, racism, violence and war, and connected these to nationalism, since national feeling and identity, what people felt themselves to be, was the kind of powerful and unreasonable sentiment capable of getting people to act collectively.

Fascism before the war?

Now Sternhell argues that all the ingredients of fascist ideology were present in this end-of-century intellectual swamp, and there was a natural

fusion between ideas circulating on the radical right in a movement like *Action Française*, and ideas of those on the left who, like Sorel, were revising Marxism in the light of the culture of 'unreason'. The meeting ground was the common rejection, on both right and left, of a purely materialist reading of modern industrial society, and of democratic parliamentary systems of government. For Sternhell, the ideological synthesis of nationalism and a revamped socialism, which was 'fascism', was realised in France before the First World War. Above all, there was Maurice Barrès, the novelist and militant 'organic' nationalist, who fought an election campaign in 1898 on a platform of what he called 'socialist nationalism'. Later, there was the *Cercle Proudhon*, what we would now call a think tank, which in 1911–12 brought together men associated with *Action Française* and some of Sorel's syndicalist protégés, a liaison which was so short-lived that it raises doubts as to whether the marriage of ideas had really been consummated.

Roger Griffin, who generally takes on board Sternhell's thesis, prefers to use the term 'proto-fascism' to describe these projects, which suggests that they were ancestors, some early primitive forms of fascism. Sternhell himself sometimes adopts the same terminology, regarding *Les Jaunes*, a pre-war movement of pro-employer 'yellow' unions, as an earlier version of the *Parti Populaire Français* (PPF), the fascist movement founded in 1936 by the ex-communist leader, Jacques Doriot. With Sternhell, you are never quite sure whether he sees the pre-war 'revolutionary right' in France as the real thing, 'fascism', or as precursors opening up the ideological path to fascism. Sometimes, the same personalities and groups appear in both guises.

Sternhell's 'history of ideas' approach carries with it the risk of a logical fallacy. He seems to assume that because some ideas in post-war Europe resembled ideas which emerged before the war, there must be a logical connection between the two sets of ideas, to the extent that they amount to the same thing.

Now many of the post-war fascists were young men in the decade before the First World War, who might well have been exposed and susceptible to the avant-garde intellectual climate of the early 1900s. Many of those who were critical of the 'culture' of conventional society before 1914 became fascists after 1918. But plenty of them did not. Their opposition and non-conformity took them in other directions to fascism. The radical republicans in post-unification Italy bemoaned the lack of national civic consciousness among most Italians and the low level of popular participation in the political affairs of the country, which they blamed on the workings of an oligarchic liberal parliamentary system. They joined the anti-democratic Nationalists in the 1914–15 interventionist campaign, because they shared with them the belief that participation in the war would 'make' Italians. Both the republicans and Nationalists were critical of Italy's pre-war political system, and thought that the war would make possible its transformation. But their critiques had different outcomes. The republicans looked to the installation of a fully democratic system after the war. Their

answer to the lack of popular involvement in national affairs was more democracy not, as with the Nationalists, its elimination. In other words, you cannot assume the connection between pre-war and post-war ideas; you have to demonstrate them.

It is possible to find concrete direct links between pre-war cultural and political developments and post-war fascism. For one thing, there was a crossover of organisations and personnel. Many of the first members of *Le Faisceau*, the French fascist movement formed in 1925, defected from *Action Française*, as did the founder and leader, Georges Valois, who as *Action Française*'s economic expert, had helped to set up the *Cercle Proudhon*, that intended meeting place for 'organic' nationalism and Sorelian syndicalism. In Italy, the ANI, partners of Mussolini's group of ex-socialists and revolutionary syndicalists in the miscellaneous coalition of political forces which campaigned for intervention in the war, eventually merged with the Fascist Party in 1923, shortly after Mussolini had become Prime Minister. The Nationalists provided the Fascist government with intellectual weight and coherence, and key ministers, especially Alfredo Rocco, the Minister of Justice, who played a significant role in setting up the institutions of the Fascist totalitarian state in the mid to late 1920s. In Germany, leaders and members of some of the anti-Semitic and nationalist leagues under the pre-war umbrella of the Pan-German League, joined the NSDAP in the early 1920s. In Austria, some of the early core members of the Austrian Nazi Party came from the post-war German National Socialist Workers Party (DNSAP), the successor to the pre-war German Workers Party (DAP), which organised among German workers in the ethnically mixed region of Bohemia, then part of the Austrian empire, and was a racist and pan-German movement by the outbreak of the war.

It is also possible to chart the political and intellectual influences on post-war fascist leaders. We know that Mussolini had read Nietzsche, Sorel, Le Bon, and incorporated some of their ideas into his own idiosyncratic version of revolutionary socialism before 1914. Oswald Mosley, the founder and leader of the British Union of Fascists, was influenced by Nietzsche, filtered through George Bernard Shaw, and portrayed himself and his movement as the heroic elite arresting the decline of the British empire and of Western civilisation: he had also read Spengler. Adolf Hitler's racist and anti-Semitic 'world view' was probably determined or confirmed by his experience of life and idleness in cosmopolitan, multi-racial pre-war Vienna. He was impressed by what he knew of the programme and policies of Georg Ritter von Schonerer's pan-German party in 1880s Austria, and even more so by the successful racial demagoguery of Karl Lueger's Christian Social Party, which managed to win control of Vienna's city council from the liberal 'Jewish' parties.

Fascist leaders often, also, retrospectively acknowledged their intellectual debts, though for those who see fascism as all action and opportunism, these statements were little more than attempts to give themselves some

ideological legitimacy. But, for what it is worth, Mussolini, for example, was indebted to Sorel and the revolutionary syndicalists, Valois to Sorel and Barrès, Doriot to Barrès.

Looking at things this way indicates that the pre-war 'revolt against reason' provided ideas which influenced post-war fascist leaders and movements, on which they drew in setting out their own political positions as fascists. But it does not show that what the post-war fascists offered were the same ideas which existed before the war. If none of their ideas were exactly original, the fascists did make their own unique synthesis of some of these ideas. You could, perhaps, go further than this, and say that exposure to the pre-war culture of 'unreason' made significant groups of people, especially among the university-educated classes and the teaching profession, susceptible to the appeal of fascist movements in the post-war period. It might, in the end, be possible to relate the relative strength and weakness of post-war fascist movements in various countries to the resonance of the pre-war intellectual changes, or lack of it, in those countries. People who had read and absorbed Langbehn's pre-war racial nationalism would, at least, know where Hitler and the NSDAP were coming from.

So Sternhell is probably mistaken in identifying the non-conformist avant-garde culture of early twentieth-century Europe as a fully mature, coherent fascist ideology. He has retrospectively tidied up and packaged as 'fascist' ideology, a miscellaneous pre-war mix of counter-cultural ideas. Even if you take the Sternhell line that the 'fascist' synthesis of ideas had occurred in France before 1914, it is difficult to find a similar pattern in other European countries. The particular synthesis of ideas came with the emergence of actual fascist movements in the post-war period. Ultimately, it does seem odd to divorce the ideology from the movement and to suggest that there was an already fully formed ideology in search of a movement. Fascist movements and fascist ideology co-existed; they appeared at the same time as each other. Only when fascism emerged as a political movement did the ideological synthesis happen, and become observable.

Mussolini's assimilation of some of the ideas developed in the pre-war cultural reaction against 'reason' helps to make intelligible his apparently opportunistic switch from revolutionary socialism in 1914 to a form of nationalism in 1918. But this does not mean that we call the Mussolini of 1914 'fascist' or even 'proto-fascist', any more than we would use the same labels for the ANI and the interventionist group of revolutionary syndicalists in 1914. Some of these revolutionary syndicalists were among the first members of the Fascist movement founded by Mussolini in 1919. But their ideological transition from revolutionary syndicalism to what they called 'national syndicalism' in 1918, was the result of the experience of the Great War. Again, it was during the war that Mussolini and the Nationalists drew closer together on both domestic and international issues; the 'space' between Mussolini's stance as a revolutionary socialist and his re-invention as the first 'fascist', was the First World War. It was, in other words, the war

experience which was crucial to the journey which some of the pre-war critics of the established order, on both left and right, made to arrive at 'fascism'. We should be noting that the men born in the 1880s and 1890s who became post-war fascists, were from the trench generation, those who fought as frontline soldiers in the First World War, as much as they were of the counter-culture generation.

The First World War

It was clear in the summer of 1915 that, after a year of fighting, the war was not being won or lost by either side, the 'Central Powers' of Germany and Austro-Hungary or the *Entente* of Britain, France, Italy and Russia. The anticipated short war of movement was becoming a long attritional struggle of static trench warfare. The lack of a speedy and decisive victory changed the scope and perspective of the war. The continuation of the war for each belligerent country now depended on how effectively the government was able to mobilise all of the nation's human and material resources for the war effort. The 'fighting front', the armies in the trenches, needed an elastic supply of men, weapons and equipment to be provided by the 'home front', society. In this interdependence between the 'fighting' and the 'home' 'fronts' lay the transition to 'total war', which made this Great War so different an experience to previous conflicts. The First World War was a war of societies, not just of armies.

Everywhere, war mobilisation shifted the normal peacetime balance between what were considered public and private spheres of activity. Since private and voluntary initiatives were demonstrably inadequate to sustain a prolonged war effort, governments through the apparatus of the state were obliged to coerce their societies into line, and intervene in social and economic life to an unprecedented degree. The partial militarisation of society ensued. As well as the conscription, in other words, the obligatory enlistment, of civilians as frontline soldiers, workers in the war industries were also 'called up' and put under military discipline. The state assumed powers to regulate and control the economy in the interests of the national war effort. The organisation of the war economy required governments to allocate and direct labour to priority war industries, control the supply and distribution of essential and increasingly scarce raw materials, including food, and in an effort to keep the social peace, fix consumer goods prices and rents, ration food, and put ceilings on industrialists' profit levels.

Only in Germany in 1916–17 did the military men actually run the country's war effort, before sloughing off responsibility for military defeat onto a government of civilian politicians in 1918. But even where civilian governments remained in control, as in Britain, France and Italy, it was difficult to sustain, let alone justify in a national emergency, the continuous accountability of government to parliament. The war effort was operated by largely unaccountable government agencies, where the executive arm of

government, its bureaucracy, co-operated with and co-ordinated organised interest groups, including employers and labour, in what amounted to a corporate management of the economy.

All of this was a kind of dream come true for the nationalists of pre-war Europe. The nation at war was the working model of the anti-parliamentary authoritarian and corporatist order which they had put forward as the alternative to parliamentary democracy. Specifically, Italy at war seemed to match exactly that ANI projection of Italy as a 'proletarian nation'. The country was fighting an imperialist war to improve its relatively weak international position and gain the redistribution of territory and resources. This international struggle for existence demanded the suspension of all internal conflict and a strong state unifying the nation around itself, in order to concentrate energies on winning the war.

The 'armed society' of wartime also came to be the blueprint for the kind of society the fascists wanted to create in peacetime in preparation for war, so effectively removing the distinction between war and peace. Total war provided the rationale for, and a practical if incomplete demonstration of, the functions and potential of the later fascist totalitarian state. This was evident in Hitler's obsessive re-treading of Germany's experience of the First World War. The Nazi dictator intended to win a new war by avoiding what he believed had caused defeat in the Great War. Like most post-war German nationalists, he subscribed to the 'stab in the back' myth that Germany had been defeated in 1918 not on the field of battle, but as the result of internal defeatism and subversion by various 'anti-national' forces, which had prevented the full militarisation of German society. Defeat was, therefore, down to the state's insufficient mobilisation of the German people. This could be rectified through the action of the Nazi totalitarian regime, which would not only permanently repress those 'anti-national forces' (Jews, socialists, Catholics), but also, in its propaganda and organisations, 'arm' the people morally and psychologically with the will and commitment to wage and win the future war.

If the fascist myth of the 'total' state in part derived from the experience of mobilisation for the total war of 1914–18, then another unique aspect of the First World War contributed to one of the most important motifs of the post-war appeal of fascist movements. Although in total war, the 'fighting' front was dependent on the 'home front', there was still a sharp physical and psychological separation between the life of soldiers in the trenches and the lives of their families and other civilians, way behind the lines. This aspect of the conflict set the First World War experience apart from that of the Second World War. In fact, there were two 'separations', between frontline troops and the 'home front', and between the frontline of the trenches, inhabited by troops and their junior officers, and the military bases to the rear and out of the firing line, inhabited by senior and commanding officers. The outcome of these two 'separations' was that frontline soldiers came to sense that they were a breed apart, living through their own kind of hell

beyond the experience and comprehension of their indifferent commanders and the people on the 'home front'. This sense of having experienced a different and more terrible war to the rest of the population made for a very difficult re-entry into civilian life on demobilisation, and some of them never made, or bothered to make, the transition. It was also one reason why war veterans' associations were set up after the war in all belligerent countries, enabling ex-combatants to remember and keep alive the comradeship of shared risk and sacrifice, and in so doing, to sublimate the terrible destructiveness of modern warfare; to make the very best of times out of the very worst of times.

In the sublimation of the war experience was rooted one of the most powerful myths of the war, that of 'combatantism', on which several post-war political movements, including fascism, were to draw. The idealisation of the frontline war experience saw the comradeship and fraternity of the trench 'community' as an embryonic new society, the model and basis for changes in their own societies after the war, with the ex-combatants due a special place and status because of their sacrifice and commitment to the national cause during the war. This mood was strengthened by the way the governments of the countries at war had mortgaged their own political futures from 1917, promising their soldiers a better post-war world in an attempt to overcome the general war weariness, and to offset the appeal of revolutionary change opened up by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The soldiers' sacrifice for the nation in war was unambiguously linked to the rewards they could expect for that service in the post-war renewal of society.

The fascist version of the 'combatant' myth was that since soldiers had fought for the nation, they had won the right to remake the nation and become its new ruling class, or rather, their officers had. For the fascists, the trench community was both egalitarian and hierarchical. Troops and junior officers were 'equal' in the sense that all differences of class, wealth and social background were immaterial in the new group solidarity forged around the common danger and deprivation which they all faced in the trenches. The classless 'egalitarianism' of belonging to a community of like-minded people was what fascists regarded as 'socialism'. But the trench unit was also a military formation; there had to be leaders who gave the orders, and troops who obeyed. The junior officers were the meritocratic elite of the trench community, whose leadership qualities were continuously being tested and proved in battle, and were acknowledged and respected by their troops because they were together in the same mire. This idealised relationship between junior officers and their men, comradely yet elitist, was the basis of the hierarchical organisation which post-war fascist leaders imposed in their movements, and of the hierarchical organisation they wanted to impose on their own societies. The point was that this hierarchy was new. Based on performance, the merit earned by self-sacrificing service to the nation, it replaced the conservative hierarchy of birth and wealth.

Officers were obeyed because they were officers; their authority and power

to command derived impersonally from the positions they occupied, the functions they carried out. But in the idealised trench community, they were also obeyed and followed by their men because of their personal qualities, their heroic leadership in combat. The war in the trenches provided plenty of opportunities for, and models of, personal leadership in extreme situations. This was one reason why the idea of 'charismatic' authority, coined and analysed by the pioneering early twentieth-century sociologist, Max Weber, came to mark the relationship between leaders and followers in the post-war fascist movements. The 'leader principle', which ruled out internal party democracy in the name of the incontestable personal authority and will of the leader, was, for instance, adopted at the top and at all levels of the German Nazi party in the 1920s, and was then extended to characterise Hitler's standing with the German people as a whole, once he became dictator. The fascist cult of leadership drew in this way on the myth of the wartime frontline experience.

The first fascism

The fascist appropriation of the war experience can be seen in the political evolution of Mussolini and his bunch of ex-socialists and ex-revolutionary syndicalists during the war itself, from their participation in the 1914–15 campaign to get Italy into the war to the armistice of 1918. The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was one of the few European socialist movements to retain anything of their pre-war pacifism and internationalism, and did not, like socialists elsewhere, rally behind the national war effort. It preferred the neutrality initially declared by the Italian government when the war broke out in August 1914, to Italy's eventual entry into the war against Germany and Austro-Hungary in May 1915. The PSI's ambiguous wartime stance of 'neither support nor sabotage' cloaked its continuing opposition to the war, which served to justify government repression and control over the labour movement for the duration of the war.

Mussolini, as one of the leaders of the PSI's dominant revolutionary wing and editor of the national party newspaper, *Avanti!*, found himself defending the party's neutralist position when it was his intuition that this general European war might well be revolutionary in its effects and outcome. He was expelled from the PSI for rejecting neutrality in late 1914, and joined one of the interventionist organisations, the *fasci di azione rivoluzionaria* (groups for revolutionary action). Here, he was alongside some revolutionary syndicalists, who initially rationalised the war in the same way as other European socialists, that it was necessary for the proletariat to fight against German militarism and imperialism in defence of the political freedoms which gave working class organisations the right to exist. Mussolini set up his own daily newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, with funds from the French government and some Italian industrialists, who both wanted Italy to intervene in the war on the *Entente* side. But the break with the PSI, where he

occupied a position of considerable political clout, must have seemed like political suicide, especially since there was the perception that he had been 'bought off' to support Italy's intervention in the war.

Mussolini called his newspaper a 'socialist' daily, and clearly hoped to attract workers to his idea of a 'revolutionary war'. But the interventionist *fasci* failed to deflect many workers from the PSI, which, inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, expected that war would precipitate a violent proletarian revolution in Italy as well. By late 1917, this was not the revolution which Mussolini and the ex-revolutionary syndicalists could have hoped or wanted to lead.

The military disaster at Caporetto in the autumn of 1917 had allowed Austrian and German armies to occupy parts of North Eastern Italy. The defeat and the aftermath contributed to the war's progressive 'nationalisation' of the interventionist left. In the Italian equivalent of the later German nationalist 'stab in the back' myth, the government, the military and the interventionists blamed the defeat on internal pacifism, subversion and defeatism, on the failure of the nation to unite behind the war effort, which was a painful reminder that Italy's entry into the war was itself a matter of dispute and conflict among Italians. The only way to recover from Caporetto, therefore, was for the government to intensify war mobilisation, strengthen state control of society and the economy, and rally the home and the fighting fronts to continue the war. The interventionist groups whose campaigning in 1914–15 had pushed Italy into war, naturally took up the challenge of mobilising popular energies against the country's internal and external enemies. In such a national emergency, when the territorial integrity of the country was at stake, the rallying call of the interventionist left, as much as of the interventionist right, was for the defence of the nation, not of any one class, for the support of all classes behind the national cause.

So, the Caporetto defeat, put down to the country's inadequate mobilisation for war, seemed to the interventionist ex-revolutionary syndicalists to highlight what they saw as Italy's specific national problems since its late nineteenth-century political and territorial unification, which were economic underdevelopment and national disunity. Orthodox Marxism did not appear to offer the solution. The answer to economic underdevelopment, as well as to the immediate problem of reviving the country's war effort, was *more* capitalist industrial enterprise, not its destruction. An oligarchic, unrepresentative parliamentary system run by a corrupt political class of unproductive lawyers, was the cause, not the remedy, of national divisions and popular antipathy to national political institutions, and so was demonstrably and congenitally unable to galvanise, organise and unify the nation for war.

The interventionist syndicalist alternative, articulated in the last year of the war and maturing as a result of their interpretation of the meaning of wartime mobilisation for Italy, was 'national syndicalism'. This form of corporatism envisaged a state where the 'community' of 'producers' would

participate in political and economic life through their membership of economic bodies, organised around the concrete roles which people had in the productive process. Such a system would associate all the various kinds of 'producers', including workers, entrepreneurs and managers, not divide them, as Marxists expected and wished, and 'producers' acting together would stimulate the greater production of national economic wealth to the mutual benefit of all of them. The leadership of this 'national syndicalist' revolution could not be entrusted to the PSI and the proletariat, who had continued to divide the nation and weaken the national war effort. There was a new elite in the making: themselves, the combatants, formed in and by the war.

Mussolini was himself a combatant, invalided out of the army in 1917, and his newspaper signalled his intention to rebuild his political career on his own discovery of this new 'class'. In August 1918, *Il Popolo d'Italia* became the 'paper of combatants and producers', a shift he had anticipated earlier, writing in December 1917 about the emergence of a 'trenchocracy' of worker-soldiers and peasant-soldiers who by right of their active participation in the wartime struggle to save the nation, could be the protagonists of an 'anti-Marxist and . . . national socialism' (Morgan 1995: 12). The reference to 'producers' was as artful as that to 'combatants'. These categories were products of Italy's wartime mobilisation, and superseded conventional class and political divisions. Nobody was excluded by these terms, except, of course, those who had failed to support the nation at war.

As for the 'national syndicalists', Mussolini's commitment to the 'producers' and to 'productivism' was connected to the experience of wartime mobilisation, where the priority was production at almost any cost to meet the escalating demands of the war economy. The maximisation of production in the national interest required the end of literally counter-productive class conflict and the enforced co-operation of organised groups of all types of 'producers' in a national community of 'producers', intimating a corporatist re-organisation of society and politics. His take on 'productivism' was also related to the increasingly nationalist and imperialist foreign policy aims which he adopted in the wake of Caporetto and the re-launching of the patriotic war effort. The military muscle for a policy of national expansion and greatness could only come from industrial development and growth. By the armistice in November 1918, Mussolini had assembled in 'combatantism', 'productivism' and imperialism, the ingredients of the first fascism.

2 Fascist movements

The first wave, 1919–29

There were two general legacies of the First World War which affected the political climate or ‘mood’ of the post-war years in Europe. The first can take its name from the article written by the French author, Paul Valéry, in 1919, ‘la crise de l’esprit’ (crisis of the spirit), one of the early contributions to an anguished, apocalyptic debate among Europe’s intellectuals, about what the war entailed for the meaning and future of European, or ‘Western’, civilisation. This beating of breasts was important because it was so widespread, being taken up in newspapers, journals and books across Europe in the 1920s. It also gave the impression that the post-war political and economic difficulties experienced in European countries were symptomatic of a more general spiritual malaise, a crisis of European civilisation, affecting the core values of Europe and Europeans.

Countries had fought themselves to an exhausted standstill, employing against each other all the resources of modern industrial societies. The outcome was human and material devastation and destruction of an unprecedented scale and extent. The carnage of war seemed to represent what the British fascist leader, Mosley, called ‘the slaughter of values’ (Skidelsky 1980: 96), to convey his own sense of disorientation at the end of the conflict. Such a destructive war appeared to mark the end of civilisation, and of the expectation, now the illusion, of uninterrupted ‘progress’ towards greater human freedom and prosperity. The idea of ‘progress’ itself was discredited by the experience of ‘total’ war, which apparently confirmed the diagnosis of European society made by the pre-war ‘counter-culture’ of ‘unreason’. The pervasive sense of European civilisation being in crisis coloured the way in which the sharp ideological and political conflicts of the inter-war period were portrayed as the clash of ‘cultures’. Fascism and Bolshevism were seen, and not only by their protagonists, as opposed, alternative ‘civilisations’, rival sets of values competing to fill the ‘spiritual’ vacuum left by the war.

The other general legacy of the war was a sense of aggrieved nationalism, which was far more widespread than before the war. The enthusiastic popular response to the outbreak of the war in August 1914, and in particular the rallying of socialist parties and labour movements to the war effort,

seemed to show that the nation meant more to people than anything else, including class. The power of the nation to unify and mobilise people was one of the reasons why sections of the revolutionary left in Italy became nationalist in the course of the war.

A prolonged 'total' war was fought for huge stakes; it tested and put at risk the internal national unity, territorial integrity and international position of each belligerent country. All the defeated countries lost people and territory in a post-war settlement imposed by their wartime enemies, which also required the defeated to accept that they were responsible for starting the war and pay the victors' costs in reparations. This exercising of the 'rights' of victory bred 'revanchism' and 'revisionism' in the countries on the receiving end of national humiliation. Their desire for revenge could only be met by 'revising' the post-war treaties and recovering those parts of the nation now imprisoned in the new states of Central and Eastern Europe, even though they lacked the power and international leverage to do much about the position in the 1920s.

Frustrated nationalism was undoubtedly felt most strongly in the defeated countries, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, and in Italy, a victor nation with the mentality of a loser, after its inflated expectations of greater post-war territorial gains in the Balkans, the Near East and Africa, had been dashed by what, for nationalists, were the incompetence of the liberal government and the ingratitude of wartime allies. Since the war had put such a premium on the unity of the 'home front', resentment at defeat or in Italy's case, the 'mutilated victory', was turned against the nation's enemies within. The impact of defeat soured and embittered post-war domestic politics, to the extent that, in Germany, the nationalist right was unable to accept the legitimacy of the democratic parliamentary republic, because its mainstays, the socialists and the Catholics of the SPD and the Centre party, had accepted the national humiliation of the Versailles treaty, after 'subverting' the national cause before and during the war itself.

But the defence of victory engendered aggressive nationalistic feelings in the victor nations, too. Although the League of Nations was an international organisation which was meant to associate both the victor and defeated nations, Germany was excluded from it until 1926, and the USSR excluded itself until 1934. France, the country most committed to 'making Germany pay', interpreted the 'collective security' provisions of the League as an obligation of the other member states to enforce the Versailles treaty on her behalf against Germany. She did not balk from occupying German territory in 1923, when Germany defaulted on reparations payments in kind, a counter-productive move which managed only to fuel the Germans' sense of national grievance. From one nationalist perspective, the millions of Hungarians and Germans who now lived outside their countries under foreign rule in the new, restored and enlarged states of Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia, were persecuted national minorities demanding reunification with their fellow nationals. But, for these benefici-

aries of the post-war settlement, the national minorities, along with large Jewish populations, were the enemies within, the major barrier and threat to the integration of these new states around the 'official' nationality. At all levels of the infrastructural activity required to form and consolidate new states, from the civil service to the education system and the economy, there was competition for posts and influence between the educated classes of the various national and religious groups, which intensified national rivalries. Nationalism, then, was accentuated in those European countries which fought in the First World War, both as the result of the mobilisation for 'total' war, and of the political and territorial settlement which the victor nations imposed on the defeated. Its insidious effects not only damaged relations between European countries, but also reinforced existing political divisions and created new ones within them.

'Total' war, because it demanded unprecedented levels of government intervention in and management of society and the economy, tested the efficiency and viability of each belligerent country's political system. The fall of the Tsarist imperial monarchy in Russia's first revolution, in February 1917, showed that undemocratic near-absolutist systems of rule were particularly vulnerable to being destabilised by the political and socio-economic strains of war mobilisation. Autocrats, by the nature of their rule, found it more difficult than democrats to engage the co-operation and participation of their subjects necessary to sustain the unity of otherwise conflicting political and social groups behind the war effort. To do so involved sacrificing the principle of autocratic rule, that the emperor did not share power with his people. With authority, power and responsibility concentrated in the person of the emperor at the peak of the ruling pyramid, failures of government and of armies rebounded directly on him and the system he personified.

Similarly, in Germany, Austria and Hungary, military defeat in 1918 discredited and de-legitimised the semi-democratic, semi-authoritarian imperial monarchies which had taken the German and Austro-Hungarian empires into the war. But as in Russia in 1917, so in Germany, Austria and Hungary in 1918, it was not immediately clear what kind of political regime would replace the abdicating king-emperors. The succession to the monarchies was a contested one, between either a democratic parliamentary or a communist republic.

The outcome was eventually determined, as in every revolutionary situation, by those who had the superior power and force to impose their solutions. Following the example and inspiration of the Bolsheviks in Russia, who had managed to transform war into revolution, newly formed communist parties worked to stage risings in late 1918 and early 1919 through the soviets-style workers' and soldiers' councils. They succeeded in the South German state of Bavaria, and in Hungary, where in the second of three political revolutions between 1918 and 1920, a communist coup in March 1919 overthrew the short-lived democratic parliamentary government set up in November 1918 after the king's abdication. The communist risings and

republics in Germany and Austria were suppressed by governments led by the SPDs, which acting in the logic of their pre-war and wartime reformist rather than revolutionary practice, put the establishment of democratic parliamentary institutions before socialist revolution. The force to do so was provided by the army, returning 'unsubverted' from the front, and its improvised anti-communist militia units, the *Freikorps* (Free Corps) in Germany and the *Heimwehr* (National or Home Guard) in Austria. The SPD alliance with the army against leftist revolution was the central component of a wider tacit political bargain, by which the permanent institutions of the German state and the country's conservative political forces rallied to the defence and consolidation of the democratic Weimar Republic, for fear of worse, rather than any authentic commitment to a democratic polity.

The other element of power and force which settled matters in the defeated countries in the immediate post-war period were the victorious Allied armies. In Germany, their presence was passive and potential, but still decisive. The Allied governments had said that they were fighting the war against militarism and imperialism, and for democracy, and would probably have intervened in Germany if this was necessary to prevent either a leftist or a nationalist revolution. Even the German nationalists recognised that accepting a democratic republic kept Germany from being invaded and occupied by the Allied armies, a realisation which only reinforced their contempt for democracy as a 'foreign' and imposed solution to the country's chaotic post-monarchical political transition. In Hungary, foreign armies were actual, and their intervention equally decisive. Acting very much as the proxies of the French government, the Romanian army, along with Czech and Yugoslav forces already occupying parts of Hungary, overturned the communist government in the capital, Budapest, in late 1919. Local Hungarian counter-revolutionary militias, the equivalent of the *Freikorps* and *Heimwehr*, rallying around Nicholas Horthy, ex-admiral of the Austro-Hungarian fleet, cleaned up in the wake of these armies, attacking and killing socialists, communists and Jews in a nasty counter-revolutionary terror, lasting well into 1920.

The paramilitary formations were the distinctive and sinister agents of the eventual political stabilisation of post-war Germany, Austria and Hungary. The *Freikorps* and the *Heimwehr* were similar in composition, functions and methods, reflecting the similar national settings in which they emerged. Made up mainly of recently demobilised army officers and their troops, they were men caught between military and civilian life, something more than vigilantes and something less than professional soldiers, who had the *esprit de corps* more of the armed gang than the army platoon. They were political mercenaries, employed for violence against the nation's internal and external enemies, self-consciously applying the weapons and tactics of warfare in what could pass as the post-war conditions of a civil war. In Germany, the *Freikorps* assassinated national communist party leaders, broke communist-led strikes, overthrew with the army the Bavarian Soviet Repub-

lic and fought against the Polish army on the contested German–Polish border, and to maintain a German presence in the Baltic states, newly independent of the Russian empire. In Austria, *Heimwehr* units defended farmers against ‘Bolshevik’ soldiers’ and workers’ councils requisitioning in the countryside to feed the ‘red’ towns and cities, were employed by industrialists to attack striking workers and their organisations in industrial Upper Austria, and in the mixed population areas of Styria and Carinthia, fought alongside the regular army against Yugoslav incursions into Austrian territory. Contacts across the Austro-Bavarian border leading to mutual moral and material aid, were regular and sustained. The Austrian aristocrat, Prince Ernest Rudiger von Starhemberg, the *Heimwehr* leader in Upper Austria and later the movement’s national head, was also involved with one of Bavaria’s *Freikorps* units.

The Austrian *Heimwehr*

Mobilised to use extraordinary methods in emergency situations, these units often did not survive the immediate post-war crises which spawned them. The *Heimwehr* remained until the late 1920s very much an aggregate of local and regional formations, with no clear national organisation and political programme beyond a patriotic anti-communism, kept alive by various local political deals and alliances, especially with the major Austrian party of the 1920s, the Catholic Christian Socials. In Tyrol, the *Heimwehr* unit, formed in 1920 to defend the Austrian frontier against Italy, was founded and led by the provincial Christian Social leader, Richard Steidle, himself a native of the South Tyrol, which from 1919, was a part of Italy. Here, there was some justification for regarding the *Heimwehr* as the paramilitary arm of the Christian Social party, as an extreme, violent extension of conservatism.

They were thrust back into the national political reckoning by the return of that threat from the left which had been one of the reasons, along with ethnic border conflict, for their emergence in 1918–19. SPD gains in the April 1927 national elections at the expense of the right–centre Christian Social-dominated governing and electoral coalition, were followed in July by violent workers’ demonstrations in Vienna and a general strike, against which the local *Heimwehr* units intervened by force, fighting with the SPD’s own paramilitary organisation, the *Schutzbund*.

External interference in Austrian politics also pushed the *Heimwehr* into becoming a more coherent national political organisation. Mussolini’s Fascist regime in Italy started funding and arming the *Heimwehr* in 1927, initially using the Hungarian government as the conduit for this illegal traffic. The covert destabilisation of the politics of neighbouring countries was one of the means Mussolini used to extend Italy’s area of influence in Central Europe and the Balkans, action which belied his reputation for good international behaviour in the 1920s. He was at the same time backing Croat and Macedonian secessionist movements in an attempt to destroy

Yugoslavia from within. There was self-evidently a Fascist and an Italian national state interest in preventing the socialist left from coming to power in the country on Italy's borders, as there would be later in preventing a pan-German movement taking power there. From the Hungarian government's record of its contacts with Mussolini about Austria, it would seem that he was grooming the *Heimwehr* for a coup against the parliamentary republic in the not so distant future. This was certainly a different view of the *Heimwehr*'s prospects to that of the national Christian Social leader and Chancellor, Ignaz Seipel, who in light of the 1927 disturbances, wanted to formalise its role as the armed anti-socialist watchdog of his party's Catholic conservatism.

The attempt to create a national movement out of the *Heimwehr* terminated in 1930, by which time it had expanded its support among the Catholic middle-classes of rural and small town Austria, on the Christian Socials' own turf. It seems reasonable to continue the history of the *Heimwehr* up to 1930, and still regard it as belonging to the 'first wave' of fascism, since the stimulus to the growth of support was the middle classes' fear of socialism after the 1927 events, growth which peaked in the 1930 elections before the Great Depression had significant political effects in Austria. The movement asserted its independence by standing in those elections on its own, rather than joining an electoral bloc with other anti-socialist middle-class parties. *Heimwehr* leaders agreed on a party platform, the so-called Korneuberg Oath, which depending on whom you read and believe, was either 'fascism' or some Catholic variant, 'clerico-fascism'. Griffin calls it 'proto-fascism', even though the *Heimwehr* of the 1930 Oath seems to meet his own set of criteria for fascism as well as mine. The Oath espoused an Austrian nationalism, as opposed to the pan-German nationalism of its rival, the Austrian Nazi party. It sought to appeal to all Austrians across party and class lines, and talked of the need to renew and rebuild Austria from its foundations, by rejecting Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism, parliamentary democracy and the party political system, and creating in its place the 'People's State', based on dictatorship of the *Heimwehr* and corporate representation.

The movement won about 6 per cent of the vote in the 1930 elections, about 250,000 votes to the SPD's 1.5 million, giving it eight seats in the Austrian national parliament. This was perhaps not an electoral breakthrough, but it was respectable enough for the first time around, and in relation to the stiff competition from other more established parties in the Catholic and nationalist camps. But the movement disintegrated once more into its regional and ideological component parts, as it proved unable to decide on what to make of its electoral debut. Walter Pfrimer, head of the Styrian *Heimwehr*, and Steidle in the Tyrol, saw its platform as fascist, and the Styrians in particular wanted to stage a coup to take power and implement the programme. When Pfrimer tried to do so in 1931, he was left high and dry by other regional *Heimwehr*, whose personal and political connec-

tions were, and remained, with the Christian Socials. The Styrian group soon defected to the Austrian Nazis, while the Stahremberg and Christian Social-affiliated groups merged in with the ex-Christian Social Englebert Dollfuss's establishment of a non-fascist authoritarian regime from 1932.

As will also be seen later in the treatment of political developments in inter-war France, the boundaries between fascist and conservative politics were, and are, difficult to demarcate. In the Austrian case, admittedly an untidy one for historians who want to keep a clear head, it is probably safest to conclude that the *Heimwehr* were a mixed bunch whose shared nationalism and anti-socialism were never enough to enable them to create a unified movement. The radicals among them, who wanted to use their paramilitary formations to overthrow the democratic republic by force, and put into effect the Korneuberg Oath, had evolved into something recognisably fascist. There were others, however, who did not see their movement as anything more than the back-stop for the defence of conservative interests.

The Nazis in Germany

In Germany, the *Freikorps* might have been employed by Weimar governments to suppress communism, but they were hardly genuine supporters of parliamentary democracy. *Freikorps* units took part in the Kapp *putsch* in 1920, an attempted military mutiny-cum-coup against the Republic, aborted by a workers' general strike and the refusal of the army High Command to involve the rest of the army. The KPD used the coup and the workers' mobilisation against it to attempt a rising of their own, the repression of which allowed the *Freikorps* to disguise their earlier subversion of republican democracy. But the Free Corps, unlike what happened to the Austrian *Heimwehr*, did not continue beyond the early crisis years of the Weimar republic as an independent political force. Free Corpers merged into nationalist veterans associations, and joined nationalist political movements, including the Nazi party and its paramilitary formation, the *SA* (*Sturmabteilung*, or Storm Troops). The *Freikorps*' organised violence to smash the threat from the left was the 'trenchocracy' in action. Even though they were a rather special group of war veterans, their presence in the Nazi party allowed it to portray itself as the movement of the 'front' generation, carrying the militarised values and methods of warfare into peacetime politics.

In Munich, Bavaria, in February 1920, there was a re-launch of a very small party, the DAP (German Workers Party), formed in 1919. Behind the re-named NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers Party) were Anton Drexler, the founder of the original DAP, and Adolf Hitler, who had come across the DAP and joined it while still in the Bavarian army, working in the army's political indoctrination unit set up to 're-educate' its soldiers after the experience of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and Soviet Republic in Bavaria in 1919. Historians give these events a retrospective significance because of what Hitler and the NSDAP became and did. At the

time, these were obscure men leading obscure movements. Their importance was that they were indicative of wider political trends in crisis-ridden early post-war Germany.

The NSDAP was one of literally hundreds of *völkisch* nationalist groups and movements all over Germany. Some of these were revivals or extensions of pre-war *völkisch* nationalism. A major league example was the DNVP (German National People's Party), a coalition of right-wing interests and groups whose core members came from the pre-war Conservative party and the Pan-German League. They, in turn, were components of the Fatherland Party of 1917, a nationalist front organisation to rally all 'good' Germans behind the war effort and against the 'anti-national' Catholic Centre party and SPD in the German parliament, who wanted a negotiated democratic peace. The Fatherland party was another demonstration of how precarious German national unity was during the war. Its partial reincarnation in the DNVP was a sign of the carrying over of these bitter internal wartime divisions into post-war politics.

Others were new nationalist groups, like the DAP. Along with the nationalist war veterans' associations and the paramilitary *Freikorps*, they more evidently reflected the impact of the war experience, and what the nationalists saw as the disastrous outcome of that internal 'subversion' of the war effort, the national humiliation of defeat and revolution, of a dictated peace settlement and democratic parliamentary republic. So the 'unalterable' 'national socialist' programme of the NSDAP called for the revival of German power, internally and externally, through the dismantling of the Versailles treaty, and the union of all racial Germans inside and outside the present Germany, excluding Jews, who would be denied citizenship. 'Small man' capitalism would be served by the confiscation of excessive war profits, a matter of 'Jewish' wartime profiteering and speculation on the sacrifice of 'German' soldiers' lives, the partial nationalisation of large business corporations and of banking and credit institutions, and land re-distribution to create small farms. The 'socialism' of 'national socialism' amounted to anti-Semitism, action against big-time parasitic, speculative, interest-earning 'Jewish' financial and commercial capitalism, in the interests of productive German, wage- and profit-earning industrial capitalism.

This programme also reflected pretty well Hitler's own view of the world, which would be assembled more fully later in his fascinatingly turgid autobiography-cum-political testament, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) in 1925. In his speeches and propagandising for the fledgling NSDAP, Hitler, the new movement's only real political asset, kept to the simple message that the Jews were responsible for Germany's defeat and post-war revolution, leading to the triumph of the country's internal enemies, above all, the SPD, in the democratic parliamentary institutions of the Weimar Republic. As well as making the connection between Jews and finance capitalism, Hitler increasingly made the linkage between the Jews and Marxism, its validity apparently strengthened by events in the Soviet Union, the headquarters of the

Jewish international conspiracy, and by the continuing threat of the SPD and KPD in Weimar Germany.

There was a concentration of these new *völkisch* nationalist groups in Bavaria, and for good reason. The Soviet Republic, whose leaders included Jews, was overthrown for the national government by the army and the *Freikorps*. The right-wing Bavarian state government refused to disband them and other paramilitary formations, including the Nazi party's own militia, the SA, regarding them as indispensable to keeping order against any recurrence of 'Bolshevism'. Germany's federal structure was, in this sense, Nazism's best defence. The movement could survive here because of the benevolence of the Bavarian state authorities, when it was banned by the left-centre governments of other North and Central German states. Its Bavarian location made for easy cross-border contacts and communication with its Austrian counterpart, the pan-German DNSAP. It was not until 1926 that a breakaway group formed the Austrian NSDAP, which recognised Hitler as its leader, and effectively made itself the Austrian section of the German Nazi party.

But Bavaria was also the NSDAP's prison. By late 1923, the party had about 50,000 members, with perhaps 15,000 in the SA, practically all of them Bavarian and representative of a broad cross-section of Bavarian society, though there were proportionally more middle class than working class members. It was not really an electoral party. Hitler, the party's acknowledged leader from 1921, was more interested in building up a disciplined, militarised organisation than an amorphous mass movement, one equipped to come to power through a coup rather than winning elections.

The opportunity for a nationalist revolution, or at least, for the transformation of the NSDAP from a regional to a national phenomenon, seemed to come in the long tail to Germany's post-war political and economic crisis. In January 1923, French and Belgian troops entered the industrial areas of the Rhineland to enforce German reparations payments to the ex-Allied countries. The invasion turned into an occupation, as the German government decided on a policy of non-co-operation and promised to bear the financial costs of the Rhinelanders' passive resistance. The effect was to accelerate an already uncontrolled inflation in post-war Germany to the point of total collapse of the German currency by the end of 1923. As in all the economies of Central and Eastern European countries, inflation was endemic to a situation of post-war material shortages, where governments met the shortfall between revenue and expenditure by printing money rather than taxing their citizens harder. Even before the invasion and occupation, reparations were pushing up inflation, as the exports needed to pay for reparations were made more competitive on international markets by successive devaluations of the German currency, which in turn, made imports more expensive and raised prices still further in Germany itself. As would happen in the late 1920s, under the impact of the Great Depression, the economic crisis polarised German politics and benefited the political extremes on left

and right, pushing them to take action against the parliamentary republic, which was blamed for the devaluation and inflation, and for the source of all evils, the national humiliation of Versailles.

That neither a communist nor a nationalist revolution succeeded in the crisis conditions of 1923 was ultimately down to the army's use of its powers under the national state of emergency declared by the government in August 1923. Its show of force forestalled planned KPD-led risings in Saxony and Thuringia, which, if successful, were anticipated to be the torches for communist revolution throughout the country. The army's loyalty to the Republic was less certain in Bavaria, where both the Bavarian army and the state's conservative government wanted and expected an army-backed nationalist coup in Berlin against the central government.

Hitler was impressed by both Mussolini's leadership of the nationalist camp in Italy and his successful use of local power as the launch pad for the taking of national power in the 'March on Rome' in 1922. In early November 1923, he pressurised the heads of the Bavarian government and army to back a 'March on Berlin' by Bavaria's paramilitary nationalist formations for the overthrow of the central government. As Mussolini had done in October 1922, Hitler banked on the army, at the very least, not intervening against a nationalist war veterans' coup, which would amount to collusion in the coup attempt. But the 'March on Berlin' got no further than the centre of Munich, where state police fired on and dispersed the demonstration of the paramilitary units led by Hitler.

The inflationary spiral was capped in 1924, as the reorganisation of the German currency, another foreign loan, and the Dawes Plan's scaling down of reparations payments, restored domestic and international confidence in the German economy. This, along with the defeat of communist and nationalist revolution in 1923, marked the political and economic stabilisation of the Weimar Republic after five years of practically uninterrupted crisis. Hitler and the NSDAP had not managed to stage a coup on the back of Germany's post-war crisis. But the trial and imprisonment of Hitler for sedition, and the latitude he was allowed at the trial to justify his position, achieved what the coup attempt did not. It made Hitler a national political figure.

Hungary

The so-called 'order detachments' which carried out the counter-revolutionary reprisals in Hungary in 1919–20, were not only made up of demobilised war veterans, but also of serving army officers, many of whom had formed and joined secret patriotic societies and leagues in the immediate aftermath of defeat. As in Austria, the nationalist and anti-communist reaction of the Hungarian army did persist in a political form beyond the events of 1919 which had provoked it. The radical elements of the Hungarian counter-revolution eventually coalesced into a fascist movement.

After the suppression of the Soviet Republic, ex-admiral Horthy was elected head of state and regent of a country which no longer had a coastline, now part of the new Yugoslavia, and was not allowed by the Allies to have a king. The military defeat and dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1918, endorsed in the Treaty of Trianon dictated by the ex-Allied powers to Hungary in 1920, reduced Hungary's pre-war multinational territory to what was near enough an ethnic Magyar Hungarian state. Large Magyar populations were now beleaguered national minorities in neighbouring countries. The desire to revise the treaty and re-unify the Magyars in the restored 'historic' boundaries of pre-war Hungary, was the Hungarian national obsession of the inter-war period. But the actual capacity of Hungarian governments to challenge the post-war settlement improved only as a result of the difference that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany made to international alignments in the 1930s.

Under Horthy's auspices, the Prime Minister he appointed to head the government, the old hand politician, Count Istvan Bethlen, turned Hungary back to the kind of oligarchic liberal parliamentary system which had developed before the war, not only in Hungary, but in other countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, including Romania, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The fully democratic electoral system was changed to limit the numbers and kinds of people who could vote, and open balloting was re-introduced outside Budapest and the larger towns. As in the late nineteenth century, this was a system which invited and facilitated the government's management and fixing of elections, and so ensured that the majority of parliamentary seats and, hence, the formation of governments, went to the official government party, given the appropriately apolitical title, the National Union. The socialists were not actually outlawed as a reaction to the experience of the Soviet Republic. But Horthy severely restricted their political range, trading off the right to exist at all against a ban on their operations among public sector and utilities employees and in the countryside which, with open balloting the rule in rural areas, practically ensured the continued political and socio-economic dominance of the conservative landed gentry and aristocracy.

Together, the Horthy system, which lasted until 1944, the Soviet Republic's blight on the activities of the left and the all-pervasive sense of national humiliation and grievance meant that effectively all politics in inter-war Hungary was conducted on the right. What political competition there was, was between the various rights, with the only fundamental alternative to Horthy's hybrid not quite democratic, not quite authoritarian regency, coming from a more radical nationalism and fascism.

One of the leaders of the patriotic army officers' movements which had spearheaded the 1919–20 counter-revolution, Gyula Gömbös, himself an assimilated German–Swabian officer, was absorbed into the official governmental party. But in 1923, Gömbös left the Union to found his own fascist movement, the Party of Racial Defence, significantly on the grounds that

Horthy's regime was too conservative, and at the same time, not nationalistic enough, to satisfy the political aspirations of those who had made the counter-revolution. Gömbös apparently had a second 'March on Budapest' in mind, to topple the Horthy–Bethlen government. He had many contacts with the Bavarian right since 1920, which went as far as he and the German Nazi leader, Hitler, talking about plans for co-ordinating coups in Hungary and Bavaria.

A self-proclaimed 'national socialist' from 1919, Gömbös set his party against the Bethlenite political alliance of conservative landowners and the assimilated urban Jewish middle classes. There were perhaps more than a million Jews in Hungary, over 200,000 of them living in Budapest, where they made up nearly a quarter of the city's total population. Gömbös wanted to go beyond Horthy's tepid authoritarianism, and do away with even the remains of democratic parliamentary institutions, in a fully-fledged authoritarian and corporatist order regulating a properly 'Christian' and 'national' economy. The use of the term 'Christian' in Central and Eastern Europe had only one meaning; it was the code word for anti-Semitism.

Gömbös was apparently a racial anti-Semite. Biological racism was certainly the ground on which he could justify his exclusion of Jews from the Hungarian nation, since the Jews in Hungary were such a culturally assimilated and 'Magyarised' minority. He blamed the Jews for the nation's post-war political and economic ills, for Marxist revolution, since many of the Soviet Republic's leaders were Jewish and for the halting post-war recovery of the economy, in hock to Jewish businessmen and financiers at home and their compatriots in the 'Jewish' international money markets abroad. This kind of bile had enough hold on reality, or a perception of reality, to make sense to some aggrieved middle-class Hungarians. The large, well-off Jewish community in Budapest of professionals, entrepreneurs and financiers constituted the bulk of the country's economic and commercial middle classes. They voted for centre and left opposition parties, but also for the government party of Bethlen, who along with the heads of government throughout post-war Central and Eastern Europe, based their hopes of economic recovery and stabilising weak currencies on international loans and investment. A healthy, productive and independent national economy, for Gömbös, could only emerge once property and capital passed from Jews to Magyars. This confiscatory and discriminatory economic 'programme' was not really against capitalism as such; it was for a capitalism in the 'proper' hands, and organised in a different, corporative manner. Finally, in an attack on the landed magnates who were the real fixers of provincial rural politics, Gömbös proposed a more ambitious redistributive land reform than the one which had already been adopted in Hungary after the war. Together with the 'nationalisation' of Jewish capital, land reform made up what Gömbös understood as the 'socialism' of his 'national socialism'.

Like every other politician in inter-war Hungary, Gömbös was revanchist, but even more so. His contacts with other nationalist 'revisionist' groups in

Central European countries showed some awareness of how an internationally weak Hungary might, nevertheless, reverse the hated treaty of Trianon.

The programme self-evidently represented a break with the conservative political and social and economic order of Horthy's post-war Hungary. It attracted support from the Magyar middle classes with particular reasons for discontent, indigent gentry landowners who wanted more land and especially those professional or would-be professional, university-educated men who could identify their own uncertain career employment and development prospects with the wider national cause. These included nationalist army officers who, like Gömbös himself, had participated in the counter-revolution and whose careers were stalled or even interrupted by the treaty's limitation on the peacetime size of Hungary's army and police forces, and actual or aspirant white-collar employees in private enterprise, and especially in the public service sector. This was a vastly overcrowded arena, not only because of the well-established positions of Jews in the economy, but also because of the influx of some 300,000 refugees from the 'lost' territories, most of them involved in the administration of the pre-war Hungarian multi-ethnic state, and now competing with everybody else for posts in a much reduced territory and public infrastructure. Military men and civil servants were the core of all the radical nationalist movements in inter-war Hungary.

The Party of Racial Defence did not manage to stage its coup, nor did it succeed in the 1926 elections in breaking the hold of the National Union, whose majorities were practically built into the workings of the electoral system. Horthy's own coup against Gömbös was to persuade or bribe him into believing that he had no political future outside the government party. He rejoined the Union in 1928, and was later appointed Minister of Defence, on condition that he disbanded the Party of Racial Defence. The system's successful co-option of its radical nationalist alternative showed that, while Hungary's post-war rightist political ambience was conducive to the emergence of a fascist movement, it was, paradoxically, not enough to ensure that fascism made real political headway. Not for the first, nor the last time in the history of inter-war fascist movements, conservative authoritarianism proved to be both fascism's best friend and worst enemy.

The Romanian Iron Guard

In Hungary, a defeated country in 1918, the dominant nationalistic thrust to inter-war politics came from the loss of territory and populations to neighbouring countries. In one of these neighbouring countries, Romania, a victor nation in 1918, the national issue was the reverse. It was how to secure ethnic Romanian control of a new multi-ethnic Greater Romania, while attempting to integrate newly acquired territories containing significant ethnic and religious minority populations, including Hungarians in Transylvania, Russians and Ukrainians in Bessarabia, Bulgarians in Dobrudja, Jews in all areas, especially Bukovina and Bessarabia, and whose



Figure 1 Corneliu Zelea Codreanu: the face of a fascist fanatic. Codreanu was the founder of the Romanian Iron Guard movement and its leader until his murder in prison by police in 1938. His photogenic film star looks helped to make him a genuinely charismatic personality, capable of inspiring his followers to acts of extreme, and in the Guardist view, redemptive, violence.

majority Romanian populations had lived for years in foreign multinational empires with differing legal, economic and transport systems.

One answer was to adopt a highly centralised political and administrative system modelled on the French Third Republic, disappointing the hopes for administrative autonomy of the Romanians in Transylvania. The other was to make the state apparatus ethnically Romanian, ensuring that the levers of administrative power in the enlarged country were in the hands of ethnic Romanians. This was why the universities, whose graduates would be the politicians, officials and professional men, the elites of the new Romania, became the battleground of the Romanian 'nation'. The bulk of the ethnic Romanian population were rural, living on or by the land or servicing those who did so. The intake to the country's provincial universities in the post-war period was swollen by the sons of peasants, rural school teachers and clergymen, upwardly mobile but still barely one step away from their provincial rural origins, and by young Romanians from the new territories whose parents had lacked the same higher education opportunities in the old empires, where elites were drawn from other ethnic groups. In the 1920s, these new Romanian students found themselves a minority in their own country. Between a half and two-thirds of students enrolled were from the

ethnic and religious minorities, whose presence in the provincial universities was proportionally far higher than their weight in the population as a whole. There were Russians, and especially Jews, many from newly annexed Bessarabia, who because of its proximity to the USSR, which claimed the old imperial Russian territory, were assumed and actual leftists.

It was at Iasi University that a Romanian law student, Corneliu Codreanu, who attempted to join the Romanian army during the war but was too young to do so, took up the fight to secure the future of his nation and his generation's employment prospects. He formed an association of 'Christian', in other words, ethnic Romanian and anti-Semitic, students, who physically attacked and intimidated non-Romanian students, won control of university student councils and campaigned for the imposition of quotas on the numbers of Jews enrolling at universities. Among his many allies on the university's teaching staff was his mentor, Professor Alexander Cuza, head of the law faculty at Iasi, who with Codreanu's father, reformed his pre-war anti-Semitic nationalist party as the League of National Christian Defence in 1922–23. Without actually graduating, Codreanu stayed in student politics, organising for Cuza's party among students and setting up compact networks or small fraternities of university and secondary school students, called 'Brotherhoods of the Cross'.

The university setting, and the real national issues involved in the expansion of higher education in post-war Romania, were crucial to the development of Codreanu's own political movement, the Legion of the Archangel Michael, which he formed in 1927. Its first leaders, like Codreanu himself, were the student agitators of the early 1920s, and its core members were always university and high school students. This was a fascist movement which was forever young, and always had to be, since its ranks were continually being decimated by imprisonment and death or, for the Legionaries, 'martyrdom'.

Codreanu, in 1924, had murdered the Iasi police chief for his brutal harassment of the 'Brotherhoods of the Cross', and been acquitted because it was a 'national' crime. Again in prison awaiting trial, and another acquittal, for a conspiracy to kill politicians from the governing party, he claimed to have a vision of the Archangel Michael, the patron saint of Romania's past national wars, who told him to dedicate his life to God, the Romanian Orthodox God. So the Legion, uniquely among Europe's inter-war fascist movements, claimed a religious inspiration and a spiritual goal of a religious, other-worldly kind, rather than a secular, this-worldly kind.

The religious sense of being on a special and personal divine mission was probably enough to precipitate Codreanu's break with Cuza's party and setting up on his own. The League of National Christian Defence, practically a single-issue and regional party in its xenophobic anti-Semitism, won a respectable 5 per cent of the votes in the 1926 national elections, mainly concentrated in the North Eastern provinces where the Jewish middlemen's presence in the small market towns was most felt and resented by the

Romanian rural population. Codreanu's vision had given him a national mission, and one that he did not think could be realised by a conventional political and electoral party like the League, concerned only with the short-term, material needs of its supporters. For one thing, that would involve him too much in Romania's corrupt electoral and parliamentary politics, which delivered the nation to its enemies. The familiar fascist critique of democratic multiparty politics, that parties were inherently divisive and factional, because they represented sectional interests and fragmented parts of the nation, was given a peculiarly Romanian frisson by Codreanu. Romania's democratic constitution had made the Jews citizens of the Romanian state, and the exercise of their democratic rights gave the Jews a place in the country's institutions, which was enough for Codreanu to want to do away with the parliamentary system altogether.

Instead, the Legion was an elite, selective cadre organisation, an 'aristocracy of virtue'. It rested on the gradual multiplication of 'nests', small, conspiratorial and secretive cell-like groups, whose members were to act unquestioningly on the orders of the 'nest' leader and convenor. His authority and right to command was charismatic, and continuously self-confirming. The leader was leader because of what he did, how he performed, how he led. The Legion seemed more like an underground religious cult than a political movement, an impression strengthened by the elaborate initiation ceremonies for new members, which were meant to impart Codreanu's sense of mission and commitment to perform heroic acts, as well as bond the group together.

These heroic acts were, mainly, assassinating 'corrupt' establishment politicians, state officials, including policemen, who 'harassed' the 'nests', and members proving themselves to be 'traitors' to the movement. The enclosed underground structure of the movement served its main activity, conspiring to kill people. But if the idea was to evade detection at the planning stage, it was not to do so once the act had been perpetrated. The Legionaries wanted to be public martyrs, and practically invited arrest, trial, imprisonment and death, to satisfy a heretical notion of national spiritual redemption. On the principle that the greater the sin, the greater the need for God's redeeming forgiveness, the Legionaries calculated that the ultimate sacrifice to the nation was to lose their own lives, and since murder was a cardinal sin, they risked even more for the nation as murderers, the loss of eternal life for their souls. They envisaged themselves accumulating spiritual credit for the Romanian nation through their self-sacrificing acts of heroism, banked up ready for the enactment of the ultimate national goal which would unite the dead and the living souls of Romanians, 'the resurrection in Christ'.

The Legion's fusion of religion and politics meant that they regarded the Romanian nation as those practising Romanian Orthodoxy, and by extension, since urban values were cosmopolitan, secular and Jewish, the ethnic Romanian peasantry. Their religious mission also allowed them to portray

the nation's enemies, communists, politicians and the prime movers, the Jews, as God's enemies, against whom they were justified in waging an all-or-nothing 'holy war'. The movement was implicitly 'totalitarian', therefore, even if initially, it never said much about what institutional and political structures it wanted to create, other than those suggested by its intention to destroy inherently corrupt and self-serving political parties and parliamentary democracy. The movement emphasised the formation of the nation's future leaders in the 'nests', and the killing of corrupt politicians and state officials, as if institutions could be destroyed by eliminating the people who embodied them, and the new elites could become more virtuous through the act of killing. Their concern was not so much with articulating political programmes and policies, as with creating 'new men' with a new national mentality capable of regenerating (and resurrecting) the nation as a whole.

Later in the 1930s, the movement took up a vague corporatism, mirroring the way it organised its own members. Its impassioned calls for social justice for the materially and culturally oppressed Romanian peasantry amounted to the elimination of the Jews as the economic middlemen of rural life, and the strengthening of their Orthodox faith, which would liberate spiritually the peasants and their masters. The real poverty of the Romanian nation was spiritual, not material.

Given its deliberately secretive organisational structure and its concern with forming new elites, it was perhaps no wonder that the movement grew slowly in the late 1920s. But in 1929, Codreanu, a genuinely charismatic and messianic figure with a cultivated peasant chic, sitting astride his white horse in full Romanian peasant costume, led the first of the Legion's rural tours or pilgrimages into the remote countryside of Southern Bessarabia. This and successive countryside campaigns brought the recently urbanised educated Legionaries into contact with the peasant Romanian culture they idealised and had never really abandoned. In itinerant summer work camps, the Legionaries laboured with the local peasants on practical agricultural improvement projects and initiatives, including digging ditches and setting up shops and outlets for Romanian-only handicraft products, and thereby created the mass movement of the so-called Iron Guard in the early 1930s, with a significant following among the peasants and educated rural elite of school teachers and clergymen in some of the more remote and backward areas of the country.

Taking in what the Legion–Iron Guard did always induces a sharp intake of breath. Everything was extreme about the Legion. The Legionaries were the most ferocious, driven and fanatical fascists in inter-war Europe, and the most extreme manifestation of that general fascist 'spiritual' revolution, for the creation of the 'new man'. Interestingly, despite the extremism and uniqueness of their positions, the Guardists were among the keenest 'Europeanists' of the fascist movements, strong supporters of the idea of a Fascist International patronised by the Italian Fascist regime in the 1930s. This was partly to do with their uniquely developed desire for martyrdom, which

could be satisfied by joining ‘fascism’s’ wars in other countries. Codreanu’s second-in-command, Ion Mota, was killed with other Legionaries fighting in support of Franco’s military rising in the Spanish Civil War.

Fascism in Italy

As newcomers, it was difficult for fascist movements to grow out of their political niches and develop into popular, mass movements. The Fascist movement formed by Mussolini in March 1919 certainly saw itself as different to other political parties, and tried to act in a different way to them. It deliberately described itself not as a party, but as a movement, made up of *fasci di combattimento*, combat or fighting groups. Like the term *bund* in Germany, *fascio* had particular connotations in Italy, meaning a relatively loose association of like-minded people acting together to achieve certain common objectives. The *fasci* were open and open-ended organisations, from which nobody need be excluded. Viewed more practically, being a movement rather than a party was a way of facilitating recruitment, and without the hostages to fortune of a ‘party’ programme, permitted some flexibility in tactics and policies. But in the Fascist case, being a movement also meant being ‘anti-party’, even anti-political; that is, against a party political system, where by their nature, parties only represented ‘parts’ of the nation. The *fasci*, by their title, claimed to be a national, cross-class, cross-political movement, a movement of ‘combatants’ and ‘producers’, terms which had no specific class or political connotations.

As their name indicated and in a deliberate attempt to stress their connection to the war experience, the *fasci* were also ‘combat’ organisations, which would be prepared to act decisively and use violence to resolve problems. Even after the movement apparently made itself more conventional and respectable by becoming a party in 1921, Fascism retained the will to action and recourse to violence of the 1919–20 ‘anti-party’.

Even a movement gives itself a programme. The 1919 Fascist programme’s combination of anti-socialist nationalism and some radical democratic social and financial policies, was geared to appeal to interventionists and ex-servicemen, the ‘new’ constituency created in and by the war. That was what the first *fasci* of 1919–20 came to: from 1914–15 interventionism, a collection of Futurist intellectuals and some ex-socialists and ex-revolutionary syndicalists; and some rather specialised groups of ex-servicemen, particularly the *Arditi* (Daring Ones), an elite commando corps formed during the war and with their own veterans’ association. These members were joined by groups of patriotic university and secondary school students and young ex-army officers. The poor electoral showing of the Fascist–Futurist platform in Milan in the November 1919 elections, winning only 5,000 of the 270,000 votes cast in the constituency, indicated the narrowness of the niche occupied by the movement.

Although the Fascist movement appealed to the war generation, and

claimed to embody its aspirations for post-war change, it attracted only a minority of ex-servicemen. These were not so much the rank and file, as the young educated middle-class junior officers, for whom the egalitarian–hierarchical trench community was the model of the anticipated relationship between elites and masses. The peasant and worker ex-combatants in the North and Centre supported the two post-war mass political parties, the socialist PSI and the new Catholic party, the PPI. In the South and the Islands, branches of the main veterans' association, the ANC, made up of recently demobilised peasants, initiated without Fascist involvement the great land occupations of 1919–20, cashing in on the promises of land made by the government during the war. Where the ANC stood in post-war elections, it had democratic slates, and resisted attempts by the Fascists and Nationalists to take it over, something which Fascism only achieved after it took power in 1922. The myth of the war experience, in other words, could have democratic as well as fascist outcomes in post-war politics.

What saved the Fascist movement, if not from extinction, then from occupying a marginal position in post-war politics, was its grasping of the opportunities offered by Italy's dramatic early post-war crisis. The so-called *biennio rosso*, or 'Red Two Years', of 1919–20, was a time of almost uninterrupted political, social and economic unrest in Italy. In the South and Islands, the widespread land occupations of the demobilised peasantry were eventually checked and channelled by the state authorities and the police, and the 'normal' workings of Southern patronage and clientelistic politics. In the capitalist agricultural and industrial areas of the Centre and North, however, workers' and peasants' agitation, usually led by socialist and sometimes Catholic organisations, escalated beyond strikes for better wages and working conditions to demands for systems of land tenure and farm and factory operation which challenged the employers' right to own and manage their property and businesses. To embattled agricultural and industrial employers, it seemed that the socialist revolution was at hand, and that class war was being waged at the local level by tax-and-spend municipal councils which the socialists overwhelmingly captured in the autumn 1920 local elections. The national PSI talked revolution and frightened the provincial middle classes by doing so. But they did not fashion a strategy which could translate their local power bases into the taking of power at the centre.

The perception of agricultural and industrial employers of being in a revolutionary situation was reinforced by the final element of Italy's post-war crisis, which made it terminal, the paralysis of parliamentary government and of the state. It proved impossible to channel the post-war agitation and to contain the country's divisions through the parliamentary process. A proportional representation electoral system meant governments could only be formed by coalitions of parties. Yet these were inherently unstable in the post-war period. The liberals had lost their previously axiomatic majorities in parliament with the coming of full political democracy in 1918, to the mass parties, the PSI and the PPI. The PSI, since its dominant wing was

revolutionary and saw governmental instability as hastening the crisis of the bourgeois state, refused to co-operate with other parties in the formation of governments, even though it was the largest single party in parliament. The Catholic PPI, in turn, could not establish lasting political alliances with anti-clerical liberals. The outcome was that the resolution of Italy's post-war political agitation took place outside and against parliament.

Again, governments appeared to be unable or unwilling to defend property against socialist revolution. The state stayed neutral in labour disputes; the police were overwhelmed by the scale and extent of popular agitation. The state's inadequate policing of the popular unrest of the *biennio rosso* was Fascism's opportunity.

Fascism became a mass movement from late 1920, when the *fasci* organised their paramilitary units, or squads, to intervene in the bitter class conflict of the countryside and small towns of Northern and Central Italy. Often directly financed and equipped by local farmers' and business associations, the squads systematically destroyed by violence, intimidation and pressure the socialists' organisational hold over agricultural labour and their control of municipal councils. Performing much the same anti-socialist functions as the *Freikorps* and the *Heimwehr*, Fascist squadristism was, again, the 'trenchocracy' in action. The squads were gangs of mainly middle-class young men, many of them wartime junior rank army officers, along with university and secondary school students and the sons of the middle-class people who supported Fascism's violent campaign against socialism. The *fasci* did not have to do much more than promote their nationalism and anti-socialism in order to attract a broad alliance of middle-class people in town and countryside, linked by their belief that at a time of revolutionary crisis, Fascism was the best defence of the class interests apparently endangered by the proletarian revolution and the government's inability to prevent it happening.

By the time the Fascist movement became the National Fascist Party, or PNF (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*) in late 1921, it had about 300,000 members. The PNF's own sample of about half the membership revealed a party which seemed to be pretty close to what it claimed and aspired to be, the party representing the 'nation', not just parts of it. While more 'national' than its political rivals, the PNF was nowhere near as strong in the South and Islands as it was in Northern and Central Italy, reflecting the absence of the socialist threat in much of Italy south of Rome. If nearly 50 per cent of its members in the 1921 sample were agricultural and industrial workers, most of these, especially in the countryside, were there because of squadrist coercion, forced out of socialist and Catholic unions into the Fascist unions, or syndicates, membership of which was usually the only way they could secure employment on the farms. The PNF's 'real' membership came from both the 'old' middle classes of artisans, shopkeepers and small farmers, and the 'new' middle classes of Italy's capitalist and tertiary sector development from the late nineteenth century, commercial farmers and

industrialists, managers and technical staff in agriculture and industry, state and private sector white-collar employees and professionals.

The PNF's programme matched its middle-class constituencies, while also indicating the party's intention to change the country's parliamentary system. There were policies to protect private property, and to stimulate private enterprise, in the interests of greater economic efficiency and national production, but in the anti-liberal and statist framework of a part-parliamentary, part-corporative political system, where the state was seen as the sovereign 'incarnation of the nation' (Delzell 1971: 28), subordinating and regulating other individual and group interests and values.

But it is important to realise that the PNF was far from being a conventional political party. The party remained a 'combat' organisation, a militarised body using military methods of action and control. Squadristism became integral to Fascism, and was not just a necessarily violent improvisation to meet the threat from the left. There was little doubt whose social and economic interests were being served by the squadrist offensives of 1920–22 against working-class organisations. Their actions were the basis of the contemporary Marxist reading of the Fascist (and fascist) phenomenon, that it was a counter-revolutionary reaction, the last ditch defence of capitalism in crisis. But the squadrists' activism and violence meant that their outlook was very different from the 'respectable', materialistic middle-class men who backed them. Their subversive slogans were, 'I don't give a damn' and 'living dangerously'. What in the course of the squads' 'punitive expeditions', became a cult of violence, gave squadrists the feeling that they were a heroic elite, taking risks and making sacrifices in defence of the nation. Violence was not 'normal' politics. It short-circuited the dialogue and compromise between competing interests and groups which were and are the essence of democratic parliamentary politics. The recourse to violence meant that there was only one answer to a political problem, the one imposed and maintained by force.

This was the point of Fascism which its liberal and conservative fellow-travellers failed to grasp, in their belief that Fascism, once it had defeated socialism, could be 'tamed' and inserted into the parliamentary system. The squadrists were intervening in situations of extremely bitter class and political conflict, and if divisions were not to reappear, violence, or the threat of it, had to be continuous and habitual. The squadrists were effectively creating a 'terror', their willingness to use violence against the nation's enemies deterring dissent and opposition both now and in the future. This was not conceptual violence; it was actual. By the summer of 1922, provincial PNF bosses, who were both party leaders and squadrist commanders, were in informal military occupation of large parts of Northern and Central Italy, and in a position to influence, even dominate, all aspects of political, administrative and economic life in their provinces, from 'law and order' to local government and the labour market. This kind of party rule showed that the Fascists intended to control affairs exclusively and not allow any alternatives

to exist. So, before the Fascist government formally embarked on the formation of the totalitarian state in the late 1920s, squadrist Fascism embodied in practice a single party method of rule, and a system of permanent repression and absolute control. ‘Totalitarianism’, unlike fascism, existed before it had a name.

The problem for Fascism by 1922 was the one which had defeated the PSI in 1919–20: how to translate its local provincial power in North and Central Italy into national power. Mussolini well realised that the squads could not take power in an armed coup if the government got the army to resist. He evolved what was, in retrospect, a quite brilliant strategy, which combined legality with extra-parliamentary illegality. It was no wonder that other European fascist movements of the 1920s, including the German Nazi party and *Le Faisceau* in France, sought to emulate what so impressed them about the first fascism, its coup technique.

The PNF had entered parliament in the 1921 elections, winning thirty or so seats, 8 per cent of the total, as part of a broad anti-socialist electoral bloc with liberals and Nationalists, and had thereby seemed ready to co-operate with liberals in the parliamentary game. It was in this sense logical for Mussolini to negotiate with liberal politicians in late 1922 for a place in government. But Fascism’s power and strength lay outside parliament, with the PNF’s private militia, the squads, and in October 1922, the Fascist leadership decided to go ahead with an insurrection, a ‘March on Rome’. Parliamentary talks and the planning of a coup together made perfect political blackmail. If Fascism was not given power in a legal and constitutional way, then it could threaten and stage a coup. Under the duress of three small squadrist armies converging on Rome, the king, as head of state, decided not to put the army to the test of defending the capital and thus risking civil war, and did what all the senior liberal politicians were advising him to do, appointed Mussolini to government. He was made Prime Minister before the squadrist armies reached Rome. The constitutional forms had been observed, but the king’s choice of Mussolini as head of the government had been imposed on him by the unconstitutional pressure and force of a party militia.

No historical event was inevitable, of course, until it took place. The decisive element which explains why broadly similar national political crises in post-war Italy and Germany had different outcomes in 1922–23 was that, in Italy, the threat from the revolutionary left could not be met by parliamentary government. It was, in default of the government, confronted by a movement of violent middle-class self-help, Fascism, which was basically subversive of the principles of the parliamentary system. The extremity of the crisis, and the apparent inability of the political system to manage it, were sufficient to shake people out of ‘normal’ political behaviour in a democratic system and for them to accept the extreme solution. In turn, the decisive factor in the survival of parliamentary democracy in early post-war Germany was the attitude of the majority socialist party, the

SPD, in government. Here, the social democratic left took action against the revolutionary left in defence of the democratic Weimar Republic, which prevented the nationalist right from exploiting the threat of socialist revolution to the point of destabilising the Republic itself. In Italy, by contrast, the reformist wing of the PSI was only thinking of making itself available for an anti-Fascist coalition in the summer of 1922. The PSI's revolutionary stance between 1918 and 1922 not only stoked up the middle-class fears of socialist revolution on which Fascism grew into a mass movement. It also meant that the PSI saw no virtue in defending parliamentary democracy against Fascism. If, in Eastern Europe, the barrier to fascist advance was political conservatism, the experience of post-war Italy and Germany indicated that the main obstacle to fascism further to the West was social democracy.

Fascism in France in the 1920s

There are real problems for historians in locating fascism in inter-war France. For a long time, the standard view was that there was no 'French' fascism. The movements which existed were politically insignificant, pale imitation imports of the real things in Italy and Germany. This was, in fact, a common way of dismissing many of the fascist movements which appeared in Western and Northern Europe. The assumption that fascism did not belong to France was undermined convincingly enough by Sternhell's researches on the pre-First World War 'revolutionary right'. Even if you do not accept his view that fascist ideology originated and appeared in a fully-fledged form in pre-war France, you do have to accept that inter-war French fascists drew on that matrix of ideas which were the French version of the early twentieth-century European 'revolt against reason'.

The accepted view was less convincingly tested by Sternhell's controversial work on inter-war fascist ideology, which concluded that practically all areas of French intellectual and political life, outside the orthodox Marxist left, were penetrated by the 'fascist spirit'. This was what landed Sternhell in legal trouble, since all the non-Marxist non-conformists of the 1930s became, by the stroke of Sternhell's pen, 'fascist', which understandably enough in the post-1945 post-fascist period, was not a congenial label.

But 'fascism' in France, from being nowhere, was now everywhere. Oddly, the view of fascism as a significant political force in inter-war France was confirmed by the more recent work of the American historian, Robert Soucy, who otherwise had little truck with Sternhell's treatment of fascism as a radical and novel political departure. Soucy's portrayal of French inter-war fascism as 'a new variety of authoritarian conservative and rightwing nationalism . . .', 'a more dynamic form of conservatism' (Soucy 1995: 17, 20), allowed him to trawl in all the various paramilitary nationalist leagues, from the *Jeunesses Patriotes* (Patriotic Youth) to the *Croix de Feu* (Fiery Cross), alongside the surviving old-stager, *Action Française*, and the self-consciously

fascist movements, such as *Le Faisceau* (the *fascio*) in the 1920s, and the far less important *Francistes* (French-ists) in the 1930s.

So, for Soucy, the first fascist movements in post-war France were two paramilitary anti-communist leagues formed in 1924, the *Légion* (Legion) and the *Jeunesses Patriotes*, soon to absorb the *Légion*, and created as the youth organisation of the pre-war *Ligue des Patriotes* (Patriotic League). Both of them preceded the formation of *Le Faisceau* in 1925. Soucy's case is strengthened by the fact that there seemed to be an incestuous traffic of supporters and backers between *Action Française*, the Leagues and the movements, in a constant regrouping of right-wing politics and its constituencies. *Action Française's* vicious public character assassination of Valois, the leader of *Le Faisceau*, in 1926, looked like a case of dog eat dog. Valois had left *Action Française* to form *Le Faisceau*, and taken with him other *Action Française* members and backers, and *Action Française* wanted them back. So these movements were both allies and rivals, looking for support in the same socially conservative, mainly Catholic clientele among the middle and lower middle classes, and for the backing of those businessmen and financiers who regularly funded right-wing political causes. Soucy views the new movements of 1924–25, the *Légion*, the *Jeunesses Patriotes* and *Le Faisceau*, as anti-parliamentary, anti-Marxist movements which were financed by businessmen to defend conservative middle-class interests against the industrial working classes and their Marxist parties and organisations. Although Soucy is no Marxist historian, no Marxist of the time could have put it better.

The differences between these movements and the conservative Republican groupings in the French parliament, were, for Soucy, ones of means rather than ends. The new movements were prepared to use violence in the defence of property and order, and take to the streets against socialists and communists, if necessary. They also contemplated abolishing the parliamentary system altogether, as the only way of terminating definitively the threat from the Marxist left. Since democratic party politics, by their very pluralistic nature, allowed Marxist parties to organise and grow, and were one of the routes they could take in order to come to power, then the system itself was inherently fallible and would have to go. This, of course, was the lesson which was lost on the Soviet Union and inter-war European communist parties until the mid-1930s: that it was worthwhile defending 'bourgeois' parliamentary democracy against fascism because a democratic system guaranteed the political freedom which permitted Marxist parties to operate at all.

The apparent threat from the left in France had been contained in the immediate post-war period by the election of the right-centre electoral coalition, the National Bloc, to government in 1919. But the 'threat' resurfaced, apparently confirming the fears of the Third Republic's critics that the system per se was at fault. The elections of May 1924 were won by the *Cartel des Gauches* (Bloc of the Left), a centre-left electoral alliance. The main partners were the Radicals, themselves a rather loose coalition of centrist

groupings who represented the provincial secular middle-class electorate of Republican France, and the mainstay of coalition governments throughout the period; and the socialist party, the SFIO, the social democratic rump of the socialist movement, now that the revolutionary wing had broken away in 1920 to form the communist party, the PCF, under the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Bolsheviks' assumed leadership of revolutionary socialism. The impetus for the formation of the new movements in 1924–25 seemed to come from the left's 1924 election victory.

In retrospect, there appeared to be something of an over-reaction, but perceptions of reality and of potential danger determined people's responses. The SFIO did not actually enter government in 1924. They preferred to offer parliamentary support for government policies which they liked. This was power without responsibility, and exercised from a standpoint which raised doubts as to the SFIO's commitment to parliamentary democracy. They wanted no enemies to the left, were very aware of PCF competition for the working-class vote and sensitive to their charge that they were selling out the proletariat's interests by co-operating with a 'bourgeois' government. The economic policies they liked, higher taxes and nationalisation, were also divisive and made continuing co-operation with the Radicals difficult, as well as frightening the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary right.

The position of an already unstable governing coalition was further destabilised by a worsening financial crisis. As in other European countries, the inflationary spiral set up in France by the effects of wartime economic mobilisation and the funding of the war effort by loans, continued into the post-war period. French governments were reluctant to get the post-war generation to pay for the huge costs of the war and for post-war economic reconstruction through higher direct taxes. They expected Germany to pay through reparations, which explained France's occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 when Germany defaulted on payments. The occupation itself was costly and unproductive, and its failure hit the value of the French currency. Meanwhile, the government went on feeding inflation, meeting its spending commitments by continuing to borrow short term on the financial markets, and increasing the issue of money in circulation. A cumulative financial panic set in. As the franc devalued, French investors converted their francs into stronger foreign currencies and invested abroad rather than in France, moves which depreciated the franc's value even further.

The electoral victory of the *Cartel des Gauches* gave an additional vicious twist to the financial crisis. The 'threat' of socialism in power was another incentive for people to invest abroad and for the financial markets not to renew short-term loans to the government, driving the franc's value down to new lows. The 'flight of capital', marking the general lack of confidence of businessmen and financiers in a centre-left government was, in the end, the more effective way of neutralising the imagined threat from the left than the new paramilitary movements. The conservative Republican, Raymond Poincaré, became Prime Minister in July 1926, forming a right-centre coalition

government with the Radicals on a policy of raising revenue by indirect taxation. Almost immediately, by the fact of taking office, Poincaré restored business and financial confidence in the economy and the currency. The franc rose in value and stabilised. The continuation of right-centre governments was confirmed in the results of the 1928 elections.

Georges Valois, the founder and leader of *Le Faisceau*, was *Action Française*'s 'expert' on social and economic affairs before and after the First World War, and one of the intermediaries who had attempted to bring about a meeting of organic nationalist and syndicalist minds in the *Cercle Proudhon*. Conscripted to the army in the war, he became a lieutenant, and was one of those middle-class junior rank officers who, on the basis of his own combatant experience, bought heavily into the wartime myth of the 'trench' community. Returning to work for *Action Française* after the war, he tried to promote corporative organisations among industrial employers and professional groups. In this sense, the corporative-based economic blueprint he gave to *Le Faisceau*'s programme was the consistent extension of his pre-occupations as an organiser for *Action Française*. But, significantly for the credibility of Soucy's argument which blurs the distinction between conservative and fascist movements, Valois felt that he had to break with *Action Française* and create his own political vehicle for his corporatist aspirations. In February 1925, Valois started up a new newspaper, *Le Nouvel Siècle* (the New Century), with money provided by the businessmen and financiers who had funded *Action Française*. In April 1925, he founded the *Légion des Combatants* (War Veterans' Legion), and finally, in November 1925, a new political movement, *Le Faisceau des Combatants et des Producteurs* (the Fascio of War Veterans and Producers), whose title alone indicated that Valois intended to appeal to precisely the same groups which Mussolini targeted in the Italian Fascism of 1919–20.

The immediate reason for Valois' rejection of *Action Française* was probably the perception that more now needed to be done to head off the socialist threat looming after the *Cartel des Gauches* election victory. *Action Française* remained an intellectual literary-political *salon* cultivating the best minds for nationalism, when socialism's advance demanded a political movement committed to action. But Valois' secession from *Action Française* was more fundamental than this.

Le Faisceau was deliberately launched on Armistice Day, to capture for the new movement the mystique and ethos of the victorious war and its warriors. Valois called for 'the dictatorship of the combatant', seeing the war veterans as fascism's new elite, who would bring to the organisation of national life the spirit and virtues of the war generation, which were a will to get things done and a sense of duty and sacrifice in disinterested service of the nation's welfare.

A 'unitary national state' (Griffin 1995: 197), in other words, a centralised, dictatorial, non-parliamentary executive, would preside over an economy made more dynamic and productive by the organisation of its

sectors into corporations, mixed bodies involving and reconciling all the interests and personnel concerned with the production process. By their very structure, the corporations would ensure the social peace and the rational ordering of all the forces of production necessary to increase the strength of the national economy. In particular, Valois anticipated that a corporate structure would facilitate technological innovation and the application of new technologies to the productive process. Here, Valois was clearly seduced by the USA model of consumer-led, high volume mass production manufacturing exemplified in the rapidly expanding automobile sector, which delivered lower prices, higher profits and higher wages. A general and constantly growing economic prosperity, the gains of which were distributed ever more widely among all kinds of 'producers', would flatten out social differences and ensure social justice without having to do away with private property.

Valois' corporatism clearly led on from his activities in *Action Française*. But this vision of a new French nation, revived by the dictatorial leadership of the war veterans and a planned and modernised economy, was a far cry from *Action Française's* anachronistic attachment to the idea of a federated, decentralised 'old regime' monarchy, which was an inappropriate and redundant model of authority for early twentieth-century workers and peasants whose last experience of a ruling king was in the 1840s.

Valois' fascist programme was also some distance from that of the *Jeunes Patriotes*. Although the *Jeunes Patriotes* wanted to enliven the political establishment with the co-option of war veterans, its leaders did not use *Le Faisceau's* language of national spiritual renewal, to be built on the war veterans' self-sacrificing service mentality. The *Jeunes Patriotes* talked about revising the constitution of the Third Republic, to make the executive less dependent on the elected Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament, something which practically everybody said they wanted in inter-war France. *Le Faisceau* wanted the abolition of parliamentary and party politics altogether, and talked of dictatorship endorsed by popular plebiscite.

Valois took his anti-parliamentarism seriously. An *Action Française* candidate in 1924, Valois excluded himself and his movement from electoral and parliamentary politics; no member could be a parliamentary deputy. The *Jeunes Patriotes*, on the other hand, had strong links with right-wing parliamentary lobbies, some of the deputies of which were on the movement's governing body. Its leader, Pierre Taittinger, was a deputy, and in the 1928 elections was elected on the right-centre National Union ticket whose deputies provided Poincaré's parliamentary majority. There were, of course, plenty of fascist movements which stood in democratic parliamentary elections in the inter-war period, benefiting, like the communist parties, from the political freedom and diversity allowed under such a system. But their sights were clearly set on transforming democratic systems, after profiting from them, and their systemic aversion to parliamentary democracy was no less evident than Valois's principled opposition to getting involved in a political system which he wanted to destroy.

Again, using language which Taittinger, himself a well-off businessman, never employed, Valois denounced ‘finance capitalism’, ‘plutocracy’, ‘the yoke of money’, drawing what was and would be a familiar fascist distinction between the exploitative, speculative world of the financial markets, where money earned money, and that of the honest, hard-working, productive world of the industrial entrepreneurs. These were moral and anti-political, as much as economic distinctions. The ‘acceptable’ bourgeois were the innovating captains of industry; the ‘unacceptable’ bourgeois were the corrupt politicians who were parliamentary lobbyists for the real masters of political life, businessmen and financiers. This traffic of political favours and economic patronage had made the state apparatus the tool of private concerns rather than servants of the national interest.

What Valois regarded as the ‘great originality’ of fascism was its synthesis of right and left, nationalism and socialism, into something which was ‘neither right nor left’, transcending both. The ‘socialism’ of his famous equation, ‘nationalism plus socialism equals fascism’ (Sternhell 1979: 333), was clearly the syndicalism or corporatism which he put at the centre of his new economy and polity. Soucy sees the inclusion of ‘socialism’ in the fascist equation as ‘misleading’ rhetoric, and regards Valois’s ‘socialism’ as ‘counterfeit’, a thin disguise for the conservative substance of the movement, whose conservative goals reflected its actual and potential membership and the sources of its funding.

Le Faisceau was, of course, against the socialism which was Marxist, and Valois’ conception of socialism was not one most Marxists would recognise. For one thing, he had nothing in principle against private property, nor indeed against capitalism. His modernising, productivist rationale for corporatism implied the need for more entrepreneurial capitalism, not less. The point, for Valois, was for a dictatorial state to regulate and plan a capitalist economy, so as to maximise production and productivity, and strengthen the nation. That this amounted to a private businessmen’s charter was not, however, borne out by *Le Faisceau*’s relations with the businesses which financed the movement, relations which Soucy uses to demonstrate that *Le Faisceau* was a conservative movement defending conservative interests.

Le Faisceau’s leaders attempted to live up to their anti-conservative rhetoric. By conceding that the situation in France was not as serious as it had been in Italy, where ‘communism ruled the streets’ (Levey 1973: 291), *Le Faisceau* intended to indicate that it was not simply to be taken as an anti-communist reflex. For Valois, fascism and communism shared a rejection of ‘finance capitalism’, and fascism was, therefore, open to all ‘revolutionaries’, whatever their provenance, who wanted to challenge and find an alternative to ‘the power of money’ in the national economy. In reality, *Le Faisceau* did not progress very far in forging an alliance of ‘revolutionaries’ from across the political and class spectrum. If police estimates were accurate, the movement grew quickly, pulling in disaffected members of *Action*

Française and *Jeunesses Patriotes*. At its peak in mid-1926, it might have had about 50,000 members, but perhaps barely one in ten of these were blue-collared workers. It had a fair number of white-collared salaried public and private employees, and a reasonably flourishing *fascio* of corporations, a section of the movement which organised among the professions, attracting some engineers, accountants, technical staff and middle managers.

But if real factory workers were thin on the ground, *Le Faisceau* recruited a few ex-communists and ex-CGT union organisers, notably Marcel Delagrangé, the ex-communist mayor of Périgueux in the Dordogne, whose job was to enhance the movement's profile among industrial workers. Delagrangé's speaking and publicity tour of the industrial towns of Northern France in spring 1926 scandalised the textile manufacturers who had given money to the movement and whose conception of corporatism stopped short at the formation of yellow or employer-patronised labour unions. Delagrangé was both incompetent and unconvincing, and he won over few workers to the cause. But *Le Faisceau*'s efforts to do so alienated the businessmen pay-rolling the movement, who withdrew their support.

Even more interesting were *Le Faisceau*'s contacts with *Redressement Français* (French Recovery), a businessmen's pressure group formed in 1926, which lobbied among politicians and in parliament against nationalisation and for constitutional reform, meaning less power to parliament and more to the executive. This lobby represented oil, automobile and power-generating companies, among the more dynamic and technologically advanced sectors of the French economy, and containing Valois's archetypal modern 'fascist' entrepreneurs and managers. Some funding of *Le Faisceau* occurred, but the lobby and the movement never really gelled. The lobby and the companies it represented certainly wanted a 'partnership' of government, private industry and banks to promote economic modernisation. But they were wary of the high level of state economic control and limitation on business autonomy explicit in Valois's conception of state-regulated planning and organisation of production through the corporations. Some loss of business initiative and decision making seemed to be the price companies would have to pay for the social peace and control of labour, which were the business gains of corporatism.

These problematic and unstable relations with their business supporters eventually crippled the movement. François Coty, the wealthy *parfumeur* who, along with the kings of Cognac, Maurice James Hennessey and Paul Firino-Martel, were the usual suspects behind the financing of nationalist leagues and movements in inter-war France, attempted to use the lever of financial aid to make *Le Faisceau* an unashamedly anti-communist militia organisation. The offer, made at a time when money was really short, encapsulated the dilemma of *Le Faisceau*, and indeed, of any new movement which wanted to avoid being a one-day wonder. The choice was between financial security and the probable loss of political independence, or political independence without the financial resources to sustain it. Being on the

horns of this particular dilemma was one of the reasons behind Valois's decision to wind up *Le Faisceau* in 1928, by that time bereft of money and members.

What distinguished *Le Faisceau* from its conservative rival, *Jeunesses Patriotes*, were the movement's uncompromising hostility to the parliamentary system and its blueprint for a new political and economic order based on dictatorship and a modernising corporative organisation of the economy. This showed that it aspired to be more than anti-communism and had the effect of souring its relationship with the conservative financial and industrial backers who could unambiguously subsidise the *Jeunesses Patriotes*.

Le Faisceau was also different because it wanted to seize power, while the *Jeunesses Patriotes* posed as the strong-arm defence of the existing social order against the threat of socialism. Valois was impressed by the coup strategy which Mussolini and the PNF had employed to come to power in Italy in 1922. He intended to exploit the *Cartel des Gauches* government's disarray in the face of the worsening financial crisis, by using the movement to build up pressure on the government and create an irresistible momentum which would carry it to power. *Le Faisceau's* attempted 'conquest of the state' came in the form of three mass rallies, each one meant to build on the success of the other and keep pace with and heighten the country's political and financial crisis. In a kind of slow motion 'March on Paris', *Le Faisceau* held mass demonstrations at Verdun in Eastern France, the site of France's longest and bloodiest First World War battle and a symbol of national resistance and survival, in February 1926, followed by another rally at Rheims in July 1926. The planned third rally at Meaux, on the eastern outskirts of Paris, never took place, because the already narrow opportunity for a coup disappeared in that summer.

The rallies had seen an impressive turnout of war veterans' associations, as well as of *Le Faisceau's* own paramilitary formation, the *Légion des Combatants*. But the movement clearly could not deploy the kind of force capable of taking on the police and army or, the more likely scenario, of inducing a failure of will of government at the centre. By the time of the 'March on Rome' in Italy in 1922, the Fascist squads had usurped policing functions in many provinces of Northern and Central Italy, and had, in other words, broken the state's monopoly of coercion. The threat of an armed take-over of central power, and of civil war if such a coup was resisted, were real enough in Italy.

The financial crisis which, as it worsened, apparently showed up the paralysis and incompetence of parliamentary government, was resolved within the framework of that system. In July 1926, the conservative Republican old-hand politician, Poincaré, formed a new government which even had the backing of the *Cartel des Gauches* majority in parliament and was given special powers by parliament to stabilise the financial position. With the passing of the financial crisis went *Le Faisceau's* slim chance of transforming a crisis in the system into a crisis of the system.

The first wave of fascism

The 'first wave' of fascism in inter-war Europe had a number of interesting common features. It was striking that most active members of these early fascist movements, or of fascist movements in their early stages of development, were young men, many of whom were either war veterans and/or secondary school and university students. Only the inter-war communist parties had a comparably strong young adult male profile. Students were present in large enough numbers to constitute a separate category in membership rolls. In Italy, the late 1921 PNF sample of about 150,000 members, perhaps half the total membership, showed that 13 per cent were students. Over 3 per cent of Austrian Nazi party members in the 1920s were university students. These figures might appear to be rather small, but relatively they were significant, being many times higher than the proportion of university students to the population as a whole. The Romanian Legion, more extreme in this as in most other aspects of its fascism, was almost exclusively a student organisation up to the early 1930s.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, we are obviously dealing with the 'war generation'. These were young men born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who might well have actually fought in the Great War, or whose teenage years were filled by the dramatic experiences of war and of that combustible post-war conjuncture of economic difficulties, revolution and the disappearance of existing states and the emergence of new ones. Many students gave up or interrupted their studies for war service, and started or resumed them post-war, in a climate for graduate employment made harsh and competitive by their countries' economic problems and adaptation to either reduced or enlarged national territories. The situation was particularly acute in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, where state employment and state-connected employment were the normal outlets for university-educated men.

It can be tempting to overemphasise the youth phenomenon, and see fascism as a general generational revolt of young men, socially uprooted and disaffected as a result of the war and post-war experiences. Fascist movements certainly expressed in anthropomorphic terms their contempt for what they condemned as decrepit and dysfunctional political systems and political elites. The appeal to action, violence, youthful vigour and 'new blood', fitted their claims to be movements of national revival and regeneration.

But the question of 'youth revolt' needs to be given its proper dimension. Young male war veterans were core active members of the first fascist movements. But since practically all able-bodied young adult males were called up for military service during the war, all post-war parties and movements had ex-combatants as members and voters. 'Youth revolt' did not necessarily have a 'fascist' outcome. The largest post-war ex-servicemen's organisation in Germany was apolitical and mainly concerned with the welfare and

support of its members. The main veterans' association in Italy, the ANC, was democratic in its political outlook, not Nationalist or Fascist. The bulk of Italy's peasant and worker ex-combatants voted for the mass political parties, the PSI and the PPI, in the post-war elections. The point was that fascist movements drew on the war experience, or an idealised version of it, for their core values, ethos and *modus operandi*, and attracted those ex-combatants who were especially susceptible to the myths of the nation at war.

It was also clear that fascist movements were products of crisis and could only really thrive in conditions of crisis, which justified their paramilitary formations and their willingness to use violence for political ends. They could only ever actually come to power in a situation of extreme crisis, which could not apparently be resolved within and by the existing political system, and which made fascism appear a credible alternative. The post-war crisis in Italy had many of the same facets and sources as the post-war crisis in Germany, the only other country where fascism, eventually, came to power in the inter-war period. Even though the immediate outcomes of these respective national crises in Italy and Germany were different, and need explaining, the similarities which existed indicate that a broader comparative historical perspective is both possible and illuminating.

Political and territorial unification came late to Italy and Germany, in 1870. In both cases, national states came into being largely as the result of diplomacy and war, to the exclusion of mass popular participation. The process seemed more like the enlargement by conquest of the two leading regional states, Piedmont and Prussia, than a unification either desired or brought about by the Italian and German peoples. The new states had to create nations out of populations who were more seriously divided by class, religion and region than other West European countries, whose peoples had become accustomed to central state power and administration over a relatively longer period of state formation.

Unification achieved in such a way kept alive real doubts and insecurities among ruling elites about the cohesion and stability, even the continued existence, of the national state. The pre-war political systems of the newly unified states scarcely integrated the mass of the population into the nation. Quite the reverse; democratic politics were never the nationalising and unifying force they potentially could have been. In both countries, the agricultural and industrial working classes, when organised by 'internationalist' Marxist socialist or Catholic movements, were regarded as anti-national elements, undermining national unity. The political systems in both countries were geared to exclude, or contain, such popular forces. In Italy, there evolved an oligarchic parliamentary regime, with power passing in and out of the hands of a small political class, who called itself liberal, but was generally illiberal in its suspicion of and resistance to the political and social advances of the organised working classes. In Germany, the SPD could become the largest single party in the national parliament by 1912, but

remain as far from political power as before. Government ministers were appointed by and responsible to the emperor, not to the elected national parliament.

War, when it came, was the opportunity for states to 'nationalise' their populations, mobilising everybody and everything behind the patriotic war effort. But Italy and Germany were hardly unified nations on entering the war, and pre-war political divisions were sharpened by war mobilisation. The national euphoria in Germany which greeted the outbreak of war in August 1914 soon passed. In Italy, the decision to go to war at all in 1915 was divisive, and prevailed against the neutralist position of most popular and political opinion in the country. The same 'anti-national' forces, socialists and Catholics, were opposed to, or lukewarm about, the war effort, or were perceived to be so, during the war itself. In the fully democratic parliamentary systems which emerged in both countries after the war, in Germany as the result of military defeat, in Italy as the result of expectations of political change generated by and in the war, political power fell to socialist and Catholic parties. To the nationalist camp in both countries, it appeared as if democracy had finally delivered the nation into the hands of its enemies.

So the social and economic difficulties of the transition from war to peace, the threat from the revolutionary left, challenges faced by most post-war governments, were being met in Italy and Germany at the same time as these two scarcely unified countries were passing through their first experience of conditions of mass political democracy. Nothing inevitable can be assumed from these similar profiles of troubled and imperfect national state formation. But they were felt in the particular intensity of the post-war national crises in Italy and Germany, and there was a real resonance to the Fascist and Nazi claims that they could resolve this persisting crisis of national identity and cohesion.

But whatever the crisis, Hitler's failed coup in 1923, Valois's aborted would-be rolling coup in 1926, showed that it was practically impossible to take power wholly by force in a modern state where government retained control of its police and armed forces. Mussolini's strategy of simultaneously playing the electoral parliamentary game and using extra-parliamentary paramilitary violence, proved to be the lethal winning combination. Organised Fascist violence was enough of a threat to pressurise the king into appointing Mussolini Prime Minister, a decision made more tolerable by Fascism's parliamentary presence, which suggested to Italy's political establishment that the movement could be co-opted into the system.

To make the point in another way, it was coups by the military, in other words, the state's own repository of 'official' force, which ended or modified parliamentary government in Spain in 1923, and Poland, Portugal and Lithuania in 1926. The threat from the left was a significant factor in precipitating the military coup in Spain, while the paralysis of parliament by ethnic national conflict provoked the army's intervention in Poland. Fascism

played no part in the destruction of parliamentary democracy in these countries, and had no place in the semi-authoritarian systems of rule set up under military auspices after the coups.

From this perspective, fascism was one outcome, not *the* outcome, of the early post-war crises, which saw a widespread shift during the 1920s from parliamentary to more authoritarian forms of government, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe. In the light of these developments, it was perhaps understandable that Marxists and other anti-fascists of the time, and later on, historians, tended not to distinguish between fascist and conservative movements, and to see them both functionally as ‘fascism’, in terms of their defence of conservative interests threatened by socialism and socialist revolution. There seemed to be little doubt as to whose class position and interests were served by the Italian Fascist squads’ violent rolling back of the working class gains of the *biennio rosso*, or by the strike-breaking action of the *Heimwehr* in 1927. It became a real test for fascist movements to assert their independence from their conservative supporters and allies. *Le Faisceau* never became a big enough mass movement in its own right to survive without the financing of individual businessmen or business lobbies. The PNF in Italy did, and the party bosses’ informal domination of the affairs of many Northern and Central provinces, secured and then maintained by a squadrist ‘terror’, occurred before the movement came to power nationally. This showed that the organised violence of a fascist movement could take it beyond the defence of class interests initially served by that violence, and become the tool of totalitarian control.

If fascists and conservatives felt the same hostility to Marxist socialism, and could co-operate politically on this basis, they, nevertheless, occupied different political ground. This was evident from the way that some new fascist movements were breakaways from existing movements. Valois, Gömbös, Codreanu left, respectively, *Action Française*, the National Union and the League of National Christian Defence, because they were too conservative in aims and method, in order to found their own movements.

Again, all ‘first wave’ fascist movements were fundamentally against parliamentary democratic institutions. Their insistence that they alone represented the nation and knew what was good for it, ruled out the dialogue and mutual compromises which were, and are, the essence of democratic, pluralist politics. You could not say that about the *Jeunes Patriotes*, whose leader, Taittinger, was elected to every parliament between 1919 and 1935 as a member of right-centre electoral and parliamentary blocs. Where fascist movements were explicit about their aim to replace parliament by dictatorship, they saw dictatorial power being exercised not by the existing establishment elites, but by a new national elite of young ex-combatants. While not being anti-capitalist per se, fascists wanted to release and regulate the productive forces of the national economy in a national syndicalist or corporative order, which would not only impinge on the managerial decision making of private business, but was also envisaged as a way of integrating workers as ‘producers’ into the national ‘community’.

So, if conservatism was the defence and reinforcement of power relations in society, economy and politics as they were, then fascist aims and methods were radical and posited a new order of things. Perhaps none of these distinctions between fascism and conservatism really matter now, except for historians and political scientists retrospectively analysing and categorising political phenomena. But, arguably, being aware of these distinctions would have made a difference then, in the inter-war period, because it would have enabled both the Marxist left and conservative right to identify the real, systemic enemies of democracy. Instead, contemporary Marxists did not properly resist fascism until, in some cases, it was too late, while contemporary conservatives often colluded with fascism, viewing it as their last line of defence against the perceived threat of revolutionary socialism.

3 Fascist movements

The second wave, 1929–40

It should be clear from the previous chapter that fascism was inseparable from crisis. The sense or perception of national crisis was, in most cases, the reason for the emergence of fascist movements, and certainly, in all cases, provided the opportunity for these movements to make their mark. Crisis situations seemed to demand extraordinary political methods to resolve them. Crisis justified, for fascists, the recourse to political violence, and the paramilitary formations which complemented and even constituted the political organisation of fascist movements. The willingness to use violence for political ends, if not unique to fascist movements, set them apart from most other politicians and parties.

The 1930s were the ‘fascist’ decade, because of the impact of the Great Depression on European countries. It was an economic recession of such range and severity that it appeared to contemporaries to be the structural crisis of the European political and social order, and led some to question the very credibility of liberal capitalism and parliamentary democracy as economic and political systems.

The starkest alternatives to these apparently malfunctioning and discredited systems were, of course, communism of the Soviet model and fascism. The USSR’s international isolation in the 1920s, and its autarkic drive to create ‘socialism in one country’, largely immunised the country from the effects of the Depression, and the Soviet ‘great leap forward’ to economic growth and development occurred precisely during the Depression years of the European capitalist economies. Soviet communism ‘worked’, while capitalism demonstrably did not. The already existing fascist movements experienced a dramatic surge in membership and electoral support as a result of the impact of the Depression, the German Nazis between 1930 and 1933, their Austrian counterparts between 1930 and 1932 and the Romanian Iron Guard between 1933 and 1937. Gömbös, the reformed and co-opted Hungarian fascist of the 1920s, became the country’s Depression Prime Minister in 1932, and up to his death in 1936, attempted to create a version of a fascist regime from above. New fascist movements proliferated throughout Europe during and as a result of the Depression. They included the formation of the Lapua, then the People’s Patriotic Movement (IKL), in

Finland in 1929–33; the Norwegian National Unity (NS) movement in 1933; the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB) in 1931; the League of Netherlands National Solidarists (*Verdinaso*), and the fascistic Flemish National Front (VNV) and Rex movement in Belgium, in 1931, 1933 and 1935; and the Spanish Phalanx of Organisations for National Syndicalist Combat (*Falange Española de las JONS*), in 1931–34. Perhaps only the French Popular Party (PPF), formed in 1936, and the Hungarian Arrow Cross movement, formed in 1935, and experiencing its political ‘take-off’ in 1938–39, cannot be included in this roll call of new fascist movements whose reason for existence came from the Depression.

The German Nazi party

The Nazi party had practically to be reformed after Hitler’s release from prison, early in 1925. His trial and imprisonment for sedition after the abortive Beer Hall coup had given Hitler a national notoriety, which he intended to build on in making the NSDAP a movement with a national, rather than mainly Bavarian, organisational reach. By 1928, when its share of the national vote was just under 3 per cent, the NSDAP had doubled its 1925 membership to about 100,000, a considerable if unspectacular organisational achievement allowing the party to exploit the political opportunities which opened up with the onset of the Depression from the late 1920s.

Part of this growth came from the party’s absorption of other small and competing racist nationalist groups. But much of it was the result of the extraordinary organisational dynamism generated by the re-imposition of the ‘leader principle’ at the top of the movement and its application throughout the party’s lower level structure. Overcoming the resistance of those party leaders who wanted some semblance of internal party democracy, Hitler managed to re-assert in the re-launched party his personal dominance of the pre-*putsch* days. He was the acknowledged and untouchable leader, the man with the national mission, who literally personified the National Socialist ‘revolution’; all fundamental ideological and organisational decisions of the party lay with him as the Führer.

This form of charismatic leadership and authority did not permit a sharing of power in the party, but it allowed the delegation and decentralisation of that power. At the regional and local level, the party was run by mini-Führers, who had risen to the top of their smaller heaps by dint of their organisational drive and commitment, their performance on the job, in other words. The position of these local party bosses, who had proved by organisational achievement their ‘fitness’ to lead, was cemented and perpetuated by Hitler’s personal approval, endorsement and nomination. The result was an active, proselytising local party leadership and organisation with an in-built and self-endorsing drive and momentum, which was often internally factious and competitive, but undeniably loyal and obedient to the person and will of Hitler. The analogy with a feudal ‘duke-vassal’ relationship drawn by one

of Nazism's own *Gauleiter* or regional leaders, was a revealing one. The Nazi party operated on the basis of an intricate yet potent mix of mutual personal obligation and loyalty, which subordinated the party's leaders to Hitler personally, without destroying their sense of initiative and drive.

This central principle of Nazi party organisation is extremely important to grasp, because where the party led, the nation was to follow. In its obsession with performance, with results, which rewarded initiative and getting things done, the party was meant to be an example and model of national achievement. It was a meritocracy, 'egalitarian' not in the sense of a levelling down, but of upwards mobility, since anyone, whatever their social background and status, could get on by 'doing'. Merit, and opportunity, came with what a person did, not from what he was or what he had. The way the party was run before 1933, on the basis of charismatic leadership, then became, once Hitler was in power, the way the country was run. While Hitler was translated from being the Führer of his party to the Führer of the German people, he tolerated, even encouraged, the top Nazi leaders to carve out for themselves vast political and administrative empires, and continued to respect the local power bases and semi-autonomy of the party *Gauleiter*.

Hitler's relationship with those below him differed greatly from the dictatorial management style of Mussolini, who both despised and distrusted his subordinates, and undermined any accumulation of significant personal power other than his own by constantly and unpredictably rotating office-holders. The 'leader principle' applied to the modus operandi of government also explains the increasing formlessness of the Nazi regime in the 1930s, as competing para-state and para-party agencies proliferated, each claiming Hitler's personal mandate and each, by their own lights, seeking to implement the Führer's will. In the same way as the 'leader principle' gave a self-sustaining momentum to party activities before 1933, so after 1933, its application to the governing of the country produced a progressive radicalisation of the Nazi regime's policies. There is much more on this important aspect of charismatic authority in Chapter 4.

There is another aspect of the Nazi party's organisational build-up from 1926 which deserves attention. Even before the dramatic surge in membership which accompanied the Depression, the NSDAP was a mass party which largely financed itself, through the accumulation of many relatively small-scale donations and subscriptions from members and supporters. As its electoral performance dramatically improved between 1930 and 1932, the party attracted, and courted, financial support from businessmen's lobbies and associations, which in their customary hedging of bets, also went to other political parties on the centre and right. But the NSDAP was not dependent on financial subsidies from industry and business. It could operate without them, and did not have to face compromising its political independence in the way that other fascist movements did, like, for instance, *Le Faisceau* in France.

With the reformed party in 1925–26 came a different political strategy.

Turning its back on the idea of coming to power in the Mussolinian manner, by a coup, which had failed in 1923, the NSDAP went for the longer-term strategy of working within the parliamentary system it was ultimately committed to destroying. 'We shall have to hold our noses and enter the Reichstag against the Catholic and Marxist deputies,' said Hitler from prison in 1924, and political success would be a matter of 'out-voting them', rather than 'out-shooting them' (Noakes and Pridham 1999: 37). Not that playing the democratic parliamentary game meant disbanding the movement's paramilitary arm, the SA, or abandoning the use of political violence and intimidation. But the SA was not to spend its time preparing for a coup. Its job was now to police Nazi demonstrations and meetings, gain 'mastery of the streets' from their Marxist rivals, to contest and secure the public space in which the party could promote and spread its message. The SA, in other words, was to complement the political activities of the Nazi party, not replace them.

It has recently become more fashionable for historians to argue that the Nazis' electoral take-off between 1928 and 1932 was down to the exploitation of national issues, rather than to the political fallout of the Depression. It was certainly the case that the NSDAP took greater advantage than its nominally senior nationalist partner, the DNVP, of the national exposure which came with the referendum campaign on the Young Plan for Germany's reparation payments in 1929–30, and that its first big voting gains were made in some East German state elections in the same period. But the coincidence of the Depression and the great surge in the Nazis' electoral performance makes it impossible not to connect them. The NSDAP won 2.8 per cent of the vote in the national elections of 1928, increased its vote eight times to 18.3 per cent in the 1930 elections and gained 37.3 per cent and 33.1 per cent in the two 1932 elections. At its electoral peak of the July 1932 elections, it was the largest political movement in Germany, with perhaps 800,000 party members, about 500,000 in the SA, many of whom would also at the same time have been party members, and thirteen million voters. As we shall see, the national issue which the Nazis addressed was the one raised by the impact of the Depression on German politics and society.

Who voted for Hitler? How did the Depression affect people's voting and political behaviour? In general terms, the impact of the economic crisis was to push the politics of the Weimar Republic to the extremes of right and left. Throughout Europe, the social groups most severely affected materially during the Depression in terms of shrinking incomes, rising debts and unemployment, were farmers and industrial workers. In Germany, the process of polarisation, the going to extremes, can be seen most graphically in the way these two groups voted.

The overall left-wing vote for the socialist and communist parties, the SPD and the KPD, remained relatively stable between 1928 and 1933. But there was a movement of working-class votes from the SPD to the KPD. For

the KPD, the Depression was the crisis of capitalism and, therefore, its great revolutionary opportunity. It became more militant as it won more working-class votes. In its desire to become the sole representative of the industrial working class, the KPD concentrated its fire on the 'social fascists' of the SPD, which as the party in coalition governments, was held responsible by its working-class constituency for failing to alleviate the worst effects of the Depression on employment and social welfare schemes. There was some force to this diagnosis. The SPD-led coalition government, formed in 1928, had broken up in 1930, because the partners could not agree on how to manage the Depression. The immediate point of dispute was the exhaustion of the unemployment insurance fund, and the reluctance of the centre and right parties in the government coalition to sanction further state and employer contributions to keep the scheme afloat.

This issue mirrored a wider disagreement among the parties, not only in Germany, but also throughout Europe, about the policies to be adopted to confront the Depression, or more realistically, to allocate the misery. In Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, the centre and right-wing parties generally insisted on deflationary policies, primarily swingeing cuts in public spending, including unemployment benefits and the salaries of public sector employees. The NSDAP stood apart from its right-wing rivals, here, promoting state-funded public works schemes as the way to economic recovery, which might have been one of the reasons why the party apparently won the votes of that minority of 'conservative' workers who usually supported the DNVP.

Deflationary policies whose costs were borne by workers and consumers were, of course, a very good reason for the SPD not to want to enter national government again, even though it became increasingly clear in the early 1930s that the SPD was the only real defence against an authoritarian, rather than a democratic, outcome to Germany's Depression-induced political crisis. As it was, the SPD was caught in the dilemma of needing to protect workers' interests during the Depression, if only to stop the haemorrhaging of working-class votes to the revolutionary KPD, and having to compromise those interests if it was in government.

Its way out of this dilemma was to give tacit parliamentary support to the minority government which succeeded its own coalition government in 1930, led by the Catholic Centre politician, Heinrich Brüning, but to vote against the deflationary measures passed by emergency decree legislation when these required retrospective parliamentary approval, according to the Weimar constitution. This parliamentary vote precipitated the dissolution of parliament for new national elections in late 1930, in the hope of the government securing a parliamentary majority, only for the NSDAP to achieve its electoral breakthrough.

The NSDAP was already doing well in the indebted North German farming communities from 1928, for whom the Depression aggravated the condition of an already depressed agricultural sector in the 1920s. The party

often managed to put itself at the head of single-issue rural protest movements resisting foreclosures, for instance, and take over existing local, regional and interest group organisations, filling the organisational vacuum left in the countryside by the other national parties on the left and right. In and from the 1930 elections, the electoral and organisational inroads made in small town and rural Northern and Eastern Germany became almost a clean sweep. Schleswig-Holstein became the first area where the Nazis polled over 50 per cent of the total votes, an extraordinary situation under a proportional representation electoral system.

What was happening with the farmers was also happening more generally among lower-middle- and middle-class voters. The polarisation on the right saw a dramatic redistribution of votes, as the NSDAP burnt off the support of the centre and right-wing middle-class parties, and of the special interest group parties which had been splintering off from the mainstream national parties since the great inflation of 1923–24 destroyed middle-class savings and incomes. Indicative of a wider national trend was the electoral disintegration of one of the most important of these splinter parties, the Economic party, which represented small scale self-employed businessmen, retailers and artisans, the classic German *mittelstand* of the 'old' middle classes. The party won more votes than the Nazis in the 1928 national elections, at 4.5 per cent, and its decline to a rump of 0.3 per cent of the votes in July 1932 exactly matched the spectacular surge of the NSDAP, which was taking over its constituencies.

After 1930, the Nazis did almost as well among the 'new' urban middle classes of professionals and white-collared salaried employees in the public and private sectors, and in the large cities, did especially well in the well-off middle-class suburbs. These people were not always those impoverished or made unemployed by the Depression. But they feared the repercussions for social stability of the discontent of those that were, which, in their eyes, was expressed in the polarisation to the left, the growing electoral strength and revolutionary militancy of the KPD.

The bandwagon effect also mattered in the middle-class electorate. If the economic crisis pushed the SPD further to the left, then it also pushed the centre and right parties further to the right, in support of deflationary policies whose burden would fall on the unemployed and organised labour, and politically at state and national level, for centre–right coalitions excluding the SPD. The rightward drift of these parties was also a defensive response to the success of the NSDAP. But the weaker electorally these parties became, the more compelling was the reason for middle-class voters to support the real thing, the Nazis.

The NSDAP already had a general party programme, which was, crudely, to unite the nation internally, primarily or initially by destroying the nation's enemies, Jews and Marxists, which they saw as the necessary premise for making Germany great again, internationally. Whatever the particular messages which the NSDAP addressed to the various middle-class electorates

during the almost constant electioneering of the Depression years, this general message had a significant resonance for people who felt that the country was in crisis. The party campaigned from 1928 on themes of anti-Marxism and national unity. These motifs had a real meaning for those who felt threatened by the growing extremism of the left, and for whom the Depression was accentuating the divisiveness and social tensions of German life. The Depression everywhere, not only in Germany, made democratic politics extremely competitive and sharp-edged, as parties representing different social groups and interests fought to defend their own corner and deflect the costs of the Depression onto others. The Nazis captured the votes and appropriated the interests of the various fragmented sections of the German middle classes, and could do so as an untried but unsullied 'outsider' party, never in government and not responsible for Germany's post-war internal and external 'weakness'. They could also win these middle-class votes as a unifier in a country of divisive party politics, the party of all good racial Germans, whatever their age, gender, religion, region or class.

By 1932, the NSDAP had come closest to what every inter-war fascist movement aspired to be, a 'people's party', a cross-class national party, transcending the social and religious cleavages of modern European societies. In Germany, these class and religious fissures still, at the peak of the Nazis' electoral success, kept the NSDAP at bay. Most Catholics of all classes continued to vote for the Catholic Centre party and its Bavarian counterpart, even during the Depression, leaning on a sub-cultural network of Catholic political, social and economic organisations which the Nazis were unable to breach. Most industrial workers went on voting for the SPD and the KPD, with a significant minority, probably not Marxist socialist voters anyway, going Nazi. So, although the NSDAP became the party par excellence of the country's Protestant urban and rural lower middle and middle classes, it more closely resembled a *volkspartei* than any other party around. The idea on which they based their programme of national renewal, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or national race community, by and large fitted the socially wide-ranging membership and electorate who supported them between 1930 and 1933.

After the July 1932 elections, Germany was practically ungovernable, at least by parties supporting democratic institutions. The Nazis and the KPD together had over half the seats in the national parliament and could prevent any pro-Weimar coalition forming. But by then, parliament was irrelevant to the resolution of Germany's political crisis and was sidelined, even subverted, by President Hindenburg, the elected head of state, who was a Prussian land-owning conservative, a DNVP'er, with no particular commitment to a parliamentary and republican system of government. Between 1930 and 1933, a succession of governments lacking a parliamentary majority enacted measures and laws by emergency decree on Presidential authority, a procedure allowed under the Weimar constitution, which also permitted retrospective parliamentary scrutiny of such emergency decree legislation. The temporary suspension of government's accountability to the elected parlia-

ment exposed the operation of government to the behind the scenes influence of powerful non-elected national institutions and interest and pressure groups, including the armed forces. Hitler's eventual appointment as Chancellor, or Prime Minister, of a new government in January 1933 obviously had some reference to the NSDAP's staggering electoral success and to the strength of the party's parliamentary representation. But his nomination owed more to the interplay between Hindenburg and his conservative clique of advisors and the representatives of Germany's military and economic establishment, who delivered power to parties, the NSDAP and DNVP in coalition, systematically opposed to democratic parliamentary institutions.

At the very least, Hindenburg wanted a government which excluded the SPD. But there were signs that he, and his advisors, were thinking of making Presidential rule permanent and governing without reference to parliament or elections, effectively a fundamental revision of the Weimar constitution. But no democratic or potential authoritarian government in Germany could govern without taking account of a party which had over a third of the electorate behind it. As in Italy in 1922, banning the party or preventing it from having at least a share in power would have risked civil war, and the army taking on good patriotic and nationalist Germans. The hope and expectation was, then, in the words of the architect of the strategy, Franz von Papen, an independent conservative politician close to the President, to 'box Hitler in', to co-opt him and his movement's mass support for a conservative stabilisation of the country's political and economic situation. The short-lived non-party governments ruling by Presidential decree in 1932, led by the army general, Kurt von Schleicher, and von Papen, had sought the backing of the NSDAP, in order to give themselves the popular support which they, non-elected and with no party affiliations, lacked. But Hitler, in his unproductive contacts with President Hindenburg, held out for a Nazi-led government. Eventually, in January 1933, this was conceded, but the strategy remained the same. Hitler was Chancellor, but von Papen was Vice-Chancellor, the NSDAP was in coalition with the DNVP and most government ministers were not Nazis.

So, as in Italy in 1922, fascism came to power in Germany more or less within the framework of a parliamentary system, and as the result of a compromise with the country's conservative establishment, who saw the *parvenu* fascist movement and its leader as the necessary popular dimension to a conservative resolution of the national crisis. There was, as yet, no revolutionary conflagration of the country's existing political, economic and military institutions. The test of Italian Fascism's and German Nazism's fascist credentials was whether they could, or would, break out of the 'box'.

Austria

Political developments in Austria during the Depression years paralleled those in Germany in the same period. The impact of the Depression led to

significant electoral gains for the Austrian Nazi party, contributing to a political crisis which became the crisis of Austria's democratic parliamentary system. The outcome was, however, different, and there was an additional ingredient to the crisis: external interference in the country's domestic politics.

In the late 1930 national elections, the Austrian Nazis had polled about 100,000 votes, 3 per cent of the total, compared to the *Heimwehr's* 6 per cent. As the Depression bit, the Austrian NSDAP achieved its electoral breakthrough, winning over 16 per cent of the vote in the regional and municipal elections of 1932. In the event of national elections, they clearly expected to become a significant parliamentary force. They had swallowed up the votes of the other pan-German nationalist organisation, the Greater German People's Party, the rump of which, along with the Styrian and other *Heimwehr* sections, merged with the Nazi party in the course of 1933–34. The Austrian Nazis continued to show well among the urban 'new' middle classes, civil servants and public sector employees, professionals, teachers and students, and as a measure of the impact of the Depression on their support, made greater inroads in small town and farming communities. Despite this broadening base of middle-class support, the Austrian Nazis were less of a *volkspartei* than their German comrades, and were limited in their appeal by the same sub-cultural obstacles which the Nazis faced in Germany. The SPD and the Christian Social party, both buttressed by dense cradle-to-grave organisational networks, held on to the votes of, respectively, most industrial workers, and most Catholics, the latter being more susceptible to the appeal of the Nazis' rival, the *Heimwehr*.

As in Germany in 1930, parliamentary government in Austria was effectively suspended as the result of inter-party disagreement on how to tackle the Depression. The Christian Social leader, Engelbert Dollfuss, headed a right-wing coalition government pursuing conventional deflationary economic policies, which with *Heimwehr* support had a parliamentary majority of one. This was government against the SPD, with the policies to match. Confronted by SPD resistance to the government's deflationary measures in both parliament and on the streets, Dollfuss prerogued, or suspended, parliament in March 1933 and, re-activating wartime emergency powers, governed by decree.

In time, it became clear that this was a coup against Austria's parliamentary republic, but it was not a fascist coup. Some have argued that Dollfuss's action was primarily a matter of preserving Austria's very existence as a state, at the price of doing away with the country's parliamentary system. With Hitler just in power in Germany, and on the evidence of the Austrian Nazis' electoral performance in 1932, new elections and parliamentary democracy would deliver the country to the pan-German Nazis, who would bring about the *Anschluss*, the union of Austria with Germany. If Dollfuss's intention was to save Austria from the Nazis, then this was certainly the effect of his suspension of parliamentary government, which was followed up

by a government ban on the Austrian NSDAP in June 1933, and under strong pressure from Mussolini, a similar ban on the SPD, in February 1934.

A cross-party Christian Social crisis alliance with the SPD could also have saved Austrian democracy from Nazism, of course. But, as in Germany, the centre and right during the Depression did not want to be in government with the SPD, and this is another way of seeing Dollfuss's actions: a non-parliamentary government was preferred to parliamentary government with the SPD. The government bans undermined the political pluralism at the heart of any democratic system. Dollfuss's intention to have done with party political activity altogether, was confirmed in his mooted of a single, government-supporting organisation, the Fatherland Front, essentially a union of the Christian Socials and the *Heimwehr*. These dissolved themselves into the new body, which became the only party legally allowed to exist under the new constitution of May 1934, transforming Austria from a parliamentary republic to an authoritarian 'Social, Christian, German State'.

This new corporatist constitution did not allow a corporately-elected national federal assembly to initiate laws, only to approve those put to it by an unaccountable government. It owed less to fascist models, and more to Dollfuss's own Catholic Christian Social background and to current Papal Catholic political and social thinking, which was corporatist and 'accidental-ist', meaning that for Catholics, the type of political system was immaterial as long as the interests of the Church were protected. The Fatherland Front equipped itself with fascist-style capillary organisations encompassing young people, social welfare and recreational activities. But its real purpose was to exist, as a touchstone of national, patriotic support for the new regime, rather than take on the totalitarian mobilisation of the single party in the actual fascist regimes in Italy and Germany in the 1930s. The Front's lack of dynamism also derived from the fact that it was created from above, as a passive prop for the regime, with the *Heimwehr* having its leaders in government, but its independence wrapped up inside the official state party. One of the strands of Austrian fascism had become a component of an authoritarian regime, but not its driving force.

One wonders whether Mussolini was entirely satisfied with his efforts to 'fascistise' Austria through his support of the *Heimwehr* from 1927, and his pressures on Dollfuss to have done with the SPD and parliamentary democracy in the crisis of 1932–34. The eventual outcome of an authoritarian, but not fascist, constitution might well indicate the limits of his influence on Austrian politics. He might well have thought that 'fascistising' other countries was a way of extending Italian Fascist influence in Europe, and that a country with a political system aligned to his own was much more likely to have good relations with Fascist Italy. But the then current Italian state interest of keeping Austria 'independent', that is, independent of Germany if not of Italy, so as to keep Italy's frontiers from the weight of German revisionism of the Versailles settlement, was well-served by Dollfuss's authoritarian and Austrian nationalist Austria. The Austrian

NSDAP went underground and into German exile after the Dollfuss ban, and probably with the knowledge and approval of Hitler, attempted a coup against Dollfuss in July 1934, whose overthrow was to be the prelude to *Anschluss*. They succeeded in murdering Dollfuss in his office, while Mussolini was entertaining his wife and children on holiday in Italy, but did not manage to topple his government or his system of rule, which continued under his successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg. In response to the coup attempt, Mussolini staged a mobilisation of troops on the Italian–Austrian border as a sign that he was prepared to resist by force the union of Austria with Germany.

But foreign influence and intervention had the final word. If Dollfuss had been able to make something of Austrian nationalism and independence as the beneficiary of the hostility between Italy and Germany in 1933–34, his successor was the victim of the growing co-operation and friendship between the two fascist powers in 1936. Hitler's Germany had refused to apply League of Nations economic sanctions against a Fascist Italy internationally isolated by its invasion and conquest of Ethiopia in 1935–36, and became the major supplier of Italy's energy and raw material needs. In return, Mussolini effectively dropped his earlier defence of Austrian independence. He encouraged Schuschnigg to conclude an agreement with Germany in July 1936, which recognised Austria as a 'German' state and removed the ban on the Austrian Nazis. Exposed to relentless internal and external Nazi pressure without Italian cover, Schuschnigg's resignation and *Anschluss* came in early 1938, and this time Mussolini did not resist. The Fatherland Front and the Dollfuss constitution were dissolved, and Austria was politically and administratively incorporated into Nazi Germany.

Unable to come to power through its own coup, the Austrian NSDAP's route to power was decided by external intervention and changing international alignments. In the 1920s, fascist movements had prospered, or not, in their national contexts. The defeat of Austrian democracy, and then, in turn, of Austrian authoritarianism, was a sign that international relations, disrupted in the 1930s by the assertive presence of the two fascist regimes in Italy and Germany, were one of the factors determining the fate of Europe's fascist movements.

The Gömbös regime and the Arrow Cross in Hungary

In Hungary, as elsewhere in agrarian Eastern Europe, the impact of the Great Depression was catastrophic. The international terms of trade had been running against the mainly agricultural and raw materials producing economies of Eastern Europe in the 1920s. Now, for Hungary, there were even sharper falls in agricultural prices and in both the value and volume of the country's mainly wheat and cereals agricultural exports, leading to lower farmers' incomes and rural unemployment, which, in turn, hit the domestic sales and production of national industries. The lower level of economic

activity generally, reduced the tax and other revenues coming to government. There was a run on the Hungarian currency on international money markets in 1931, as foreign disinvestment occurred in response to the Depression. The country's sources of foreign short-term loans and credits dried up, and existing foreign debts were not extended but called in. In a country with an already inflated and unaffordable state bureaucracy which was the main employment outlet for educated men, the loss of international loans and falling state revenues forced the government to cut both the pay and numbers of civil servants, and so restrict and make more competitive the job market for university graduates.

This kind of retrenchment was happening everywhere else, of course. But the Depression was effectively destabilising the way the dominant conservative liberal politician and Prime Minister, Bethlen, had managed the economy and the oligarchic parliamentary system since 1921. Reconciling the interests of the Bethlenite alliance of aristocratic Magyar landowners and the Jewish business and financial community, post-war and post-revolutionary economic reconstruction in the 1920s was based on international loans and investment, and on agricultural exporting, both of which withered away with the Depression. As in Germany and elsewhere, politics became increasingly competitive and defensive, as interest groups and the parties which represented them attempted to ensure that others bore the brunt of the Depression and of the government's deflationary policies. The 'government party' in Hungary, the National Union, itself little more than a common forum for government-supporting civil servants, professional politicians and economic interest groups, sustained by state patronage, showed signs of breaking up from within. The Smallholders party, representing indebted peasant farmers, left the National Union in late 1930. Bethlen, no longer able to hold together the Union nor manage the economic crisis, resigned in 1931, opening up nearly a decade and a half of internecine political conflict among the various Hungarian rights, with the head of state and regent, Horthy, holding the ring.

Late in 1932, Horthy appointed the domesticated fascist, Gömbös, as Hungary's Depression Prime Minister, in a manoeuvre which resembled that being attempted at the same time by Hindenburg and von Papen with respect to Hitler in Germany. Gömbös's nomination opened the way to the more radical elements within Hungary's political establishment, and provided the 'strong government' which Horthy evidently thought Hungary needed in the midst of the Depression. But, at the same time, Horthy wanted to box Gömbös in. Gömbös was not allowed to enact the 'socialism' of his earlier 1920s 'national socialism', in other words, land reform and anti-Jewish laws, and was anyway effectively prevented from doing so by Horthy's refusal to bring forward parliamentary elections. Gömbös, until the 1935 elections, was obliged to work with a parliament elected when Bethlen was in charge of government and of the National Union.

Gömbös, nevertheless, did his best to implement from above what he had

attempted from below as leader of the anti-system Party of Racial Defence in the mid-1920s. The possibility of achieving Hungarian nationalist goals was checked in the 1920s by the existence of France's alliances with the beneficiaries of the Versailles settlement, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, and their complement, the anti-Hungarian Little Entente. In this light, even Bethlen's government had seen the value of contacts and co-operation with an equally 'revisionist' and anti-Yugoslav Fascist Italy in the late 1920s. Hitler's coming to power in Germany in 1933 meant that Hungary could now also hitch her revisionism to that of a much stronger 'revisionist' power. This became an increasingly attractive, and necessary, proposition, as Nazi Germany successfully dismantled the Versailles settlement in the late 1930s, the *Anschluss* of 1938 bringing Germany to Hungary's borders.

Gömbös was extremely keen on an overtly 'revisionist' international alignment with the two fascist powers, an extension of his own co-operation with other Central European nationalist groups in the 1920s. The German–Hungarian trade agreement of 1934 for the export to Germany of Hungarian agricultural produce and bauxite was, then, both an act of economic policy and diplomacy, and for both countries. It was one of several similar exclusive bilateral trading deals which Nazi Germany made with East European countries desperate to find guaranteed outlets for their agricultural and raw materials exports. Such deals were not just ways out of the Depression. In a longer term perspective, they were steps on the way to creating that German-dominated, autarkic continental European *Grossraumwirtschaft* ('large economic area') so nearly achieved by 1942, in which the industrialised 'steely core of a Greater Germany' (Overy 1987: 98) serviced, and was serviced by, a mainly agricultural and raw materials producing periphery.

Gömbös, like Mussolini on the other side of the fence, seemed to think that closer international alignments were cemented by internal alignments of political systems. Hitler, as we shall see later, interestingly, thought differently. But Gömbös' boasts to German Nazi leaders that he would create a 'national socialist' state in Hungary probably owed as much to his own long-held belief that the Horthy system needed overhauling, as to his desire to please the Nazis. He certainly intended to set up a one-party corporate state system, to be realised through the transformation of the 'government party', the National Union, from an organisation designed to fix elections and secure unassailable parliamentary majorities, to a permanent national political movement with a capillary network capable of organising and mobilising the population. The renamed Party of National Unity equipped itself with a militia and youth organisation, in order, said Gömbös, to realise 'total control of the nation's social life', or, even more revealingly in the words of the man responsible for the party's reorganisation, 'to aid the leader in his progress towards the goal of national unity . . . (as an) instrument for reshaping the whole way of life . . . (and) to pre-empt political ideas and action that do not emanate from its own framework' (Janos 1982: 289).

What prevented, or slowed down, Hungary's mooted development into a fascist state was, of course, the lack of the very factor, an already existing mass fascist party, which gave Hitler his real leverage in German politics and enabled him to avoid the trap set for him by Hindenburg's conservative clique. In Nazi Germany, the party became the state, while in Hungary, the state attempted to create the party. But it was a very close run thing. Gömbös won his own governmental parliamentary majority in the 1935 elections, and might have managed to break free of Horthy's policy strait-jacket, if he had not died in 1936. His Bethlenite successor returned the 'government party' to being an electoral organisation. A similar attempt to change the nature of the 'official' party was made when he was Prime Minister in 1938 by Bela Imrédy, who assumed Gömbös's radical establishment mantle, and his overtly pro-German foreign policy and anti-Jewish and agrarian reform internal policies.

While Gömbös was attempting to foist a fascist party on Hungary from above, the real things were emerging outside establishment politics. One of several fascist groupings which mushroomed during the Depression, the Brotherhood of the Scythe Cross, formed in 1931, momentarily achieved a mass peasant following on the basis of the promise of land reform and an apocalyptic vision of a religious and 'peasantist' national regeneration. The movement's 'March on Budapest', or pilgrimage-cum-crusade to redeem a benighted capital city, in 1936, was a rolling coup, in the manner of *Le Faisceau's* rallies in Eastern France in 1926. The momentum of the march was meant to induce a failure of government will at the centre. But the march was very soon contained and dispersed by police action.

The Party of National Will, formed in 1935, and reformed, after a government ban, as the dominant partner in a national socialist coalition, the Arrow Cross–Hungarist movement, in 1937, had far more staying power, and was a more serious challenge to the Horthy system. Its founder was a dreamy recently retired army officer, Ferenc Szálasi, who brought an already developed idiosyncratic concept of 'Hungarism' to the new movement, which he constantly refined and tinkered with, over his years as leader. Szálasi's 'Hungarism' was a bizarre version of racial geopolitics, but no more bizarre than Hitler's vision of an Aryan racialist–imperialist utopia. In a way which was characteristic of inter-war fascist movements and ideologies, Szálasi invented for the Hungarian Magyars a mythical and glorious past, which served as an ideal to evoke and emulate, a stimulus to remedying Hungary's inglorious present situation and to securing its glorious future.

For the Magyars were, in origin, as racially 'fit' and superior as the Aryan Germans, and like them and their fellow 'Turaniens', the Japanese, the Magyars were a global 'master race'. Magyars-as-'Turaniens' were a racial oxymoron, a 'pure' blend of various Asiatic and Middle Eastern tribes and peoples, who by location and settlement had a 'Western' culture, and so represented the racial and cultural bridge between Europe and Asia. This

'Turanian' tosh, which set the Magyars up as Europe's 'Asiatics', had become current in some extreme nationalist circles in the 1920s, and their assumption of a partly non-European Hungarian identity was their 'Eastern' answer to the 'Western' humiliation of the Magyar nation in the Treaty of Trianon.

Anyway, Szálasi envisaged a global racial 'new order', where each of the dominant 'master races', the Magyars, Germans and Japanese, would carve out huge regional and ethnically grouped empires. The Magyars were to rule a South Eastern and Eastern European 'Carpathian–Danubian Greater Fatherland' of the Christian slav peoples, where Magyar would be the official language, the language of power, in other words, but a degree of administrative and cultural autonomy would be conceded to the empire's subject nationalities. This might seem little more than an enlarged restoration, with different racial justifications, of the Austro-Hungarian empire after the *Ans-gleich* of 1867. But allowing other nationalities any rights at all was rather different from the usual Hungarian nationalism, which offered only assimilation to Magyardom, the road actually taken by Szálasi himself, as a Hungarian of German and Slovak extraction.

Szálasi's fantasy land had no place for Jews, conventionally portrayed as the anti-national purveyors of bolshevism and finance capitalism, and they would be forcibly 'repatriated' outside Europe. The expulsion of the Jews would be a step towards creating a 'Christian' corporately organised economy, where the state would nationalise the banks and financial services sector, energy production and war industries, and foster the growth of a Magyar middle class of agricultural and industrial entrepreneurs, by promoting land reform and industrial development. Szálasi seemed to think that it was possible to take a 'legal', parliamentary road to power, and then, as Hitler had done, transform Hungary's mongrel parliamentary democracy into a fully blown dictatorship, with himself as the supreme and charismatic leader, 'selected by higher divine authority to redeem Magyardom' (Janos 1982: 277).

Szálasi founded his party in 1935, when the worst of the Depression was over, and its dramatic political breakthrough occurred in 1938–39, when the Hungarian economy was on the way to recovery. So it is difficult to claim that the movement's emergence and growth were induced by the effects of the Depression, other than the general one that it had undermined the conservative liberal Bethlenite political hegemony of the 1920s, and so opened up Hungarian politics in the 1930s to intense competition among the various rights.

Pre-1989 Marxist historians in Hungary tended to write off the Arrow Cross as Nazi Germany's traitorous 'fifth column'. They put the movement's growing strength in the late 1930s down to the external support it received from Nazi Germany, and to the effect on internal Hungarian politics of the country's ever closer international association with the fascist powers for the revision of the Versailles settlement. Szálasi certainly had contacts with the German Nazi leaders, and received German funding. But Hitler's main

concern, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, was to bring Hungary into Nazi Germany's economic orbit. He remained extremely cagey about local fascist movements, distrusting their nationalism, which would make them uncomfortable allies in a Germanic empire. He also feared that once in power, their enactment of a fascist revolution would lead to social, economic and political upheaval, hardly producing the settled economic conditions conducive to Germany's access to their countries' economic resources.

All things considered, Hitler preferred working with non-fascist authoritarians, even tepid ones like Horthy, and saw local fascist movements as levers of pressure on other governments, a way of blackmailing their cooperation with Germany. Delivering what Germany wanted was made to seem the lesser evil to the unleashing of a fascist revolution. The implied threat was that if existing governments could or would not co-operate with Nazi Germany, then the latter could turn to fascist movements who would. Hitler's distrust of other fascisms, which reflected his unwillingness to compromise on the fulfilment of Nazi ideological aims, led to ambiguous and sometimes prickly relationships between the local fascist movements and German authorities in German-occupied Europe after 1940.

So, the Germans never favoured putting the Arrow Cross in power before or even during the war, and only did so *in extremis*, in 1944–45, when the country was already being invaded by the Soviet army. The stand off was a reciprocal one. Szálasi accepted Nazi money, but did not intend to be compromised by it, regarding himself as an ideologically purer national socialist than Hitler. There can be no doubting the level of influence the Germans were capable of exerting on Hungarian internal politics, as a result of the *Anschluss*, and Hungary's economic and diplomatic dependence on Germany for economic recovery from the Depression and the realisation of her 'revisionist' aims. But in the political manoeuvrings of late 1940, when the Germans wanted the Arrow Cross to merge with a new party under Imrédy seceding from the 'government party', Szálasi refused to play the role assigned to him and his movement of becoming the mass base of a pro-German rightist government. In standing by his political independence, Szálasi probably put the Arrow Cross further from power as a result.

If only because other explanations are inadequate, one has to conclude that the Arrow Cross's surge in 1938–39 was due to internal political and organisational factors. Up to then, its members and leaders were, typically, army officers, or ex-army officers, civil servants and professionals, the usual components of extreme nationalistic movements in inter-war Hungary. In the period of its mass recruitment and growth, the Arrow Cross won over agricultural labourers and peasants, especially in the poorest rural areas, and industrial and urban workers, an uncomfortable fact both acknowledged and disguised by Marxist historians when they spoke of the movement's support among the 'large backward stratum of urban and village semi-proletarians and proletarians' (Lackó 1980: 397). So, despite successive government bans on Arrow Cross political activity, Szálasi himself being in jail for conspiracy

to overthrow the constitution, and the Arrow Cross not standing in all constituencies, its national socialist coalition won forty-nine seats, thirty-one of them to the Arrow Cross, and nearly a million votes, about 25 per cent of the total, in the May 1939 elections.

In Budapest, remarkably, the Arrow Cross-led coalition came a decent second to the government party overall, but outvoted everybody, the government party, the socialists and the Christian Socials, in the city's working and lower middle-class suburbs. The Arrow Cross's popular vote seemed to indicate that it had made the most of recent electoral reform which, by extending the secret ballot, effectively enfranchised more industrial and agricultural workers, and had stepped into the organisational vacuum left by the long standing government-imposed limitations on socialist party activities. The Arrow Cross's national socialism was, in effect, the only radical alternative for previously unorganised industrial and rural workers (the 'proletarians'), and transport and other public utility workers (the 'semi-proletarians'). The Arrow Cross did well among precisely those social groups, agricultural labourers, miners, public employees, whom the socialists had not been allowed to organise. Bethlen contemptuously observed that the masses of leftist socialism were now on the extreme right. The final product was a fascist party which performed well electorally across Hungary and among all social groups, and so, like the NSDAP in Germany, came closest to the fascist dream of being a *volkspartei*, a 'people's party', a heterogeneous movement which was the microcosm of the nation.

Szálasi's imprisonment was probably a blessing in disguise. The movement could play on his status as the martyred visionary, and on its status as the only serious oppositional force to the Horthy system. But its dramatic electoral performance did not bring the Arrow Cross any nearer power. As Gömbös had found in the 1920s, large governmental majorities could be stirred, but not shaken. The coalition's forty-nine seats in parliament were way off the government party's 179 seats. Horthy had no intention of co-opting Szálasi, nor was Szálasi open to co-option, which was more than could be said for some of the Arrow Cross's supporters among Hungary's actual and aspirant state employees, whom government patronage and pressure could quite easily transform from the system's 'outs' to the system's 'ins'. As often happened to other inter-war fascist movements, momentum and expectations fell away after the initial surge, when it became clear that the movement would not take power.

The Arrow Cross was also becalmed by the government's own policies. The moderate conservative, Pal Teleki, Prime Minister between 1939 and 1941, introduced tougher anti-Jewish measures, including lower quotas on Jews in professional and white collar employment and a ban on Jews marrying non-Jews. Although Teleki, like Horthy, feared too fixed an alignment to the Axis powers, that, too, was helping Hungary regain her lost territories. The Vienna agreements of 1938 and 1940, 'arbitrated' by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, allowed Hungary to re-annex parts of Slovakia

and of Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia, and northern Transylvania from Romania. In effect, and perhaps also in intention, these internal and external nationalistic 'gains' helped to neutralise the Arrow Cross's political appeal, demonstrating that the country did not need fascism in order to achieve national goals. It only required the existing government to go further to the right.

So, rather paradoxically, the very right-wing and nationalist political ambience of the 1930s which stimulated the growth of the Arrow Cross, was also the factor inhibiting its progress. The Arrow Cross would undoubtedly have performed even better in the 1939 elections, if the country had had a fully democratic political and electoral system and the government not habitually intervened to influence the polling. Szálasi's opportunity came, eventually, only as the result of Hungary's military defeat in the Second World War, and of what he had previously resisted, Nazi Germany's external intervention in Hungary's domestic politics. But the limits which authoritarian governments and systems placed on the success of fascist movements can be seen even more brutally in the case of Eastern Europe's other most significant fascism, the Iron Guard in Romania.

The Iron Guard in Romania

As in Hungary, the impact of the Depression in Romania was to undermine an economy based on agricultural and raw materials exporting and international loans, and destroy the credibility of the generally liberal economic policies followed by the governments of the 1920s and continued by the National Peasant Party government of 1930–32. This government had negotiated a foreign loan in 1929 to help stabilise and re-value the Romanian currency, and the NPP's own peasant following now paid the price for it. Having borrowed money and mortgaged their properties in a period of inflation, which if it continued would reduce the value of their debts over time, farmers now faced paying back their loans in re-valued currency at the same time as agricultural prices and incomes were being lowered by the Depression.

The other new and destabilising element of Romanian politics in the Depression years had nothing to do with the Depression. The King, Carol, who had abdicated in 1925 and gone into exile, returned to the country as King in 1930. His renegeing on a promise not to repatriate his Jewish mistress as well prompted the resignation of the NPP Prime Minister in late 1930. The authoritarian drift of Romanian politics in the 1930s came from this conjuncture of the predictable and the unpredictable, the impact of the Depression and the King's return.

After another short lived NPP government in 1932–33, the manipulated 1933 elections delivered over half the total vote to the Liberals, the great political fixers of the 1920s, who had a large parliamentary majority as the result of the workings of Romania's less than democratic electoral system, which gave the party winning 40 per cent of the vote half of the seats in

parliament and a proportional share of the other half. The Liberals formed Romania's real Depression government, and went right to 'neo-liberalism', adopting protectionist and autarkic policies to industrialise a still mainly agrarian society through state management of the economy. Such an attempt at state-directed, fast track modernisation was bound to have casualties as well as beneficiaries, and was ill-suited to the give and take, the balancing of interests of even a nominally democratic party system. This suited the King, who wanted to govern as well as rule his country, and to this end, preferred governments made up of 'talented' individuals dependent on him for their appointment, to governments tied to parties and their parliamentary representation.

The growth of the Iron Guard coincided with the period of 'neo-liberal' government, between 1933 and 1937, and had its equivalent of the Arrow Cross's political surge in 1936–37. The rise of such an extremist political movement also hardened the King's authoritarian tendencies, paradoxical as that might seem. During the Depression years, the Iron Guard became a national mass movement, its proselytising and organising in often politically untouched peasant communities feeding off the deepening rural impoverishment caused by the economic crisis. Its practical small scale self-help community work projects helped the Guard to establish a permanent presence in village society. There was evidence also of peasant farmers who used to vote for the NPP, turning to the Guard in the mid-1930s. Certainly, the Guard's increased activity brought it into sharp competition for the rural anti-Semitic vote with the National Christian Party (NCP), formed by a merger of Cuza's LANC and Octavian Goga's Agrarian Party.

In 1931, the Iron Guard, albeit standing under an assumed name after a government ban on its activities, won between 1 per cent and 2 per cent of the vote, gaining its first parliamentary representation of two seats in subsequent by-elections. In the 1932 elections, it polled perhaps 70,000 votes, between 2 per cent and 3 per cent of the total, and had five seats in parliament. The movement's electoral participation did not mean abandoning its usual political methods, which were inimical to those of parliamentary democracy. Its actual and promised political violence and intimidation during the 1933 election campaign justified another ban by the government, which arrested and imprisoned Guardist leaders and members en masse, precisely to prevent the Guard's participation in elections giving the 'government party', the Liberals, their absolute majority of the vote and unassailable majority in parliament. The Legion responded in characteristic fashion, one of its assassination squads killing the Liberal leader and Prime Minister in December 1933. Between 1933 and 1940, the Legion managed to assassinate four Prime Ministers in a row. It was little wonder that the Iron Guard alternated between being a legal and illegal organisation in the 1930s, nor that Carol eventually concluded that the only way to deal with such a violently disruptive political party was to do away with all political parties.

The Iron Guard thrived on official persecution and 'martyrdom'. Its core Legionary structure, built around the constellation of 'nests', was ideally suited to underground conspiratorial activity, and to the continuous recruitment needed to replenish imprisoned party cadres. No matter how hard the government repressed it, the movement was never extinguished. In the 1937 elections, the Guard, under its political nom de plume, the All for the Fatherland Party, won a staggering 16 per cent of the total vote, with sixty-six seats in parliament, making it the third largest party behind the 'neoliberals' and the NPP. The vote was staggering, because it was achieved by an oppositional party operating outside and against an electoral 'system' habitually subject to heavy interference from state authorities designed to fix the result for the 'government party'. Police reports indicated that the actual, rather than the officially recorded vote for the Iron Guard was probably nearer 25 per cent of the total.

The size of the vote was also a sign that the Iron Guard had branched out. Although still mainly a rural organisation, winning peasant and small town lower middle-class support, the movement was active in the towns and capital city, Bucharest. Its corporation of Legionary workers, founded in 1931, claimed 8,000 members in the late 1930s, while the practical propaganda by deed projects were extended from the countryside to the provincial towns and the capital, in the shape of Legionary-sponsored restaurants, shops and small businesses. One has to assume, again, that like the Arrow Cross in Hungary, the Iron Guard was filling a gap left by the weakness of Marxist socialist labour organisations. For unorganised workers, the Iron Guard was a socially radical alternative to the 'establishment' parties.

The 1937 elections meant that the country was ungovernable in the usual manner. For the only, and last, time no electoral list had managed to win the magical 40 per cent of the votes, and the King appointed a minority government led by the National Christian Party. New elections carried the risk of the Iron Guard making even greater gains. Carol used the *impasse* to stage his own royal coup, in February 1938. He first suspended the constitution, governing by decree, and then abolished it. His new constitution removed parliamentary accountability, with government ministers now nominated by and responsible to the King, and introduced corporate representation. All political parties were abolished; the only legal political organisation was his own concoction, the Front for National Rebirth, into which other political forces, including the Iron Guard, were expected to merge.

This resembled the top-down, government-supporting front organisations which the other inter-war non-fascist authoritarians, Dollfuss in Austria, Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain, had created to buttress their regimes. The Front, later renamed Party of the Nation, developed, as Gömbös's official party did, sectoral capillary organisations for workers, young people and women. But it lacked the true ideological inspiration and drive of the genuine fascist party. It was a government toy, run by civil

servants; its local branches were led by the prefects, state officials who represented and exercised state authority in the provinces.

Romania's independent fascist movement was as opposed to the royal dictatorship as it was to the country's nominal democratic parliamentary system. Codreanu had refused to enter a coalition government with the NCP after the 1937 elections, one of the factors precipitating the King's coup. Carol then coupled his attempts to co-opt the Iron Guard with repression. Codreanu and thousands of Legionaries were arrested and imprisoned, pushing the Iron Guard onto familiar territory. The Guard refused to accept the King as the movement's new leader, and Codreanu's real replacement, Horia Sima, instigated the usual cycle of violence and counter-violence, which this time reached new levels of brutality. Guardist attacks on Jews and state officials seemed on this occasion to be a concerted strategy of tension, to unnerve and destabilise the government by an orchestrated campaign of terror, preparatory to an actual coup. The government retaliated with the police's murder of the imprisoned Codreanu and Legionaries, in November 1938, and a persecution of the Guard which intended to stamp the movement out once and for all.

Neither happened. Sima's potential coup was stymied by the army remaining loyal to the King. The Guard went underground, or into German exile, but hydra-like, were still capable of the revenge assassination in September 1939 of the Prime Minister responsible for the mass cull of the movement, also killing his successor, in 1940. It was the fast changing international situation which brought better times for the Guard.

German-led revisionism of the Versailles settlement was, of course, a threat to the Greater Romania created by that settlement. Codreanu presumably recognised this when, in the 1937 election campaign, he openly committed the Iron Guard to leading Romania into an alliance of the 'states of the nationalist revolution' with the Axis powers, against the USSR, the Western democracies, the League of Nations, and, of course, Romania's membership of the pro-French, anti-Hungarian Little Entente. Associating a Guardist Romania with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany might have been Codreanu's way of heading off revisionism at the expense of Romania, on the grounds that the Axis would hardly dismember the territory of a fascist ally. The Axis alliance would at least protect Romania against the territorial claims of the Soviet Union. But Codreanu's support of an alliance with the fascist powers was also a mark of the 'internationalism' of this most idiosyncratic and national of European fascist movements. Codreanu perceived things in terms which matched Mussolini's view of the Axis, that it was the vanguard of a progressively 'fascistising' Europe, and that the conflict between the alternative 'civilisations' to the liberal capitalist and democratic order, fascism and Bolshevism, was now a universal one. Each country's 'national revolution' was part of a wider struggle to 'save' Europe from Communism.

But the fascist power which was coming to dominate Eastern Europe in

the late 1930s was Nazi Germany, not Fascist Italy. Romania came relatively late into the German economic orbit, the March 1939 trade agreement envisaging the exchange of German rearmament of Romania for Romanian agricultural produce and mineral and oil supplies, the production and delivery of which was to be managed by joint German–Romanian investment banks and businesses. The delayed interlocking of the two economies was not only a matter of Romania being under threat from revisionism. The ‘neo-liberal’, and then Carol’s, industrialisation policies in the post-Depression 1930s, did not fit the complementary, or subordinate, relationship between the German industrial economy and the Romanian agricultural economy envisaged by the Germans.

Hitler did not really see the Axis as a sign and a way of ‘fascistising’ Europe. The Nazis really approached the Iron Guard with the same wariness as they did the Arrow Cross in Hungary. They wanted stable regimes in Eastern Europe, not an economically and politically disruptive fascist revolution, and favoured the same kind of arrangement between the Guard and the NCP which they promoted in Hungary between the Arrow Cross and Imrédy’s breakaway new movement. Carol’s offer to the Iron Guard to join an NCP-led coalition, therefore, suited the Germans. Codreanu’s declaration of independence, as with Szálasi’s in Hungary, made it impossible to regard the Iron Guard as Nazi Germany’s tool.

Carol’s rule in Romania did not survive the enactment of German and Soviet ‘revision’ of the Versailles settlement. The August 1939 Nazi–Soviet Pact, which in Hitler’s eyes made possible his war against Poland, was also a secret agreement to divide up Eastern Europe, and in June 1940, the USSR reclaimed Bessarabia from Romania. In August 1940, the Axis-brokered Vienna agreements handed over Romanian territory to Bulgaria and Hungary.

The King’s flight from the country after these national humiliations was the Iron Guard’s opportunity to take a slice of power, this time with the essential connivance of the military. The establishment of the so-called ‘National Legionary State’ in September 1940 might indicate that the Legion had become one of that small and select band of fascist movements which had managed to come to power in peacetime conditions. But the real power in the land was the army, and General Ion Antonescu had been made head of government with full powers by a desperate Carol just before his abdication. The Legionary state was a form of co-existence between the Legion and the military, though Antonescu probably wanted to create, or perpetuate, something like Carol’s front organisation.

The Guard behaved as it always had done, violently attacking Jews, officials, political opponents, this time assuming that since it was now in the government, it could act with impunity. But in January 1941, on German advice and prompting, Antonescu decided to put an end to fascist disorder and disarm the Guard, which responded with an attempt to end co-habitation and take total power in a coup. This was defeated by the army,

and Romania entered the war against the Soviet Union in 1941 under a military rather than a fascist dictatorship. The Iron Guard was a victim, not a beneficiary, of Nazi Germany's expansion in Eastern Europe, as much as it was a victim, not a beneficiary, of Romania's turn to authoritarianism.

Fascism in Finland

Fascist movements in Northern and Western Europe were relatively insignificant, compared to their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe, and those in Scandinavia were among the least significant in Northern and Western Europe, with one exception, in Finland. Their insignificance, at least in the inter-war period, was their most salient feature. Finding reasons for failure or absence is difficult, however tempting it might be to explain them by applying a template of reasons for success cut out from the study of other more significant European fascist movements.

Generally, the reasons, or rather the setting, for the emergence and development of fascist movements, were there in the crises of the immediate post-war period, and of the Great Depression. As we have already seen, whether and how these crises were managed determined the relative success or failure of the fascist movements, which were, in some sense, extreme responses to these crises. Although this is putting things rather too simplistically, fascism's opportunity in Italy came from the perceived inability of parliamentary politics and politicians to check the threat of revolutionary socialism in the early post-war years. While, in Germany, in the same period and in the 'same' crisis, fascism's opportunity was denied by the SPD's commitment to a democratic parliamentary republic, and its willingness to face down communist revolution. It is a truism to say that the failure of fascism denoted the strength of democracy. But it was, nevertheless, 'true', and in particular, in Scandinavia, fascism's failure reflected the strength of social democracy and social democratic parties. In Norway, indeed, the perceived threat of fascism was one of the reasons why the country's socialist party completed in the early 1930s its transition from a Marxist revolutionary party to a reformist but non-revolutionary social democratic one, willing as a matter of principle to work in, and make work, a democratic parliamentary system it had previously opposed. Fascism's emergence, in other words, provoked the necessary democratic response, and strengthened the democratic institutions it wanted to destroy.

The exception to the inter-war triumph of social democracy in Scandinavia was Finland. Here, the country's post-war crisis, combining both ethnic national conflict as borders changed, and the threat of leftist revolution, resembled more closely the situation in Germany, Austria and Hungary, than in the rest of Scandinavia. The early twentieth-century socialist movement was both politically strong and revolutionary, as it was throughout the territories of the Tsarist Russian empire, and remained so. During the First World War, the Finnish socialist party had won, uniquely

in Europe, an actual numerical majority of seats in the Finnish Diet, the existence of which marked Finland's semi-autonomous status within the Russian empire.

As part of that empire, Finland went through the revolutionary upheavals of 1917. The presence of mutinous Russian troops precipitated the breakdown of the government's remaining policing and repressive powers, much as it had done in Petrograd in the first Russian Revolution of February 1917, and enabled the Finnish socialists to set up a revolutionary government in January 1918, on the back of a revolutionary general strike it had called in late 1917. The inspiration and contagion of the Bolshevik coup in Russia were clear. It seemed that an independent Finland, which effectively seceded from the Russian empire in the revolutionary turmoil of 1917, would, nevertheless, remain linked to its close neighbour, now the USSR, in the form of its revolutionary government, and might, indeed, be re-united in revolutionary fraternity with the USSR.

But, as in Russia, the revolutionary takeover was contested, and the brief but bloody civil war in Finland in 1918 was part of a more general civil war in the Soviet Union, though with a different outcome. Anti-communist Finnish 'white guards' went on fighting against the Bolsheviks in Russia's civil war across the border in the mainly Finnish-speaking Soviet territory of East Karelia. This was long after the 'whites' had overthrown Finland's revolutionary government, and even after the 1920 peace settlement with the USSR which formally recognised Finnish independence and set the frontiers between Finland and the USSR.

Nowhere else in Scandinavia did anti-communism have quite the same visceral meanings as in inter-war Finland. The Finnish civil war was never, in fact, over in 1918. It was a very close-run thing, anyway. In Helsinki, the anti-communist 'white' militias had to be reinforced by units of the German army, returning the favour of the Finnish volunteer battalion which had fought with the Germans against the Russians on the Eastern front, in the not unrealistic expectation that Finland's independence would come with Russia's military defeat. This precariously gained national independence was always seen as vulnerable to Soviet and Finnish communism in the 1920s.

Although defeated in the civil war, Finnish communism did not go away. Most of the Finnish socialists joined the communist party, formed in late 1918, as Europe's Marxist left split in face of the choices imposed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the immediate post-war revolutionary climate, and the unions affiliated to the communist party. In the 1922 elections, the communists won 15 per cent of the vote, strengthening the perception that the communists were both a social and a national threat, the 'enemy within' and the 'enemy without', subversive of Finland's social and political order and of the country's territorial integrity. Finland had national and territorial claims against the USSR, in the shape of East Karelia. The existence of this 'unredeemed' Finnish territory made the 1920 Finnish–Soviet treaty a national humiliation to Finnish anti-communists. Equally, the Soviet Union

had designs on Finland, which, eventually, were real enough. The USSR invaded Finland in November 1939, apparently secure in the knowledge that the Nazi–Soviet pact would, this time, rule out German intervention, and again in 1944, when Finland was aligned with the Axis.

The persistence of communism kept Finnish anti-communism alive and kicking in the 1920s. Demonstrating the remarkable rootedness of anti-communism in Finland's inter-war political life, the civil war 'white' militias were not disbanded, but were retained as an armed 100,000 strong 'civil guard', deployed by governments as a kind of permanent anti-communist backstop to the regular army. It was as if anti-communism was 'official' and built into the state's institutions.

In 1922, young veterans of the wartime volunteer force and of the post-war East Karelia campaign, themselves mainly students and recent graduates, formed a nationalist association among secondary school and university students, and new graduates, the Academic Karelia Society. Never really a political movement, more a cross between a think tank and an alumni association, this unashamedly elitist group put the intellectual gloss on post-war Finnish nationalism. Its ideas and personnel were transferred wholesale into the fascist party which appeared in 1933.

Imagining a geo-political and racist utopia nearly as fantastical as Szálasi's later 'Hungarism', the AKS saw the Finns as a 'pure' hybrid race, a strengthened mix of Scandinavian and Baltic stock, much as Szálasi's Magyars were a cross of European and Asiatic peoples. These parallels with Magyarism are not just this historian's fancy. The Finns, the Magyars and the Estonians belonged to a Finnish–Ugric language group, while the Slav, Germanic, Baltic and Romance languages were Indo-European. Hungarian and Finnish students I teach, however, are reluctant to accept that their languages are mutually comprehensible, while each, of course, remains incomprehensible to most other Europeans. This Finnish master race were the protectors of European civilisation in the North against Bolshevism, as demonstrated by their actions in fighting the USSR and its internal stooges between 1918 and 1922.

The 'civilising' process, as always, involved action which turned both inwards and outwards. Bertolt Brecht, the contemporary German dramatist, described the Finns as the only people in the world silent in two languages. The AKS wanted to silence for good the Swedish-speaking minority component of this silent bilingualism, and push back the creeping Swedish acculturation of the country's educated classes. However, externally, its vision of a Greater Finland stretching from the Gulf of Bothnia to the Arctic Ocean, would include not only the mainly Finnish speaking populations of the now Soviet East Karelia and Kola peninsular, but also 'Finnish' speaking Estonia, now an independent Baltic state recently seceded from the old Russian empire, like Finland itself, the mainly Russian speaking Ingria province in Soviet territory just to the East of Estonia, and the all-Russian area of Leningrad.

The extent to which the civil war had effectively straitjacketed Finnish politics, and anti-communism penetrated the country's political culture, was demonstrated in the hysterical reaction to a communist 'revival' in the late 1920s, its threat apparently heightened by the first effects of the Depression on Finland's agricultural and forestry export economy. Soon after the Finnish communist party had practically recovered its early 1920s position, winning nearly 14 per cent of the vote in the 1929 elections, civil guards and local farmers violently broke up a communist party meeting in Lapua. This place gave its name to a spontaneously combusting direct action movement, the sole aim of which was to smash communism.

The Lapua movement became something rather more than a violent reflex anti-communism, when its *raison d'être* apparently disappeared with the successful climax of its campaign, the newly elected parliament of late 1930 voting through a law dissolving and banning the communist party. Even though the legal ban affected a subversive organisation, it clearly struck at the principle of a pluralist democratic system. There was some logic, then, in Lapua's demand for a ban on the socialists, and by extension, for an end to the party and parliamentary system altogether, and for a new 'patriotic' government 'free from party aims' (Carsten 1976: 167). This was a step too far for some Lapua members and sympathisers. Although many of the civil guards and volunteer veterans backed the movement's attempted coup in February 1932, the country's President, himself a civil guardsman and a leader of the 'whites' in the civil war, mobilised the army against them, and Lapua itself was banned.

Although the Lapua movement's anti-communism had led it to oppose democracy as well, it was not really a fascist movement, lacking any coherent ideology of national regeneration beyond the single issue which brought it into being. It resembled more the conservative, anti-Marxist leagues of inter-war France. The movement, up to its coup attempt, had a real conservative 'establishment' feel to it. The anti-communist campaign was supported by the Conservative and Agrarian parties, and serving army officers, as well as civil guards and war veterans, along with churchmen and even government ministers, participated in its meetings and demonstrations. It was the movement of the victors of the 1918 civil war, defending that victory.

The Lapua movement's successor and heir, the People's Patriotic Movement (or IKL), was the real thing. The IKL not only inherited Lapua's regional farming support, and the anti-democratic as well as anti-communist thrust of the movement between 1930 and 1932. The IKL was also the heir, or extension, of the AKS, its programme for internal reformation and a new political and social order now coherently linked to realising the unrealisable dream of a mono-lingual Greater Finland. Lapua's vague call for a government above party had hardened into a policy of a root and branch replacement of parliamentary democracy by a strong executive which would be unaccountable to an advisory corporate assembly. The demand for a

corporately-organised economy, the vehicle for state control and economic planning, was explicitly geared to integrating the country's productive forces, including workers, and effecting a reconciliation of capital and labour. Such 'national socialism' transcended Lapua's crude and triumphalist restatement of the old civil war divisions of the 'whites' and the 'reds'.

Few actual workers responded to the IKL's appeal to national cross-class solidarity. The IKL was the party of some well-off farmers, students, university educated middle-class professionals, civil servants, teachers and Lutheran churchmen, winning just over 8 per cent of the vote in 1936 and fourteen seats in parliament, falling back to just under 7 per cent in the 1939 elections.

Payne regards the IKL as too conservative and religious to be 'fascist'. Its Protestant fundamentalism, reflected in the presence of churchmen among its members and leaders, can hardly be denied. But Protestantism was seen by the IKL as a badge of racial and national identity, a mark of essential 'Finnishness', as well as of an anti-Bolshevik 'civilisation', much as the Iron Guard identified Orthodoxy with the Romanian nation, and the *Falange* Catholicism with being Spanish. Its new order was 'new', proposing systemic changes to the way the country was governed, as was its hope of 'nationalising' the 'reds'. Even its intolerant mono-lingualism had an anti-conservative edge, since it was the country's upper classes who were Swedish acculturated. It seems strange to see as 'conservative' a party which was the target of an attempted Conservative–Agrarian government ban in 1938 for 'subversive' and 'revolutionary' activities.

Fascism in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

The electoral performance of fascist movements in the rest of Scandinavia was pitiful. The highest vote for the Danish National Socialist Party, the DNSAP, was 1.8 per cent of the total in 1939, which won it three parliamentary seats. The high point for Vidkun Quisling's Norwegian *Nasjonal Samling* or National Unity party was the 2.2 per cent of the vote it gained in the 1933 elections, shortly after its formation. Swedish National Socialist groups were formed in the 1920s, and despite mergers between some of them, they attracted under 1 per cent of the vote in the 1932 and 1936 elections.

At first sight, the failure of Scandinavia's fascist movements to make a political impression, is a puzzle because the impact of the Great Depression was severe on farming communities throughout the region, especially in those areas which were integrated into the international economy through exports of forestry and animal husbandry products. The political fall-out of agricultural depression was the flaking away of farmers' support for the Agrarian and Conservative parties, which usually won the rural vote, and the emergence of single-issue farmers' protest movements. These were organised, for instance, to protest at the spate of foreclosures on farms, the

indebted owners of which could no longer meet mortgage payments on their properties. Similar agrarian crisis movements had been mopped up by the Nazi party in Northern Protestant Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Farmers' discontent was clearly fascism's opportunity in Scandinavia, too.

To a very limited extent, that opportunity was taken. In areas where the agricultural depression bit deep, support for fascist movements was at its strongest, these few relatively good regional followings disguised by the pathetic national figures given above. For example, in Norway, the National Unity party joined forces with the main breakaway farmers' movement, the Farmers' Relief Association, for the 1933 elections, and won a decent share of the vote in some parts of Eastern Norway. Here, the party's anti-socialist and anti-finance capital proposals for a 'national' autarkic and corporately organised economy had some appeal to the small farmers who were also seasonal forestry workers. These lumberjacks' jobs and incomes were being hit by falling international prices for timber, intense job competition from the socialist foresters' union, and the government's deflationary economic measures.

But these were cameo performances. Generally speaking, the impact of the Depression did not result in farmers being shaken out of their customary political support for Agrarian parties. The explanation for this lay with political choice, rather than with any 'structural' reason or the Scandinavians' presumed 'natural' predilection for democratic politics. During the crisis, the practitioners and supporters of democratic parliamentary politics had to demonstrate by their political actions that the system itself was still viable.

The political choices made by the fascist movements also mattered. The Norwegian party's temporary electoral coalition with the Farmers' Relief Association showed, at least, an awareness that a new movement needed political allies if it was to make headway. But in Sweden, the fascist movements seemed to accept that political marginalisation was the price worth paying for ideological purity. In other words, they behaved like sects, unable to form any stable coalition with likeminded groups because of doctrinal and personality conflicts, and even more reluctant to associate with possible conservative allies.

So, Sven Lindholm, the founder of the Swedish Fascist People's Party in 1926, merged it with another group to form the Swedish National Socialist Party in 1930, and then seceded from this in 1933 to form the National Socialist Workers Party. If the reader is still following all this, Lindholm gave as the reason for the split his opposition to any attempt to make electoral deals with the conservative right. This was actually a real possibility at the time. The Swedish Conservative Party had an active and troublesome youth section, the SNU (*Sveriges Nationella Ungdomsförbund*, or Swedish National Youth League), which showed distinct fascist leanings, and became a separate political movement in 1934. But still Lindholm kept to his

ideologically pure niche, regarding co-operation with the 'reactionary' SNU as out of the question.

This is yet another useful practical demonstration of how fascists always distinguished themselves from conservatives. In this case, political extremism led to political isolation, which, in turn, encouraged and reinforced the extremism. Quisling's movement in Norway became locked into the second part of this vicious circle after 1936, its more strident racism and anti-Semitism both cause and effect of its growing political insignificance.

Because of the potential threat of fascist movements capturing their own rural constituencies during the Depression, Agrarian parties were obliged to treat them as political rivals, not as possible allies, and to make political choices of a more fundamental kind, with very important consequences. What finally killed off any chance of fascist movements exploiting the agricultural depression in Scandinavia were the 'crisis agreements' negotiated between the Agrarian and Social Democratic parties in Denmark and Sweden in 1933, and in Norway in 1935.

These were horse-trading political deals induced by the impact of the Depression, which involved a mutually acceptable level of sacrifice for farmers and workers, the groups represented by the Agrarian and Social Democratic parties and the people most badly affected in their jobs and livelihood by the Depression. The terms of the deals were basically similar. The Agrarian parties, and their farming constituencies, swallowed deflationary policies which meant Social Democratic-led governments spending more taxpayers' money on work creation schemes. These would put unemployed workers back to work and made them consumers and spenders again, helping to stimulate the economy to recovery. In return, these same governments protected their national agricultures from the competition of foreign imports, and put some of the increased state spending and borrowing into direct subsidies for agricultural production, both of which pushed up prices for the workers as consumers. Through this trade off, the Agrarian parties protected the interests of farmers and, as a result, recouped the support of farmers where it had been lost or was wavering in face of the Depression, hedged off farmers from the potential appeal of fascism, and committed themselves to making the parliamentary system work in the most trying and difficult of circumstances.

In Sweden, by the time of the Depression, the Social Democratic party leaders were already behaving like social democrats, rather than Marxists. In Norway, the Depression moved the Socialist Party to a social democratic position. The party realised that the retention of its formally Marxist and revolutionary stance would heighten the sense of the threat of 'communism' in a crisis situation, which Quisling could expect to exploit. The party fought the 1933 elections, where the fascist movement had its first outing, on the reformist and compromise slogan of 'city and countryside hand in hand', increasing its vote by a third again, to 40 per cent of the total, and self-evidently opening itself up to the later 'crisis agreement' with the Agrarians.

The importance of these agreements in checking any fascist potential during the Depression can hardly be over-emphasised. There could be no going to the extremes of left and right, which marked the politics of the Weimar Republic during and as a result of the Depression, once the political representatives of workers and farmers found a way of allocating the misery of the economic crisis, and of the costs of economic recovery. Their actions demonstrated that the democratic parliamentary system could manage the crisis, that it was, in fact, functional, belying the charge of dysfunctionality and incapacity to govern on which the fascist movements based their appeal for a fundamental political transformation.

The British Union of Fascists

As in Scandinavia, so in Britain. The mainstream political parties in Britain negotiated their own version of the 'crisis agreements' in response to the Depression. The sense that the management of the crisis was seen to be possible within and by the system made the fascist alternative appear superfluous.

The founder and leader of the British Union of Fascists, Oswald Mosley, came to fascism by way of both the Conservative and the Labour parties. A Conservative MP in 1918, he joined the Labour party in 1924, resigning from the Labour government and party in 1930 to form his own parties, the New party in 1931 and the BUF in 1932. Such a trajectory exposes Mosley to the easily made charge of political inconsistency and opportunism, that he was driven by the pursuit of power 'for its own sake', and rather like Mussolini, is best understood, and dismissed, as a political chancer.

But Mosley's political evolution had some sense to it. His political career shows an interesting link between the two periods of crisis in post-war Europe, and the two waves of fascism, one related to the experience of 'total' war and the immediate post-war years, the other to the Great Depression. In Mosley's mind, the two crises were fused into the one general crisis of 'Western' civilisation, to which fascism was the 'answer'. Mosley made his own the values of the 'trench' generation, which inspired the fascist movements of the early 1920s, half believing that a war of such devastation was the end of civilisation as he knew it, closing down the possibility of religious belief and any idea of human progress, and half believing, or wanting to believe, that a 'new world' would emerge from the carnage.

The pessimistic view prevailed. That 1920s Britain was so patently not a place 'fit for heroes to live in' led Mosley to conclude that the 'old men' who had returned to run the country in the 'old ways' after the war, had betrayed the sacrifices and aspirations of the ex-combatants. Post-war unemployment, persistently high even before the Depression, and the problem which most absorbed Mosley as a democratic and as a fascist politician, assumed for Mosley a more than economic dimension. It was the greatest failure of conventional laissez-faire economics and parliamentary politics, and marked the

moral decay and collapse of 'civilised' society. Mosley ultimately blamed Britain's post-war economic decline on the country's now outmoded political system.

His solutions to unemployment were worked out in the 1920s, and took in a reading of the experience of wartime *dirigiste* economies, the then unorthodox Keynesian views on economic planning and the need for government to massage demand, and social imperialism. These ideas for resolving Britain's chronic unemployment assumed immediate political relevance once the Depression pushed unemployment levels even higher. His proposals for a reflationary economic programme, which had been commissioned from him as the Labour government's unemployment 'tsar', were, however, rejected by his government colleagues and by the party generally, at the party conference.

Exasperated by what he saw as the failure of imagination of conventional party politicians, unable to grasp and adopt the best possible blueprint for recovery from the Depression and general economic decline, he left the Labour party in 1930, and created his own vehicles for the rejected economic programme, the New Party and then the BUF. So what emerged in Mosley's fascist manifesto of late 1932, *The Greater Britain*, was a rational analysis of Britain's post-war decline, and a set of rational proposals for economic recovery. Whatever people thought of the reasoning, its rationality was inescapable.

Locating persistent unemployment in 'under-consumption', where the demand for products always lagged behind the capacity of the economy to produce things, Mosley planned for increased public spending to put people back to work and make them consumers of each other's products once again. The emphasis was on stimulating internal demand within Britain and its empire, creating an autarkic protectionist imperial trading bloc, Britain's own global economy. Some of this was good Keynesian counter-cyclical stuff. Mosley's rethinking of how to manage and direct a malfunctioning capitalist economy made him part of a recognisable inter-war group of political economists and politicians, mainly though not exclusively on the left, like John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge in Britain, the 'neo-socialists' in France and Hendrick De Man in the Low Countries, who talked of the state planning economic growth and development in a way which would mitigate the socially unjust consequences of the uncontrolled play of market forces. This 'third way' between fascist and communist alternatives to the crisis of capitalist economies was not adopted in the 1930s, when these ideas were being formulated and canvassed. Instead, it was built into the post-1945 West European political and economic consensus around the mixed economy and welfarism, the 'mould' eventually broken by Mrs Thatcher in the 1980s.

What made Mosley's economic programme 'fascist' was the projected political framework for the implementation of the programme and its moralising and national revivalist packaging. Convinced by the rejection of his economic proposals that the country's political establishment would never enact the radical measures needed to reverse Britain's economic

decline, Mosley looked to their implementation by a one-party dictatorship. The elected parliament would be replaced by a corporate assembly, the apex of a corporately-run economy where economic policy would be decided by actual 'producers', by whom Mosley meant a technocratic managerial elite, and not politicians. How power was to be achieved, whether by force or by election, would depend on the development of the current crisis of the system. But once power was achieved, a fascist government would at first enact its measures by emergency decree, and this suspension of parliamentary activity would be followed by its abolition.

For Mosley, the failure of the system was ultimately a moral one, of the country's political leaders, the 'old gang', not being up to the job of stemming, let alone reversing Britain's decline as a global, imperial and civilising force. Only the 'new men', or 'super-men', of fascism had the iconoclastic will and the élan to do this, and shape the next generation of 'new men' to defend and promote 'civilisation'. *The Greater Britain* was a sometimes surreal blend of economic rationality and a belief in the transforming power of men with an implacable dynamism and will.

Back in the real world, the crisis of the system on which Mosley counted to justify and enable a fascist seizure of power had seemed evident enough. Britain faced financial meltdown in the summer of 1931. The 1929 elections had produced a 'hung parliament', with no one party having an overall majority, and the minority Labour government faced taking some rapid decisions to meet the economic and financial crisis likely to arouse opposition in the Labour party itself, and among the Liberal groups on whom the government relied to stay in office. Decisions on how to meet the crisis were bound to bring any government down, and political instability could only deepen the economic crisis.

The political response was unconventional, as it needed to be. The minority Labour government was replaced by a streamlined 'National Government', a coalition government of four Conservative, two Liberal and three Labour ministers, including Ramsay MacDonald, who continued as Prime Minister. Most of the Labour party balked at this, and went into opposition. The 1932 elections gave the Conservatives about two-thirds of the seats in the House of Commons, and the National Government became a largely Conservative government disguised by the national label. But it was, nevertheless, important that even though the Conservatives could have governed alone, the 'national' tag remained.

Politically, of course, it helped the electorate to swallow some uncongenial economic measures, which could be portrayed as a matter of national political agreement, not as the policy of the dominant party directed against its political opponents. The presence of the National Government indicated, if nothing else, a coalition of national unity formed to meet the 'national' crisis, in some sense transcending party conflict in the national interest. It proved that the parliamentary system could cope, and could provide firm government in a crisis. It would have been little comfort to Mosley and the

BUF that after 1932, the National Government implemented mildly reflationary measures, protected agriculture and made preferential trading agreements with the empire, in a pale version of their own programme for economic recovery. These measures did not really make laissez-faire as dead as the slave trade, as Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin claimed. But they were far enough removed from laissez-faire capitalism to show that the 'old gang' could adapt in a crisis, and were, in their effects, pre-emptive of fascism.

The BUF enjoyed its best period in late 1933 and early 1934, when its membership peaked at about 50,000. In this period, the movement had the support and press coverage of Rothermere's version of the *Sun* of the 1920s and 1930s, the *Daily Mail*, which had always given space to Mussolini's contribution to saving Italy and Europe from 'Bolshevism'. Rothermere evidently saw Mosley in the same light, as a kind of super-charged conservative who would, if need be, defend the country against the communist threat. It was a case of mistaken identity, and Rothermere publicly withdrew his support after the paramilitary violence against protestors at the BUF's London rally in June 1934.

In Italy in 1920–22, the Fascist paramilitary squads had managed to provoke disorder, the better to pose as the defenders of 'order'. This trick escaped the BUF, and the reverse happened. BUF meetings, rallies and demonstrations themselves required extensive and expensive policing, because from the start, they were opposed and disrupted by anti-fascist groups. The BUF always found itself painted into a corner as the party which caused public disorder and violence. Eventually, as a result, the government took action to curtail its activities. Following violent disturbances and clashes between fascists and anti-fascists in East London in October 1936, the government passed the Public Order Act in 1937, which banned the wearing of uniforms in public demonstrations, and gave the police powers to re-route marches and even prevent them from taking place.

The fact that the BUF was opposed, both, as it were, legally and officially, and by the grassroots 1930s equivalent of today's Anti-Nazi League, was a very important reason for it remaining an insignificant political force. Despite Rothermere's temporary dalliance with the movement, the BUF was recognised to be a threat to democracy, and fascism generated anti-fascism.

BUF membership was volatile. Numbers contracted, and then rose again in the course of the 1930s, and people obviously joined for a while and then left. As with most other relatively small fascist movements which did not achieve any electoral breakthrough, it is difficult to establish any sociological patterns among those who supported the BUF. There appeared to be a decent mix of people from different social backgrounds and occupations. But in an organisation which ceased to be of much political importance, this cross-class profile meant little, and was probably coincidental. Although it seemed to match fascism's own projection of itself as a 'national' movement, it probably denoted no more than the BUF's limited capacity to attract a range of political misfits and 'nutters'.

After the abortive attempt to pose as the nation's saviour in the hour of national crisis, which, unfortunately for it, had all but passed, the BUF, between 1935 and 1938, tried targeted local campaigns, among unemployed South Wales miners and East Lancashire textile workers, for instance, in a rather desperate effort to keep momentum going. None of these came to much, except in the East End of London, where the BUF had some success in mobilising white working-class resentment against Jewish-owned sweat-shop industries and local businesses. Perhaps half of the BUF's 15,000 or so members between 1936 and 1938 were in East London.

The movement's anti-Semitism is still a matter of some historical debate and controversy. There were certainly anti-Semites in the BUF from the start, though some of anti-Semitism's most virulent and obnoxious exponents stayed outside and criticised the BUF from the commanding heights of their own professed racial ideological purity. But the BUF did not become overtly anti-Semitic until late 1934 and early 1935. Mosley's own pronouncements on the issue did not seem to draw on the late nineteenth-century British and European seam of 'scientific' biological racism. He portrayed Jews as culturally alien and parasitic, a 'nation within the nation', feeding off and exploiting their host community.

Mosley's own explanation of the BUF's anti-Semitism was that it was reactive; the BUF's most vociferous opponents were Jews and communists. Although Mosley was clearly making excuses in trying to say that anti-Semitism was not inherent to the movement, but foisted on it by circumstances, there was something to this. Communist and Jewish groups did organise very quickly in London against the BUF, provoked into action not only by the movement's Jew-baiting in the East End, but by the Nazi regime's treatment of Jews in Germany. The identification of the BUF with the Nazis in Germany was a telling point for anti-fascists. It could, and was, happening here.

The movement's anti-Semitism was probably best understood as a symbiosis of the BUF's own anti-Semitic activities and Jewish attacks on the BUF. Whatever its source, the BUF's anti-Semitism was politically self-defeating, an attempt to break out of a situation of political impotence which only deepened that impotence. Attacking Jews might have worked in the East End, the location for the bulk of early twentieth-century Jewish immigration to this country, but anti-Semitism was not really an issue with national resonance, and was not easily made the focal point of a national political campaign. It ghettoised the BUF, identified the movement exclusively and notoriously with a single issue and kept fascism local.

Fascism in the Low Countries

The political environments were in some ways different, but the trajectory of the fascist and fascistic movements in the Low Countries in the 1930s were similar to that of the BUF in Britain. There was an initial bloom, for the

National Socialist Movement (*Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*, or NSB) in the Netherlands between 1933 and 1935, and for the Rex movement in Belgium, in 1935–37. There was then a decline to a position of political insignificance by 1940. The reasons for political decline were also broadly the same. Democratic governments and parties took action to prevent the political advance of movements which were not only a challenge to their own political positions, but also, early on, identified as a threat to democracy itself. As with the BUF in Britain, decline induced a self-destructive lurch to greater extremism, which marginalised these movements even more.

With proportional representation electoral systems, coalition governments were inevitable in post-war Belgium and the Netherlands. But throughout the period, governments usually served out their terms of office, and changes in government usually only followed elections. This much-vaunted political stability was put down to the consolidation in the inter-war period of ‘pillarised’ societies and politics. The major ‘cleavages’, or dividing lines, of twentieth-century European societies were, and are, around class, religion and nationality, and political parties have formed along these fissures in society. So, at first sight, it seems odd that political stability in the Low Countries should derive from the divisions which existed in politics and society.

Much of Belgian and Dutch social and political life was ‘community’-based, and the ‘communities’ were separate, defined and cohered by religion, or by its absence, secularism. The dominant political parties in inter-war Netherlands were the two parties representing the Protestant ‘community’ or ‘pillar’, and the Catholic party representing the Catholic ‘pillar’. Beneath and behind the political parties were networks of civil society organisations binding the ‘pillarised’ communities together, and closing them off to other social and political influences. It has been estimated that some 80 per cent of Dutch Catholics, whatever their social class, voted for the Catholic party. Catholics not only voted for their confessional party; they sent their children to Catholic schools, joined Catholic unions and professional associations and played in Catholic sports clubs. Catholics lived, worked and relaxed in a Catholic milieu.

Co-operation between the ‘pillars’ took place at the national political level, and coalition governments traded off policies which met the needs of their ‘communities’. The three confessional parties in the Netherlands, two of them Protestant and one Catholic, regularly won over half the seats in parliament, provided all the Prime Ministers and most of the ministers in inter-war governments. The Dutch socialists were an excluded ‘pillar’, largely because of their revolutionary stance in the immediate post-war years, and entered a coalition government only once, in 1939.

It is important to grasp the segmentation of Dutch and Belgian life, because the parties which rejected ‘pillarisation’ and attempted to transcend what they saw as the divisiveness in national society perpetuated by the ‘pillars’, were the fascist movements. ‘Pillarisation’ was a formidable barrier

to the advance of any new political party. One is reminded of how the Catholic sub-culture in Germany largely immunised Catholics from the appeal of Nazism, even during the Depression.

In Belgium, unlike the Netherlands and exceptionally in Western Europe, 'nationality' was as important a cleavage as religion. In the inter-war period, population and economic growth were stronger in Flemish-speaking Flanders than in French-speaking Wallonia, inverting the nineteenth-century trends after the formation of the Belgian state in 1930. These trends obliged francophone Belgians to concede in nationally agreed laws the principle that one language would be exclusively used for all purposes, in the education and legal systems, business and government administration, in areas where that language was the one of the majority of the population. The Catholic and Socialist parties had Walloon and Flemish sections. In 1936, the former actually split up into separate linguistic parties, the Flemish Catholic party moving closer to political co-operation with the fascist and secessionist Flemish National League, the VNV (*Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond*).

However, the balancing of the position of the two language communities was accomplished within, rather than against, the unitary Belgian state and parliamentary system, and the VNV could erode but not break the hold in Flanders of the Flemish sections of the national Catholic and Socialist parties. But official bilingualism practically institutionalised doubts about the form and identity of the Belgian state and 'nation', and was another significant inhibition on the development of Belgian fascism.

Elsewhere in Europe, the political repercussions of the Depression were governmental instability, caused by serious inter-party disagreements on which economic policies should be followed to meet the crisis, or some people shifting from their usual political loyalties, even to the point of questioning the continuation of democratic parliamentary politics, or both. This happened to some extent in the Low Countries. But the 'pillars' wobbled more dangerously in Belgium than the Netherlands under the impact of the Depression, which here bit later and lasted longer than in most other countries.

The three main Belgian parties all lost votes over the years of the Depression. In particular, the Catholic party vote fell by a quarter from 39 per cent to 29 per cent of the total between the 1929 and 1936 elections. This loss of votes appeared to be the political fallout of the Depression-induced failure of banks and businesses, which revealed the often corrupt relationship between establishment politicians and large financial and industrial interests. A young Catholic publisher, Léon Degrelle, had publicly exposed the scandals involving leading figures of the Catholic party. With his roots in the Catholic youth and student movement of the 1920s, Degrelle's moralising campaign to clean up the Catholic party was based on an austere version of 'pure' Catholic spiritual values, which he thought had been betrayed by Catholic politicians as corrupted by the country's increasingly secular and materialistic 'civilisation' as their Liberal and Socialist coalition partners.

A great irritant to his own Catholic party and to the Church hierarchy, he broke away in 1936 to form his own *Christus Rex* movement, in time to pick up disaffected Catholic party rural and small town middle-class votes in the elections of that year. Rex's 270,000 votes, nearly 12 per cent of the total, gained it twenty-one of about 200 parliamentary seats. The overall vote might seem modest enough. But for a new party to do so well in the Belgian context of static 'pillarised' politics was a revelation, as was Degrelle's unconventionally blunt and coarse political language and populist style. Even Griffin finds it difficult to pigeon-hole Degrelle, and ends up inventing a unique category for Rex as a charismatically led democratic party.

Degrelle's condemnations of the corrupt Catholic party politicians were broadened to include all major parties implicated in financial scandals and could be construed as an attack on the parliamentary system itself. He certainly demanded constitutional reform of a drastic kind, shifting the balance of powers decisively to a stronger executive at the expense of an elected parliament whose main job would be to approve the government's tax and spending plans. But the 'new morality' he purveyed was Catholic, and his programme pointed more to the Catholic authoritarian revision of democracy adopted by Dollfuss and the Christian Socials in Austria.

That he was a challenge to Belgium's political establishment and, by extension, to the country's parliamentary system, was clear from the establishment's response. The government banned civil servants from becoming members of Rex, and the Catholic Church's hierarchy practically instructed Catholics not to join Rex nor to vote for it.

In moves which some historians see as an attempt at a kind of rolling political coup, Degrelle provoked by-elections by getting Rex deputies to resign, and stood himself in Brussels in April 1937 against the candidate adopted unanimously by all three of Belgium's main political parties, Paul Van Zeeland. Degrelle must have relished fighting such an opponent. Van Zeeland was a leader of the Catholic party, soon to be Prime Minister, and had been a deputy governor of the National Bank, the epitome, in other words, of the political class Degrelle so despised and criticised. It was a dramatic electoral confrontation, and although Degrelle managed to hang on to the Rexist vote achieved in Brussels in the 1936 elections, at 20 per cent it was way behind Van Zeeland's 75 per cent share of the vote.

Degrelle's defeat did seem to mark a turning point in his political evolution. Opposed by the 'system' and unlikely now to get the change he wanted through elections and parliament, Degrelle turned himself and Rex over to a fully blown anti-system fascism, complete with paramilitarism, the 'leader principle', racism and the secular, not Catholic, morality of the dynamic warrior 'new man'. This rather desperate radicalisation caused consternation in the Rex movement, and many left before the 1939 elections, one explanation for its share of the vote declining to just over 4 per cent. The Catholic party recouped much of the loss of 1936, and the Catholic 'pillar' stopped shaking.

By 1939, the identification of Rex by its political opponents with the ideology of Belgium's predatory and expansionist Nazi German neighbour, which Degrelle scarcely bothered to deny, made it very difficult for Rex to portray itself as a national patriotic movement. This was doubly the case since, neither as a democratic nor as a fascist party, did Rex manage to straddle successfully the linguistic communal divide. This was not for want of trying. Degrelle believed in a strong unitary Belgian state, and saw Rex as an all-Belgian nationalist movement. It organised in Flanders as well as Wallonia, and tried to strike deals with the VNV to facilitate Flemish recruitment. Always very much stronger in francophone Wallonia, Rex was by 1939 a niche Southern Walloon movement, marginalised in Wallonia itself by the 'pillarised' parties, and in Flanders, for the radical 'nationalist' Flemish vote, by the VNV.

The NSB, like Rex, initially did promisingly for a new party operating in a democratic system which was even more firmly 'pillarised' in the Netherlands than in Belgium. Founded in 1931, the NSB, whose programme was unambiguously fascist from the start, won 8 per cent of the vote in provincial elections in 1935, but only just over 4 per cent of the vote in the 1937 national elections. Its 1935 showing was the result of steady organising in the well-off middle-class suburbs of the country's larger cities. But the vote was not simply the reward for the NSB's organisational efforts. Hardly coincidentally, the NSB found it easier to organise and win votes among non-religious middle-class people who had previously voted for the Liberal party, the most loosely 'pillarised' of the Netherlands' main parties and in evident decline in the inter-war period, and among those who were not really 'pillarised' at all. This was the case for the other place where the NSB did reasonably well, the Catholic rural area on the Netherlands' Eastern border with Germany. Here, the NSB allied itself with small farmers' Depression protest organisations. The NSB was not so much eroding the 'pillars' as operating outside them.

It was, of course, consciously an 'outsider' and anti-system party, opposed to a multi-party democratic polity which allowed a Marxist Socialist party to exist, and very critical of 'pillarisation' because of the way it reinforced the divisions of what should have been a unified *Volk*. This became a self-fulfilling cycle of impotence: the party's appeal was to those outside the 'pillars', and only those outside the 'pillars' were available to respond to their appeal.

Again, the political reaction by democratic parties and the confessional 'pillars' was swift. The government, from 1934, banned civil servants from joining the movement, forcing its leader, Anton Mussert, a civil engineer in government employment, to resign and opt for a full time political career. Many others, however, stayed in their jobs and out of the NSB. Both the Catholic and Protestant Churches told their flocks to keep away from a pagan, totalitarian party. There was also a ban on paramilitary formations.

As in Norway, the Depression and the threat of fascism helped to push

along the Dutch Socialist party's break with its Marxist and revolutionary recent past. The SDAP adopted as party policy in the 1930s the 'mixed economy' planning proposals mooted by the Belgian socialist, De Man. These aimed to reform rather than abolish malfunctioning capitalist economies, involved the dropping of the premise of class war and were part of the SDAP's attempt to become a more broadly-based reformist party. Plans for a 'mixed economy' were meant to appeal to the country's growing white collar sector in both private and public employment. They were seen as a way into the confessional parties' 'pillars', and also of keeping middle-class employees from fascism. It was more than likely that any middle-class defectors to the NSB from the 'pillarised' parties during the Depression returned to the confessional 'pillars', rather than to the SDAP. But the SDAP's stance was indicative of the willingness it shared with other Northern and Western European socialist parties to resist the possible spread of fascism by strengthening its commitment to the democratic system.

***Francisme* and the PPF in France**

The *Cartel des Gauches* election victory in 1932 seemed to have the same consequences as that of 1924. It frightened the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary right, and probably deepened the economic and financial crisis which the country was experiencing. The centre-left coalition was divided over the economic policies to adopt in face of the Depression, as parties attempted to protect their own electoral constituencies from the worst. The Radicals wanted conventional deflationary policies, including cuts in public spending, in the pay of government employees and in unemployment and welfare provision. The Socialists wanted reflationary measures, with more, not less, spending on public works, and the protection of unemployment benefits, in an attempt to increase the consuming power of workers and so stimulate demand throughout the economy. This was the same kind of difficult political and economic choice faced by the SPD Chancellor, Müller, in Germany in 1930, and by the British Labour Party Prime Minister, MacDonald, in 1931.

The Socialists kept the coalition going and the Radicals in power, if only to keep out the right. But Radical-led governments could not act decisively because they were dependent on the parliamentary support of the SFIO, whose economic priorities were different. The result was legislative paralysis in parliament, and five successive governments in twenty months, during a Depression which demanded tough decisions to be taken. A financial scandal involving corrupt Radical politicians precipitated a right-wing reaction against the impotence of government. In the so-called 'Stavisky riots' of February 1934, the paramilitary leagues and ex-combatant associations organised demonstrations against the government. Whatever might have seemed possible, or plausible, at the time, it was doubtful that these demonstrations were a 'fascist' coup. It was serious enough; the demonstrators wanted to

bring down the government, and they did. The outcome was, however, a change of government, not a change of political regime.

This outcome was, in itself, something of a rebuttal of Soucy's view of French fascism's 'second wave' in the 1930s being essentially the same anti-Marxist super-charged conservatism as that of the 'first wave' in the 1920s. The survivors from the 'first wave', the *Jeunesses Patriotes* and the *Croix de Feu*, certainly participated in the 1934 demonstrations. So did the newcomer, *Solidarité Française* (French Solidarity), founded and funded by the indefatigable Coty to stand up to the *Cartel des Gauches* and demand constitutional revision for the strengthening of the executive at the expense of the parliamentary arm of government. If these organisations were 'fascist', one would have expected the outcome of the February crisis to be something rather more radical than a new centre ground Radical-led government. The argument for distinguishing these conservative movements from 'fascism' deployed earlier in the book in relation to Soucy's treatment of 1920s French 'fascism', can, then, also be applied to the movements of the 1930s.

The distinction emerges from consideration of an actual fascist movement. The *Franciste* (French-ist) movement was formed in 1933 and led by Marcel Bucard, a one-time member of, successively, *Action Française*, *Le Faisceau* and the *Croix de Feu*, using a large gift of money from the ubiquitous Coty, who seemed determined to dispose of his business fortune in backing various right-wing political adventures. *Francisme* was certainly no rival to *Solidarité Française* or the *Croix de Feu* in terms of support and numbers. Estimates of membership fluctuate madly, from Soucy's one of 2,000 in 1934, to Sternhell's 10,000 figure and Jacomet's wild speculation of 30,000, of whom only 8,000, apparently, were 'active' members. Their estimates seem as wide apart as the police reports on which they are based. Whatever the disparities in estimated membership, *Francisme* was certainly small and politically insignificant. But it was, also, definitely, 'fascist'.

Bucard was a decorated and disabled war veteran, who felt he personified the values and spirit of the 'front' generation, whose sacrifices for the nation had been squandered by the corrupt, self-serving politicians of the post-war. His idea of fascism as representing a new ex-combatant elite who alone could bring about the civic and moral regeneration of France, clearly echoed the sentiments and aspirations of the first fascism he had belonged to, Valois's *Faisceau*. Like Valois, too, Bucard spoke of fascism as 'national socialism', rejecting both unbridled capitalism and communism as expressions of the same corrosive materialism, and investing in corporatism a 'spiritual' function of healing divisions between people, as well as facilitating state regulation of the economy.

Francisme was more openly mimetic of the two major European fascisms than many other contemporary fascist movements, claiming initially that 'our Francism is to France what Fascism is to Italy' (Jacomet 1975: 50). The movement hardened up its message after 1936, drawing on the experience and models of both fascist regimes to propose for France the establishment

of a totalitarian state, which would undertake a spiritual transformation, a 'moral revolution', of the nation. *Francisme* was racist, speaking out against black colonial migration to metropolitan France, and anti-Semitic. The movement's formation was, in some sense, part of a political reaction to the election of a *Cartel des Gauches* government in 1932. But it was Coty's money which enabled Bucard to strike out on his own. The exhaustion of Coty's, and the Italian Fascist government's, funding reduced the movement to muted, low-level activity for much of the late 1930s.

It is obviously the historian's bad luck that this perfectly formed fascist movement was also one of the smallest in membership and with little political clout. The historical controversy surrounding the nature, extent and definition of French fascism in the 1930s does not centre on *Francisme*, except that it shows us what a real fascist movement looked like. Sternhell should be shown, certainly. His provocative, and ultimately irresponsible study of inter-war fascist ideology says very little about the actual fascist movements of 1930s France, nor much about the right-wing paramilitary leagues which Soucy regards as 'fascist'. His quarry is, rather, a small army of non-conformist writers and intellectuals, some big names, others not so big, who were, in various ways, critical of the political and moral status quo.

What undermines the study is the approach. The problem with his work on the pre-1914 'revolutionary right' was a tendency to tidy up and package current counter-cultural ideas into a coherent 'fascist' ideology. The synthesis, you feel, is Sternhell's, rather than that of the personalities and intellectuals involved. The problem with his work on the 1930s is rather the reverse. He seizes on what he regards as individual ingredients of the fascist ideological cocktail, and finds them present as individual components in the writings and pronouncements of a wide range of intellectuals and politicians, who are then dubbed 'fascist'. The 'fascist' label is applied to individual traits of different people's political thinking, and the definition of 'fascist' is then extended to characterise these people's thinking as a whole. In other words, the whole is identified by a part: fascism is a creature which has four legs; hence, every four-legged creature must be fascist. So, for instance, anyone found talking about 'corporatism', even economic planning, was, *ipso facto*, 'fascist', when we know that such 'Third Way' thinking was a matter, from widely differing perspectives, for democratic socialists as well as Catholic authoritarians and, of course, fascists.

The moral and political capitulation of the Belgian socialist leader, De Man, to German victory and occupation in 1940, and the wartime fascism and collaborationism of the French 'neo-socialist', Déat, is artificially fed back by Sternhell into the 1930s. The political choices these men made in 1940 had, for Sternhell, already been made in the 1930s. De Man was certainly revising Marxist socialism in the inter-war years, in the name of a more humanistic social democracy which intended to modify capitalism rather than supersede it. He had a huge influence on social democratic thinking and practice, in France and the Netherlands, as well as in Belgium.

But De Man's Belgian Socialist party was a member of that country's coalition governments between 1935 and 1940, the *raison d'être* of which was democratic unity against the perceived threat of Belgian 'fascism', the Rex movement. De Man himself was the Minister of Public Works, attempting to put *planisme* into practice.

His disillusionment with that experience, coupled with what appeared at the time to be the finality of Nazi Germany's dominance of Western Europe, and its proven superiority as victor, might well have been behind his attitude to German occupation in 1940. But this is a long way from being able to see De Man as 'fascist' in the 1930s, or even during the war. While bowing to the superior form of German 'socialism', and clearly exasperated that 'socialism' could not apparently be achieved within a demonstrably decrepit democratic parliamentary system, De Man's call in 1940 was for an authoritarian government under the King, collaborating with the German occupier, not a Rex fascist dictatorship.

He belonged to a large current of thought in the Low Countries, and in France, which saw German victory as a judgement on parliamentary democracy, and the opportunity to recast the now occupied country's politics and society. In this, he was closer to the intentions of that extraordinary national but not fascist movement which sprang up in the Netherlands in the immediate wake of German occupation, the *Nederlandse Unie*, than to Degrelle and Rexism. By 1942, when the reality of German occupation had destroyed any possibility of meaningful collaboration, De Man had withdrawn completely from the scene, preferring silence to the ideological collaborationism of Degrelle.

Some of the same goes for the French socialists who were influenced by De Man. Déat, unlike De Man, became a fascist in 1940–41, thinking that it was possible to realise his 'socialism' on the ruins of the Third Republic. But the proposals for a planned 'mixed economy' of his 'neo-socialist' group, which split away from the SFIO in 1933, assumed and were to operate in a democratic system, at the juncture when they were put forward. They were consciously designed as policies likely to appeal to the managerial middle classes, and keep them from fascism. Yet, for Sternhell, 'neo-socialism' itself came to resemble fascism; this of a group who were part of the Popular Front centre-left electoral alliance which won the 1936 elections on a ticket of resisting 'fascism'. In the end, what Sternhell's book on the 1930s reveals is the extent of intellectual and political disaffection with the French Third Republic's parliamentary democracy, usually depicted in the apocalyptic language of 'decadence', but not that this disaffection was all 'fascist'.

Sternhell gives little space to Jacques Doriot and the *Parti Populaire Français* (French Popular Party, PPF), around whom there is still some debate. This is surprising, given that Doriot seems to fit Sternhell's view that one major component of the fascist synthesis was a revision of Marxism. Doriot was, anyway, an interesting and problematic case. He was a communist party leader with a local and national profile, mayor and parliamentary

deputy for the Parisian working-class suburb of St Denis, and a member of the PCF's central committee and head of the party's youth organisation. Soucy sees his falling out with the PCF in the early 1930s as 'just' a matter of political opportunism; his political career within the PCF was blocked. Much the same charge was levelled by contemporaries and historians at that other revolutionary socialist turned fascist, Mussolini. Yet both men broke ranks on matters of principle, and the break with movements where they occupied important national positions put their political careers at risk.

Doriot's disaffection with the PCF certainly came from a sense that others were being advanced ahead of him. But Doriot was held back because of his known disagreements with the official line of the PCF and the USSR. Above all, he was unhappy at the revolutionary strategy adopted by the Comintern and imposed on national communist parties in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This pitted 'class against class', and saw the communist parties as the only legitimate representatives of the working class, which should exploit the 'crisis of capitalism' as a revolutionary opportunity. There could be no political co-operation with the socialists, who were rivals for the loyalty of the proletariat, and 'objectively' 'fascist' because their reformist non-revolutionary ways not only diluted the revolutionary élan of the workers, but also propped up 'bourgeois' parliamentary democracy and the capitalist system. Doriot felt that this intransigent line reflected and served the interests of the communist party of the Soviet Union, which under Stalin was engaged in the forcible collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation, involving a deliberate intensification of class conflict. But the line damaged the PCF politically in France, since the PCF and the SFIO often did electoral deals to maximise the parliamentary representation of working-class parties.

Doriot pushed even harder for a renewed co-operation between the communists and the socialists, as it became clear that the effect of the Depression, the 'crisis of capitalism', was to strengthen fascism. The fallibility and impotence of the Comintern strategy was exposed by Hitler's coming to power in Germany, and his elimination of all non-Nazi parties, including the KPD, and of the democratic system which allowed a communist party to exist. The point to take here, and to remember in relation to Doriot's later political evolution, was that Doriot thought, with some justification, that the position of the Marxist left in France, which should have adapted to and taken account of the French political system and current political situation, was being subordinated to that of a foreign power, the USSR.

The Nazi destruction of democracy in Germany, and the sense of a similar 'fascist' threat in France, with the 'Stavisky riots', were also decisive in the Comintern and the PCF changing tack and adopting, in 1934–35, the 'Popular Front' strategy of political co-operation with non-communist forces against fascism. The Comintern was about to impose on communist parties the line which Doriot himself had proposed. But it had to do so without acknowledging the error of the previous strategy. Doriot was expelled from the PCF in June 1934, at the very point it assumed the now official Popular

Front line, a victim of the communist party's breathtaking inability to admit to a mistake, and its concern to present its shifts in strategy as seamless ideological continuity.

It is certainly tempting to see the rest of Doriot's political career as the working out of a grudge against the PCF and the Soviet Union, first as a kind of freelance 'national communist' between 1934 and 1936, and then as a 'fascist' after 1936. It was hardly coincidental that Doriot launched his own new political movement, the PPF, in June 1936, immediately after and in response to the election victory and formation of a government of the Popular Front parties.

This was a landmark election in the politics of the French Third Republic. For the first time ever, the Prime Minister was a socialist, Léon Blum, head of a government which included the Radicals, and, another first, was supported in parliament by the PCF. The Popular Front government was consciously an alliance of centre and left-wing forces defending the democratic Republic against the threat of fascism. It made combat formations and paramilitary militias illegal. This move succeeded in domesticating the *Croix de Feu*, which emerged from the ban as a normal political party on the conservative right, the *Parti Social Français* (French Social Party, PSF). The Popular Front government embarked on an ambitious social and nationalisation programme, and deflationary economic policy, and planned for increased military expenditure to meet the Nazi danger, only to struggle to reconcile these domestic and foreign policy spending priorities. To an even greater extent than its *Cartel des Gauches* predecessors in 1924 and 1932, the Popular Front government provoked a huge political reaction on the right, for whom 'Marxism' was now in power, and the usual 'flight of capital', a financial withdrawal of confidence which fatally undermined, as it was designed to do, its public spending programmes.

Doriot's newly launched PPF was clearly part of that reaction to the Popular Front. It was the hub of an anti-Popular Front front, the *Front de la Liberté*, or 'Freedom Front', which it formed with the *Fédération Républicaine*, the largest conservative right grouping in the French parliament. As Doriot intended, this brought his new movement within range of the bankers and industrialists who payrolled the FR and would see in the PPF a new weapon in the struggle against a social reforming government. It was this situation which allows Soucy to portray the PPF as a 'fascist' movement by his terms of reference, a 'revision of conservatism' rather than a revision of Marxism. But this pigeon-holing of 'fascism' as extreme conservatism does not encompass the meaning of 'fascism', nor does it capture the 'fascism' of the PPF.

The formation of the Popular Front certainly placed the PPF in the dilemma which had confronted and eventually crippled Valois and *Le Faisceau* in the 1920s. The people funding the movement expected it to defend the socio-economic interests under threat from Popular Front policies, and there was the obvious risk here of compromising the outlook of a movement

for whom, in Doriot's words, 'social conservatism is as detestable as Bolshevism' (Austin 1990: 188). The PPF's stance went beyond conservatism, as *Le Faisceau's* had done.

At first, the PPF had echoed the demands of the other conservative leagues for a reformed constitution, a stronger executive and a weaker legislature. But in its 1938 programme, it called for a state where there was unity of action and command, a dictatorship, in other words. This idea for a 'new state', to be run by the 'new men' of will, dynamism and action, was combined with a vision of a technology-driven modernised and 'productivist' corporately organised national economy, providing the economic muscle for a revival of French *grandeur*. The aesthetic, morally regenerating 'supermen' politics was what attracted unattached fascist intellectuals, like Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, to the PPF. The blend of economic modernisation and a new virile 'civilisation', as the bases of revived national greatness, very much resembled Mosley's vision of the 'Greater Britain'.

Doriot had, in other words, completed the transition from international communism to national communism, and to fascist 'national socialism'. His political evolution, or involution, started and ended with a rejection of the way a foreign communist power, the USSR, could interfere in and affect French national politics, to serve other than French national interests. This 'nationalism' was the link between his expulsion from the PCF and his reincarnation in the PPF. So at the PPF's launch, Doriot talked of the PCF as a 'foreign army camped on our territory' (Wolf 1969: 157), and opposed the Popular Front as a stooge of the PCF, and by extension, of the USSR. The 'answer' was not to renounce 'socialism' and the working classes, but 're-nationalise' French workers in and through a cross-class, cross-party national movement, as the PPF aspired to be, a 'microcosm of a reconciled France' (Griffin 1995: 199) with 'a great programme for the working class, for the middle class, and for the peasantry' (Allardyce 1966: 71), capable of mobilising the country around the national ideal.

Doriot retained for a while his working-class appeal and political base in St Denis, reflected in the large proportion of working-class delegates to the PPF's first party congress. This was gradually whittled down by the PCF, Doriot losing out as mayor to the Popular Front candidate in May 1937, and the PPF became more of a middle-class party. It certainly grew in membership between 1936 and 1938, and although estimates again differ, probably peaked at perhaps 100,000 members. Besides St Denis, it was regionally strong in Algeria, for its racism and defence of French settler interests against the Arab population and around Marseille in South Eastern France, largely as the result of the temporary migration of a local ex-PCF and ex-socialist political fixer and his municipal employees' following.

The PPF's anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance marked it out as a 'peace party' and a strong supporter of appeasement in 1938–39. But it was difficult to continue portraying the USSR as wanting war against Nazi Germany, and through the Popular Front, involving France in the Soviet

Union's war. In March 1938, a short-lived second Popular Front government collapsed, unable to do anything about the *Anschluss* externally, or the financial 'strike' internally. 'Order' was restored with the Radical Daladier's centre-right coalition government, which brought foreign policy and domestic policy into line, 'appeasing' Nazi Germany with the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at the Munich conference in September 1938, and cutting back on the Popular Front's spending programmes.

If it was a case of 'better Hitler than Blum' for some on the French right, the end of the Popular Front and the return of Daladier and parliamentary conservatism removed the appeal of and the need for any extra- and non-parliamentary resolution to the country's 'crisis'. After March 1939, when the Nazis occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia in defiance of the Munich agreement, both the British and the French governments moved from a policy of 'appeasement' to one of 'deterrence'. Being for 'peace' now appeared to be little better than consorting with the national enemy, and this could only throw doubt on the PPF's nationalism and its political credibility for the French electorate, and even for its own members. Drieu La Rochelle left the PPF because of Doriot's support for appeasement. As Drieu said, 'systems change, countries remain' (Soucy 1966: 44), and French nationalism now demanded resistance to Nazi Germany.

Fascism in Spain

Spain was one of the last countries in inter-war Europe to experience a fully democratic system of government, when the monarchy was replaced by a parliamentary Republic in 1931. But, as in much of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, parliamentary democracy did not survive for long. Rather against the trend of what happened in these parts of Europe, where the strength of fascism mirrored the weakness of democratic institutions, fascism in Spain was, until the final crisis of democracy, as marginal a force as it was in much of Northern and Western Europe.

At first sight, this seems strange. The centre-left Republican–Socialist coalition governments which ran the country between 1931 and 1933 embarked on a rapid political and economic reform programme to create a 'modern' and secular Spain. Its anti-clerical policies aroused fierce opposition from the Catholic Church and Catholic organisations, and practically obliged the formation of a Catholic party which aimed to revise the Republic's anti-clerical constitution and restore the position of the Church. The attempt to 'modernise' Spain was being attempted in the particularly unpropitious circumstances of the Great Depression. Agrarian reform, especially, was difficult to push through in any circumstances in Spain, without aggravating the already polarised relations between landowners and an often Anarchist-organised and militant agricultural workforce. Agricultural depression sharpened and intensified these social tensions in the countryside. Farm incomes were being squeezed by falling agricultural prices, at the same

time as farmers and landowners faced measures which not only required them to improve their workers' pay and conditions, but also constituted, in their eyes, an attack on property rights.

This was not, perhaps, a socialist revolution, though some of the people whose interests were damaged or threatened by the reforms would perceive what happened as such. The situation was potentially very fertile ground for fascism, which, as demonstrated throughout Europe, both thrived on national crisis and projected itself as the resolution of national crisis.

A fascist movement appeared in 1934, the *Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (Spanish Phalanx of National Syndicalist Assault Groups), the result of a merger between a small national syndicalist group and an equally small nationalist movement led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of the Spanish dictator of the 1920s. The *Falange* was the classic fascist formulation. The movement's twenty-seven point programme rejected all that divided and weakened contemporary Spain, from regional separatisms to class warfare, and the real source of internal divisiveness, the existence of political parties and a parliamentary system, which by their nature, could only organise, represent and defend sectional and partial interests. All this could be superseded by what the *Falange* saw as unifying and so strengthening the nation: a single-party totalitarian state organising a 'national syndicalist' economy, making Spain into a 'gigantic system of producers . . . a system of vertical syndicates for the various fields of production, all working towards national economic unity' (Delzell 1971: 274).

This was 'neither right, nor left' fascism, repudiating both laissez-faire and finance capitalism and Marxism as embodiments of the same corrupting materialistic 'civilisation'. The 'new order' would be imposed by a fascist movement whose members lived 'life as a militia' and whose 'aesthetic and military view of life' (Delzell 1971: 271) would serve as a model of values for a regenerated nation. Very significantly in the Spanish context, the *Falange* was as secular, if not as anti-clerical, as the democratic Republic it so despised. Catholicism was identified as the 'glorious tradition' of Spain, signifying Spain's special historical position on the very frontiers of European Christian civilisation. But there were to be no special state-sponsored and state-protected privileges for the Church. The *Falange* insisted on the separation of Church and state, each one to its own legitimate sphere of activity. In a scarcely veiled warning that the Church would be expected to complement, not take the place of, the national educative role of the totalitarian state, point twenty-five spoke of allowing the Church 'no interference or activity that may impair the dignity of the state or national integrity' (Delzell 1971: 277).

Pointedly, also, the programme closed with a clause which ruled out any change to the party's current designation and title. This was like Hitler declaring the twenty-point programme of the NSDAP in 1920 to be inviolable. The *Falange* intended to be a pure and independent movement, to stand and succeed alone, without compromising its principles. This point

twenty-seven, together with the programme's very explicit use of the term 'totalitarian', made it clear that the *Falange* distinguished itself from conservative parties, which it saw as rivals, not potential allies.

This was a recipe for political isolation and impotence. José Antonio invoked point twenty-seven to justify the *Falange* not joining the rightist National Front electoral coalition which opposed the leftist Popular Front coalition in the 1935–36 elections. The National Front parties won 40 per cent of the vote, losing narrowly to the Popular Front. The *Falange* stood separately, in only less than a third of Spain's constituencies, winning under 1 per cent of the vote and no seats in the Spanish parliament. The miserable overall performance disguised relatively better showings in some places, like Madrid and Cadiz, where José Antonio lost the seat he had won in 1933.

It appeared as if only party members actually voted for the *Falange*, where they could. Secondary school and university students and recent graduates were often the core members of party sections, and many of these young men were not of voting age. Outside the university towns and cities, the *Falange* attracted small groups of urban lower middle and middle-class people. Its national union organisation only made an impact among some service sector workers, and its only toehold in agriculture was a sugar beet farmers' association in the Castillian province of Valladolid.

You can only explain the *Falange's* inability to make an impression in propitious circumstances by looking at the alternatives to it. On the socialist left, there were well-established, well-organised and active Anarchist and Marxist socialist labour unions among workers in both town and countryside, for whom the *Falange's* national syndicalism offered less than they already had or could expect from the two forms of socialism. The votes of conservative rural and small town Catholics of all social classes went to the Catholic party, *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (Spanish Confederation of the Independent Right, CEDA), the amalgamation of a ramified national network of Catholic parties and social and economic organisations, or in North Eastern Spain, to the Catholic monarchist party, the Carlists. CEDA was 'accidentalistic', neutral about forms of government, though actually drawn to Catholic authoritarianism in the Dollfuss Austrian mould. Its *raison d'être* was the revision of the anti-clerical Republican constitution, which it was prepared to pursue within the democratic parliamentary system. It became the largest single party in parliament after the 1933 elections, and to the scandal of the left, who regarded CEDA as 'fascist', entered a coalition government with conservative Republicans in 1934. CEDA and the Carlists hoovered up all Catholic opposition to the secular Republic. So neither to the left nor to the right did the *Falange* find 'available' constituencies.

The constituencies on the right became 'available' after the shock of the Popular Front election victory in early 1936, which marked and accentuated the left/right polarisation of Spanish politics. The socialists stayed out of the government, and those on the revolutionary wing who, like CEDA, had an 'accidentalistic' and not principled commitment to parliamentary democracy,

talked of socialist revolution, creating the ‘red scare’ which justified the military coup to overthrow the Republic in June 1936. On the right, the Popular Front election victory destroyed the credibility of CEDA’s ‘accidental’ ‘legalist’ strategy of working through parliamentary institutions to undo the Republic’s damage to the Church. For democracy had not delivered a parliamentary majority capable of passing constitutional revision, but one which gave government back to the enemies of the Church.

At this point, the *Falange*’s stand-alone anti-system stance worked to its advantage. CEDA literally disintegrated after the calamity of a Popular Front government, and thousands of CEDistas passed over to the *Falange* from March 1936, a relatively short step to take for members of CEDA’s violent and fascistic youth movement, *Juventud de Acción Popular* (Youth for popular Action, JAP). This process continued in the Nationalist zones where the military coup had succeeded, which were policed by Falangist militias during the ensuing civil war.

So the military rebellion under General Francisco Franco, and the civil war which resulted from its only partial success, was the *Falange*’s great political opportunity. But the military rising was also the greatest threat to its political independence, and point twenty-seven of the party programme. José Antonio, imprisoned by the Republican government since March 1936, and executed after the outbreak of the civil war, warned the *Falange* against being the ‘supernumeraries in a movement that does not intend to install the National Syndicalist state . . . but intends rather to reinstate a conservative bourgeois mediocrity . . . adorned . . . with the choreographic accompaniment of our Blue Shirts’ (Delzell 1971: 281).

It was difficult for the *Falange* to avoid being ‘used’, as José Antonio feared. It had unexpectedly become a mass movement in 1936–37, the beneficiary, not the instigator, of a shift among Spanish Catholics and conservatives from legal to illegal opposition to the Republic. The *Falange* had not taken nor conquered power in its own right; the military rebels had. In the system of rule which the military evolved in the Nationalist zones during the civil war, General Franco became head of the armed forces and head of state. The various nationalist party militias, including the Falangists, were put under army command and discipline. The Falangist twenty-six points, minus point twenty-seven, became the official ideology of the new Nationalist Spain. Franco himself was the nominal head of the *Falange*, or rather the new party he created in April 1937 from a forced merger of the *Falange* with the other nationalist parties, the Carlists, the Monarchists and the rump of CEDA, the so-called *Falange Española Tradicionalista* (Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx, FET). The *Falange* alone wanted to be the single party of the new state, and the merger was resisted and resented by the party. Manuel Hedilla, the Falangist leader, was imprisoned until 1944 for his mutinous response to Franco’s decision. José Antonio rolled in his grave at the thought of his fascist movement now carrying a ‘Traditionalist’ label, and being associated with those militants of an *ancien régime* Catholic monarchy, the Carlists.

Franco had made a very significant and defining move. He was a career military man, and had never been a fascist, and nor did he become one. The Falangist programme gave some ideological legitimacy and pedigree to a military government which had none. But the military had taken over and subordinated the *Falange*, rather than the *Falange* taking over the government. The other parties were not merged into the *Falange*, which was what happened to the Italian Nationalists when they joined the PNF in 1923; the *Falange* was merged with them. The intention was clearly to neutralise, or balance off, the *Falange*, in an enforced alliance with its ideological and political rivals.

The FET, and the *Falange* within it, became an important component of the Franco regime. Falangists were made government ministers, appointed to top state administrative positions at the centre and in the provinces, and ran much of municipal government. Falangist organisations and personnel controlled what passed as the regime's syndical structure and its social welfare and housing services. But the *Falange* was never allowed to monopolise the regime, which they would have wished to do, as a totalitarian party. The constant features of the regime were Franco's position at the head of it, and the diverse composition of successive governments, which always included military men, Carlists and others, alongside Falangists and Falangist sympathisers.

Catholicism became the official religion of Spain and Spaniards. The Church and Catholic organisations regained their position in education, and retained it in the press, banking and the economy, baulking the *Falange's* aspirations to form the secular morality of a totalitarian state. Whenever Franco spoke of 'totalitarianism', he invoked not Mussolini, nor Hitler, nor even José Antonio, but the absolutist medieval Catholic monarchy. Franco, in other words, was at the apex of a pyramid of regime-supporting political forces and institutions, balancing and shifting the power and influence of each of them. The *Falange* was a special cog of the system, but one among other components, and this meant that although the Franco regime was a dictatorship, it was not a fascist dictatorship.

Establishing the position occupied by the fascist parties within dictatorial systems, is, in fact, a pretty good indicator of their nature. The parts played by the *Falange* in the Franco regime, and by the *Heimwehr* in the Austrian Dollfuss regime, were analogous. The situation was clearer from the start in the dictatorship established by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, in Spain's Iberian neighbour, Portugal. Rolao Preto, the leader of Portugal's fascist movement, the National Syndicalists, spoke bitterly of Salazar and Dollfuss from exile, saying that 'the Revolution can only be made with revolutionaries, and fascism has only been realised by fascists' (Griffin 1995: 194). That 'there is no fascism without fascists', seems so blindingly obvious that it is surprising that anyone, at any stage, would want to categorise these regimes as 'fascist'.

Salazar, like Franco and Dollfuss, had never belonged to a fascist movement. No political party, fascist or otherwise, had played a role in the

transition from military rule to dictatorship between 1926 and 1932. His 1920s political and ideological roots were in social Catholicism, and this, if anything, lay behind the authoritarian corporatist constitution of the 'New State' in 1932. Salazar publicly repudiated the idea that the state could legitimate itself, be its own source of authority; above the state, there was always a superior morality, that of Catholic Christianity.

Preto's movement, formed in 1932, had initially been tolerated by the 'New State'. But in July 1934 the National Syndicalists were banned for being, in Salazar's words, a 'pagan' and 'totalitarian' movement. Its leaders went underground and into exile, and Preto participated in an abortive coup against Salazar in 1935. Those who were willing to be co-opted were swept up into the 'New State's only authorised political party, the National Union, which in the way of parties created from above by the government in power, was actually a 'non-party'. Candidates in Portugal's non-competitive elections to the National Assembly came from the National Union, which indicated its sole purpose, as a passive reservoir of support for the regime. As the single party of a dictatorial system, it resembled not the PNF nor the NSDAP, but rather the Fatherland Front in Austria, or King Carol of Romania's Front for National Rebirth.

So, in the fascist regimes of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the fascist parties had taken power themselves, and set up new systems of rule, with the now monopolistic fascist parties attempting to organise and transform institutions and civil society in a totalitarian way. The half-way house was occupied by the authoritarian regimes of Austria and Spain, where the *Heimwehr* and *Falange* respectively had helped Dollfuss and Franco to power, but not to the extent that they could monopolise power and determine the shape of the regime, becoming components, but not the engines, of the system. Finally, there was Salazar's authoritarian 'New State' in Portugal, and for that matter, King Carol's in Romania, where the national fascist movements had no input at all to the formation of the regimes, and, in fact, opposed them, and were eliminated as a result.

The second wave of fascism

This book has been emphasising throughout that fascist movements were usually born of crisis, exploited crisis and saw themselves as the only route out of crisis. This is one reason why some historians tend to see fascist movements as political fireworks which burst onto the scene, and seemed to want to get things done, usually violently, rather than talk or deliberate about what they intended to do. There can be no doubting the 'getting things done' pragmatism of fascist movements, which made a virtue of acting decisively, while others talked. Part of their appeal, they thought, lay in their confrontational dynamism, their willingness to believe that there were simple, violent solutions to apparently intractable problems.

But it is a big step to move on from the fascists' will to action, and say

with the American historian, Gilbert Allardyce, that the movements were 'just' opportunistic, and empty vessels ideologically (Allardyce 1979). For one thing, the will to action was not extraneous to fascist ideology; it was part of it, part of the mystique of the 'new man' personified in themselves, who alone could regenerate the nation. For another thing, all the fascist movements which emerged, or flourished, in the years of the Depression had political programmes, a set of policies and aims, which they declared publicly and usually in writing. The Romanian Iron Guard was probably the vaguest fascist movement with the least sympathy for formulating programmes. But Codreanu's insistence that what the country needed were 'men, not programmes', was its 'programme'. Even 'smash the Jews', which was one of the Guard's basic messages to Romanian peasants, was a 'programme'. At the other end of the spectrum, there could scarcely be clearer expressions of intent than the Spanish *Falange's* 'twenty-seven points' programme, or Mosley's *The Greater Britain*.

A programme is not an ideology, but it is the expression of an ideology, an attempt to give concrete shape to the informing principles of a political movement. The programmes of fascist movements might have been incoherent, in parts plagiarised. They might also be regarded as dangerous rubbish, but they existed, and we can examine them to find out what fascists wanted and intended to do. For Allardyce, of course, another demonstration of fascism's ideological vacuity was that the fascist leaders were big liars, whose words were not to be trusted. They were men who would say and do anything to get and retain power; it was all 'propaganda'. What these remarks really demonstrate is that Allardyce wants fascists to be judged by higher ethical standards than other politicians. As for matching words to performance, this is best considered by looking at what fascists did when they had power, in Chapter 4.

The fascist movements of the Depression years were many. But their development was uneven, and several of them were and remained small in terms of members and of voters. This does make comparison difficult. Is there any useful point in comparing small, politically marginal fascist movements, with a few thousand members, to the big guns, like the German Nazis, who had hundreds of thousands of members? The Danish Nazi party in the 1930s had, apparently, a membership who, by class and occupation, were a microcosm of Danish society as a whole. Are we to make of this that the DNSAP was a real *volkspartei*, a cross-class national party, the fascist dream realised? Hardly, when it had a few thousand members at most, and won at its peak 1.8 per cent of the vote in national elections. The microcosmic character of the membership was, in this case, surely, more chance and coincidence. The smaller movements were like sects, a bunch of people whose coming together tells the historian little about social patterns in the wider national society. Their reasons for joining were idiosyncratic; they were exceptions who proved no rules. It would seem that making generalisations about the social composition, the class base, of fascist movements, can only usefully be done by comparing movements of a decent size.

The bigger fascist movements of the 1930s did, more or less, have a 'people's party' profile, drawing in support from all social classes. It was a 'more or less' situation, since middle-class people were usually over-represented in fascist membership and electorates, while workers of town and country were often under-represented. This would seem to indicate that the middle classes, by virtue of being middle class, were more susceptible than workers, as workers, to the hyper-nationalist appeal of fascism.

This general point can be related to people's political behaviour during and as a result of the Depression. The worst affected materially by the economic crisis were industrial workers and farmers. There were plenty of farmers who joined, and voted for, fascist movements. The fact that some urban middle-class people in professional or white-collar public and private employment also supported fascist movements indicates that the Depression affected groups who were not the hardest hit in material terms. These people were probably reacting to their fear of the repercussions of unemployment on others, as expressed in a more militant attitude among workers and other signs of social instability.

The question of whether fascism was mainly a middle-class phenomenon need not be closed yet. In Hungary, over 40 per cent of the membership of the Arrow Cross in 1938–39 were industrial workers and miners, when these groups overall counted for 23 per cent of the country's working population. In Germany, in 1933, a third of Nazi party members were workers, an impressive enough figure, but relatively below the 46 per cent of workers in the country's working population. What membership figures reflected were the organising drive and ability of fascist movements. But explaining why fascist movements organised more successfully among some social groups rather than others might not, after all, be simply a matter of class-specific susceptibility to the fascist appeal.

What seemed to determine the 'political space' occupied by fascist movements was whether people were 'available' or not, the extent to which they were already organised by other political parties. Fascist movements were newcomers, and they entered the fray when the political patterns of modern European societies were often set, and took what chances they could. Strong Catholic and socialist parties, usually backed up by union and other social organisations, made Catholics of all classes and agricultural and industrial workers, difficult groups to penetrate. It was probably why the NSDAP did relatively so much better among the Protestant middle classes of Northern and Eastern Germany, and why many of the workers they attracted often worked in small businesses and did not belong to socialist labour unions. The strength of the religious and class based 'pillars' of Dutch and Belgian society helped to limit the range of appeal of the anti-'pillar' NSB and Rex, while CEDA cut away the ground of the *Falange* in Spain. The hold of socialist unions over the landless labourers working the capitalist farms of Northern Italy was only broken by systematic squadrist Fascist violence between 1920 and 1922. The opposite situation confirms the point about

'availability'. Fascist movements sometimes filled organisational vacuums, the Legion literally marching into the mountains to discover a 'lost' Romanian peasantry, the Arrow Cross taking advantage of the Horthy regime's restrictions on socialist party organisation among workers.

Mussolini took Hitler's coming to power in Germany as a sign that this was the fascist 'era', that fascism was becoming 'universal'. His regime's 'internationalism' of the early 1930s was, as we shall see in Chapter 5, both an attempt to build on the success of Nazism, and to control it as a potentially stronger pole of attraction for other European fascist movements. Much has sometimes been made of the extent to which European inter-war fascist movements mimicked or imitated the two movements in Italy and Germany which had actually become regimes. To my mind, if this was the case, it becomes all the more pertinent to treat fascism as a general European phenomenon. But for those historians who make most of the imitating, the intention is different. They want to show that fascism was not 'native' to their own countries, that it was an imported 'foreign' ideology and, at its worst, that fascist movements were the 'agents' of the two fascist powers.

There can be no denying the fact that the two fascist regimes gave financial and other support to many of Europe's fascist movements in the 1930s. In some instances, it probably kept the movements afloat, which in the case of a movement like *Francisme*, was not saying very much. Nobody would have noticed if *Francisme* had ceased operating. Again, as we shall see in Chapter 5, funding was often made in the expectation of some political return to the donor. Through the *Heimwehr*, Mussolini hoped to gain leverage in Austrian politics. But it is far more difficult to show that fascist movements adopted programmes modelled on the big two, in order to attract funding from them. It is even difficult to show that fascist movements behaved as though they were in the pay of one or other of the two fascist regimes. Hitler was undoubtedly frustrated by Szálasi's refusal to compromise his political independence and throw in his lot with the Imrédy faction of Hungary's authoritarian political establishment, whom the Germans were backing in 1940.

It was certainly the case that some fascist movements quite consciously drew on the Italian Fascist and/or German Nazi models. Valois did, to an extent, with *Le Faisceau*, in the mid-1920s, as did *Francisme*, the NSB, and the Scandinavian Nazi movements in the 1930s. These movements did so because they believed that the national crises their own countries were passing through bore some resemblance to those in Italy and Germany. But these movements invoked their own glorious national pasts, invented their own national myths to serve as the inspiration for national revival and regeneration. They adapted the models to their own national environments.

Other fascist movements publicly discounted any modelling on Italian Fascism and German Nazism, and again, they did so for good 'national' political reasons. In Belgium and France after 1936, there were government bans on fascist organisations; to accept or adopt the fascist label was to invite

government repression. More importantly, fascist movements in Northern and Western Europe realised that with war approaching in the late 1930s, they were increasingly identified by their own countrymen with the expansionism of the fascist powers.

This was an inescapable dilemma for fascists, whether they should, or could, put their patriotism before their fascism. Both Doriot and Mosley were for 'peace' in the late 1930s, and supported the appeasement of the fascist dictators by their governments, though from a very different perspective. But once the governmental policy of appeasement became one of 'deterrence' to Nazi Germany, after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the BUF and the PPF were left high and dry as movements which seemed to be supporting, against their own countries, the aggressive actions of foreign enemy powers. Rather ironically, to convince people of their nationalism in the late 1930s, fascists had to play down the name of 'fascism'. Fascist movements outside Germany found that they were the losers of Nazi success.

This odd dialectic worked in another way, as well. The breakdown of German democracy as a consequence of the impact of the Depression haunted the democrats and parliamentarians of Western Europe, because the Depression in their own countries seemed to be producing the same kind of political deadlock which had led in Germany to the crisis of the parliamentary system. Made aware of the threat of fascism at home, and later abroad, anti-fascists united and resisted. The best way of resisting, or pre-empting fascism, was, of course, to show that the democratic parliamentary system worked, even and especially in a crisis. The National Government in Britain, the 'Red-Green' crisis agreements in Scandinavia, the Belgian tripartite coalition against Rex, showed that it could.

The Depression had the effect of integrating socialist parties into the democratic system and making them social democratic. This was also one of the side effects of the Soviet Union's shift to the Popular Front strategy, one country too late, in 1934–35. The fact that communist parties were now committed to defending democracy against fascism as the greater evil, in alliances with non-communist forces, was important, but ambivalent. The presence of local communist parties in Popular Front coalitions in France and Spain arguably deepened these countries' internal political divisions, and on the right made the fascist alternative seem more attractive.

But the point remains. Fascism was unable to make the political advances it might have expected in the 1930s, because it was resisted. In still democratic Western and Northern Europe, governments banned it, and acted to resolve the crisis situations which fascist movements wanted to exploit. In authoritarian Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, where fascism was as much an oppositional force as it was in democratic countries, military, royal and civilian dictatorships either co-opted and neutralised, or repressed, the fascist movements.

4 The fascist regimes in Italy and Germany

There was no *tabula rasa*, no clean slate, for the fascist movements which came to power in Italy in 1922 and in Germany in 1933. The comparison with the Bolshevik coup in Russia in 1917 is instructive. Here, the absolute monarchy, as both the source and actuality of state power, had been destroyed in the first Russian Revolution of February 1917. The so-called 'Provisional Governments' of the democratic interregnum of February to October 1917 had dismantled the Tsarist system's policing and bureaucratic apparatus, largely to demonstrate their democratic credentials, making Russia, as Lenin said, 'the freest country in the world'. This rendered the Provisional Governments practically powerless to coerce the peasantry into continuing with the war economy, and then to prevent the peasants' cumulative local action to take control of land use.

The army, the Tsar's usual rather than last resort in keeping 'order' internally, ceased to be an effective instrument of state repression, as a result of 'revolutionary fraternisation' with the Bolsheviks, and the disintegrative effects of the peasant land revolution on an army of largely conscript peasant soldiers. There was a real sense of the Bolsheviks stepping into, and taking advantage of, a vacuum of authority in late 1917, of 'boarding the empty ship of state'. The relatively small amount of bloodshed in the Bolshevik coup of 1917 indicated that there was no governmental will or capacity to resist. The old order had already gone and, although the Bolsheviks drew on elements of the 'old' army and state bureaucracy, they could create the new institutions of governance from scratch, and had to do so, in order to survive the organised chaos of the civil war between 1917 and 1921.

In Italy in 1922, and in Germany in 1933, the established institutions of society were largely intact, despite in Italy, appearances to the contrary of a Fascist armed coup, the 'March on Rome', which had certainly coerced the King into accepting Mussolini as Prime Minister, but not overthrown the monarchy as an institution. Fascism and Nazism had come to power with the connivance and collusion of the country's establishments, and it is difficult to see how they could have done it in another way, and achieved it on their own.

The new Fascist and Nazi governments could make use of the existing

career civil service, not only because it was already there. In the main, the government administrations were prepared to accommodate themselves to the newcomers, since a period of anticipated strong government would enhance the role and importance of the executive of the state. The rallying of the established institutions to the new fascist governments was, in the end, motivated by a meeting of aims, if not of minds. Mussolini was expected to provide a shot of strong government as an antidote to the threat of the revolutionary left after a turbulent transition from war to peace. Anti-democratic feelings were probably more deeply entrenched among the conservative elites of Germany after the experience of the Weimar Republic. Hitler, like them, was a nationalist who wanted to defeat Marxism and destroy the Versailles settlement. He would need them, industrialists and businessmen, the armed forces, the career diplomats, to achieve economic recovery, re-arm the country and dismantle Versailles. It was these initial and apparently mutually binding compromises between fascism and the conservative establishment which sustain the Marxist view of fascism as an extreme, but conservative and reactionary means of defending embattled dominant economic and social interests at a time of crisis.

This was, and is, a static view of fascism's 'function'. These compromises can scarcely be ignored, but one cannot assume that the fascist regimes remained bound by them. The continued existence and weight of the 'old order' meant that any change would necessarily take time, and be a process, rather than a once and for all transformation. The compromises were not easy to escape from. But equally, they were not set in stone, as they were, by contrast, in Franco's Spain. The hybridity of the fascist systems, as elements of the 'old order' cohabited with those of the 'new, was a sign not of stasis and fascism's accommodation with its conservative allies, but of the transition from one 'order' to another, of a transformation which was under way. These were regimes which became progressively more radical, and the shifting relative weight of the institutions which Fascism and Nazism inherited on coming to power was a good indicator of the tempo of radical change.

The radical nature of fascism in power was evident from the way Fascism and Nazism strengthened their political hold over Italy and Germany. The pace of change was different, but the outcome was the same, or similar. What the Fascists achieved between 1922 and 1926, the Nazis achieved, and more, in Germany, in shorter order, in 1933–34.

In a frenetic bout of law making in 1925–26, the Fascist government formally outlawed all non-Fascist political parties, unions and press, removed the rights of a democratic citizenry and effectively installed a one-party and police state. These 'most fascist laws' also made Mussolini head of government, who could issue laws by decree, and was no longer accountable for government policy to an elected parliament, but only to the King as head of state. In Germany, the so-called Enabling Act of March 1933 gave the government the power to issue laws without recourse to parliament nor even to the President as head of state. The socialist and communist parties were

banned, the others dissolved themselves, and in July 1933, the NSDAP became the only party legally allowed to exist. On the death of the conservative nationalist President Hindenburg in 1934, Hitler promptly merged the positions of Chancellor (Prime Minister) and President in himself and got the armed forces and civil service to take an oath of loyalty to him, not as Chancellor-President, head of government and state, but as 'Führer of the German People'.

What needs explaining here is not so much the same outcome of the single-party state, as the different pace of change. This was down to historical accident, and to the 'national' differences between Italy and Germany and between the two fascisms. The accident was Hindenburg's death, which given his old age, might have been expected, but could not be predicted. His death gave Hitler the opportunity to do away with one of the remaining components of the Weimar constitution, the Presidency, which was a potential alternative source of authority in Nazi Germany.

But the main reason for the more rapid pace of change in Germany was that the points of departure of the two movements were different. Hitler in 1933 was Chancellor of a coalition government including ministers from the conservative nationalist party, the DNVP and independent conservatives, like von Papen, Hindenburg's protégé and Vice-Chancellor. Only a few cabinet posts were taken by Nazis. But the NSDAP was the largest single party in parliament, winning well over a third of the total votes in the elections held shortly after Hitler was appointed head of the government. It also had, by 1933, a highly ramified party organisation, with party sections for various occupational, gender and age groups, including farmers, workers and professionals, and women and young people, and its own policing and security apparatus in the SA and the SS. The NSDAP then, was not only popular and representative of the country at large, but was also already, through its organisational network, a kind of parallel government in waiting. This made the entry of Nazis to government broadly acceptable to large sections of the German people. It also greatly facilitated the incorporation of the NSDAP into the state system.

The Nazi party, sometimes acting in tandem with central government and sometimes conflicting with it, carried out in 1933–34 a process of 'Nazification', which was called *Gleichschaltung*, rather unsatisfactorily translatable as 'Co-ordination'. It was an exercise to align government and society to the Nazi way, and took in organs of government as well as organised sectional interest and pressure groups and economic, cultural and professional associations. Sometimes, the process was pretty crude and coercive. The regional party bosses, the *Gauleiter*, 'co-ordinated' the *Land* or state governments by pressurising, under threat of violence, non-Nazi administrations to resign and then purging the local state bureaucracies, sometimes taking over whole departments, significantly including the police. The process was enforced, too, for the labour unions, the premises and assets of which were seized by the NSDAP in May 1933, and transferred to the new Nazi labour

organisation, the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labour Front, DAF), under Robert Ley.

Here, force was used because the party's organisational penetration of the industrial working classes had not proceeded very far by 1933. But in other areas, party 'co-ordination' was almost subliminal, since the NSDAP had already effectively taken over these sectors and won the support of their members before Hitler's coming to power. This was certainly the case with the various small retailer and artisan associations, and especially so with farming. Already led by men drawn from the Nazi pig breeder Walter Darré's agricultural policy section in the NSDAP, the 'co-ordinated' farmers' organisations were brought together in the Reich Food Estate, a vast corporation controlling agricultural production and marketing. Not unusually, Darré straddled party and state spheres, as both head of the Reich Food Estate and Minister of Agriculture.

Mussolini and the PNF were not in such a commanding position in 1922. Although the PNF, with about 300,000 members, was the largest party in Italy at the time, it was not a 'national' party in the way the NSDAP was. Its support and strength lay in the North and Centre of the country, and it was much less significant, even non-existent, in most areas of the South and the islands. The PNF had only thirty or so seats in parliament, and the coalition government headed by Mussolini between 1922 and 1924 was dependent on a parliament dominated by non- and anti-Fascist groups and parties. The capillary and sectoral organisations of the PNF were far less developed than the NSDAP at the point of taking power. It had the paramilitary squads, who policed in an informal and terroristic fashion those Northern and Central provinces run by local party bosses, the *ras*. It also had its own syndical or union organisation, but this was only really of any weight in Northern and Central agricultural areas, where fascist syndicates mopped up agricultural labourers and small farmers largely driven out of their socialist and Catholic unions by squadrist violence. The fascist unions had made as little headway among the bulk of the industrial working class as the NSDAP had.

Perhaps even more important, Italy's existing national institutions were a considerable obstacle to Fascism taking control of the country. The King, who, as head of state, nominated Mussolini Prime Minister in 1922, could as constitutionally dismiss him, even after the 1926 law making Mussolini head of government and practically combining legislative and executive powers in his person. The King was commander-in-chief of the armed forces and, since the country's political and territorial unification in 1870, the monarchy had customarily involved itself in military affairs. It was significant that Mussolini had covered his back and neutralised any army opposition to a Fascist take-over just before the 'March on Rome', by playing down the PNF's republican leanings and praising the army as Italy's great national institution.

The continuing presence of the monarchy, even within a Fascist state

system emerging in the mid and late 1920s, was important in reconciling the military and the civil service to Mussolini's rule. This loyalty and sense of service to a state symbolised in the monarchy was far stronger than that felt by the German military and bureaucracy to the Weimar Presidency.

The Catholic Church, again, in Italy, was a national institution. Catholicism was the nominal religion of all Italians, whereas Germany was bi-denominational. As in other countries where Catholicism was well-established, Catholic clerical and lay organisations permeated all levels of Italian society.

In such circumstances, taking political control in Italy was always likely to be a slower and longer process than in Germany. There is still a great deal of uncertainty among historians as to how to treat Mussolini's early years in power between 1922 and 1925. On balance, the evidence of Mussolini's actions pointed to an attritional and cumulative strategy to gain power for the PNF, one suited, in other words, to the minority position in which Fascism found itself in 1922.

Mussolini created new party organs parallel to and shadowing state bodies. The Fascist Grand Council, at this stage in late 1922, exclusively made up of Fascist leaders in PNF, syndicate and state positions, met as a surrogate Fascist cabinet to determine Fascist policy, often deciding on things which were then pushed through the government cabinet or Council of Ministers. In January 1923, the Fascist squads were made into a national paramilitary organisation paid for out of taxpayers' money, the *Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale* (Voluntary National Security Militia, MVSN). One reason for doing this was certainly to control the squads from the centre and curtail the provincial *ras*, whose local fiefdoms rested on the squads. But the Militia was a private Fascist army, the function of which was to keep internal order and defend the 'Revolution' against Fascism's political opponents, a job it performed to some effect during Fascism's political crisis following the murder of the socialist leader, Giacomo Matteotti, in 1924.

It was the Grand Council which decided on electoral reform, in the shape of the so-called Acerbo law. This passed through parliament in July 1923, and was designed to give the PNF an unbeatable majority in parliament, which was duly delivered in the 1924 elections held under the new system. The electoral list winning the largest number of votes, as long as this was 25 per cent of the total votes cast, got two-thirds of the seats in the parliamentary Chamber of Deputies, and a proportional share of the other third. If people wanted to guarantee being elected, then they had to get themselves included on the government's electoral list of candidates. This was the bait to absorb into Fascism pro-Fascist but still independent fellow travellers among conservative liberals, Catholics and nationalists.

The strategy worked particularly well in the South. Most Southern liberal politicians and their clientelistic followings joined and supported the official Fascist electoral list, and were elected not as Fascism's independent allies,

but as Fascists, members of a one-party bloc. The inclusion of the 'old' South into the workings of the 'new' Fascist Italy had important consequences for Fascist 'nation-forming' in the 1930s. But for the moment, the Fascist government had managed to extend its political hold to the South, where Fascism had been weakest in 1922.

In a process later mirrored in the Nazi 'Co-ordination' of 1933–34, the PNF continued to pressurise political opponents and non-Fascist organisations. Its actions were not only tolerated, but also complemented by the local state authorities, who used their own powers to suspend elected municipal councils and nominate Fascist 'caretaker' administrations, and to close down unions and co-operatives, transferring their assets to the Fascist syndicates. The aim was clearly to 'fascistise' organised economic interest groups, and secure for the Fascist syndicates the exclusive right to represent agricultural and industrial workers, something which was beyond them in a normal competitive situation.

Industrial employers managed to head off at this point their inclusion in 'mixed syndicates' or corporations, organising both employers and workers together. But the national Palazzo Chigi agreement with the Fascist government in December 1923, although allowing industrial employers and workers to be organised separately, stated that the employers' association, *Confindustria*, and the Fascist syndicates should deal only with each other, a step towards securing for the syndicates the monopoly representation of workers.

So the drift of the actions of the PNF and the Fascist government was towards the Fascist party monopolising political power, and Fascist syndicates extending their control over labour from an initially limited base. The June 1924 abduction and murder of the socialist deputy, Matteotti, by a Fascist hit squad close to Mussolini's own entourage, opened up a serious political crisis for Mussolini's government. It was important because, pushed on by the Militia and the hardcore provincial PNF, Mussolini eventually resolved the crisis early in 1925 by making the public and final break with the parliamentary system he had inherited, and inaugurating the dictatorship. But this action made explicit and accelerated the pace of a stealthy and gradual transformation of the system, which the Fascist party and government had been pursuing since 1922.

Fascist 'totalitarianism'

It has for some time been rather unfashionable to apply the idea of 'totalitarianism' to the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes. In part, this is down to the historical judgement that they, and especially the Italian Fascist version, were never really totalitarian in practice and effect. Certainly, Italian Fascism hardly figured at all in the articulation of theories of 'totalitarianism' in the 1950s and 1960s, where the concern was to find a basis of comparison between Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union. This

comparison, developed by political scientists in the 'West', clearly had a contemporary political and ideological edge. The 'Cold War' was, after all, a European and then global confrontation of diametrically opposed political and ideological systems, around which the world's two hegemonic powers, the USA and the USSR, cohered their respective 'Western' and 'Eastern' blocs. 'Totalitarianism' pointed up the similarities between the recently defeated enemy of democracy, Nazi Germany, and the post-war enemy of democracy, the Soviet Union. As a scholarly weapon in the 'Cold War', the concept of 'totalitarianism' made anti-communism as politically pressing and necessary as anti-fascism was and had been. More subtly, the use of 'totalitarianism' also helped to rehabilitate the conservative fellow-travellers who had supported fascism because of its anti-communism, and indeed fascism itself, which had at least been 'right' in its opposition to the greatest threat to 'Western' civilisation, communism.

The discovery that a scholarly concept was used tendentiously or politically is not a reason for destroying its credibility for ever. The intention here is to argue that the idea of 'totalitarianism' is still a useful way of comparing the two fascist regimes, once it is removed from the 'Cold War' context which required the Soviet Union to be linked to Nazi Germany, and from the rather mechanical and static totalitarian models which political scientists devised in order to make that connection. This does justice to the idea itself, because 'totalitarianism' was not a concept invented in the 'Cold War' period. It was originally used and applied in the 1920s, contemporaneously to the establishment of Mussolini's dictatorship in Italy. Mussolini's political opponents in the mid-1920s coined the term 'totalitarian' to describe Fascism's attempts not just to defeat its enemies, but to destroy them completely so that it could dominate everything. What was initially, then, a mark of condemnation, was appropriated by Mussolini as a badge of honour. Italian Fascism became the first ever political regime to justify and legitimate itself as totalitarian. Using 'totalitarian' is, therefore, a way of assessing fascism in terms which fascism itself would have accepted.

In this light, saying that the fascist regimes were not totalitarian, which in practice they were not, and that this makes redundant the use of the concept, seems to miss the point. Of course, the two regimes never managed to realise 'total' control. Such a thing, thankfully, is probably unrealisable in modern, pluralist societies, even those which subsequently fell under dictatorships. A totalitarian society remained a dream, or a nightmare, for the fascists, an aspiration, a goal to aim at. Though imperfectly realised, a totalitarian fascist society was, nevertheless, what the two fascist regimes intended to create, and a 'totalitarian' dynamic lay behind their progressive radicalisation in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The fascist idea of 'totalitarianism' drew on the fascists' own recent experiences in wartime and political struggle, which were then both rationalised and generalised, bearing out Mussolini's characteristic remarks on his movement's pragmatism, that 'as always, the fact, for Fascism, preceded the

doctrine' (Mussolini 1934: 112). The idealised First World War 'trench community' was seen as the embryo or microcosm of the 'national community' which the two fascist regimes wanted to create. Here was the comradeship and unity of purpose which came from people of different backgrounds and places submerging and sacrificing their individual interests in service of the collective national good. The war provided the opportunity and test of heroic leadership and national virtue.

In a speech to the PNF congress in June 1925, where Mussolini first publicly used the term 'totalitarian', he spoke of Fascism having to become 'a way of life'. By that, he hardly meant a conventional bourgeois morality or lifestyle, but rather, inculcating warlike attitudes in the Italian people: 'courage . . . fearlessness, the love of risk, a repugnance for shirking and pacifism, always ready to be daring in individual and collective life, hating everything sedentary . . .' (Mussolini 1934: 116). These martial values evoked not only the trenches, but also the 'trenchocracy' in post-war action, the paramilitary Fascist squads, whose use of violence to destroy all opposition and both gain and maintain the Fascist party's absolute control, also fed into the idea of 'totalitarian'.

As has already been outlined in Chapter 1, Hitler was literally driven by the 'lessons' which he derived for future political action from Germany's First World War experience. The war, for him, was lost on the 'home', not the fighting 'front'. Defeat was the outcome of internal popular defeatism, itself the result of the government's less than 'total' wartime mobilisation of the country's resources and energies, held back and undermined by the 'enemies within', the Jews and the socialists. A successful domestic mobilisation would win wars, as surely as domestic demoralisation lost them. From here, for Hitler, came the function of Nazi ideology, which was to be the intellectual rearmament of the nation.

The particular intensity of the Nazis' vision of a totally materially and psychologically mobilised society came, of course, from the bitterness of defeat and national humiliation in 1918. But it was shared by Fascism, too, even though Italy was on the winning side in the First World War, through the influence of the Nationalists who merged into the PNF in 1923, and whose leaders shaped both the theory and practice of the Fascist totalitarian state in the mid to late 1920s. Wartime mobilisation demonstrated the potential of an all-powerful state co-ordinating and organising groups of a modern society, which in turn, as arms of the state, controlled their members in the national interest as defined by and embodied in the state.

So, both fascist regimes extrapolated from the First World War experience what was the distinctive fascist dynamic of internal reorganisation and 'revolution', and external expansionism through war. Domestic and foreign policy were effectively one; external power came from, and expressed, internal strength. As Mussolini declared in the same 1925 speech, the means to conquer an empire was 'discipline on the inside in order to

confront the outside world with the granite-like bloc of a single, unified national will' (Mussolini 1934: 118).

'Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation' (Griffin 1995: 44), was Mussolini's rallying cry to the Fascist party at Naples just before the 'March on Rome'. He used the word 'myth' in the Sorelian sense, as an aspiration, a goal, towards the realisation of which popular enthusiasm and action could be galvanised. The achievement of the national myth was connected in the regime's totalitarian phase to the idea of the state, because 'it is the state which creates the nation . . .' (Delzell 1971: 95). The Fascist state was not the neutral umpire of society, which was how the fascists parodied the liberal conception of the state, but an 'ethical state' (Delzell 1971: 104), one which embodied national values and inculcated them in society. This made the state's powers limitless, since such a state would need to penetrate every nook and cranny of people's lives, in order to educate and moralise them with its values and purposes.

The mobilising myth of Nazism was not so much 'nation' and 'state', as it was for Fascism, but the *Volk*, the racially defined German 'nation'. So, in both cases, the 'national community' was unified by people having a shared history and common destiny, a glorious future to match a glorious past, and by a general acculturation to fascist values, and in the Nazi German version, also and primarily, by common 'blood'.

Fascist 'totalitarianism', therefore, involved a monopoly of control and coercion: a single fascist party, a single fascist labour organisation, a 'co-ordinated' press and media, a preventive as well as repressive policing apparatus. But while a pervasive and permanent repressiveness certainly characterised the fascist regimes, it was not the most distinctive component of 'totalitarianism'. Repression meant the removal and intolerance of opposition, of alternatives, of choices. It was designed to clear the ground for the equally monopolistic party organisations to mobilise the people behind the regime's political and ideological goals, to 'fascistise' them by instilling in them the warlike attributes of fascism, so that, to say it with Mussolini, 'tomorrow Italian and Fascist . . . mean the same thing' (Morgan 1995: 79). This attempted mobilisation of society by and through the single party was what distinguished the fascist totalitarian regimes from the authoritarian state systems of a Salazar or a Dollfuss. The two regimes were not only interested in repressing dissent and opposition; they required not a passive obedience to fascist rule, but an active consent and participation. This was Josef Goebbels, chillingly, at a press conference to launch his new Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, in March 1933, barely two months after Hitler had become Chancellor:

it is not enough for people to be more or less reconciled to our regime, to be persuaded to adopt a neutral attitude towards us, rather we want to work on people until they have capitulated to us, until they grasp ideologically that what is happening in Germany today not only *must* be

accepted but also *can* be accepted . . . The new Ministry has no other aim than to unite the nation behind the ideal of the national revolution.

(Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 381)

Such popular consent had to be ‘manufactured’, or constructed. It could not be assumed or spontaneously given, because at the point Fascism and Nazism came to power, the sense of the ‘national community’ did not exist, outside the fascist parties. People had other competing loyalties and identities, which divided them: to their families, their locality or region, to their class, to their religion. These alternative and divisive attachments had to be erased if the ‘national community’ was to be brought into existence. This was why the regimes felt that they had to interfere in, and affect, all areas of people’s lives. A totalitarian system involved breaking down all boundaries between society and the state, all boundaries between people’s private and public activities; everything was ‘political’. ‘The new government no longer intends to leave the people to their own devices . . .’ (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 380–81), promised or warned Goebbels, an injunction which was taken up by Ley, the head of DAF, to the very limits of banality, when he was reported as saying: ‘the “national comrade” is to have no private life and above all he must give up his private skittles club’ (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 575). As this same anonymous anti-Nazi *rapporteur* for the SPD in exile acutely observed:

this monopoly of organisations is intended to make the man in the street completely dependent . . . to isolate him and at the same time to bind him to the state organisation . . . The essence of fascist control of the masses is compulsory organisation on the one hand, atomisation on the other.

(Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 576)

It should be clear from this attempt to convey what fascist ‘totalitarianism’ meant that the fascist ‘revolution’ had nothing necessarily to do with changing socio-economic structures. This, of course, is why Marxist historians and political scientists deny that fascism was ‘revolutionary’, and assert that it was intrinsically ‘reactionary’, since it had first ‘saved’ a capitalist system in crisis, and then presided over and reinforced the class and power relations of a capitalist economy and society. The fascist revolution was, to use the fascists’ own term, a ‘spiritual’ one. The fascists’ aim was to transform people’s consciousness, their mentality and attitudes, their ‘spirit’, their perception of themselves and others.

The Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was the ideal of a classless national society, where there was an equality of ‘citizenship’, of belonging, based on the common ties of race. There were workers, employers, professionals, farmers, but they were all simply ‘Germans’, members of a distinct and superior racial entity. This was the ‘trick’ which the Nazi totalitarian regime wanted

to pull off: to convince a working-class German that he was as 'good' as his employer, whatever the differences in income and social and educational background, and as valued a member of the 'national community'. It explains why the two fascist regimes placed so much emphasis, and concentrated so much of their resources and effort, on organisation and propaganda. In order to 'fascistise' the nation, claimed Achille Starace, the head of the PNF in the 1930s, it was necessary to control 'every single individual and every square foot of territory' (Morgan 1999: 87). That was why, from the early 1930s, the Fascist party developed a 'capillary' structure which went down as far as individual streets in towns and cities. Starace's manic 'totalitarian' vision conveyed some sense of the immensity of the two fascist regimes' self-imposed task of social engineering. In the ambitiousness of the totalitarian project lay the reasons for its failure.

The two fascist regimes, then, ruled through a unique and paradoxical combination of coercion and consent, in the attempt to shape the 'new man'. One wonders what kind of 'consent' could possibly be 'manufactured' by the fascist regimes. It was being 'manufactured', after all, in a climate of repression, which was inescapable. Physical violence might not usually be involved, but there was pressure, even compulsion, on people to do what the regimes wanted, if only because no alternatives were on offer. The regimes organised consent; they expected to change people by requiring them to go through the experience of being organised in and by the regime's own agencies.

You can get a real sense of this orchestrated spontaneity by looking at how welfare and relief was provided during the years of the Depression, and indeed beyond. Both the PNF and the NSDAP effectively took over the provision of social welfare in the early 1930s, partly because it was a very effective way of extending the parties' reach in society, partly because welfare, like everything else, had to be given a public and 'fascist' profile and meaning. So, as you might expect, Party-controlled provision of welfare was portrayed as the spontaneous display of national solidarity, a demonstration of the 'national community' in action and in formation, bringing together the haves, the donors, and the have-nots, the recipients. A German newspaper in December 1935 claimed that the sight of local bigwigs coming out onto the streets with collection tins for winter relief, showed 'what a strong and decisive leadership filled with true Socialist [note the word] spirit has made of the German people in whom previously class differences and pride in status flourished' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 413).

Nobody even really bothered to hide the fact that there was an obligation to contribute, though it was not enforced by violence. 'It goes without saying that every family will give ...' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 414), said another local press report in March 1939. In Italy, the Fascist party raised funds for its welfare agency by levying 'subscriptions' on other party and state organs, who would 'donate' money on behalf of their members without consulting them, with local banks and businesses following suit. If

not exactly a charade, the whole exercise met Goebbels' standard line on propaganda, that it was up to the country's leaders 'to tell the masses what they want and put it across to the masses in such a way that they understand it too . . .' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 381).

You are, of course, left with the question as to whether donating money to winter relief programmes in these circumstances marked a sincere and enthusiastic, or rather, a conformist involvement in the 'national community'. This question could be asked of membership of and participation in any of the regimes' organisations and activities.

But questioning 'consent' in this way might well be missing the point. We are used to handling the polarities of 'consent' and 'dissent' as they exist in democratic, pluralist societies, and we tend to assume that people 'consent' or 'dissent' to how they are governed on rational grounds. Living in a totalitarian system made for greater demands on people. The Fascist and Nazi police files were full of people reported or denounced for saying and doing things so apparently trivial that they would hardly be 'criminalised' in any 'normal' society. These were regimes which wanted to track and monitor every nuance of the popular mood, which were interested in housewives complaining to each other about the price of bread, and would take action against such 'defeatism'. The 'consent' gained by the two fascist regimes was not a matter of voluntary, considered choice, because it was the outcome of organising and propagandising people.

But perhaps this was not really the kind of 'consent' the fascist systems wanted to create. One of the ubiquitous Italian Fascist mottoes from the late 1920s was 'Believe, Obey, Fight'. Carlo Scorza, an intransigent squadrist Fascist of the old school who became head of the PNF's youth organisation for 18 to 21 year olds, said that Fascism was not interested in making young men into intellectuals, but rather members of 'an armed religious order' (Morgan 1995: 124). The 'consent' the regimes wanted was that of the religious convert, literally an act of faith, denoting an emotional attachment and affinity, a feeling capable of inspiring people to act. Living lives 'religiously' is, then, perhaps the way to 'read' both regimes' use of public space and public spectacle, and to assess the effectiveness or not of the 'manufacture' of 'consent'.

Such things are very difficult to make historical judgements on, when in such closed societies, expressions of popular opinion were inevitably filtered through the regime's own repressive apparatus. What can be said is that the regimes' concern with changing people's mentalities and attitudes, with a 'spiritual' revolution, was likely to be self-deluding. This was because the 'form' *was* the 'substance'. Put a civil servant in uniform rather than a grey suit, make him greet his colleagues with the Fascist raised arm salute rather than a handshake, which was what Mussolini's regime did in the late 1930s, and a 'soldier' was made out of a civilian, or so it might have appeared.

Both dictators over-estimated their approval ratings. Mussolini was both astonished and depressed by the huge public welcome he received in Italy as

Europe's 'peacemaker', after returning from the September 1938 Munich conference, where 'his', in fact, German, proposals for dismembering the Czech state, had prevailed. The last thing he wanted the Italians to be was peace loving, and typically, Mussolini's response was more, not less, belligerence at home and abroad. But it was easy, even understandable, given the nature of 'consent' building in a totalitarian system, for fascist dictators to believe their own propaganda, and take the rhetoric for the reality. Historians run the same risk.

One of the problems of using the Cold War models of 'totalitarianism', and even perhaps of the idea of fascist 'totalitarianism' developed here, is that it suggests that the monopolisation of power was an ordered and linear process. The premise of the totalitarian model was that these regimes had ideological goals and that power was acquired and used to achieve such goals, which rather assumes that the totalitarian system of rule would have developed in a coherent and single minded way, towards the implementation of ideologically set policies. The reality belied this assumption. The fascist systems of rule were a mess, organised chaos, especially the Nazi regime, the internal workings of which we know more about.

Charismatic leadership and fascist systems of rule

The institutional anarchy of fascist governance can be understood by looking at one of the essential components of the fascist totalitarian system, the role of the Leader. In both cases, the 'leader principle' was developed first in the movements, and was then extended to the country after the movements had come to power. Hitler's dominant position in the re-founded NSDAP from 1925–26, while occasionally challenged, was more secure in the movement phase than Mussolini's.

Although Mussolini was called *Duce* or Leader by the war veterans who joined the early *fasci* in 1919, the movement which spread rapidly in the North and Centre of the country between 1920 and 1922 was often beyond the control of the Milanese leadership. The *ras* of squadrist Fascism were often financed directly by local employers' and farmers' associations and banks, and ran their provinces much as they wished, looking on Mussolini as 'first among equals'. Some of the fascist bosses even contemplated ditching Mussolini as leader for D'Annunzio in 1921, objecting to the effect Mussolini's more compromising policy at the national level would have on the continuation of their local tyrannies. This, perhaps, was the point. If Mussolini was at this stage rather derisively referred to as 'the leader who follows', he was, nevertheless, by 1922 accepted both inside and outside the movement as the national 'face' of Fascism.

His dominance over the Fascist movement probably only occurred in the late 1920s when, under Augusto Turati, the PNF was put under centralised control and discipline, and simultaneously, many of the extremist provincial leaders were removed and their local power bases dismantled. Such a culling

never really occurred among the Nazi party's regional bosses, the *Gauleiter*, many of whom survived and prospered as the movement became the regime. Significantly, it was Turati who launched the leadership cult with the slogan, 'Mussolini is always right'. The exaltation of the *Duce* coincided with the start of Fascism's explicitly totalitarian phase, and the formal end of the PNF's independence. Turati always portrayed and justified his reforms of the extremist provincial PNF's men and methods as equipping the Fascist party for its tasks in the service of the totalitarian state. Mussolini's growing personal power in and over both state and party in the late 1920s matched the development of the personality cult.

The idea of the leader, of leadership, was at the core of the fascist outlook. Fascists saw themselves as an heroic elite, whose decisive and dynamic leadership of their nations was the only road to national revival. It might appear paradoxical, but leadership was also taken as a mark of fascism's 'egalitarianism'. This was because fascist elites were 'new men', parvenus, who had arrived at positions of leadership not by dint of birth, wealth or social background, which was how 'traditional' elites were formed, but as the result of succeeding through struggle, self-sacrifice, being prepared to take risks and act. This meritocratic view of leadership was self-affirming. The fascist leader's 'right' to lead came from being successful at what he did, from his ability to lead and inspire the enthusiasm and commitment of others, so that they followed where he led.

The internal party 'democracy' or 'election' of leaders which Turati ended with the principle of central nomination to party office from above, was really a plebiscitary rather than an electoral process. The annual local PNF assemblies did not actually even take or count votes; the party boss was noisily acclaimed and celebrated by his squadrist following. Such scenes captured the essence of what charismatic authority was, coming not from the impersonal prestige of holding a particular office or position, but rather from a personal hold over loyal and dedicated followers. Translate this to the 'oceanic' rallies presided over by Mussolini, like the one where he announced and celebrated the conquest of Ethiopia in May 1936. The atmosphere created, or aimed at, was that of the provincial PNF assembly writ large. It was not a case of the Prime Minister of the government speaking to the nation, but of the people's leader communing and connecting emotionally with his enthusiastic followers. Charismatic authority dovetailed perfectly with the kind of 'consent' which the fascist regimes wanted to 'manufacture', that of the acolyte, of the convert.

In the Italian Fascist case, one can justifiably say that Turati's PNF reforms sacrificed the 'charisma' of local Party bosses to safeguard and enhance that of the supreme leader, Mussolini. In the fascist totalitarian systems, a strong state demanded a strong leader, and that leader carried the authority of the state in his own person. But it was the leader who was the source of authority, and his authority was personal, charismatic and not institutional. The famous, or infamous, oath of loyalty to Hitler made by the

military and civil servants in 1934, was not to the man who, for now, held state office; it was to the person of the 'Führer of the German Reich and People'.

Charismatic personal rule made a real difference to the way the country was governed, or misgoverned. For one thing, it gave a temporary feel to the fascist regimes. Hitler and Mussolini were young men, in terms of political careers, but they were not immortal. There was the obvious danger that the regimes they created would die with them. How was it possible to pass on, or inherit, personal rule?

Some thought was given to the problem of how to succeed Mussolini and Hitler. The Fascist Grand Council was meant to deliberate on matters of government and party policy, and to control the PNF. It was also supposed to keep an updated list of candidates to fill any vacant ministerial posts, and to succeed Mussolini as head of government. To the King's annoyance, it could 'discuss' the succession to the throne. Since the King, as head of state, was formally empowered to appoint and dismiss the head of government, the Grand Council, a Fascist body, was challenging the authority and powers of the King. It was a good example of standard fascist practice: creating 'shadow' Fascist bodies which duplicated and undermined existing state institutions, in a kind of competitive co-habitation.

But, in practice, the Grand Council became a victim of Mussolini's personal style of government. He, anyway, as head of government, decided who were Council members, when the Council met, if it met, and what it discussed. In 1929, Mussolini transferred from the Council to himself the control of the PNF, and he, now, appointed the PNF's leaders. The Council never seriously designated Mussolini's successor, for the very simple reason that Mussolini did not want it to consider even future alternatives to himself. So, a body set up to ensure that Fascism lasted beyond Mussolini was effectively paralysed by the workings of Mussolini's personal dictatorship.

In Nazi Germany, there was not even an equivalent organisation to the Grand Council, a mechanism for determining a successor. Hess, national leader of the NSDAP's political organisation and vice-Führer, would presumably have 'deputised' for Hitler in his temporary or permanent absence. In 1939, Hitler named both Hess and Hermann Göring as his successor(s). Hess's bizarre flight to Scotland in search of Anglo-German understanding left Göring as the nominal successor, confirmed in a decree of June 1941. But, again, nobody really took the matter of succession in hand, if only because doing so would detract from the Führer's authority. In the end, the party organisations with responsibility for the attempted fascistisation of Italian and German society were the only way fascism could reproduce itself.

It was not only a matter of there being no proper succession procedures. Collegial or collective government, normal in democratic or 'rational' systems, progressively disappeared. Mussolini chaired only four Council of Ministers, or cabinet, meetings in 1936; there had been over seventy cabinet

meetings in 1933. It was not even the case that decisions were being taken by the Fascists' own collegial organ, the Grand Council. Very busy during the 1920s, Mussolini called it much less often during the 1930s. When it met, it tended to endorse with little discussion decisions which had already been made. Mussolini took some important policy decisions himself, including the 1929 Conciliation with the Catholic Church and Italy's entry into the Second World War in 1940, without consulting the Grand Council at all. Hitler scarcely bothered with the normal business of government after the death of Hindenburg. There were no cabinet meetings of ministers from 1938. Even in democratic systems, where cabinets of ministers meet regularly, 'joined-up' government is sometimes difficult to achieve. In the fascist regimes, it was never a possibility. Personal rule meant fragmented and blinkered government, the one hand never really knowing what the other was doing.

There was a self-evident way in which decision making and governing were inherently unpredictable and unstable in the fascist personal dictatorships. Since the leader was supreme, and the source of power and authority, each and every whim of the dictator could become policy. Impulsive, ad hoc decisions had to be enacted, because they expressed the leader's will, and he was 'always right'. This was an important feature of personal rule, that the power of the supreme leader and the imperative to preserve and enhance it, was always destabilising and destructive of the hold and pull of all other institutions and organisations.

While this was a common feature of both fascist regimes, there were marked differences in impacts of the 'leader principle' in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In part, this was down to the differences between Italy and Germany, which made totalitarian rule more difficult to realise in Italy than in Germany. With the death of Hindenburg, there were no institutional or personal alternatives to Hitler as Führer. In Fascist Italy, there were rivals to the Mussolini cult, which could not be eliminated at a stroke or even by the accident of death. The King was a political cypher in the 1930s and early 1940s. But he still existed as an alternative focus of loyalty to the state, and survival proved to be enough. It was a royalist coup, or at least a coup in the name of the King, which eventually overthrew Mussolini in July 1943, and exposed the fallibility of a personal regime without a proper succession procedure in place.

A far more significant rival of institutional 'charisma' was the Pope, the ruler of his own tiny state in Italy, a fig leaf of territorial independence, but recognised as infallible in faith and morals by not only Italy's, but the world's Catholics. This inescapable rivalry of 'charismas' might explain the multi-faceted image of the *Duce* projected during the 1930s. Clearly 'Renaissance man', Mussolini was simultaneously and variously depicted as 'the warrior', 'the thinker', 'the family man' and 'the common man', posing stripped to the waist bringing in the harvest. The Pope could be a 'thinker', perhaps, but he could hardly cover the other 'Mussolinis'. The *Duce*, of

course, was bound to be portrayed as the archetypal 'new fascist man', whom Italians were to emulate: virile, physically strong, aggressive, belligerent. But the macho image was perhaps also deliberately cultivated with Mussolini's rival in mind, and so was intended to highlight the difference in values between a warlike fascism and a pacific, cheek-turning Catholicism. The Pope, after all, was not a 'real' man, since he could not sire children and could not fight in a war. This might be pretty fanciful stuff. But while the iconography of Hitler was not exactly uniform, he was, nonetheless, often represented in posters and other media forms, as a rather ethereal and visionary figure, out of reach, almost detached in his aura of 'super-humanity'. His was an unchallenged 'divinity'.

To return to slightly firmer ground, it was partly also the personality and temperament of the two dictators, personal traits reinforced by the experience of leading their movements, which determined the different effects of personal rule. Mussolini distrusted, often despised, his subordinates in the PNF and government, and saw the human material he had to work with as corrupt and fallible. He had experienced for himself from 1920, with the rapid expansion of Fascism into a mass movement, the over-familiar and conditional way in which he was treated by the powerful local Party bosses. His inclination was to push all rivals and potential rivals aside. Almost congenitally suspicious of collaborators who had minds of their own, he unpredictably rotated office holders in ludicrously unannounced 'changes of the guard', the relative insecurity of tenure reminding top party and government men who was really in charge.

Turati, one of Mussolini's most loyal and competent PNF Secretaries, was gratuitously disgraced as the result of an extramarital liaison after his replacement as head of the party in 1930. In Nazi Germany, such sexual 'scandals' were usually exploited not to discredit party men, but establishment figures whom Hitler wanted to get rid of. Italo Balbo, the *ras* of Ferrara, one-time commander of the Fascist Militia, Minister of Aviation, whose spectacular but useless transatlantic flights between 1928 and 1933, confirmed him as the dashing archetypal Fascist 'hero', was shunted off to be Governor of the Italian North African colony of Libya, where he was killed in the skies in 1940, his aeroplane apparently shot down by his own command's anti-aircraft guns.

The ministerial shake out of July 1932 saw Rocco, the ex-Nationalist responsible for the laws erecting the totalitarian state, go from the Justice Ministry, Dino Grandi from Foreign Affairs and Giuseppe Bottai, another intelligent and capable Fascist, from that most 'Fascist' of Ministries, Corporations. The only man Mussolini could trust was himself, and he returned to Foreign Affairs and Corporations, and in 1933, once again became the minister for all the armed forces. Mussolini was now head of government and held seven of fourteen ministerial cabinet posts. No wonder the Council of Ministers never needed to meet; it was in permanent session inside Mussolini's head. The appointment of incompetents to public office occurred so

often as to seem deliberate, fulfilling Mussolini's deep scepticism about human nature. Nobody was more competent than him, and nobody would be allowed to put him in the shade.

Mussolini's manic centralisation of powers in his own person reinforced both the reality and propaganda impression that Mussolini, alone, was the government. His self-imposed solitude in government strengthened his own delusions, and those of the Mussolini cult, that he was the man with the mission single-handedly capable of 'saving' the nation. As head of government and minister, Mussolini did involve himself in the details of administration, usually to the detriment of any longer term strategic view, both because it was superficially easier to tackle small problems, and because it conveyed the sense of him being omniscient and omnipotent to subordinates and the country. He often worked, or spent, long hours in the office, its rarely extinguished lights, shining whether Mussolini was there or not, a symbol of the unending effort and time the dictator gave to the service of his people.

Personal government of this kind was, in fact, dysfunctional and inefficient. The accumulation of ministerial offices filled out the image of the all-powerful *Duce*. But, in practice, no one man could possibly exercise real control over the running of all the ministries he nominally headed. Management was delegated to the under-secretaries or junior ministers. But this downwards delegation was not accompanied by any systematic 'horizontal' co-ordination between ministries, and stifled initiative among his subordinates. It was suffocating and inhibiting to have Mussolini as the titular head of ministries, since junior ministers never felt that they could act with full ministerial authority, nor, indeed, act decisively at all, without Mussolini moving first.

This was the worst of all possible worlds, no effective control and direction from the top, and little being done further down. It was by no means the whole story, but Mussolini's style of dictatorial government certainly bore some responsibility for the fact that a regime with goals of territorial expansion through war was not really prepared nor equipped for war when it came. Mussolini himself was the chief of all three armed services ministries between 1924 and 1929, and again from 1933 to 1943.

The 'leader principle' worked in a dramatically different way in the Nazi regime. Hitler's modus operandi as dictator was not like Mussolini's at all. He was lazy and unsystematic, never kept office hours, went to bed and got up late, took *kaffee und kuchen* and long afternoon walks, and was absent from the seat of government for prolonged periods, preferring Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps to Berlin. He detested paperwork and formal meetings with agendas, and despised and distrusted 'legal' procedures and professional expertise. His near-bohemian lifestyle and patternless days were no way to run a modern state. Unlike Mussolini, he did not collect ministries, nor did he concern himself with administrative detail and anything much beyond the broadest outline of policy.

But he did, and this was a crucial difference, trust his subordinates. He felt no threat to his position either from the vast administrative empires, often straddling party and state, built up by top Nazis like Ley, Göring and Heindrich Himmler, or from the regional power bases of the party *Gauleiter*. The relationship between Hitler as Führer and the national and regional Nazi leaders was a classic demonstration of charismatic authority. Nothing could be done except on Hitler's personal authority, and these Nazi bosses regarded themselves as the Führer's mandatories, specifically and personally authorised by him to carry out his will. Personal access to Hitler became crucial, since things could not proceed without his approval and endorsement. It was a 'system' which did not actually require Hitler to take any policy initiatives, simply to register his support for initiatives proposed by others.

From one perspective, charismatic government was ready-made inefficiency. It encouraged and sanctioned duplication and competition between party and state agencies in practically all areas of governmental activity, the one claiming Hitler's personal mandate, the other resting on formal and conventional ministerial function and responsibility. There were endlessly wasteful turf wars between, say, the *Gauleiter* and the field offices of central government ministries, and even of the central party administration.

One example of many is probably sufficient to show how inherently unstable and uncertain government was in the Nazi regime. As in all other areas of life, the 'leader principle' was applied in the 'co-ordination' of labour organisations and factory management. A law on the Reordering of National Labour in January 1934 restored to the workplace the full authority of employers and managers, who in each factory were 'leaders' of their quaintly renamed workforces, their 'retinues'. National collective labour contract bargaining between employers and unions gave way to local plant 'agreements' on wages and conditions, brokered by initially provisional government-appointed Labour Trustees.

Employers welcomed the Labour Trustees initiative, because it meant that they did not have to negotiate labour agreements any more with socialist-affiliated unions of real industrial muscle, nor would they have to deal with their replacements, the Nazi labour organisation, DAF, which had 'co-ordinated' the sector by force in May 1933. DAF's leader, Ley, sidestepped the law by seeing Hitler, who impulsively signed Ley's own 'Decree on the Essence and Goals of the Labour Front', made public in October 1934, which gave DAF the right to intervene in matters of production and factory management, previously denied to it by the Labour Trustees. DAF, armed with the Hitler decree extracted by Ley, could now behave as if it was a union, and not be confined to the propaganda and welfare functions of its original mandate.

The decree aroused opposition from employers and the Ministry of Labour, and to all intents and purposes they ignored it, or tried to. But the Führer's decree could not be rescinded, because it was Hitler's will. It

remained Ley's leverage and justification for DAF's involvement in labour issues and disputes, in bitter and prolonged competition with the Ministry of Labour, which thought with the establishment of the Labour Trustees that it had secured a state monopoly in the area of labour relations. The conflicts of jurisdiction were never resolved by any order from above, and the competing agencies slugged it out on the ground. In this one example, repeated *ad infinitum*, was encapsulated the Nazi 'system' of rule: enduring and unresolved conflict between party and state organs, set in motion and sustained by the application of charismatic leadership.

'Intentionalist' historians argue that the institutional chaos which resulted was Hitler's deliberate 'divide and rule' ploy, since leaders were constantly at each others' throats rather than his, and he was the pivot and arbiter of the 'system', the necessary final umpire of the regime's internecine disputes. It seems doubtful that the chaos of government was that intentional. But it certainly suited Hitler's slapdash and unfocused working arrangements and his fixed ideas about pettyfogging legalistic bureaucracy. The effect of the chaos let loose by charismatic rule was to strengthen Hitler's central position as Führer.

In the case analysed above, the outcome was a wastefully time and energy consuming stalemate, which showed the Nazi style of governing at its worst. One wonders quite how anything got done. But there was another perspective on 'organised chaos'. This was Ley, reminiscing at a DAF conference in 1937: 'I received the Führer's order to take over the Trades Unions, and then I had to see what I could make of it' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 336). An old time Nazi, Werner Willikens, operating further down the ministerial scale in the Ministry of Food, showed the extent to which Nazi office holders had internalised the mentality which lay behind the regime's *modus operandi*, when he said in 1934 that it was 'the duty of everybody to try to work towards the Führer along the lines he would wish' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 207).

The Hitler mandate was, in other words, a tremendously energising stimulus for the party leaders who sought and gained it. Ley accepted the competition, and knew that DAF would survive and prosper as a result of his own energetic leadership and organisational drive. The Führer's mandate was also limitless; it did not require its mandatories to deliver in any particular way, only that they deliver. As Hitler's personal agents, Nazi leaders were free to act as they wished. Success was its own justification. Charismatic authority produced a body of Nazi leaders who were both personally loyal to Hitler and brimming with initiative.

In this way, a dynamism and radicalisation of policy was built into the very shapelessness of the Nazi 'system', as Nazi leaders competed to implement what they interpreted as the Führer's will. Apparently dysfunctional, competition between agencies spurred them on to ever greater organisational efforts, to fulfil the Hitler mandate. One should not, then, be deceived by the continued existence and functioning of the state's apparatus and civil service,

which can be taken as a sign of Nazism's compromises with the established order. State bodies survived, but the location of power was progressively shifting to distinctively Nazi party agencies and party-state amalgams.

The relations between party and state organs seemed much clearer cut in Fascist Italy, something which is often used to show that the Italian Fascist regime was more compromising and less totalitarian than the Nazi regime. Formally, it was certainly the case that clear demarcation lines were set between party and state. At the heart of Fascist 'totalitarianism' was the idea of the strong and all-powerful state, to which all other institutions and organisations, including the PNF, were subordinated.

In one of the key statements which outlined the formation of the totalitarian state, Mussolini's 'circular to the prefects' of January 1927 addressed the overlapping and, in some cases, the superseding of state authority and functions by the dominant Fascist party in some Northern and Central Italian provinces. The circular condemned squadristism, the coercive element of informal party control in the provinces, and declared that the prefect, who was the direct agent and representative of central government in the province, was 'the highest authority of the state'. Since state authority was absolute and indivisible, it was the duty of all Fascists to 'collaborate in a subordinate fashion with him'. Mussolini's apparently unambiguous conclusion was that 'with the new . . . order, it is the prefect who must be at the head of all provincial life, and who must provide impetus, co-ordination and directives to the province' (Aquarone 1965: 485, 488).

This seemed to rule out the possibility of the PNF keeping the independent political role in the provinces which it had carved out for itself in the 'years of struggle' from 1920. Quite deliberately, this official declaration of the primacy of the state coincided with Turati's reorganisation of the cadres and methods of the PNF, which was meant to equip the Fascist party for its instrumentalist role in the Fascist state. The circular was clearly directed at the PNF's arbitrary and coercive controls through which it intended to 'fascistise' Italian society. Some historians assume from this that Fascism's totalitarian phase from the late 1920s really marked the domestication of the Fascist 'revolution', the principle of the state's primacy signifying the regime's accommodation with established state institutions, to the detriment of the Fascist party.

This is too static and one-dimensional a view. For one thing, the role which the PNF was expected to undertake in the Fascist totalitarian system was a very significant one, and made the party the most important single organisation of the Fascist state. The PNF's task was to take Fascism to the country and 'fascistise' Italians through organising and propagandising them. Throughout the 1930s, The PNF attempted to organise in areas and among social groups which were antagonistic or neutrally indifferent to, or simply ignorant of, Fascism. Territorially, this vast and ramified organising effort extended to the South, the islands, and the remoter rural districts. Socially, the organising campaign embraced the young, women

and industrial workers, all largely untouched by the appeal of Fascism. The party's brief to 'fascistise' the nation inevitably made the party a predatory and expansion-minded organisation.

As inevitably, the PNF entered and took over areas of activity which were normally within the state's orbit. So, during the Depression, the party sometimes supplanted, sometimes co-ordinated existing local government and charitable organisations, and became the major fundraiser and provider of social relief to needy Italian families. Its welfare agencies ran summer health camps for young children and organised winter welfare programmes to distribute food, clothing and subsidies at the time when seasonal unemployment was at its worst. Party welfare touched hundreds of thousands of Italian families, and it stimulated the deeper organisational penetration of Italian society.

Expansion fed expansion, and the grass roots organisational networks created to distribute welfare could be activated for various other kinds of party-sponsored activity and proselytisation. Fascist women's groups sprang up and expanded under the impetus of the party organisation of welfare, as did the OND or *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (National After Work Agency), the equivalent of DAF's 'Strength Through Joy' organisation, which provided for people's recreation and free time. The OND had nearly four million members by 1939. Its popularity was undoubtedly down to the subsidised and discounted consumption it offered, from sport, folklorist festivals, film and theatre showings to tourism. That the Fascist party organised these after work activities at all was a sign of the totalitarian state's intolerance of the normal boundaries of people's public and private lives.

The demarcation lines between party and state activity were difficult to maintain in other areas, too. In fact, a persisting subterranean tension ran beneath the surface of the official primacy of the state. The cornerstone of the Fascist new order was the corporative system, at least in propagandistic terms. We know what corporatism was meant to be. The idealistic, intelligent and apparently sincere Fascist corporatist, Giuseppe Bottai, was junior and then full minister of the new Ministry of Corporations between 1926 and 1932. Naturally enough, Bottai had ambitious plans to make the *parvenu* ministry a kind of high command of the economy through control of the corporations, idealised as monopolistic mixed bodies which brought together and represented in one organisation all those involved in the productive process: employers, managers, technical staff and workers. These corporations would organise and plan production in the various sectors of the national economy, and would be able to maximise production in each sector because unproductive conflict between employers and workers would be smoothed away in the cross-class collaboration impelled by the composition and structure of the corporations. We still do not know very much about how, or whether, the Fascist corporations worked in practice, and their role, real or imagined, in economic policy making and planning of production. It may not be worth the effort finding out.

For the centrepiece of Fascist restructuring, the corporations took an unconscionable time coming, and came in fits and starts. Rocco's 1926 syndical law on labour relations established that only state-recognised organisations could negotiate collective labour agreements for each branch of production. This was the final death knell for socialist and Catholic unions, and gave legal status to the monopoly of workers' representation by the Fascist syndicates, and in industry, to the national employers' association, *Confindustria*. The law also banned strikes and lockouts, and set up a complicated legal arbitration machinery for settling or pre-empting labour disputes. It then, rather bizarrely, allowed but did not oblige the formation of corporations, which was really a polite way of saying that they would not, at this stage anyway, be formed at all.

The enabling provision of the 1926 law was not acted on until 1930, during the Depression, which in demonstrating the redundancy of laissez-faire capitalism, practically obliged the Fascist regime to unveil its non-communist alternative to the now defunct capitalist 'civilisation'. The National Council of Corporations was an assembly of representatives of employers' and workers' organisations for the main economic sectors, which, in turn, were represented on an executive body, the Central Corporative Committee. There were still no actual corporations, however, and in 1934, twenty-two of them were created, covering the major sectors of industry, agriculture and services. Finally, after another delay, the neutered parliament left over from the Fascist law making of the late 1920s was made into a Fascist and Corporative Chamber in 1939.

Why the corporate state had such a tortured path to some form of realisation is not easy to explain. One factor was certainly the prolonged stonewalling on the whole corporative project by *Confindustria*, which feared that involvement would lead to a loss of organisational autonomy and even some limitations on how employers managed their own businesses. They need not have worried, because in composition and structure the corporations were weighted towards employers, as was the whole 'productivist' rationale of corporatism, which emphasised greater production rather than wealth distribution.

Another reason was that the idea and reality of corporative self-management of the economy, even when controlled by the state, was not a mobile nor dynamic enough vehicle for state intervention in the economy. The corporative apparatus was rather cumbersome and time-consuming, and the Fascist government effectively by-passed corporate structures and improvised as need arose, PNF and para-state agencies to extend and implement its hold over the economy. This it did progressively from the late 1920s into the 1930s, initially in response to the successive economic crises caused by Mussolini's revaluation of the currency and the Great Depression, and then in pursuit of warlike autarkic and armament goals from the 1935–36 Ethiopian invasion onwards.

Finally, the slow and irregular pace of corporative reforms reflected real

indecision at the centre. It was clear that delays occurred because of persisting differences of opinion and jurisdiction, not only between the upstart Ministry of Corporations and the other economic ministries, but also and especially between the PNF and the state ministries. The point at issue was who should run the territorial, as opposed to the sectoral, organisations of the corporative economy, the provincial state official, the prefect, or the provincial PNF leader, the *federale*, or federal secretary. According to Mussolini's formula of the primacy of state authority, this by rights should have gone to the prefect as 'head of the province'. But there was a self-evidently 'political' side to syndical and labour relations matters, which justified and, indeed, necessitated party involvement, since wages and employment affected the popular mood and public order, and class and sectional interest organisations had to be 'educated' to class co-operation and recognition of the overriding 'national' interest.

Into this decision-making vacuum stepped the PNF. In order to enforce the 1926 syndical law, the party had set up ad hoc intersyndical committees which were, in effect, informal 'corporations'. These committees were convened and chaired by the *federali*, included representatives of the provincial employers', workers' and traders' syndicates, and their self-appointed tasks were to investigate and resolve labour disputes, draft and implement provincial labour contracts and control 'politically' the syndicates and their leaders. This was empire building of a kind the Nazi party *Gauleiter* would have relished. The PNF had seen the 'gap' in the Fascist state's corporative provision, and occupied it with a body through which it could influence and control economic life. The intersyndical committees duplicated and, in practice, supplanted the rival state body in the provincial arena, the so-called 'provincial economic councils', presided over by the prefect and, in fact, the 'co-ordinated' former chambers of commerce.

The party was mobilised to fight the 'economic battle' for the defence of the national currency, politically overvalued by Mussolini in 1926. The revaluation of the *lira* required wage cuts to lower production costs, and should have also led to corresponding price falls. The party turned to the provincial intersyndical committees to determine and impose both the level of reductions in wages and in the prices of items of basic food consumption. It was doubtful whether the committees could, and did, have much effect on the economic 'laws' of supply and demand. But the attempt was made; the committees were essentially improvising a rudimentary prices and incomes policy.

The committees' pricing functions were withdrawn in 1928. But their settling of collective labour contracts and of labour disputes, especially in agriculture, continued on a regular basis. The PNF, through the intersyndical committees, resumed responsibility for price controls in 1934, and held them until 1937, as the regime attempted to protect the cost of living from the effects of the devaluation of the US dollar in 1934, the goods' shortage caused by Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and League of Nations sanctions in 1935–36, and the long delayed devaluation of the *lira* in 1936. This time,

the party's 'price committees' went even deeper into the production cycles of basic goods in order to control costs, and came close to the national regulation of the grain market. The point was not so much how effectively the party did the job, but the fact that it was doing it at all. The de facto party organs, the intersyndical committees, dominated their equivalent *de jure* state organs for the decade between 1927 and 1937, and intervened practically and decisively in provincial economic activity.

It has already been made clear that the authority of the state was meant to prevail throughout the Fascist regime. In formal, official terms, this was the case. But at all levels of government, there was competition and duplication of activity, as the PNF attempted to carry out its role in the Fascist state, to 'fascistise' Italian life and society. It was difficult in practice to work out exactly the respective limits of what one *federale* termed the 'different but parallel' (Morgan 1998: 263) spheres of party and state organs, and the PNF was certainly not intending to try.

In the provinces, prefects and *federali* clashed regularly over policing and public order, with the party complaining that the police forces, the prefects' responsibility, were too 'soft' on 'subversive' activities, and hankering after the vigilante methods of the squads. The greatest source of disagreements was appointments to local administrative and other official positions, which were, once again, the prefect's responsibility. This conflict over local appointments was important, because what was at stake was the fascistisation, or not, of provincial society. The prefects had to take party credentials and recommendation into account, but generally insisted that the technically most qualified, rather than the politically most qualified candidates, should be appointed to posts.

This source of friction was never-ending; it came up every time a vacancy occurred. The evidence seemed to show that sometimes the prefect's perspective prevailed, sometimes the party's. At the centre, the national PNF secretary, Starace, an incompetent and a martinet, was, nevertheless, a tenacious promoter of the party, and scored some spectacular hits in what otherwise was a steady attritional war to extend the party's influence. Both personal dislike and 'professional' party-state rivalry lay behind Starace's successful campaign in 1933–34 to get rid of Leandro Arpinati, the *ex-ras* of Bologna, who as junior minister at the key Interior Ministry, had protected his career civil servants, including the prefectural service, against the progressive fascistisation of the government bureaucracy. In 1937, Starace finally managed to resolve in the party's favour another major area of long-standing conflict and competition between party and state over the control of youth organisations. The Ministry of Education's *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (National Balilla Organisation), which provided pre-military training and indoctrination and sports activities for children and young people of school age and beyond, was unified with the PNF's young men's and university students' organisations, into a single party body, the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (Italian Youth of the Lictors).

Other party–state issues were also apparently resolved in 1937. The party’s welfare work passed back to municipal councils, while the intersyndical committees were wound up, their role in labour conflict resolution, collective labour contract negotiations and price regulation, going to the state’s provincial corporative organ, now renamed the ‘provincial council of corporations’. But the game was not over in 1937, any more than it was with Mussolini’s circular to the prefects a decade before. A long-time goal of both the PNF and the Fascist syndicates, to get formal recognition of a party presence on the factory shop floor, was realised in October 1939, with the authorisation of so-called *fiduciari di fabbrica*, or ‘factory agents’. Almost immediately, the *federali* were instructed to convene meetings of the workers’ and employers’ syndicates for regular updates on what was happening in local firms and syndicates. These were the intersyndical committees, reborn. The intersyndical committee had first prevailed over the prefectural body to become, de facto, the regime’s provincial corporative organ. Then, even when the state body apparently won out in 1937, the PNF carried on interfering in labour and employment issues, ignoring the ‘final’ verdict.

The PNF’s involvement in economic life, and the other areas of party–state rivalry dealt with here, indicate that perhaps we need to rewrite the history of party–state relations during the Fascist regime. The primacy of the state, and the PNF’s ‘subordinate collaboration’ with it, was set in the late 1920s, when the basic structures of the Fascist totalitarian state were created. But a party–state dualism persisted, if not officially. Starace’s behaviour, and that of his provincial *federali*, showed that the PNF honoured in name the primary authority of state organs, but challenged and undermined it in practice. This is rather a controversial conclusion, and runs against the grain of much current thinking on the fascist regimes. But the shapelessness and institutional rivalry which were associated with the Nazi system in Germany, seen in the competition between overlapping party and state bodies, might also be a suitable way of characterising the Italian Fascist regime in the 1930s.

Fascism at war, both home and abroad, 1936–39

The dynamic of both fascist totalitarian regimes came from the interaction of domestic and foreign policies, the internal preparation for imperialist wars of conquest and expansion. Nazi Germany’s racial empire lay to the East, in Eastern Europe and Western Russia, the ‘living space’ to be conquered and colonised so as to ensure the survival and dominance of the German race. Fascist Italy’s ‘living space’, another ‘Roman’ empire to make the country independent and powerful, was in and around the Mediterranean. Empires of such dimensions, which involved the disappearance of many existing states and empires, could not be achieved by diplomacy, only by war. The necessary premise for successful wars of empire was national strength and unity, the fascistisation of their peoples. The end was war, for

conquest; the means was also war, against their own societies, to make them warlike and war-ready. Fascistisation made war possible, and would itself be strengthened and accelerated through and by war.

This is the fascist totalitarian dynamic stripped to its essentials, and tidied up. Real life, things, people, were refractory material, not so easily nor so tidily bent to the fascist will. But it is not distorting what actually happened in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the 1930s, to say that there was a discernible synchronisation of domestic and foreign policies, a progressive and mutually reinforcing radicalisation of both, as more assertive and aggressive foreign policies were matched by an intensified fascistisation internally. The effect of this cumulative radicalisation was that both regimes broke through the crust of compromise with established elites and institutions, and the 'new order' began to supplant and supersede the 'old'. The shift was evident in both countries between 1936 and 1938.

Opportunely for such an analysis, the development of the Fascist regime in Italy turned on the most fascist of projects, war: the invasion and conquest of Ethiopia in East Africa, in 1935–36. In diplomatic terms, Hitler's coming to power in Germany gave Mussolini the opening to put into effect invasion plans drawn up in the Colonial Ministry by 1932. A relatively small power in European and global terms, Italy could not really go it alone, internationally. But Italy could operate in the space between stronger powers contesting European hegemony. The attempted Nazi coup in Austria made the threat of *Anschluss* immediate, and helped to push Mussolini towards a tacit deal with France early in 1935. If Italy would help France prevent *Anschluss* and contain German revisionism in Central and Eastern Europe, then France would allow Italy to have its way in East Africa.

There was a continuity of policy here with pre-Fascist liberal Italy, not only in Italy's smaller power exploitation of the rivalries between more powerful countries, but also in the chosen area of expansion. Italy already had small colonies in East Africa, Eritrea and Somalia, and the 1935 attack was the opportunity to avenge the national humiliation of Ethiopia's defeat of an Italian army in 1896. The continuity with the colonial aspirations of the recent past helped to explain the support of Italy's establishment for Mussolini's policy.

But Ethiopia was definitely a 'Fascist', rather than just an 'Italian' war. Mussolini was insistent that Ethiopia had to be taken by war, not by diplomacy: 'the empire cannot be made in any other way' (Morgan 1995: 142). The conquest was also an exercise in totalitarian mobilisation for war, especially when the invasion led to League of Nations sanctions being applied to Italy as the aggressor, setting Fascist Italy against the world. The regime embarked on a systematic and sustained propaganda campaign before and during the invasion. The body co-ordinating the propaganda effort, the sub-Ministry for Press and Propaganda, under Mussolini's son-in-law, Galeazzo Ciano, was elevated to a full Ministry just before the invasion started.

The war, in other words, was the justification for and a test of the

regime's growing control of the making and dissemination of 'information'. The concerted effort to rally the nation around the regime and its war seemed to work in arousing national enthusiasm. On the 'day of faith', in December 1935, the King and his family, and thousands of Italians, in a symbolic public ceremony blessed by the Church, 'married' the nation by donating their wedding rings to be melted down for precious metals in support of the war effort. Millions of Italians listened simultaneously across the country to Mussolini's public radio broadcast in May 1936, announcing the conquest of 'a Fascist empire'.

The preparation for the invasion, the invasion itself and the 'international community's' reaction to it in applying economic sanctions, also gave a considerable push to the fascistisation of the Italian economy. Some historians rather oddly berate fascism for having no 'theory' of economics, reflecting, one supposes, the view that every serious political movement should have one, and that the only 'revolution' worth taking seriously is one changing the economic relations of production. The fascists, however, certainly had a view of the role and place of the economy. This was expressed as brutally as one could get, in Hitler's memorandum on the Four Year Plan for the German economy, launched in 1936, an interesting document not only for its content, but also because Hitler actually committed his 'mandate' to paper. The primary goal, said Hitler, was 'the preservation of our existence . . . the securing of all the spiritual and other prerequisites for the self-assertion of our nation.' This became the economy's goal: 'the nation does not live for the economy . . . on the contrary, it is finance and the economy, economic leaders and theories, which all owe unqualified service in this struggle for the self-assertion of the nation' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 283). From this perspective, fascists were not particularly interested in reforming capitalism or private property ownership. Their economic policy was that the economy should serve the nation, or rather, the political and ideological goals of the nation's fascist leadership.

Translated into action, the 'primacy of politics' over economics meant growing state intervention in and regulation of the economy, as in every other sphere of life, which over time reduced the influence private businessmen had on economic policy decision making and even on the management of their own businesses. Managers managed, employers employed, but private companies benefited to the extent that their activities fitted the priorities for the economy set and imposed by the fascist leaderships, whose intervention in the economy increasingly determined what should be produced, and how.

This process can be observed clearly enough in the Italian Fascist case. As in other non-fascist European countries, state intervention in the economy was practically required to meet the impacts of the Depression. The Fascist government's most important salvage operation during the Depression was to create the Institute of Industrial Reconstruction in 1933. This was a giant state firm or holding company, which bought with public money the shares

of ailing industrial companies held by the now ailing banks, who had invested in them. So, through IRI, the state acquired a huge portfolio of shares in firms which were still structured and managed as private companies. IRI was intended to be a temporary device to bail out failing industries and banks, but it became a permanent body in 1937, and specifically linked to the building up of a war economy. Not only did IRI run through subsidiary companies the now largely publicly owned heavy industrial sector; it could also take over private firms where this was deemed necessary for national defence, autarky and empire.

The reference to autarky, or national economic self-sufficiency, was significant. With the collapse of international trade, the Depression made all countries 'autarkic', looking to the protection and development of internal markets. Fascist Italy was no exception to the pressure of circumstances. But the economic sanctions of the Ethiopian war isolated Italy even more from the international economy, and impelled Italy to be self-sufficient. As the Depression eased, countries could begin to make choices about the recovery of international trade, and the degree to which they would and could participate in it. These same choices faced Fascist Italy, when economic sanctions were lifted in July 1936, after the conquest of Ethiopia in May.

Similar choices also faced Nazi Germany, at precisely the same time. The public works schemes and initial rearmament spending were achieving full employment and economic recovery. But German farmers were still not producing enough food and industrial raw materials to meet internal demand, and German exports were not earning sufficient foreign currency to pay for food and raw materials imports, shortages of which were beginning to affect factories working on arms and military production. The Minister of Economics, Hjalmar Schacht, with the support of Germany's export industries, wanted to release the economy from this *impasse* by once again opening the country up to international trade, in order to increase exports, and by stimulating consumer goods production. The implications of these proposals were, of course, clear to the Nazi leadership. They involved easing up on rearmament.

The response of the two fascist regimes in 1936 marked a real economic parting of the ways with the rest of Europe. In Germany, Hitler resolved the internal policy conflict over how the country was to handle economic difficulties caused by public spending and rearmament, by announcing the Four Year Plan to meet his two tasks: 'the German armed forces must be operational within four years. The German economy must be fit for war within four years' (Noakes and Pridham 1997a: 287). The Nazi choice was, then, not less rearmament, but more rearmament, more autarky.

Mussolini made the same basic 'fascist' choice. In March 1936, he made autarky official policy, and this declaration, made during the Ethiopian campaign, was the clearest possible indication that economic self-sufficiency was geared to war, not just to the effects of the Depression. The regime had set

up in 1934 a special agency, the Institute of Foreign Exchange, again initially as a Depression device, to do something about Italy's growing balance of payments deficit and the outflow of foreign currency and gold reserves. The Institute regulated foreign exchange and currency trading; quotas were placed on imports, paid for in foreign currency made available by the Institute. This technical agency to control foreign trade was not withdrawn once the prospect of more open international trading relations became apparent. *After* the lifting of sanctions, the Institute became the Ministry of Exchange and Currency in late 1937, strengthening and making permanent the government's import quota system and control of foreign currency, and incorporating this regulation of foreign trade into the regime's official goal of autarky.

That autarky was being connected to the preparation for war was evident from the huge increases in state spending from 1934–35 onwards, literally bankrupting the country, which went mainly on autarkic enterprises and heavy industries producing for the armed forces. The regime did not work through the corporative apparatus, but, rather, improvised monopolistic agencies to develop import substitutes, either synthetically or using Italian sources of energy, metals and raw materials. These bodies were half-way between the public and private sectors. They spent public money on purposes determined by the government. But capital came, too, from the big private companies, whose managers often ran them. This was 'privatisation' of the public domain, or private management operating as public officials, depending on the perspective.

The Ethiopian conquest also had the effect of changing the European diplomatic balance which had made possible Mussolini's invasion in the first place. In November 1936, Mussolini declared the emergence of a new alignment between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The so-called 'Rome–Berlin Axis' had its origins in the Ethiopian war. League of Nations sanctions alienated Fascist Italy from Britain and France, and drew Mussolini closer to Nazi Germany. Hitler did not apply sanctions against Italy, supplied materials and coal to a country which was under siege and then recognised Italy's new African empire. In return, Mussolini effectively removed his veto on *Anschluss*, the very issue which allowed him to move between Nazi Germany and the West European powers. The two fascist regimes also agreed to back Franco's rebellion against the Spanish Republic with military and material aid, and placed this co-operation in the wider framework of a common front against communism.

An alignment was not yet a political and military alliance. But, again, a basic choice had been made. Mussolini stuck to the Axis, in words and deeds. It became a fully-fledged alliance in the so-called 'Pact of Steel' in May 1939. This is an interpretation of events. Some historians, like the prolific biographer of Mussolini, Renzo De Felice and his 'school', argue that the Axis did not represent a final choice, and that Mussolini continued to oscillate between Nazi Germany and France and Britain right up to the dec-

laration of war against the latter in 1940. Richard Lamb's recent book on the diplomatic relations between Mussolini and Britain reiterates the De Felician line, that after Ethiopia, Mussolini was still 'available', but was eventually forced to turn irrevocably towards Nazi Germany by the British government's reluctance to meet the dictator half-way. According to Lamb, British intransigence was really responsible for the signing of the Pact of Steel, and for Italy entering the war on Germany's side in 1940.

This just does not wash. It ignores Mussolini's continued framing of his aims as control and dominance of the Mediterranean, which made war, not compromise, with France and Britain inevitable. It ignores the 1936 watershed in Fascist Italy's autarkic preparation for war, which has just been explained. Above all, it ignores the distinctive fascist totalitarian connection between internal fascistisation and external aggression. Treating Mussolini, and Hitler, as if they were normal biddable statesmen in foreign affairs, is, effectively, to say that Mussolini and Hitler did not behave as 'fascists' within their own countries.

The Ethiopian conquest undoubtedly strengthened Mussolini's position, and that of the regime, in Italy. He, and it, had the confidence and validation of a successful small war, to push on with the attempted fascistisation of the country. The body which co-ordinated the propaganda mobilisation of the nation behind the war effort, the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, was revamped as the Ministry of Popular Culture in May 1937. Its ambitious remit was to gain full control of all cultural products and output, and so transmit an official and uniform culture to the masses. The Nazi German forerunner, the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, was set up in 1933, within a few months of Hitler coming to power. The catching-up process was, again, a mark of how things were changing after 1936, as Fascist Italy acquired part of its anticipated empire, formed the Axis with Nazi Germany, and prepared for war.

The Ministry of Popular Culture represented something of a shift in Fascist cultural policy. 'Culture' was, of course, central to the Fascist 'totalitarian' idea, which was to transform and reshape the consciousness of Italians in the morally and spiritually regenerated 'national community'. Up to the late 1930s, the Fascist regime had not adopted the rigid, didactic and prescriptive cultural policies of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, and had not even decided on a standard culture and form in which it would express its core nationalist ideology. This seemed to be more or less a matter of deliberate policy. The regime, and the organisations through which it controlled cultural output, showed some preference for certain artists and artistic styles. But they accepted, patronised, and made use of various art forms, both modern and not so modern.

The relatively light touch of an 'aesthetic pluralism', accepting that Fascist art was 'that which is done and will be done during the Fascist era' (Stone 1998: 5, 58), worked quite brilliantly. It involved many artists of various schools and styles in official culture and officially sponsored

exhibitions and events. There was hardly any emigration of alienated or impoverished artists during the period of the regime. The artists produced good, accessible art, and audiences widened for official cultural events, as well as for the products of the new mass culture, such as film.

The 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, celebrating the origins of Fascism and a decade of Fascism in power, attracted nearly four million visitors. High attendances were probably the result of the 'organised spontaneity' of the regime; people went on organised and discounted trips to the exhibition. In spite of the stultifying post-modern culture-speak of 'narrative' and 'discourse' in which these events are now analysed by cultural historians, it was hard to see how all these people would not have been impressed and affected by what they saw. The exhibition conveyed the Fascist 'revolution' in a daring and innovative display of 'relics' and artefacts set in an experimental mix of various modern art and design styles. It probably came closest to the world of 'aesthetised politics' which the regime attempted to realise in all the public spectacles and ceremonies it organised ad infinitum throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, giving an organised 'happening' a real emotional or 'spiritual' charge for those people attending, recipients and simultaneously participants of the 'event'.

From 1937, however, the 'battle for culture' was being won by those who favoured the cultural orthodoxy and one message, one style approach on the Nazi German model. In line with the stepped-up fascistisation of the late 1930s, 'cultural autarky' prevailed in the sponsorship and display of a public art which was monumentally 'Roman' in style. This matched the dominant propaganda motif of *Romanità* or 'Roman-ness', which evoked the past 'civilising' glories of the Ancient Roman empire now being emulated in the Fascist present. The cruder celebratory and directly propagandistic content and theming inevitably produced 'bad' art. The change in artistic format was based on the calculation that the Fascist message was best transmitted in an unequivocal, documentary and educational fashion, when, in fact, the reverse was probably true. To have an effect, art had to be 'good', and attendances at the revamped 'monumental' version of the Fascist Revolution Exhibition in 1937 were way down on those for the original in 1932.

The most notable and extraordinary aspect of the intensified fascistisation and 'cultural' transformation after 1936 was the ludicrous attempt to reform the daily conduct, habits and attitudes of Italians. In a campaign spear-headed by the PNF in 1938–39, which must have raised a giggle at best, and derision at worst, the more comradely form of second person address, 'voi', was meant to replace the flattering, servile and 'foreign' 'lei', and the raised arm Fascist salute to supplant the unhygienic handshake as the form of greeting between 'comrades'. That this was post-League sanctions propaganda was clear from the stereotyped images of the typical 'bourgeois' and his lifestyle, which were set up to be attacked in what became known as the 'anti-bourgeois' campaign. The 'bourgeois' was 'foreign' or cosmopolitan, defeatist, pacifist, complacent, materialistic, unheroic, infertile, who pre-

ferred the quiet and easy life; he was, in other words, aping the French and the British.

There was a serious point to all this daftness. For the regime to conquer and run an empire, the Italians needed to live a life of risk and violence, as the squadristi had done in 1920–22. As Mussolini said to Ciano in July 1938, 'henceforth, the revolution must impinge on the habits of Italians. They must learn to be less sympathetic in order to become hard, relentless and hateful – in other words, masters' (Morgan 1995: 158). Mussolini deliberately located racism and anti-Semitism in the 'anti-bourgeois' campaign. Now that Fascist Italy had embarked on the road of empire, Italians had to acquire the mentality of 'imperialists', a racial consciousness, a sense of their superiority and fitness to rule others. Official anti-Semitism was the very dark side of the regime's accelerated fascistisation of the late 1930s. More will be said in Chapter 5 about the origins and implications of the anti-Semitic measures introduced in 1938.

The belligerent and ruthless attitudes which the regime wanted to instil in Italians were clearly at odds with the attributes of the good Catholic. It was striking that the 'anti-bourgeois' propaganda of 1938–39 attacked Catholic compassion and sympathy for Jews as yet another sign of the 'bourgeois' mentality which had no place in a climate of empire and war. The Pope publicly condemned racism as imitative of German Nazism and a sign of the Fascist regime's pagan 'totalitarianism'. But he confined the Church's opposition to the regime's race laws to the relatively technical point that the ban on intermarriage between Italians and Jews invalidated Church marriages of Jews who had converted to Catholicism, and so violated the terms of the Concordat agreed with the Italian state in 1929. The Pope was clearly concerned not to offend the regime to the point of rupture, which might have called into question the continuation of the Concordat.

He had a point. The PNF bitterly resented the 1929 agreement, which was a very significant breach in the idea and practice of the Fascist totalitarian state. The Concordat made Catholic Action, the Church's umbrella organisation for a countrywide network of Catholic lay people's associations, the only non-Fascist body legally allowed to exist in Fascist Italy. It was a rival and alternative to the PNF's own supposedly monopolistic organisations. The Concordat brought to an end over fifty years of Church–state hostility following the political and territorial unification of the country at the expense of the Pope's temporal possessions in Central Italy. As such, the Concordat gave Mussolini tremendous internal and international prestige, and encouraged Catholics to rally unreservedly to the regime. This was presumably why an anti-clerical and totalitarian dictator did it. The Catholic Church was too strong and rooted an institution in Italian life to be confronted head-on. It seemed opportune to bring the Church over to the regime, milk the enthusiasm and popular support the agreement generated and then trust to time and the superior organisational pull of the PNF to erode the Catholic presence in Italian life and mores.

But the spat over the race laws, and the persisting subterranean rumblings of conflict between the Fascist party and Catholic Action, were signs of how the interaction of more aggressive foreign and domestic policies was shaking the basis of the various institutional compromises the regime had made in the late 1920s. The more 'fascist' the regime became, the more threatened these institutions felt. Their anxieties, and Fascist aspirations, came to focus on war.

Mussolini had chipped away at the status and prerogatives of the King in the late 1930s without destroying his position as head of state, and made dark threats in private about getting rid of King and Pope after the coming war was won. He saw a European war as the justification and springboard for more change, much as the Ethiopian conquest had done. For him and the regime, war was made possible by fascistisation, and war, in turn, made possible more fascistisation. The King and Pope feared the prospect of war for precisely the same reasons. The King gloomily realised that war, whether it brought victory or defeat, could signal the end of the monarchy, and the Pope that war might threaten the Concordat. If the war was won, a triumphalist Fascist regime would complete its fascistisation of Italian society; if the war was lost, monarchy and Church would pay for their complicity with Fascism.

Their unease at the likelihood of war alongside Nazi Germany, after the signing of the Pact of Steel in May 1939, was probably shared by most Italians, and was one of the reasons why Mussolini, humiliatingly, did not immediately go to war in September 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland. Mussolini was forced to admit that economically and militarily, Italy was not yet ready to fight a general war which he had deluded himself would come a few years on. But it must have been worse for a regime whose *raison d'être* was war for Mussolini to tell the Germans just before the Polish invasion in the hope of getting them to delay it, that the Axis was not yet popular enough in Italy and that the nation was not yet psychologically primed for war.

But the 'non-belligerency' which Mussolini declared in 1939 was not the same as neutrality, a distinction apparently lost on the De Felician school. Mussolini was not choosing not to choose; he had chosen, but was choosing not to fight, for now. Nazi German victories in France in May and June 1940 made the argument for intervention irresistible, and arguments about Italian unreadiness irrelevant. Fascist Italy could expect to join and win a war which was all but won.

The formlessness of the Nazi system of rule in fact made it extremely flexible. Since there was nothing fixed and permanent about institutions and channels of decision making, other than their constant reference point of the Führer, further innovations were always possible, as need arose. Important changes did occur in the regime's governance from 1936, and to emphasise the point, significantly when more aggressive policies were pursued, both externally and internally.

The process can be seen in the conduct of foreign and military policy. As with Mussolini in Italy, foreign policy was the area in which Hitler intervened most decisively. His decisions were behind the dramatic foreign policy coups of the late 1930s, from the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in defiance of both the Versailles and Locarno treaties in 1936, to the *Anschluss* of 1938 and the final dismemberment of the Czech Republic in 1939, breaking his own and Mussolini's agreement with France and Britain at Munich in September 1938. While this dismantling of the Versailles settlement carried along the Foreign Ministry and the military, such decisions were made against the grain of their advice for caution. The fact that these coups were successful only strengthened Hitler's position at the apex of the 'system', while weakening that of the establishment institutions. Charismatic authority fed on, and needed, the perpetual validation of success. This was why it was inherently unstable, and why it imparted a dynamism and momentum to policy.

In a coup against the military in March 1938, Hitler used personal and sexual scandals as the pretext to remove the country's most senior military figures. Colonel General Weiner Freiherr von Fritsch was replaced as Head of the Army Command by a more compliant general. The post of War Minister, held by Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, was simply abolished, and the function of armed forces command passed to Hitler and a staff office run by an equally compliant general.

These changes were of real significance. Von Blomberg, War Minister since 1933, was one of those conservative establishment figures whom von Papen intended to use to 'box Hitler in' on his coming to power. His dismissal was Hitler's act of emancipation from the compromising alliances with the 'old' Germany. Hitler's new military position as commander-in-chief put him in strategic planning control of the armed forces, as well as the nominal control which came from being head of state. The Nazi political leadership was now in charge of operational military planning. Mussolini had attempted but not achieved as much in 1938, when he suggested that he, and not the King and the generals, should be the military commander in war. The King eventually conceded on the eve of war that Mussolini should have command of operational forces, but not of all the armed forces.

The German Foreign Ministry, like some other ministries, had been relatively successful in defending its personnel, career structure and modus operandi from Nazi party interference. But this was a deceptive and increasingly irrelevant normality. The Ministry, still staffed by career officials, was being excluded from policy and decision making; the location and distribution of power were changing. One of the Foreign Ministry's party-based rivals was the Ribbentrop Bureau, little more initially than a bunch of amateur diplomats who were Joachim Ribbentrop's cronies. Ribbentrop joined the NSDAP late, assuming the mantle of Hitler's 'specialist' in foreign affairs on the specious basis of his familiarity with foreign languages and other countries as a travelling salesman for the German sparkling wine

firm into which he eventually married. He was employed as a kind of roving commissioner for Hitler, undertaking special missions and initiatives. The Anglo-German Naval agreement of 1935, arguably one of the first acts of British appeasement of Nazi Germany, and the 1937 Anti-Comintern Pact were Ribbentrop's work.

Appointed Foreign Minister in 1938, he resisted the transition from poacher to gamekeeper, and domestication by the Ministry's ways. The Ribbentrop Bureau was inserted into the Ministry, and ran special policy units responsible to Ribbentrop alone. There were, in effect, two separate Foreign Ministries, and a considerable disparity in functions, decision making and information gathering in favour of the men who had personal access and responsibility to Ribbentrop. The principle of charismatic authority functioned, too, at levels below that of the Führer. A similar bypassing of state officialdom was achieved in the Italian Foreign Ministry in 1936, when Ciano transplanted to the Ministry his own *Gabinetto*, or Cabinet, of advisors and hangers-on. In both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, it is possible to relate changes in the organisation and implementation of policy to radicalisation of the policy itself.

Hitler's intervention in 1936 to mandate Göring, appointed head of the Four Year Plan Office, to direct the economy towards autarky and rearmament, removed decision making on the economy from the state economic ministries. Göring installed special units, 'business groups', responsible for price controls and the allocation of labour, materials and currency in various economic sectors, and 'plenipotentiaries' to run key areas of production. These agencies were the same private and public mix as those bodies putting into effect Fascist Italy's autarky and arms production projects. Göring recruited personnel indiscriminately among party men, state officials, armed forces officers and private industrialists and managers, so that in terms of staffing and function, it was difficult to say where the private sector ended and the public sector began.

In his Four Year Plan memorandum, Hitler was pragmatically neutral on the question of state and private ownership. It was up to private industry to deliver what the government wanted; if private industry could or would not do it, then the government would take its place. The steel industry's reluctance to use 'autarkic' lower quality German ore rather than imported ore in steel making, on the grounds of efficiency, cost and quality of product, was side stepped by the Four Year Plan Office. In a classic demonstration of the 'primacy of politics', the Office had built under its auspices the Hermann Göring Works, which used German raw materials and to which was directed state investment, orders and increasingly scarce supplies of labour. The Hermann Göring Works diversified horizontally and vertically to become a complex of coal mining, machine and synthetic fuels manufacturing, and construction and transport enterprises. It formed an important component of Göring's vast military, political and economic empire, which took in the Four Year Plan, the Air Force and Prussia.

Very significantly as a marker for what was to happen in territories conquered and occupied by the Nazis during the war, important administrative changes occurred in the areas which were annexed to Germany before 1939, Austria and German-speaking Western Czechoslovakia, the 'Sudetenland'. The new parts of Germany were formed into territorial administrative units with common boundaries to party and state jurisdiction, which was not always the case in pre-1938 Germany. The Nazi party *Gauleiter* and the State Governor in these new administrative areas were usually the same party man, a personal union of party and state positions which had occurred in the 'old' Germany in 1933–34. So, the 'co-ordination' of the newly-annexed territories was in the hands of Nazi party bosses, combining party and state authority and functions, and working to Hitler's mandate to 'Germanise' rapidly the new territories. The normal state ministries found it more difficult to extend their own field offices into the 'new' Germany. The purpose, and outcome, was to bring about a more thoroughgoing 'co-ordination' than in the 'old' Germany, by imposing party controls without the rival and restraining hand of state officials and 'official' procedures and processes.

The new territories were generally treated as if they were a kind of *tabula rasa*, open for Nazi experimentation, and in the characteristic Nazi spiral of radicalisation, were the testing ground for new initiatives. This was evident in the area of policy where the Nazis might have been expected to move most decisively: anti-Semitism. In fact, action against the Jews in Germany proceeded in an irregular, ad hoc way. Anti-Jewish policy before the war is a very good illustration of the radicalising momentum of the Nazi system.

Characteristically, Hitler did not appear to initiate anti-Jewish measures himself, though the people who did, claimed, of course, that they were 'working towards the Führer' in seeking to 'purify' Germany of the already clearly identified 'alien' and 'parasitic' racial enemy. It was the party on the ground which initially took the lead. The 1933 boycott of Jewish shops and businesses was designed to remove Jewish economic competition in the interests of its *mittelstand* constituency. To some extent, this party action from below was capped and channelled by laws passed by the central government to purge the professions and civil service of Jews and 'subversives'.

Another burst of party Jew-baiting in 1935 was, again, endorsed and at the same time terminated by the hastily prepared Nuremberg laws, which removed the Jews' rights as citizens and discriminated against them on biological racial grounds. The competitive momentum of the 'system' was all too evident here. The party's action both pre-empted and forced the hand of the central state authorities, which felt impelled to produce measures of their own in order to retain some influence on the articulation of anti-Jewish policy.

There was party violence against Jews and Jewish property in Austria and the Czech lands in 1938, as the NSDAP moved in to claim and colonise virgin German territory, culminating in 'Crystal Night' throughout the

Reich. But this time, party action in the new German territories was followed and supplanted by the initiative of that most distinctively Nazi agency, the SS (*Schutz Staffeln*, or Protection Units). Its anti-Jewish department in the political police apparatus, headed by Adolf Eichmann, started to organise and expedite the mass emigration of Austrian Jews. The evident 'success' of this 'solution' to the Jewish problem was such that emigration became 'official' policy throughout Greater Germany, and prime responsibility for Jewish matters passed to the SS. Their role was validated by Eichmann's proven success on the job.

The SS was Nazism's most distinctive product, and the archetypal Nazi organisation in its formation and mode of action. The SS started as a party organ in the years of struggle, nominally affiliated to the party's paramilitary wing, the SA, as Hitler's bodyguard. Its leader, Heinrich Himmler, gradually accreted by 1936 a vast policing empire straddling party and state, while being accountable only to Hitler, who personally authorised its incremental expansion. It formed its own political intelligence gathering unit, or Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, SD), in 1931, and Himmler took over as head of the political policing sections of all the German states except Prussia, Göring's fiefdom, in 1933. The inclusion of the Prussian political police, the Gestapo, in 1934 made Himmler the chief of a new national political police force, which took the Gestapo name. After the Röhm purge, the SS took over the SA's improvised detention or 'concentration camps' for 'subversives' taken into 'protective custody'. Finally, by Hitler decree in 1936, Himmler was made Chief of German police, a new state post and, as such, nominally answerable to the Interior Minister.

In practice, Himmler's appointment by Hitler's personal decree emancipated him from any control by the state ministries of the Interior and Justice. Himmler merged his new position with his party post as head of the SS, for which, again, he was only accountable to the Führer. In a very significant organisational move, Himmler brought together the political and criminal police, in the Security Police (*Sicherheitspolizei*, Sipo). In 1938, the empire was completed by the SS developing its own military formation, independent of the armed forces, which became the *Waffen SS*.

The presence of the SS is usually taken to distinguish the Nazi regime's repressive apparatus from that of Fascist Italy, which rather disguises how much the two systems had in common. Both police forces had extensive preventive, as well as repressive, powers, which distinguished them from policing in democratic polities. They could, in other words, detain and imprison people on the suspicion of wrong doing, which effectively put no limits on whom they could finger. These powers were exercised independently and unaccountably, without recourse to and outside the judicial system: the police could dispense their own justice.

In Nazi Germany, people acquitted in the courts, or completing a prison sentence, could be placed in the concentration camps under 'protective custody', where the remit of the normal justice system did not run. In

Fascist Italy, the police could enforce a range of sanctions restricting the liberty, movement and occupation of individuals, including *confino di polizia*, a kind of internal exile. Decisions to apply these sanctions were taken by prefectural provincial commissions which met in secret in the absence of those under consideration, who were denied any right of appeal.

Both systems had special courts to judge crimes against the security of the state. While it is true to say that the Nazis' special courts dealt with a wider range of 'political crimes', in the Fascist system, those acquitted by the so-called Special Tribunal or whose cases never reached the Tribunal stage, were referred as a matter of course to the provincial commission for other police measures against them. In both cases, there was an independent and separate 'justice' system, co-existing with the regular courts.

Both policing systems were not only concerned to prevent and repress political anti-fascist activity. The police were also able to act to safeguard the 'values' of the two fascist regimes and, as a result, whole swathes of people's lives and lifestyles were 'criminalised'. Police action was taken against vagrants, people deemed to be behaving 'anti-socially', homosexuals, 'political criminals' because their conduct offended and undermined 'national values'. In a very real sense, none of this was 'normal' policing; it was political and ideological policing.

But differences between the police systems did exist. The SS retained throughout its party character and roots, and was always, as a result, more ideological a force. The palest of equivalents in Fascist Italy to SS policing was the Fascist Militia, which had its own political investigation units, but never really became a party political police before 1943. For its policing activities, the Militia was responsible operationally to the prefect and was no more than an auxiliary to the state police.

The Chief of Police in Fascist Italy from 1926 to 1940 was Arturo Bocchini, a career prefect, who was no Himmler. Most provincial police chiefs in Italy remained career policemen, and their bosses, the prefects, were also mainly career civil servants, although there was a progressive increase in the number of Fascists becoming prefects during the 1930s. Career prefects and police chiefs did their duty by the Fascist state, of course, and had no compunction in applying Fascist laws and decrees. This was one reason why there was no need to purge them. In Nazi Germany, while the Gestapo, as the executive arm of the SS, was normally staffed by career policemen, its strategic arm, the SD, was run by ideologically-driven, non-professional Nazis. The SS, as a result, came closest to realising 'total' policing, waging what it saw as an unrestrained 'war' on those it defined as 'enemies' of the 'national community'. In time, the SS came to see itself and behave as the personification of the embryonic 'new order' of Nazism, its racial and ideological elite.

What becomes clear was that, between 1936 and 1938, the continuity between the 'old' Germany and the 'new' Germany was being broken. The Nazi regime was moving beyond co-existence with existing institutions and

their ways of doing things, developing instead agencies and practices of a distinctive Nazi style and dynamic, which reflected the assertion of distinctively Nazi goals. This process of a 'new order' by-passing, eroding and superseding the 'old', can be observed in shifts of policy, a more assertive foreign policy complemented by economic, military and psychological armament for war. It can also be observed in changes of personnel, and the relocation of functions and power: from Schacht and the Economics Ministry to Göring and the Four Year Plan Office; from von Neurath to Ribbentrop at the Foreign Ministry; from Blomberg and Fritsch to Hitler, in strategic and operational military planning. These shifts in who held power and how they wielded it matched the pursuit of Nazi goals.

5 Fascist internationalism

This chapter explores the contacts and relations between fascist movements and fascist regimes, with the aim of examining the common ground and unity of the various fascisms. For some historians and political scientists such an exercise is futile, even nonsensical; this is a chapter which should not, and cannot, be written.

Those of us who think that fascism was an historical 'phenomenon', that it existed and was 'real', rather than just a figment of historical imagination and speculation, something 'created' by historians, would agree that hyper-nationalism was one of the major, if not the distinguishing characteristic of fascist movements and regimes. For many, ultra-nationalism seems to undermine the 'phenomenal' aspect of fascism from the start. Extreme nationalistic movements were bound to be unique. Their respective nationalisms drew on nationally specific cultural traditions and myths, around which they attempted to mobilise and unify their countries. The point of the national unity fascist movements aspired to create, or impose, was to strengthen their countries against the external threats to the nation's existence and independence, or the external obstacles to national expansion and aggrandisement. They would necessarily be single minded and uncompromising in their defence and promotion of the 'national interest' in their attitudes towards and their relations with other countries. Such relations would, inevitably, be conflictual. So the hyper-nationalism of each fascist movement generated actual and potential conflict between individual fascist movements, and made it impossible, apparently, for them to co-operate with each other.

Cases of the essentially conflicting national interests and aims of fascist movements and regimes were, indeed, legion in the inter-war and wartime periods. Both as movements and regimes, Italian Fascism and German Nazism clashed over the continued existence or not of Austria, and over the status and state location of the area inhabited by a mainly German-speaking population on the North Eastern borders of Italy, *Alto Adige* to the Italians, as the necessary geographical completion at the Alps of Italy's national territorial unification, South Tirol to the Germans, and by race, language and culture belonging to pan-Germandom.

Two fascist movements in the same country, Austria, competed for the 'soul' and placement of their country, the *Heimwehr* for an 'Austrian' nationalism and an independent Austrian state, the Austrian Nazis for the incorporation of Austrians as Germans into a Greater Germany. Similar disagreements over the future shape of their 'nations' divided the Belgian nationalist Rex from the secessionist Flemish nationalist VNV. Transylvania was stolen territory to be restored to the 'historic' Hungarian nation for the Arrow Cross, and for practically every Hungarian, while for the Iron Guard it was part of Greater Romania. We have already seen how, in the late 1930s, with Nazi and Fascist expansionism under way and the prospect of a general European war, the political standing and credibility of fascist movements in France, Britain, the Low Countries and Scandinavia suffered from comparison and identification with predatory and imperialist fascist powers who had designs on their own countries' national territory and empires.

Of course, national interests converged as well as collided in the inter-war period, depending on whether countries were the victims or beneficiaries of the Versailles settlement. Fascist movements and the two fascist regimes could envisage and welcome co-operation with other countries in the name of a common revisionism of that peace settlement: Italy with Germany, Italy and Germany with Hungary. Even here, though, there were problems. Italian Fascist and Nazi German spheres of influence overlapped in the Danube area and the Balkans, and led to an uneasy condominium during wartime occupation of these regions. The Arrow Cross leader, Szálasi, was always rather wary of Hungarian revisionism on the coat tails of German revisionism, when his own vision of a racially-reordered Europe included a Hungarian empire on a par with that of the Nazis.

There is no need to labour the point. The conflict of nationalisms was a real one. But for the purpose of analysis and comparison, the problem is less evident than it appears to historians who want to deny the 'phenomenal' aspect of fascism. Hyper-nationalism was what made fascist movements basically similar, as a *type* of political movement which can be distinguished from other types of political movement, communist and liberal, whose values applied to all, or certain groups of people, whatever their nationality or state, and were 'universal' and 'internationalist'.

This might appear to be rather a glib sidestepping of the issue. To be more convincing, there needs to be a demonstration that fascist movements and regimes were actually capable of co-operating with each other across the battle ground of conflicting national interests, and did so out of a sense of ideological affinity between them.

This book has been heavy on historical context. It has tried to set out the specific but general historical conditions which both help to explain the emergence of fascist movements in the inter-war period, and their relative success or failure in imposing themselves in countries where they emerged. This context made it inevitable that fascism was 'international' and 'internationalist'. It has been argued that fascism was the extreme response to two

interlocked and widespread European crisis points, in the late war and immediate post-war period, 1917–23, and during the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Each country's national crisis was part of a more general European crisis, and each country's national fascist revolution, real in Italy and Germany, potential everywhere else, was an equivalent struggle to defeat what they perceived to be common enemies in each nation.

There was a common European crisis, and fascism was its common solution, played out in each country. To put it another way, fascism's national enemies, Bolshevism and plutocracy or finance capitalism, were also international and were identified, not only by fascists, with powers outside or on the margins of the European continent, the USSR, and Britain and the USA. These were enemies who had to be fought and defeated everywhere. As Hitler said in late 1930, 'the problem of defeating Bolshevism is that of the fascistisation of all the European states' (Michaelis 1973: 577).

It has already been pointed out that contemporaries, again not only fascists, felt that European civilisation generally was decadent and in crisis, a perception in part induced by the sheer destructiveness of the European civil war of 1914–18, and especially present in the 1930s after the Depression. All the fascists mentioned in this book talked up the general crisis of European civilisation, as they were bound to do, and spoke not so much of defending or restoring a decrepit European civilisation, as of creating a 'new civilisation' of 'new men', made in their own image. However pretentious this all sounds, the point was that fascists saw their regenerating mission as both national and international; they conceived of their role in European terms.

The model of Italian Fascism in the 1920s

In this light, it is not just being provocative to say that fascist internationalism was born at the point Italian Fascism came to power, in the 'March on Rome' of October 1922, an event Hitler described as 'a decisive watershed of history' (Schieder 1994: 513). Much later, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the 'March on Rome', in October 1942, Hitler wrote cloyingly to Mussolini, that as a result of the 'March', 'you became a concept' (Michaelis 1973: 546), meaning that the *Duce's* initiative could be generalised about, taken as an example to be followed. Hitler's retrospective congratulatory acknowledgement of his debt to Mussolini was not just a case of one fascist dictator buttering up the other when the Axis war was faltering. It was also a reminder of what the war was actually about, for the fascist regimes, and the sentiments were ones consistently expressed by Hitler since 1922.

There were several reasons why Italian Fascism was the model and stimulus for Nazism and other fascist movements in the 1920s. One, for the German Nazis anyway, was clearly that there were mutually beneficial

alliance interests at stake. In Hitler's scheme of things, even in the 1920s when the Nazis were far from power, Fascist Italy was a 'revisionist' power who would be Germany's natural ally in destroying the Versailles settlement and in breaking the Anglo-French hegemony in Europe which this settlement consolidated.

This, of course, was one reason why Mussolini, typically acting through intermediaries without the knowledge of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, reciprocated the German interest in Italian Fascism. He had contacts with men on the oppositional nationalist German right, from the DNVP and especially from one of the major paramilitary war veterans' organisations, the *Stahlhelm*, or 'Steel Helmet'. Mussolini recognised that a nationalist Germany would be more likely than the Germany of the democratic Weimar Republic to challenge the Versailles settlement and the Western democracies, and so open up space for the realisation of Fascist Italy's own expansionism. Hitler, against much opposition within the NSDAP, publicly confirmed that the South Tirol should remain Italian so as not to endanger any future Italian-German alliance, an interesting early indication of fascisms being able to bridge the chasm of opposing nationalisms, where necessary. Hitler was the only pan-German nationalist to make such a renunciation. This, together with the growing electoral strength of the NSDAP after the 1930 elections, eventually made the Nazis the focus of Mussolini's informal and secret contacts with German nationalists in the late Weimar period.

These early and continuing contacts between Italian Fascism and German nationalism were to do with diplomatic and state interests, actual and potential. But there was more to the relations between Italian Fascism and other fascisms in the 1920s. Mussolini was a model to other fascist movements, because he was successful, both in methods of political struggle and in the creation of a new political and social order. A fascist revolution had happened in Italy, and it could happen elsewhere, and in the same way.

Some German Nazis, especially those on the Nazi 'left', like the Strasser brothers, were unimpressed by the corporative content of the Italian Fascist new order, because they felt it conceded too much to capitalists and high finance, and hence to international Jewry. But all were impressed by Mussolini's coup technique, the way he gained power, and his imposition of a dictatorship. This, in their eyes, definitively destroyed the threat of Bolshevism, because it was based not just on force, though that was important enough, but on an anti-socialist mass movement premised on the idea of forming the 'national community'. No wonder Nazi leaders, like Robert Ley, visited Italy in the late 1920s to see how the PNF operated, and how it expanded into society through its collateral organisations.

The Beer Hall *putsch* of 1923 was to be Hitler's 'March on Berlin', in the event a ham fisted and inaccurate reading of the 'March on Rome', but a reading, nevertheless. Only after the failed coup did Hitler take on board the full sense of the strategy behind the 'March on Rome', its compelling and

effective blend of legal and illegal manoeuvring for power. Valois and *Le Faisceau* had a better understanding of Mussolini's coup. *Le Faisceau*, despite the name and Valois' admiring visits to Fascist Italy, was not directly imitative of Italian Fascism ideologically; its corporatism had recognisably French roots. But Valois's attempted rolling coup of 1926 was the French fascist version of the 'March on Rome', threatening a violent take over of power as a way of inducing a governmental failure of will. It was not successful, because unlike Fascism in Italy, *Le Faisceau* could never muster sufficient weight of numbers and force to pose as a real threat.

What developed in the 1920s was a kind of networking between fascist movements, relationships which were bound to be unequal because they involved a fascism which was in power and those which aspired to be, the regime providing the example, stimulus, advice, place of refuge and exile and the funding for the movements. That the relationship was regime-to-movements provides, incidentally, an explanation for Mussolini's rather patchy and inconsistent public articulation of fascism's international mission in the 1920s. Much though Mussolini disliked acting 'diplomatically' in foreign policy, even he felt constrained as the head of Italy's government not to offend the governments of other states by declaring his political and ideological links to what were oppositional movements in those countries.

The two models of fascism in the 1930s

Such networking continued and intensified during the 1930s, with Nazism in power and fascist movements proliferating. Practically every fascist leader visited Italy or Germany, or both, and had contacts and meetings, if not always with the two dictators themselves, then with other top men or their intermediaries. In the hydra-like Nazi system, many contacts were with Alfred Rosenberg, who in his capacity as head of the NSDAP's foreign policy desk and Nazism's semi-official ideologue, was very keen on forging formal and permanent links with fellow Nazi movements. Italian Fascism and German Nazism were natural ideological poles for Europe's fascist movements, and since they were in government, obviously good sources of funding, so perpetuating the unequal relationship of the 1920s.

It was fairly evident that the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes gave money to foreign fascist movements in order to promote Italian and German state interests. The Italian Fascist government backed the *Heimwehr* to prevent *Anschluss*, while the Nazi government backed the Austrian NSDAP in order to bring it about. Mussolini payrollled the Croat *Ustasha* movement in order to destabilise multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, on whom Fascist Italy had territorial and hegemonic claims. The Nazis funded the Flemish VNV to do the same in Belgium.

As we have already seen, the outcomes of such subsidisation were often unpredictable and did not always quite meet the expectations of the donor. It cannot be assumed that because fascist movements received external

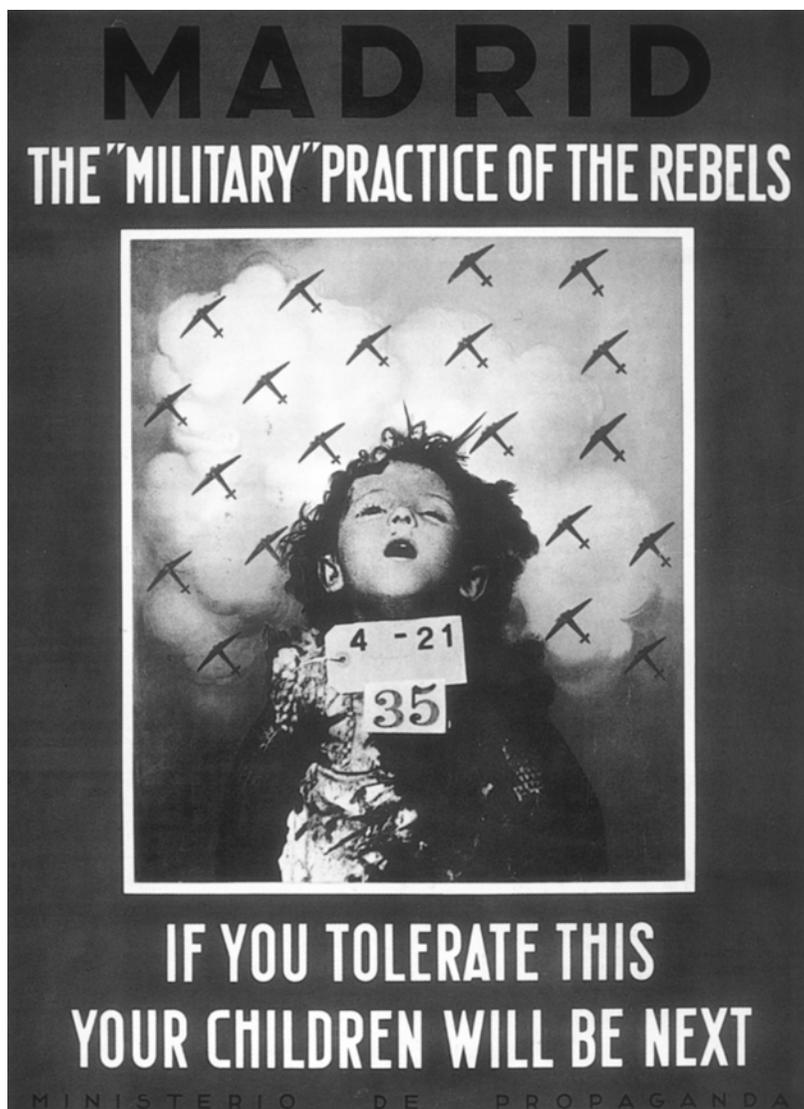


Figure 2 'If You Tolerate This, Your Children will be Next' poster: a Republican Ministry of Propaganda poster of the Spanish Civil War shows the Spanish Republic's concern to 'Europeanise' the conflict. It depicts the aerial bombing of defenceless civilian targets, and suggests that if 'fascism' is not resisted in Spain, then such brutality would be unleashed on the rest of Europe. The German destruction by bombing of the Basque town of Guernica in support of a Nationalist offensive was, indeed, a 'rehearsal' for the 'modern' warfare of the Second World War. The poster's warning words gave the title to the Manic Street Preachers' 1999 hit, a song about old men's memories and how the young fail to 'remember'.

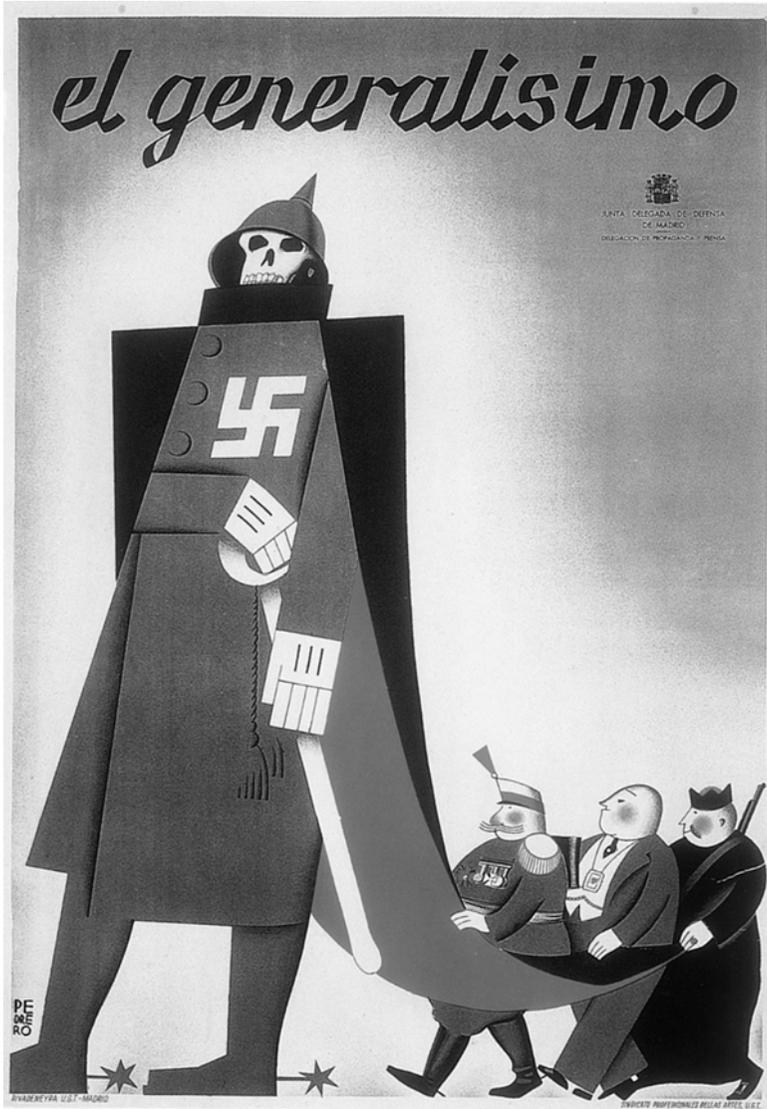


Figure 3 'El Generalísimo' poster: a Republican poster issued during the Spanish Civil War in 1937 depicts the Nationalist military rebels' 'Supreme Commander' as a Nazi, supported by Spain's military, capitalist and Catholic Church 'establishment'. While the portrayal of General Franco's backers was accurate, Franco was no fascist, though he was perceived to be so at the time. Leftists from across Europe fought for the Republican side because they believed that by resisting 'fascism' in Spain, they were resisting fascism everywhere. The Spanish Civil War was the great European 'cause' of the 1930s, marking the ideological conflicts within and between European countries which fed into the Second World War.

funding, they functioned as 'fifth columns' and agents of foreign fascist powers. Mussolini did not secure a *Heimwehr* government in Austria, though the Dollfuss regime patronised by Italy, in which the *Heimwehr* participated, certainly believed in an independent Austria. Neither the Iron Guard nor the Arrow Cross allowed Nazi money and advice to erode their political independence, both refusing to take up their allotted roles as the mass base of authoritarian governments in Romania and Hungary, with whom the Germans always preferred to work.

This was perhaps one reason why, in one of the most calamitous cases of foreign intervention in another country's affairs, Italian Fascist and German Nazi aid to the military rebels in Spain went directly to Franco, rather than through the *Falange*, who had received Italian funding for a while before the outbreak of the civil war. By contrast, Soviet aid to the Spanish Republican side in the civil war was filtered through the Spanish Communist party and used as a lever to increase its influence and presence in the Republican government. As a result, the Soviet perception of the meaning of the civil war and how it should be waged was imposed on the Spanish conflict. One suspects, in retrospect, that perhaps the intervening fascist powers should have done more to promote the *Falange*. Franco sensibly kept Spain out of the Second World War, despite the blandishments of Mussolini and Hitler, who had to be satisfied with 'non-belligerency', or a favourable neutrality, until Franco's neutrality veered towards the Allies from 1942–43. From within the Franco regime, the *Falange* were keen on involvement on the Axis side, and the Spanish 'volunteer' Blue Division, which fought on the Eastern front against the Russians, was largely made up of veteran or 'old shirt' Falangists.

The state interests behind intervention in the Spanish Civil War were, again, evident. If the Soviet Union intervened on the side of the Republic in pursuit of its Popular Front strategy of creating broad anti-fascist alliances both within and between countries, then the fascist powers intervened to prevent such an anti-fascist front forming as an obstacle to their expansionist aims. The dream of Italian Fascist hegemony in the Mediterranean was most directly at risk from a Republican victory in Spain, since it would favour an agreement between Popular Front governments in France and Spain allowing France to use Spain as a land bridge to its North African empire. Franco's victory, on the other hand, would increase Italian influence in the Western Mediterranean and weaken France's position there, giving Italy access to Spanish ports and naval bases from which to attack North Africa.

But what you will notice was that the state interests being protected and promoted in all these cases were fascist interests and goals, and not necessarily 'Italian' or 'German' interests as understood by the career diplomats in the Foreign Ministries or by preceding non-fascist Italian and German governments. These aims were ideological, and couched in ideological terms. Mussolini could send about 60,000 Italian troops to fight alongside Franco's forces in the civil war, some of them disguised as 'volunteers'; this both to

discount any 'official' involvement, and to show that Italians were committed to a Europe-wide struggle against Bolshevism.

It seems artificial and unnecessary, then, to point to a separation between diplomatic and state interests, and ideology, for the fascist powers, and to suggest that one was prevailing over the other, in any given instance. For Mussolini, at least, interest and ideology were fused. From the perspective of Italian Fascist hegemony in the Mediterranean, it mattered who governed Spain, as earlier, it had mattered who governed Austria, and how. A similar form of government was some guarantee of international co-operation.

In the case of Austria, it would have been easy and justifiable to portray the prevention of *Anschluss* in conventional power political and diplomatic terms, that it was not in Italy's interests to have a country as strong as Germany expanding to the Italian frontier. But in Mussolini's anti-German phase of 1934–35, when he was successfully playing off his backing for Austrian independence in return for the Western democracies' tacit support for the Ethiopian adventure, the *Duce* significantly chose to project the differences between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in ideological terms, publicly criticising the racism of the Nazis. As Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany drew together internationally, so the ideological gap opened in 1934–35 was closed, with the Italian Fascist race laws of 1938.

The ideological 'contamination' of international relations in the inter-war period came with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. But it was generalised by fascism, as the self-appointed vanguard of Europe's crusade against Bolshevism, both on the national and international stage. The 'contamination' spread to the Western democracies, as well. An alliance between Republican France and Tsarist Russia against Germany caused no problems in the 1890s. But a repeat version of the Franco-Russian alliance in 1935 provoked deep opposition on the French right, because the alliance was with Communist Russia; and communism, with the coming of a Popular Front government in 1936, was perceived as the greater threat internally and externally than Nazi Germany. Ultimately, the Second World War in Europe was not about German hegemony as such, but about Nazism, and both sides saw the war as a 'revolutionary' and ideological struggle which would determine how and by whom Europeans were governed.

The fascist International

Up to 1930, Mussolini's speeches and writings on the universality of fascism were clustered around the decision in 1925 to make the definitive break with the liberal parliamentary system Fascism had inherited in 1922, and to construct the first ever totalitarian state. From 1930, his pronouncements on the matter became regular and public, and reflected a groundswell of opinion within the Fascist regime itself, expressed especially in Fascist youth and university student newspapers, Bottai's journal, *Critica Fascista*, and a new journal devoted to the theme, *Anti-Europa*.

There were good reasons for this, which were the dramatic electoral breakthrough of the NSDAP in the 1930 elections and the onset of the Great Depression, the impact of which was the greatest stimulus yet to the diffusion and expansion of fascism outside Italy. Mussolini welcomed Hitler's taking of power in Germany in 1933 as a concrete sign of the coming fascistisation of Europe. Since the Depression was the general crisis of laissez-faire capitalism and its political counterpart, parliamentary democracy, fascism could pose as the 'third way' alternative between capitalism and Bolshevism, the model of a new European 'civilisation'. As Mussolini typically put it in early 1934, 'from 1929 . . . , fascism has become a universal phenomenon . . . The dominant forces of the nineteenth century, democracy, socialism, liberalism have been exhausted . . . the new political and economic forms of the twentieth-century are fascist' (Mussolini 1935: 32). The full significance of the Fascist journal's title, *Anti-Europa*, now became clear. Fascism was not anti-European; it was opposed to the way Europe was constituted politically and economically at the moment, and offered itself as the exemplar of a new political and economic configuration for Europe.

Now that the 'European' issue was a matter of official concern, the Italian Fascist regime began to give some organisational shape to it. A clumsily but aptly named body was set up in June 1933 under Eugenio Coselschi, a nationalist poet and propagandist in the D'Annunzian style who had worked in various propaganda and cultural agencies. This was the *Comitato d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (CAUR), or Action Committee for the Universality of Rome. CAUR was meant to co-ordinate and standardise the various PNF and Fascist youth initiatives which already existed, and act as the regime's propaganda agency for the spread of fascism abroad, a role including the funding of European fascist movements. It was CAUR which organised an international meeting of fascist movements at Montreux, Switzerland, in December 1934.

This conference has, perhaps understandably, received a very bad press from historians. It seems to provide further and conclusive evidence of the impossibility of organising a fascist International, of uniting what cannot be united, nationalisms; a task which, to paraphrase a colleague complaining about the lack of collegiality of university lecturers, some historians apparently regard as the equivalent of herding cats.

The instrumentalist aim of the conference was, in retrospect, all too evident. The Italian Fascist regime clearly wanted to promote an international fascist organisation which recognised Italian leadership, and through which Fascist Italy could extend its influence in Europe and affect political developments in other European countries. It was to be the organising centre for the expansion of fascism in Europe on the Italian Fascist line. In this, it resembled its great rival and model, the Communist International, the organisation through which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union controlled national communist parties. CAUR could anticipate exerting some leverage and control through its financing of fascist movements, which would be expected to align their ideology and political strategy to that of Italian Fascism.

It is tempting to extend to the projected fascist International the same view taken of the Comintern, that it was simply another arm of state diplomacy. But this, again, strikes me as distinguishing too neatly between interest and ideology. In Stalin's mind, there was no difference between advancing the cause of communism elsewhere and advancing the cause of the USSR, when the USSR was the one place where communism was actually in power. The interests of the USSR and of communism generally were one and indivisible, and no less ideological for that. Apply this logic to the fascist International, which was about spreading fascism, as the Comintern was about spreading communism.

But, of course, when the conference met, there was another fascist regime, in Germany, and the fascist International project has been seen as primarily anti-Nazi. Hitler's coming to power both confirmed the 'fascistising' trends in Europe, and set up a rival to Italian Fascism's primacy among fascisms. No German Nazi representative attended Montreux and, apparently, nobody from Germany was invited. Rosenberg came to an earlier dry run for Montreux, the so-called Volta international conference on 'Europe' in Rome, in 1932, and had a spat with other delegates, including the Italian ones, over the importance of the race issue. Rosenberg went on to organise his own oxymoronic International Nationalist congresses, to spread the word of 'Nordic' racism. A fascist International which excluded Nazism also seemed to match in timing and purpose Mussolini's then poor relations with Nazi Germany on the state and diplomatic level over the abortive Austrian Nazi coup of July 1934 and his opposition to *Anschluss*.

But if there was a diplomatic context to the Montreux conference, what Coselschi put to the representatives of fascist groups from Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland, Lithuania, the Low Countries, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland, was not radically different to formalising the position occupied by Italian Fascism in respect of other fascist movements in the 1920s. Coselschi argued that fascism was simultaneously national and universal. Each fascism was unique, in the sense that the nation was properly the arena for the action of each movement, which would attempt to take power and govern their countries in separate 'national revolutions'. But Italian Fascism, Coselschi went on, embodied certain universally applicable principles which should be the common denominator of all fascisms, who should accept Italian Fascist ideas as their own on certain key points. The basis for membership of the projected fascist International was, then, as outlined by Coselschi, the commitment of each fascist movement to carry out its own 'national revolution', to apply the central principles of Italian Fascism's new political and social order, which were the totalitarian state and corporatism, and to give the leading role in this regeneration of European society and institutions to youth.

Although the German Nazis were not present, race did emerge as a point of issue between the fascist movements in the conference debates. The Iron Guard pushed hard for the conference to come up with a common position

on race. This was not accepted as one of the essential defining criteria of fascism and of membership of the International. But it was recognised that race was an important issue for some fascist movements, if not others, and could, therefore, be accommodated in the rubric about each movement carrying out its own 'national revolution', taking a 'national road' to fascism. Critics have emphasised the anti-Nazi tenor of the reluctance to include racism in the International's ideological fascist minimum. But while not figuring as an essential component of the fascist ideological mix, it was not really ruled out altogether if it was such for some fascist movements. A movement like the Iron Guard, which adopted a xenophobic and anti-Semitic racism, could be a member of the International.

The attempt at inclusiveness was also open to contemporary and retrospective historical criticism. The criterion of corporatism seemed potentially to encompass all kinds of conservative and rightist groups, and indeed, regimes, which were corporatist. Corporatism, as the lowest possible common denominator, marked, therefore, the poverty level of fascist ideology. This is just unfair and inaccurate.

It was certainly the case that some prominent Catholics justified their rallying to the Italian Fascist regime after the Concordat on the grounds of an apparent convergence of Catholic and fascist corporatism. But as Fascist leaders throughout the 1930s told Catholics and their own corporatists, like Bottai, Italy had a *fascist* regime, not a corporatist one. It was the linkage between the totalitarian state and corporatism which was crucial to these Fascist leaders, and to Coselschi's definition of what constituted 'international' fascism at Montreux, as it was, indeed, to the Catholic authoritarian corporatists, such as Dollfuss and Salazar, who explicitly denied the 'pagan' and secular idea of the self-legitimising totalitarian state. Catholic corporatism, as expressed in contemporary Papal pronouncements such as Pius XI's 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, was based on what Europhiles today call the principle of 'subsidiarity'. This meant that there should be no transfer to the state of functions which can be performed at a 'lower' level, by the individual, the family and civil society associations.

In principle, anyway, Catholic corporatism was inherently anti-statist and de-centralising. A Catholic corporatist economy was built upwards from its building blocks: the family, the job, and the voluntary association of working families. Whereas, for fascists, corporatism was top-down, the means through which the all-powerful state intervened in the economy and society, and controlled and managed the productive forces of the nation. One cannot imagine European fascist movements finding the corporatism plus strong state ideological combination at all onerous or difficult to accept; most of them had or would have this combination in their party programmes.

In concrete terms, the conclusions of the Montreux conference were that there should be an exchange of ideas and propaganda between movements, in effect, a recognition that Italian Fascism would be the main source of

these ideas and propaganda. The communication between movements was to be co-ordinated by a permanent commission for universal fascism, a kind of secretariat of the embryonic International. It was also agreed at the conference that the criterion for membership of CAUR, which was clearly envisaged as the organisational core of the International, and hence, for receiving CAUR funding, was commitment to Coselschi's ideological minimum, outlined above.

Nothing much seemed to ensue from the Montreux conference. The permanent commission met twice only, in early 1935. One reason for the inactivity was internal to the Italian Fascist regime. CAUR forfeited official support after being attacked by a rival agency run by Mussolini's son-in-law, Ciano, the junior Minister for Press and Propaganda. But there was more to it than inter-agency competition, revealing though this was of the regime's *modus operandi*. The fascist International lapsed as a matter of official policy, once Mussolini shifted towards the Axis arrangement with Nazi Germany in 1936. More will be said about the Axis later.

But the disappearance of the International was more apparent than real. If no international organisation really materialised, fascist internationalism went on. The 'Europeanists' in the Italian Fascist regime reconciled themselves easily enough to the Axis and, during the war, the regime officially revived the themes of Montreux, which became its declared war aims. The Italian Fascist version of the European New Order was premised on the remodelling of conquered European countries according to the Fascist blueprint, a fascistisation of Europe around totalitarian rule by national fascist elites, and a statist-corporatist reorganisation of society and economy. This vision was never realised in practice, because of the tenuous hold of Italy over her occupied territories, which obliged the adoption of the terroristic methods of Nazi occupation as the war went on. But it was meant to be an alternative New Order to that of the Nazis, and was an attempt to secure some kind of voice in a new Europe largely subjugated as a result of German rather than Italian military victories.

Italian Fascist internationalism had always conceded a degree of autonomy to other fascist movements. National states would continue to exist and fascist movements were expected to see through their own 'national revolutions'. Interestingly, as war approached, practically all the national fascist movements dealt with in this book, the PPF and *Francisme* in France, Rex in Belgium, *Nasjonal Samling* and the IKL in Norway and Finland, the BUF in Britain, the Iron Guard in Romania, even the *Falange* in Spain, aligned themselves on 'internationalist' positions, at considerable political cost. All of them were for 'peace', and 'appeasement' of the fascist powers, in 1938-40, though on a very different basis to the 'appeasement' of the British and French governments. The real war, they thought, should not be against the fascist powers, but in alliance with them, against the real threats to European civilisation, which were the USSR and Bolshevism. This was wishful thinking, because it assumed the existence of what had yet to be

achieved, 'national revolutions' producing what Doriot called a Europe of fascist nations.

Of course, some of these fascist movements had particular nationalist axes to grind. Both Doriot and Mosley wanted to protect the French and British empires. Quisling's hare-brained scheme for a Greater Nordic Peace Union, proposed to both Hitler and Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, before the war, sought to secure a voice for small nations like Norway in a co-operative of 'Nordic' peoples. But all of them saw their internal national struggles against Bolshevism as part of a more general struggle to save and regenerate European civilisation against 'Asiatic' barbarism. The Rexist leader, Degrelle, was perhaps the most outspoken in his formulation of the coming European war as a European 'civil war', fought between Bolshevism and fascism over the corpse of democracy. Mussolini could not have put it better.

Degrelle's claim to be both patriotic and internationalist must have appeared a little forced in 1939–40. The fascists' opposition to a war with Nazi Germany seemed to impugn the nationalism which defined them. Regarded as potential 'fifth columnists', Degrelle, and Mosley and other BUF leaders and members, were imprisoned or interned by their governments on the outbreak of the war. Both Rexist and French fascists fought in their respective national armies against the Germans in 1940, but their patriotic loyalties were undoubtedly strained by the outbreak of the 'wrong' war. Their own articulation of what they saw as the 'right' war meant that both sets of fascists could see Nazi victories over their own countries in 1940 as 'their', 'fascist' victories over a decadent democratic civilisation. Their collaborationism with the Nazi occupier was the logical outcome of their attempt to marry fascist nationalism and fascist 'internationalism' in the late 1930s.

The Axis

The co-operation between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany started as what Mussolini called in November 1936, an 'Axis', which indicated a looser arrangement than an alliance; an alignment, rather. However, the Axis became a formal alliance, the so-called 'Pact of Steel', in May 1939, the content of which can be used to summarise the nature of the relationship forged between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

The text of the alliance indicates a political and military agreement of an extraordinarily inclusive kind. It envisaged permanent and continuous consultation on all European issues, so as to reach a common stance and agreement on these issues. More irresponsibly, it also obliged automatic military intervention on the side of any one of them who went to war, with none of the usual caveats. The alliance was an agreement *for* war, in other words.

The military and economic co-operation and co-ordination necessary to bring about a common strategy were not advanced very far, unless you take

it to mean the growing economic and military dependence of Fascist Italy on Nazi Germany. This went back to the origins of the Axis in the Ethiopian invasion of 1935–36 and League of Nations sanctions against Italy, when Germany became the main supplier of coal to Italian industry. Some military actions were synchronised, more before the signing of the alliance than after. Hitler told Mussolini in February 1936 that he intended to re-militarise the Rhineland, now that Britain and France were distracted by Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, and did so with Mussolini's active encouragement. Otherwise, it was a case of each side staging dramatic foreign policy coups without fully notifying the other. Communication was unpredictable enough for Mussolini to grumble (not to Hitler) that every time Hitler occupied a country, he sent him a telegram. Mussolini's attack on Greece in 1940 from Albania, recently annexed to Italy, was certainly not cleared with Hitler, for whom it was most unwelcome, disrupting his preparations for the Soviet invasion, which, in his view, required a peaceful Balkans.

Here, the perception of the alliance held abroad was probably more useful diplomatically than the existence, or not, of co-operation between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The Axis, and then the alliance, conveyed the impression of powers acting together, in unison, and were designed to intimidate as a demonstration of apparently irresistible strength and purpose. In this sense, the alliance did denote something, and served the common interests of the fascist powers in pushing for expansion in Europe and Africa. Their expansionist aims lay in different areas, Germany's in Central and Eastern Europe, Italy's in the Mediterranean, though they did overlap uneasily in the Danube and Balkan regions. But their expansion was directed at common enemies, the British, French and Soviet empires and spheres of influence. So, for instance, Mussolini saw and exploited the alignment with the strongest power in Europe as a lever of pressure on France, who, kept in fear of Germany on the continent, might well be forced to accommodate Italy in the Mediterranean.

If the relationship between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany operated to an extent at a political and military level, what is more contentious is whether the alliance operated at an ideological level, too. The text of the alliance, rather unusually, spoke of an alliance of *regimes* and *peoples*, of there being an 'affinity' between *Fascist* Italy and *Nazi* Germany. Much more than a diplomatic friendship was indicated here; rather, a close similarity in the structure and form of the regimes. It was the ideological dimension of the relationship which was emphasised: 'closely bound together through internal relationships of ideologies and through comprehensive solidarity of interests, the German and Italian peoples have decided in the future . . . side by side and with united strength to stand up for the securing of their living space and for the maintenance of peace.' The preamble to the Pact went on, '[i]n this way, Germany and Italy . . . desire to devote themselves to the task of securing the foundations of European culture' (Wiskemann 1966: 413).

When fascists talked about 'European culture', they meant the international struggle against Bolshevism, and this was clearly an ideological basis for Italian Fascist and German Nazi co-operation. The other was race, and anti-Semitism. The ideological alignment around anti-communism and anti-Semitism hardened as a result of the Ethiopian war and League of Nations sanctions, the ideological and much as diplomatic watershed in relations between the two fascist powers.

For Hitler, anti-communism was a matter of ideological conviction, inseparable from his racist and expansionist goals in Eastern Europe. The same could be said of Mussolini, too; the Fascist movement took off as a mass movement as a result of its violent struggle against 'Bolshevism'. This did not prevent Fascist Italy having normal diplomatic relations with the USSR, up to the turning point of the Ethiopian invasion. The Ethiopian war worsened relations with the USSR, who supported League of Nations sanctions and had entered the League largely to contain the expansionism of the fascist powers. At the same time, sanctions drove Italy closer to Germany, out of diplomatic isolation. During the war, the regime began to use systematically anti-communist propaganda motifs, and through CAUR, co-operated with the Nazi regime in doing so. The launching of the Axis in November 1936 focused on the common struggle against communism, the greatest danger to European civilisation, which was being concretely enacted in Axis intervention in the Spanish Civil War.

This conjuncture might suggest that for Mussolini, anti-communism was a show of ideological solidarity, instrumental in promoting a foreign policy of closer relations with Nazi Germany. His use of anti-communism, as an expression of the community of ideas between the two regimes, was there to buttress the diplomatic and state interests of Fascist Italy. Of course, it was this, but hardly this alone. There was no strain involved in Fascist Italy linking itself to Nazi Germany in the anti-Bolshevik crusade, formalised once Mussolini joined Nazi Germany and Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact, both an ideological and secretly military front against the USSR and international communism, in November 1937. No 'show' of ideological solidarity was necessary. Fascism in Italy and everywhere else in Europe was anti-communist as a matter of principle; it was one of the things which made them 'fascist'.

Some historians think that a similar prioritisation of state and diplomatic interests marked the alignment over anti-Semitism. The same historians see the race issue as a qualitative distinction between Fascism and Nazism. They regard the introduction of anti-Semitic race laws in Italy in 1938 as a sign of Mussolini's commitment to the Axis, not a conversion to racism. From this perspective, ideological affinity was the product, not the cause of closer relations between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Introduced for reasons of state, the race laws did not reflect any genuine ideological unity, at least for Mussolini and Italian Fascism. The stress on shared ideologies was a way of cementing a developing political and military relationship.

Mussolini's introduction of race laws discriminating against Jews was certainly seen in both Italy and Germany as binding the two countries together and making much more difficult any Italian understanding with France and Britain. So, if the intention was putting on a show of ideological solidarity in order to make the Axis stick, then the laws certainly had that effect.

But this aspect of the race laws, if real enough, did not exhaust the reasons for their adoption. What can be ruled out was that the Nazi German leaders had any part in the Fascist regime's playing of the race card. This was a home grown racist campaign. The Nazis were surprised, if pleased, by the Ministry of Popular Culture's publication of a Race Manifesto in July 1938, which 'scientifically demonstrated', or asserted, that the Italians were a pure Aryan race, and that Jews did not belong to the Italian race and were, therefore, unassimilable in Italian society.

The Ethiopian conquest was the important connection. Mussolini thought in the 1920s that there was no real Jewish problem in Italy, as there was in Central and Eastern Europe, though there were certainly anti-Semites in Italian Fascism. Mussolini was aware, in other words, of Jews being an international presence, and problem. He associated Jews, nationally and internationally, with anti-Fascism, in the forms of masonry, democracy and communism. He saw the Jews as dominant in international finance capitalism, and a powerful force, therefore, in the Western democracies of France, Britain and the USA, but one, at least in the 1920s, with Europe under an Anglo-French condominium, which was powerful enough not to risk provoking.

These rather conventional political prejudices about Jews were sharpened considerably by League of Nations sanctions against Italy. The regime's first sustained and 'official' attacks on Jewry came during sanctions, which were portrayed as the work of the Jewish international conspiracy of plutocracy and Bolshevism. Mussolini was also concerned about people like the Jews who apparently had dual identities, as Jews and Italians, and doubts about divided loyalties were intensified by the country being at war in 1935–36, and then by the development of the Rome–Berlin Axis.

The extension of Italy's East African empire unavoidably made race relations an issue. Laws to enforce racial separation and, therefore, racial superiority, were applied in Eritrea in 1933, extended to Ethiopia in 1937 and then, effectively, to the mainland in the 1938 measures. This creeping racism had some sense of logic: if racial mixing was wrong in East Africa, then it was wrong for Italians to mix with Jews in Italy.

That the race issue was incorporated into the 1938–39 'anti-bourgeois' campaign, which aimed to harden up the Italian character and mentality, has already been mentioned in Chapter 4. So, after the Ethiopian conquest, a general resolution of race issues in Africa and Italy was linked to the regime's commitment to the fascistisation of Italian society. A form of racism might well have been adopted by Mussolini for political reasons of state. These had as much to do with the fascistisation of Italians as with making the Axis credible as an international alignment.

If the Nazis were pleasantly surprised by the Race Manifesto, they were probably less impressed by the discriminatory measures against Jews introduced later in 1938 and 1939. These were bad enough, but they did point up important differences between the German Nazi and Italian Fascist ideas on 'nation' and 'race'. Fascist racism was a rather odd hybrid of biological racism, as expressed in the Race Manifesto, and non-biological racial nationalism, as expressed in the actual measures themselves. These banned marriage and sexual relations between Italians and Jews, excluded Jews from the PNF and all public and professional employment and prevented them from owning and inheriting property.

But the children of mixed Jewish and 'Aryan' marriages who were not practising Jews were regarded as 'Aryan' and presumably exempt from the discriminatory legislation. Again, 'good' Jews, in other words, war veterans and early members of the PNF, were exempted from the laws, affecting perhaps a fifth of all Italian Jewish families. The Nazis would not and did not allow religion or even patriotic war service to count for more than 'blood'. The 1930s diaries of Victor Klemperer reveal in all its distressing banality (only 'Aryans' could have pets) the impact Nazi discrimination against Jews had on the life and livelihood of a man who was born Jewish, baptised as a Protestant, who married an 'Aryan' German and fought on the Western front during the First World War in the Bavarian army. A man with this background in Fascist Italy would not have been subject to Fascism's race laws.

These distinctions, important though they were, can still be reconciled within a general racism as a defining characteristic of fascism. Italian Fascism and German Nazism were racist, as indeed were all fascist movements in one way or another, because they wanted to create a 'national community' purged of its alien, non-national elements. The minority populations of Slavs and Germans in Fascist Italy were to be ruled as subject peoples, not incorporated into the new Italy, and the interests of the Italian population to be promoted over theirs.

Sometimes, fascist racism took the form of a biologically determined racial identity, as for fascist movements in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Norway and Finland. In other places, it was embodied in the less deterministic terms of cultural and economic difference, as for the BUF and the French fascist movements. As a type of racism, the anti-Semitism of the various fascist movements reflected the same alternative biological or cultural underpinnings. We find here the reason why biologically racist fascists took the extreme path of wanting actually to eliminate Jews, as much as discriminate against them. Whether any one movement's racism was biological or cultural was related to national history and circumstances. Racism was another of the ideological features of fascism which made it both 'national' and 'international'. Each fascist movement was racist, in its own way.

The Axis, and then the alliance between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany,

were one concrete and lasting case of fascisms co-operating with each other. The way this co-operation has sometimes been treated by historians makes a rather artificial distinction between interests and ideology, treating the alliance as a conventional interest-driven relationship between two states, where ideological convergence was the gloss but not the driving force behind the relationship. In my view, both interests and ideology sustained the alliance. Even when ideologically converging, there were important differences in the Nazi and Fascist concepts of race, highlighted in the way non-biological racism prevailed over biological racism in Fascist race measures. These differences, to my mind, do not mark off German Nazism from Italian Fascism as *fascist* regimes. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were both war-mongering dictatorships with totalitarian pretensions to control, indoctrinate and mobilise their populations so that they could fight imperialist wars and dominate. The internal fascistisation of society was both the premise for and the product of waging wars of conquest and expansion. As political systems, this made them qualitatively different from and opposed to the West European parliamentary democracies of France and Britain, but not fundamentally different to each other.

Nazi Germany during the Second World War

There is something to the telescoped view that once Hitler came to power in Germany, a European war was inevitable. War was the apotheosis of fascism and the fascist systems of rule. Only war could realise the fascist powers' goal of territorial expansion for 'living space'; only war justified the mass mobilising and warlike indoctrination of the totalitarian state in its formation of the 'new man' made in the fascists' own image. Lacking the impulse and will for wars of expansion, and the need, then, to organise their populations for war, were reasons why the authoritarian regimes of Salazar and Franco never became totalitarian.

In Nazi Germany, the war accelerated and completed the shift in power, in terms of both the determination and execution of policy, to distinctively Nazi organisations, a process already well under way in the late 1930s. Self-evidently, the decisive shift of power to Nazi agencies also meant that, in and through the war, the regime intended to implement its ideological goals. The war brought about a further radicalisation of policy, on race to the point of final radicalisation.

War was an emergency, an extreme condition; it allowed and justified extreme actions. In the Western democracies at war, governments assumed powers over their citizens, in the name of the national emergency, which were unthinkable and unacceptable in peacetime conditions. In the territories conquered and then annexed or occupied by Nazi Germany, Nazis could act like Nazis, unaccountably and without restraint, as if it was all a fresh start, without the peacetime need to pay some attention to internal and international opinion. Such a situation was bound to work in favour of the

most intrinsically Nazi organisations of the regime's apparatus of power, the Nazi party and the SS.

The party's importance increased at the centre, where Martin Bormann, head of the party secretariat, or central administration, after Hess's flight to Scotland, increasingly controlled access to, and communication with and from an increasingly inaccessible Hitler, to the point of becoming the indispensable interpreter and conduit of the Führer's will. The party and party men also had a greater role and influence in the peripheries. Within Germany itself, the party's regional chiefs, the *Gauleiter*, were made Reich Defence Commissioners, responsible for mobilising and controlling the 'home front' for the war effort, a blanket mandate which justified the party interfering in practically every aspect of wartime life. *Gauleiter* were also appointed as plenipotentiaries to run newly annexed and occupied territories in both Western and Eastern Europe, and especially in the East, implemented truly frightening Hitler 'mandates'. Hitler's instruction to the *Gauleiter* in annexed Western Poland to 'Germanise' the new territory in ten years, typically without any precise orders on how this was to be done, only that it was to be done, opened up limitless possibilities for party experimentation and terror.

But the Nazi agency, or complex of agencies, most associated with Nazism's wartime radicalisation was the SS. From the *Anschluss*, and as a result of its activities on the ground in newly annexed Austria in 1938, the SS de facto controlled the implementation of anti-Jewish policy, which now became one of deportation and emigration. Again typically of the Nazi system, it was Göring, however, who was put nominally in charge of this in 1939. The SS's control over race policy was strengthened formally by Himmler becoming, in October 1939, the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Ethnic Germanism, another imprecise and infinitely expandable mandate, on which the SS could justify its organisational invasion of the newly conquered territories. As the war went on, the SS came to control the political and ethnic 'cleansing', and German resettlement, of conquered Eastern Europe and Western Russia. It also began to implement its own vision of a 'Germanic' and 'Germanised' Western Europe, and organised the 'final solution', the systematic deportation and then killing of Jews from across Europe.

So, the SS was already, by the outbreak of the war, responsible for executing racial policy, and for policing and security throughout Greater Germany. These two sets of powers over race policy and the police were the wedges for ever increasing SS penetration of and involvement in German occupation administration and policy in conquered territories. The SS's own independent military force, its own army, the *Waffen-SS*, expanded to about half a million men in wartime. This army was quite deliberately envisaged as the racially and politically 'correct' vanguard of Nazism, recruiting among *Volksdeutsche*, ethnic Germans living outside Germany's pre-war frontiers, and among 'Germanic' volunteers, mainly in the presumed 'Germanic'

areas of Northern and Western Europe. In its vast and expanding organisational empire throughout occupied Europe, the SS could, with some justification, claim to be Nazism's racial and ruling elite, the embodiment of the Nazi New Order.

As a general rule, the Nazis exported their bewildering and competitive 'system' of agencies and organisations to the conquered and occupied territories. Whether they were military (as in Belgium and Northern France) or civilian (as in the Netherlands and Norway) administrations, the German authorities nominally in charge confronted the full array of existing Nazi bodies and government ministries, which all opened offices in occupied territories. To the pre-existing agencies which expanded into the new territories, like the NSDAP and the Four Year Plan Office, were added new bodies, with special powers and responsibilities, typically improvised to meet wartime needs as they arose. These included a new Ministry of Arms and Munitions, set up early in 1940 to co-ordinate and execute arms production, which under Hitler's favourite architect, Albert Speer, claimed, and to an extent, exercised control over the Greater German 'total' war economy from 1942. There was also its inevitable rival and competitor, the agency run by *Gauleiter* Fritz Sauckel, made Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment and responsible for the conscription of labour resources for the German war effort throughout occupied Europe.

The 'final solution'

The impact of the war on the extreme radicalisation of policy was exemplified in the evolution of race policy to one of the mass killing of Europe's Jews. It should be clear from the way the Nazi regime operated that it did not need a specific written order from Hitler for Jews to be systematically killed, and the lack of one, or documentary evidence of one, is not sufficient to discount that it was intended or 'planned', or even that it did not happen at all. The war widened the dimensions of the Jewish 'problem' for the Nazis, and made its 'solution' more urgent and pressing. This was not just a case of the Nazis improvising responses to an unexpectedly severe problem as it arose, because the Nazis' own actions had created the problem.

The conquered territories in Eastern Europe and Western Russia contained millions of Jews, and the decision to clear Western Poland for the resettlement of ethnic Germans from the Baltic states and Eastern Poland had led to the forcible displacement of Polish Jews to un-annexed Eastern Poland, where they were ghettoised. Feeding and running the ghettos was self-evidently an enormous administrative and logistical burden, and a drain on the German occupier's human and material resources. Emigration, still 'official' Nazi policy, and a territorial 'solution', with a Jewish 'homeland' in Madagascar being mooted, did not seem adequate or speedy enough ways of dealing with unwanted alien populations whose numbers increased as German armies rolled further East.

The particular ideological ferocity the Nazis brought to the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 led to them adopting extreme methods. The USSR had to be destroyed, not only because it occupied German 'living space', but also because it was the embodiment of the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy which threatened the German race's survival. This was, then, a 'war of extermination', to be fought mercilessly and without restraint. The SS attached special killing squads, the *Einsatzgruppen*, to the invading German armies, whose task was to 'clean up' territories politically and ethnically, capture and kill communist party officials, and Jews, as the armies advanced. This was an escalation of the methods of war, and was 'ideological' warfare.

The key decisions leading to organised genocide appear to have been made in late 1941 and early 1942. In July 1941, Göring, still nominally responsible for Jewish policy, 'mandated' the SS to prepare what was called a 'final solution' to the Jewish problem, which at the very least, implied extreme solutions. Meanwhile, the Nazi leadership endorsed some local Nazi initiatives to resolve their own self-created population problems in conquered Eastern Europe in late 1941: the first gassings of Jews, in mobile vans, were carried out in the Baltic states and Poland; the first killing camps were constructed in Poland. Finally, at a conference of all interested Nazi parties at Wannsee, in Berlin, in January 1942, the genocide 'package' was put together and agreed. The SS was to extend, co-ordinate and make an organised process of the various murderous actions already taken on the ground in late 1941.

So, genocide was both the 'logical' outcome of the Nazis' visceral hatred of Jews and of their racial ideology, and also the bureaucratic resolution of what were perceived as otherwise insoluble problems of administering conquered and occupied territories in wartime. For what it is worth, the 'final solution' reproduced the characteristic decision making process of the Nazi system of rule, and demonstrated how the progressive extremism of policy was built into the nature of charismatic politics. Hitler's 'will' on the Jews was hardly a secret to the top Nazi leaders. While he never needed to be specific on the kind of treatment they should receive, his known hostility to the Jews and the central importance he attached to eliminating their 'contaminating' influence on German racial purity were sufficient enough justification for the piecemeal discriminatory measures introduced in the 1930s, as a result of grass roots party pressure being met by government legislation. Self-induced problems in occupied Eastern Europe in conditions of war both made the Jewish question urgent and immediate, and provided the opportunity and justification for once-and-for-all solutions. Local initiatives which seemed to 'work' were then endorsed, generalised and co-ordinated by the top Nazi leaders, who in 'working towards the Führer' on the race issue, arrived at the 'final solution'.

The Nazi New Order in Europe

Hitler was, with reason, reluctant to go public on the Nazi New Order for Europe at any time during the war. This was the case even when the war began to swing against the Axis in late 1942 to early 1943. He was then being urged by Nazi Germany's allies and top Nazi leaders to endorse some official statement of war aims, which would both counter Allied propaganda and give allies, collaborators and occupied populations some reason for their continuing and intensifying servicing of the German war effort other than force. Hitler had a brutally honest position. He did not believe that people in conquered territories would really co-operate voluntarily with their conquerors. Force was what there was, and what the Nazis had to rely on. There was no point, in his view, of creating hostages to fortune by making promises of a 'better' future for Europe and Europeans, which the Nazis might not be prepared to keep. False promises made enemies of disappointed people, and any public commitments tied German hands and made Nazi Germany dependent on others who would want something in return for their co-operation.

This stance of Hitler's explained his stand-offish and contemptuous attitude to the fascists in occupied Northern and Western Europe who wanted to collaborate with the German occupier. To Hitler, either they were so unpopular in their own countries that entrusting any power to them would be counter-productive to a smooth running German occupation; or if they were, or became, popular in their own countries, they were too nationalist to be trusted and would make demands on, or resist demands from, the German occupier. Hitler bluntly told Mussert, the Dutch Nazi leader, in December 1942, that the NSB should not even want to be in power in the Netherlands, because the Germans were about to make even heavier wartime demands on the Dutch people.

But if Hitler was insistent that people should not be told about any projected Nazi New Order during the war, this did not mean, of course, that the Nazis did not know their own minds. What Hitler's wartime stance on collaborationism really indicated was his absolute ideological intransigence, his refusal to be deflected from, or to compromise on, the realisation of his vision of a Nazi racial imperialist utopia.

So, we might glean some clues about the Nazi New Order from the patchwork and non-uniform kinds of occupation regime imposed by the Germans in conquered Europe, and from wartime occupation policies. We can also assemble a reasonable idea of what the Nazis intended as the European New Order from the private discussions, meetings and statements of Hitler and Nazi leaders during the war. At the risk of some oversimplification, the Nazis wanted a racially purified and racially reorganised Europe, built around the core of a 'Greater Germanic empire of the German nation', whose conquest, settlement and colonisation of 'living space' in Eastern Europe and Russia would secure the present and

future of the Germanic race, in its endless struggle for supremacy with other global racial blocs.

The SS, which during the war expanded its political and economic empire throughout the occupied territories and became an independent player in the Nazi system, articulated this New Order more coherently than most other Nazi agencies. For Himmler, the creation of a 'Greater Germanic Empire', ruled by and from Germany, would involve eventual annexations to Germany of the territories now occupied by the Germans in Northern and Western Europe inhabited by the various 'Germanic' peoples, the Dutch, the Flemings, the Scandinavians and, from 1942, in an opportunistic racial transfer by Degrelle and the SS, the Walloons. These Northern and Western European 'Germanic' areas were regarded rather as Austria was after the *Anschluss*. They were racially 'Germanic', but would have to be made to realise their 'German-ness' after existing as national states. The agents of the 'Germanisation' and 'Nazification' necessary to prepare these areas for incorporation into the *Reich*, were to be the local SS movements nurtured and directed by the German SS. So, what was on offer from the SS was a Degrelle, or a Quisling, or any other local fascist leader prepared to cooperate, becoming SS *Gauleiter* of 'Germanised' regions being made ready for annexation.

Some of this was actually being enacted during the war, most evidently in Eastern Europe and Western Russia, where a start was made to the forcible displacement of racially 'inferior' resident Slav and Jewish populations, and the settlement and colonisation of emptied and 'cleansed' 'living space' by ethnic Germans. The overall scheme was also evident in the SS's organisational inroads in occupied territories, and in the implementation throughout occupied Northern and Western Europe, irrespective of the form of occupation administration, of racial and anti-communist policies, including the round up and deportation of Jews to the Eastern death camps.

Perhaps over 100,000 'Germanic' men recruited in Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark fought in *Waffen-SS* units on the Russian front, mostly until the final stages of the war, coming from the ranks of the collaborationist fascist parties and their militias. These men fought in German uniform, took an oath of loyalty to the 'Germanic' Führer, Hitler, and, after being part of 'Europe's' army against Bolshevism, were intended to provide the leadership cadres of the SS-dominated 'Greater Germanic Empire'.

SS recruitment might be considered rather low in numbers. But the significance of what was happening should not be lost. Flemish, Walloon and Scandinavian units of the *Waffen-SS* were, by their service in the German armies, defending Europe from Bolshevism, and were being 'denationalised', made to re-direct their sense of loyalty and identity away from their national states to their common racial-ness.

This was precisely the meaning of the Nazi anti-Bolshevik propaganda which deluged occupied Northern and Western Europe from the invasion of

the USSR in June 1941, and which took on an even more strident and defensive 'Fortress Europe' tone as the German war faltered in the East. One of the most prevalent Nazi wartime slogans became 'Europe united under German leadership in its struggle against Bolshevism and plutocratic powers alien to Europe' (Herzstein 1982: 5). The constant reiteration of the motif of anti-Bolshevism and of a European crusade against Bolshevism was the Nazis' deliberate attempt to widen the basis of 'consent' to Nazi rule in occupied territories beyond the limited ranks of the ideological collaborators, the local fascists. Its impact should perhaps not be underestimated, given that within a decade, Western Europe would be united on the basis of anti-Communism in the 'Cold War'. The propagandistic trick was in passing off Germany's war, Germany's cause, as being Europe's war, Europe's cause, eroding, then, people's identification with their own countries and requiring them to look from their own nation to 'Europe'.

The other connected common threat against which Germany was leading Europe was, of course, the Jews. It was perhaps more difficult to justify anti-Jewish measures in propaganda themes, though the Nazis found the local collaborators they needed to carry out the deportation of Jews from occupied Northern and Western Europe. But the Jewish problem was, nevertheless, 'Europeanised' and projected as a matter of European concern. Baldur von Schirach, then the *Gauleiter* of Vienna and the Nazi party's youth leader, could publicly take pride in his part in the deportation of Jews as a 'contribution to European civilisation' (Herzstein 1982: 159), when addressing a wartime international youth conference. There was no need to wrap this up as propaganda. Von Schirach believed what he was saying.

The Nazi New Order, then, was to be a Europe reshaped by Nazi ideas on racial hierarchy and racial geopolitics. The status of occupied territories in the New Order would ultimately depend on the answer to Hitler's rhetorical question when speaking about the future of France and the French in 1942. 'Can we absorb them with advantage? Do they by blood belong to our race?' (Rich 1974: 198). In a continent where race was the 'organising principle', and where state boundaries would be racial rather than national, the historical Europe of independent national states would disappear. There was a mismatch here between the potential Nazi New Order and the fascist internationalism of the late 1930s and into the war, which posited a series of 'national revolutions' where fascist movements would align their countries' political and social systems to the ideological principles of the Axis powers, and assume at least a semi-independent place in a 'fascistised' and German-dominated Europe.

Fascist collaborationism

One can only say that the mismatch was not as clear to the local fascists of occupied Northern and Western Europe at the time as it might be to someone reading this book. All the fascists in Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Norway saw the defeat and occupation of their countries by Nazi

Germany in 1940 as a great political opportunity to take the power which was so far from them in pre-war, democratic conditions. They saw defeat as revenge on a democratic system which had managed to marginalise them before the war, and a vindication of their criticism of the national and general decadence and weakness that was the inevitable outcome of a parliamentary democratic political culture. Collaborationism, that is, collaborating with the German occupier out of choice and by ideological conviction, was the logical extension of these movement's pre-war positions.

Collaborationism was also, literally, the only route they could take to power during wartime occupation, the only avenue open to them. This was, perhaps, clearest in France. Although the fascist movements were allowed by the German authorities to operate in the occupied zones of France, life was made very difficult for them in the unoccupied zones governed by the so-called Vichy regime. Its leader, Marshal Philippe Pétain, refused to accept the proposal of the neo-socialist turned fascist, Déat, for France to be reorganised as a one party totalitarian state. None of the fascist leaders were given governmental positions in Vichy until very late on, a sign in itself that Vichy was not, and did not want to become, a fascist system.

Vichy's 'National Revolution' was certainly nationalistic and xenophobic, but it was not a creature of Fascism or Nazism, and not even set up as a pale imitation of the Nazi regime. Its political roots lay in the repudiation of the parliamentary democratic Third Republic, especially its Popular Front guise, when France had been run by socialists, communists, anti-clerical republicans and Jews. All the 1930s opponents of the Popular Front governments rallied to Vichy, and served in a regime which was a form of authoritarian, Christian corporatist state, far closer to the systems of the Iberian dictators, Franco and Salazar, than to fascism. The Vichy roll call included *Action Française* traditionalists, Catholic integralists, conservative republicans and non-conformist socialists and syndicalists. It did not include fascists. Cold-shouldered by Vichy, the fascists congregated in German-occupied Paris, and took German money to subsidise a press which spent the war criticising Vichy for not being fascist enough. If French fascism was used by the Germans at all, then it was as a kind of standing threat to Vichy: if Vichy did not deliver what the Germans wanted, then the Germans had Frenchmen in reserve who would.

The local fascists all had ideas for securing a place for their own countries in the Nazi New Order; though interestingly, all but the French fascists did not assume that the national boundaries of 1939 would remain. Quisling saw a National Socialist Norway as the core element of a Nordic 'community' of Scandinavian nations who would confederate with a 'Germanic' Europe, whose head would be Hitler. Mussert postulated a future Europe in which a 'Greater Netherlands', made up of the Dutch peoples of the Netherlands, Flemish Belgium, Northern France and the Belgian and Dutch empires, would join a confederation of Germanic peoples, alongside 'Greater Germany' and the Nordic Scandinavians, each bloc of the confederation

having its own Nazi government and armed forces. Degrelle, in similar vein, pictured a revived Burgundian empire or Low Countries state, straddling the historic racial and cultural frontiers between 'Northern' and 'Southern' Europe. Later, in 1942, he went over to the idea of annexation to the 'Greater Germanic Reich', as a way of tapping Rexism into what he saw as the real power source in Nazi Germany, the SS.

The fascists expected that they would have to earn German aid in the occupied territories. Doriot and Degrelle, for instance, spent more time out of France and Belgium than in them during the war, fighting on the Eastern front in the French and Belgian anti-Bolshevik volunteer units which they



Figure 4 Leon Degrelle, the Belgian Rexist leader, poses as the 'good European' in Waffen-SS uniform, on the front cover of *Signal*, a wartime German army publication, here in the Flemish language version published in occupied Belgium, *Signaal*. Degrelle was wounded fighting the Russians on the Eastern front with his Walloon-SS units, recruited from among the French-speaking, but redesignated 'Germanic', Walloon Belgians.

had helped to recruit for Germany's, and Europe's, war against the USSR. They thought that this was time and risk well spent. If Frenchmen and Belgians fought for Germany in the East, then they could expect rewards from Germany back in the West. This was essentially how the Northern and Western European fascists reconciled their nationalism with the Nazi New Order. By collaborating with the German occupiers, by fighting for Germany in the Soviet Union, they were securing their own nation's place in the New Order. This was real patriotism, for them. For most of their fellow countrymen, of course, they were 'traitors' fighting for an enemy occupying power.

In this light, there are good grounds for saying that the real 'national' and 'nationalist' responses to German occupation came not from the local fascists, but from the Vichyite 'National Revolution' in France, and the extraordinary *Nederlandse Unie* movement in the Netherlands in 1940–41, which attracted 800,000 members on a programme of an authoritarian and corporatist monarchism. Both Vichy and the United Netherlands movement accepted the reality of a Nazi German-dominated Europe. But they sought, in the NU's own words, 'change in a Dutch way' (Smith 1987: 251), 'new orders' which were neither Nazi nor parliamentary and democratic, and designed to preserve a French and Dutch political system even under occupation, staving off a national fascist government.

The Nazis were unlikely to fulfil any of the hopes of Northern and Western European fascists for a confederal 'fascistised' Europe. But they did, nevertheless, do something to promote movements which were falling over themselves to collaborate. As early as September 1940, Quisling's *Nasjonal Samling* became the only party legally allowed to function in occupied Norway, and the same political monopoly was extended to the NSB in the Netherlands in December 1941. In February 1942, Quisling was actually appointed minister-president of a kind of National Socialist administration, which seemed to indicate that Germany was prepared to govern Norway through the local Nazi movement. Hitler's sop to Mussert was a decree making him 'Führer of the Netherlands People' in December 1942, and he was allowed to set up an advisory 'shadow' NSB cabinet to the German civilian commissioner, which was, admittedly, hardly real power. That came with appointments to posts in local government and as secretaries-general, the Dutch civil service department heads who were effectively 'ministers', through whom the occupier governed the Netherlands. In occupied Belgium, the German authorities initially preferred to appoint VNV men to equivalent positions, and only one secretary-general was Rexist. But in 1942–43, Rexists were made mayors and provincial governors in most areas of French speaking Wallonia.

This process of fascistisation, intensifying in the later stages of occupation, was down to two inter-related factors. One was to do with the SS's growing involvement in the occupied territories of Northern and Western Europe, on the back of its responsibilities for policing and the implementa-

tion of racial measures. The SS's recruitment of racially suitable 'Nordic' types into the *Waffen-SS* was its attempt to create Europe's new racial ruling elite. Passing some power to Nazi movements in Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium was a step towards the re-education and 'Germanisation' of racially defined 'Germanic' peoples in and through the medium of local Nazi organisations, preparatory to their incorporation into the 'Greater Germanic Empire'. The NS, NSB, and Rex all started to develop the single party network of collateral organisations characteristic of the PNF in Italy and the NSDAP in Germany, through which they intended to connect themselves to, and penetrate, their own societies.

The other factor had less to do with a Nazi New Order in the making, and more to do with the 'logic' of occupation. The mismatch of the Nazi racial New Order and fascist internationalism made for rather prickly collaboration between the local fascist movements and the German occupier, and much mutual frustration and disappointment. But the collaborating and collaborationist relationship was never ruptured. The fascists had to rely on the Germans to appoint them to positions of power in the occupied territories. The Germans, in turn, were forced to concede to the logic of Quisling's position, that only the local Nazis would ever collaborate effectively with the occupier. The prolonging of the war, and the possibility, then the likelihood, of German defeat from 1942–43, led to the Germans tightening their hold on occupied territories and demanding more of the human and economic resources of occupied Europe for the German war effort. The greater exploitation of occupied areas was the major reason for growing internal resistance to German occupation. Here was the bind. The local fascists and the German occupier could only bank on each other; the fascists were the only loyal collaborators left as the war turned against Nazi Germany.

That collaborationists were the last and only resort for the Germans was clear from fascism's belated installation in power throughout Nazi-dominated Europe in 1944–45. The turn in the war in 1942–43 induced an understandable crisis of will among the fascist powers' allies and near allies. As a response to the war going badly for the Axis, Franco, in 1943, took Spain, until then the Axis' 'non-belligerent' ally, to the safer ground of a formal neutrality. Matching Spain's new international stance, there was a realignment of the internal balance of forces sustaining the Franco regime. The *Falange* lost ground to the extent that Franco by 1945 could declare Spain to be a Catholic corporatist regency, where his successor would be the monarchy. Elsewhere, the worsening Axis war pushed things to the political extremes.

Mussolini was overthrown in a monarchist coup in July 1943, so that the King's caretaker government could take Italy out of the war and the Axis alliance. This move was stymied by the German occupation of Northern and Central Italy, completed with the declaration of the armistice between Italy and the Allies in Autumn 1943, and the German restoration there of a more



Figure 5 Ferenc Szálasi: the last resort. The leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross movement, Ferenc Szálasi, is sworn in as head of the Hungarian government in Budapest in October 1944, the Germans turning to the local fascists only when Soviet troops were advancing through Hungary and after the Hungarian head of state, Horthy, had attempted to take Hungary out of the Axis and the war. But there was still time for the Arrow Cross to participate in the round-up and deportation of Budapest's Jews, and for Szálasi to polish up his vision of a Magyar racial empire, the 'Carpathian–Danubian Greater Fatherland', which went further than the restoration of the lands of the holy crown of St Stephen displayed here at his ceremonial inauguration into office.

radical 'back to the origins' Fascist puppet regime, now stripped of its compromising alliance with monarchy and Church.

In Romania, as in Italy, there was a changing of sides, with the overthrow of General Antonescu's pro-Axis government in August 1944. The German response was futile, but telling. They set up a fascist Romanian government in exile, in Vienna, made up of the Iron Guardists who had taken refuge and been interned in Germany after Antonescu's purge of the movement, with German blessing, in 1941. In Hungary, the regent and head of state, Horthy, who had been in contact with the Allies since August 1943, bodged a surrender to the Soviet armies already invading Eastern Hungary in October 1944. In response, the Germans occupied what remained of the country, and installed Szálasi as 'national leader' and head of government, which put the Arrow Cross in power for a few months until 'liberation' in February 1945.

Even Vichy had to ring the changes. Under direct German pressure, two fascists were finally appointed to posts in the Vichy government which were vital to the German presence in France and France's continuing contribution to the war effort. Déat went to the Ministry of Labour and Joseph Darnand

was made chief of police. In a final desperate throw, when the Vichy government was forcibly removed from France to Germany early in 1945, the Germans recognised Doriot and the PPF as the only political force capable of 're-liberating' France from its new 'occupiers', the Allied armies.

Europe's fascists had anticipated that the military defeat of their own countries by Nazi Germany in 1940 would be their political opportunity. Now that opportunity came only with Nazi Germany's military defeat, as the war which was being lost symbiotically locked together Nazi Germany and its local fascist allies. It was, of course, entirely appropriate that the final defeat of European fascism should be in a war, since war was the only test that fascism wanted to be measured and validated by.

It is difficult to credit Payne's view that fascism was only 'truly' European and internationalist between 1943 and 1945, when the national fascist movements finally conceded their independence to Nazi Germany. The capitulation of national fascisms to Nazi rule, and their dependence on Nazi Germany, were clear enough by the later stages of the war. But fascist internationalism was alive and well at the start of the war, a war which fascist movements expected to produce a 'fascistised' Europe. The experience of collaborationism in the war was marked by the willingness of local fascists to collaborate, and Nazi diffidence towards the offer of collaboration, until that final ironic symbiosis of war which meant that fascists came closer to power only as Nazi Germany moved closer to defeat. This experience demonstrated what was already implicit in Hitler's wartime reluctance to publicise what the Nazi New Order would be, that there was no compromise possible on the realisation of Nazism's ideological racist mission, which alone justified Nazi hegemony and dominance.

6 The phenomenon of fascism

Interpretations of fascism emerged in the 1920s with the first successful fascist movement in Italy, and have proliferated ever since. Payne lists and summarises *thirteen* categories of interpretation, thirteen apparently separate ways in which people have attempted to explain the phenomenon. Significantly, perhaps, none of them have the overall explanatory force and plausibility of Payne's own *historical* overview in Chapter 15 of his book, 'Elements of a Retrodictive Theory of Fascism' (1995). In this analysis, he extrapolates, from the experience of those fascist movements which did become significant political forces, the conditions and circumstances 'necessary' for the emergence of fascism in early twentieth-century Europe.

Fascism and modernisation

When I was planning this book, I fantasised in my synopsis about developing some grand, over-arching explanatory framework for fascism, using a version of the much maligned and much abused idea of modernisation. Now, after nearly completing the book, I have lost my nerve somewhat, and I am not sure that I am capable of producing the grand structural explanation. I am, I suppose, a victim of my own historical inductive approach, of trying to reason from particular cases to infer, or reach, general conclusions. The 'big' explanation is more likely to emerge from the other, deductive approach, which infers the particular from already stated and worked out premises or hypotheses, to be 'tested' against reality.

Everybody has some trouble finding an acceptable definition of modernisation. I tried to use the term broadly, perhaps too broadly for its own good, in the Introduction, as denoting an historical process marked by the passage from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' society. In very shorthand terms, 'modernisation' denotes industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation. In a 'traditional' society, most people lived on and off the land and in the countryside, working in a largely agricultural subsistence economy, and were governed by social and political forms associated with such an economy. Social hierarchies and political authority were ascriptive, that is, 'given', in the ordained nature of things, and society's values were derived

from and based on religion. In a 'modern' society, most people lived and worked in towns, were employed in a productive industrial economy capable of producing material abundance and were governed by the social and political forms associated with it. Social ranking was meritocratic, and based on income rather than inherited attributes. Political authority lay with the 'people' and society's dominant values were secular, not religious.

These points of departure and of arrival are rather crude stereotypes, and use of them assumes that history is 'progressive' and a 'modern' society is 'better' than a 'traditional' society, which in a material sense, is 'true'. Such a process of modernisation is practically timeless and could cover any period from the Renaissance onwards. Nevertheless, one could say that most European countries had just passed through, or were passing through, a process of modernisation from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth-century.

The initial attractions of an explanation relating fascism to modernisation certainly did not spring from the ways historians and social and political scientists have handled the connection up to now.¹ The validity of any explanatory scheme does not perhaps depend on it accounting for *all* the manifestations of the phenomenon to be explained. But modernisation theory applied to the study of fascism has so far produced too many contradictions and arbitrary inclusions and exclusions to stand up to the test of historical 'reality'. If fascism was, or is, a 'modernising' dictatorship, offering fast track short cut routes to 'modernity', that would exclude most of the fascist movements in an already 'modern' Northern and Western Europe, perhaps even the Nazis in Germany. But it would include practically every 'Third World' dictatorship.

The alternative version, viewing fascism as essentially 'anti-modern', just seems plain daft, I am afraid, even if I am caricaturing this position by pointing to the absurdity of the Nazis actually wanting to return Germany and Germans to the woad and animal skins of the pagan Germanic tribes inhabiting primeval forests, or to the military castes of the Medieval Teutonic knights. It was not really a question of Mussolini's regime wanting Italy to *be* Ancient Rome, but to be *like* Ancient Rome, a powerful, dominant 'civilising' force. Past grandeur and power were things to emulate, to be inspired by, to hark back to, but not literally to regress to. The past was 'myth' for modern fascists, not the reality.

Again, fascist racism did not go back into the mists of time, of some imagined racially pure condition. It developed from the scientific, or pseudo-scientific, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century 'rational' explorations of the roots of human personality and conduct; very modern, in fact. Fascist corporatism, or its related forms of state regulation and management of the economy, were hardly throwbacks to the medieval guilds. Such schemes were not an attempt to deny the class conflict characteristic of modern societies, but to resolve them in a way which would increase the productive capacity of industrial economies. The corporatism or national

syndicalism of Mussolini, Valois, Mosley, Doriot or Primo de Rivera was technocratic and 'modernising'.

There is an ingenious attempt to have it both ways, relating the *kind* of fascism which emerged to the stage of economic development reached by the country in question, so that fascism was 'modernising' in 'backward' societies, and 'anti-modern' in 'modern' societies. But even this cannot pin the fascist phenomenon down. Mosley's *The Greater Britain* was hardly the manifesto of a movement wanting to 'de-industrialise' Britain, while the racism and anti-Semitism of East European fascist movements sit uneasily with their allotted roles as their countries' 'modernisers'. In many East European countries, the Jews *were* the 'modern' element, making up the entrepreneurial, banking and professional middle classes.

However, what initially led me to the idea of modernisation was that it seemed to offer a plausible way of grasping fascism's unique synthesis of the 'old' and the 'new'. Fascist movements combined a subversive, anti-establishment search for a new order, offering new and alternative forms of organisation, mobilisation and control in developing mass societies, with having as their constant reference point national cultural or racial traditions and values. I am, perhaps, too taken with Goebbels' remarks at the launch of the *Volkswagen* car in 1939 about 'the steel romanticism of our century' (Herf 1984: 642), which, again, encapsulated in its odd juxtaposition of a 'feeling' ('romanticism') with a modern 'thing' ('steel'), that special fascist blend. The Nazis glorified the modern industrial fighting machine as the concrete expression and embodiment of the German will to power and domination, a sign of racial superiority and prowess. The tank and the fighter plane were manifestations of the German 'spirit'. This was not a rejection of the modern world, but the infusion of its products with the German 'soul'.

This observation regarding Nazism can be generalised. Fascists addressed the problems or consequences of people living the modern industrial-urban life, the anonymity, alienation, individualism, social divisiveness and conflict of modern societies. They wanted to inject some 'soul' or 'spiritual' meaning into modern existence, impart some cohering collective experience, which did not signify an actual return to a pre-modern communitarian idyll. What they offered was an alternative 'modernity', not an alternative to 'modernity'.

Working from this synthesis of 'old' and 'new', fascism's reconciliation of 'tradition' and 'modernity', I thought that perhaps fascism in inter-war Europe could be 'typically' viewed as the product of and response to a transitional phase in the development of 'modern' states. Fascist movements were strongest in Central and Eastern Europe, in countries which were *between* 'tradition' and 'modernity'. This would 'fit' Germany, too, a country, which in the debates over fascism and modernisation, is usually placed firmly in the camp of the developed 'modern' societies. While Germany might have become a modern industrial economy, its political and social structures had not matched or kept pace with its economic development. There is space

here for the suggestive, if over-stated, argument developed by Ralf Dahrendorf, who in his desire to take something positive from Germany's nightmarish recent past, saw the Nazis as unwitting 'modernisers'. Again at the risk of caricaturing Dahrendorf's views, he argues that the effects of Nazi 'totalitarian' organisation were to 'socialise' Germans, especially young Germans, to be good, democratic citizens in the post-war period. Taking young people from stuffy bourgeois and conformist home environments, and teaching them in Nazi organisations to be ruthless and unsentimental team players in the Nazis' own image, finally broke the social and psychological mould of Imperial Germany which the Weimar Republic had been unable to dent. The experience of totalitarian organisation equipped these young Germans, now outside the ruined walls of the Nazi system, to be citizens of a democratic polity. The Third Reich, for Dahrendorf, unknowingly completed the political modernisation of Germany.

I am putting this scheme forward so tentatively, because I do not think that I can now sustain it. Even though fascism was certainly at its strongest in Central and Eastern Europe, it certainly also existed in the countries of Northern and Western Europe, which were further along the trail of modernisation. These fascist movements, indeed all fascist movements, and not just those in countries on the cusp of 'modernity', displayed the same evocation of nationalist myths, whether it was the Elizabethan age for the BUF, or the Medieval Burgundian empire for Rex. And if the fascist combination of 'old' and 'new' was particularly appropriate for countries passing through a modernisation process, as in Central and Eastern Europe, why was fascism at its weakest in Spain and Portugal, Southern European countries which could be regarded as being at similar levels of 'development', or rather, 'under-development'?

The formula does not seem to work as a general explanatory framework for fascism. In the end, I have only found modernisation remotely useful as a tool of analysis in this book's treatment of the coming to power of fascism in Italy and Germany in Chapter 3. Here, I think that fascism's success can be connected to broadly similar problems arising in both countries from late and incomplete nation forming, a difficult transition from oligarchic to mass democratic politics, and the effects of rapid and uneven economic development.

It is not just a matter of an inapplicable formula based on modernisation. It is also a matter of mistaken identity. Ignoring the view that we should take no notice at all of what fascists said about themselves and of what they thought they were doing or trying to achieve, we can state that fascist movements did not consciously set themselves up as the agents of modernisation. The Nazis were interested in reproducing good Nazis in their organisations, not good democrats. All fascists were certainly interested in national regeneration and national power, which would involve building up a strong national (and industrial) economy. But they did this, or wanted this, in order to secure and enhance their countries' position internationally, in a

competitive Social Darwinist world. 'Fascist' industrialisation was about war, and the capacity to wage war. That was what mattered to them, and they did not agonise over whether this made them 'modern' or 'anti-modern', or whether their 'modernising' means contradicted their 'anti-modern' ends. Connecting fascism to modernisation foists on fascism a function which it never saw itself as performing.

Fascism and Marxism

This is really the flaw of that other great theory of modernisation, Marxism, when applied to the study of fascism. Marxists see 'history' as an evolutionary, progressive process, pushed forward by the impact of changes in the economy and modes of production on human development and society, the interaction between humankind and its material environment. Fascism, in this perspective, was 'reactionary', the product of a capitalist system in crisis, when under the threat from socialist revolution and the social and political advances of the organised working-class movement, the dominant economic interests in society turned to fascism as the last ditch defence of those interests, no longer secured by other political movements or state systems. At its crudest, Marxists saw fascism as the 'agent' of the economic interests of the dominant capitalist classes, though few Marxist historians these days would portray the connection between fascism and capitalism in such terms.

Marxist interpretations of fascism offer a very hard-headed approach. Fascism's 'true' nature cannot be deduced from what fascists said they wanted or intended to do. What mattered was the answer to the question derisively asked by Italian socialists of their ex-socialist comrade, Mussolini, in 1915: 'Who pays?' Whose economic interests were being served by fascism? Marxists would say that fascist movements were 'controlled' by capitalist interests, or by powerful groupings of capitalist entrepreneurs and financiers, and that once in power in Italy and Germany, the fascist regimes' policies were determined by economic priorities and were framed essentially in the interests of these capitalist groups.

This kind of analysis has some explanatory force, even now. Fascist squadrist in Italy in 1920–22 was a violent offensive to destroy socialist and Catholic working-class organisations which in the post-war *biennio rosso* threatened a whole swathe of capitalist interests in town and countryside. We know that individual businessmen and business lobbies financed fascist movements in inter-war France, largely because of these movements' virulent anti-socialism. Valois, the leader of *Le Faisceau*, eventually wound up his movement in 1928, because he could not continue his movement's dependence on that financial support at the price of compromising his party programme. Both the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes were founded on the permanent repression of independent working-class organisations.

One of the problems with this analysis of fascism is that it blurs the distinction between fascism and other movements and systems of rule. If the

'essence' of any political movement or system is its capacity to defend, promote and represent the economic interests of dominant capitalist groupings, then any anti-socialist movement or any repressive system of government can be regarded as 'fascist', from the fascist dictatorships themselves, to the military dictatorships of Spain and Romania, the authoritarian regimes in Hungary, Romania and Portugal and even the parliamentary democratic Weimar Republic in Germany. You should refer back to the points in this book in Chapters 2 to 5, where I attempt to distinguish the fascist movements in France from the conservative paramilitary leagues, the fascist regimes proper from the authoritarian governments in Eastern and Southern Europe.

Some of the earlier inter-war Marxist interpretations of fascism clearly had difficulty in accepting that some fascist movements gained a mass following, with a range of popular support beyond the narrow clique of capitalists who 'controlled' the movements. It was certainly the case that most fascist movements recruited most successfully among the middle classes of town and countryside. Those who want to define fascism as 'anti-modern' point to fascism's special constituency being the 'old' lower middle classes, artisanal manufacturers, small shopkeepers and tradesmen, small farmers: the 'victims' and the residue of an ongoing modernisation process which was creating an organised industrial and agricultural proletariat and capitalist entrepreneurs, the two typical products and protagonists of a modern industrial economy. This view is one-dimensional; fascist movements *also* appealed to the 'new' middle classes in the white-collar tertiary service and public sectors of developing capitalist economies. Fascism's mainly middle-class political support would seem to confirm the Marxist class-based view of fascism. But some fascist movements, including the most important ones in Central and Eastern Europe, recruited well among landless agricultural labourers, and among industrial workers, often themselves first generation migrants from rural areas.

In many cases, the 'typical' members and activists of fascist movements were war veterans and the secondary school and university students who had lived through the war and the immediate post-war aftermath. While, by social background and expectations, these young or younger men were mainly middle class, and this undoubtedly played a part in their choice of radical politics, the war veterans who came to fascism did so because their political consciousness had been shaped by the war experience, not by the politics of class. To some extent, Mussolini, Valois, Mosley were justified in seeing 'combatants' and 'producers' as a new 'class' created in and by the war.

Finally, of course, there is the point which has been hammered away at throughout the book. Even if their hopes were never or only partially realised, fascist movements claimed and wanted to be national, 'people's' parties, catch-all movements representing all sections of the 'national community'. In this respect, they differed from their political rivals, whose

support and appeal ran along the fault lines of modern European societies of class, religion and ethnicity. The extent to which fascist movements approximated to the cross-class 'people's' party ideal, depended on the variable 'availability' of different social groups to fascist appeal and organisation. Most industrial workers and Catholics of all classes were politically spoken for in Weimar Germany, and in Republican Spain, even when the Depression seemed to shatter existing political loyalties. Many industrial workers and poor peasants in Hungary and Romania had not been reached by other political organisations, and joined and supported fascist movements as the only radical and anti-establishment forces around.

It might be the case that there was something intrinsically 'middle class' about the extreme nationalism of fascism. But 'national socialism', 'national syndicalism', corporatism, even the 'fool's socialism' of anti-Semitism, were attempts by fascist movements to provide a bridge between classes and 'nationalise' workers on a basis other than force. As with modernisation, I do not think that fascist movements and regimes were pre-occupied with capitalism as such. They preferred the industrial entrepreneur to the money-dealing financier, because the industrialist was 'productive' and manufactured things which enhanced national power, while the financier made nothing, except money gained by speculating on the production of others. But the point, for fascists, was to ensure that the economy served a national purpose, as defined by them. The Iron Guard and Arrow Cross economic 'programmes' were not to destroy capitalism, but make it 'national', by confiscating and transferring the property and assets of Jews to native Romanians and Hungarians.

More nuanced Marxist analyses of the fascist regimes have used Marx's treatment of mid-nineteenth century French Bonapartism, the imperial rule of Napoleon III, as an analogue by which to understand fascism better. The analogy at least leads to the acknowledgement that the political executive or leadership of the two fascist regimes achieved and put to use a degree of autonomy from the economic ruling classes on whom they still ultimately depended. Whatever you think of the analogy, any interpretation which gives some significant play to the independence of political leadership, also removes the economy as the prime, or single, motive force of historical change. By the time a very good Marxist historian of Nazi Germany, Tim Mason, writes an article on Nazism under the title of 'the primacy of politics', you can sense the game is up.

To get to grips with Marxist analysis, you have to look at the institutional structures of the two fascist regimes in the 1930s, and at the decision making processes, especially as they affected what was to happen to the national economies, asking the Marxists' own question: 'Whose interests were being served?' Of course, there were massive increases in production and profits for industries in both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany which were connected to the regimes' armaments and autarky programmes, and for the banks which helped to finance these businesses. This was presumably why

the Comintern in 1934 defined fascism as the 'dictatorship of the *most* reactionary, *most* chauvinistic and *most* imperialist elements of finance capital' [the emphases are mine]. Industrial managers played a part in setting and executing such policies, sitting on the boards of the various production corporations of the Four Year Plan Office, or of the Italian state holding company, IRI. Many German industries enjoyed the plundering of the economic assets of occupied territories from 1940. Even the mass killing of Jews in the camps of Eastern Europe was a 'business'.

But while Nazi genocidal policies during the war certainly had an economic dimension, I have yet to be persuaded by any argument that the 'final solution' was to be explained by economics. The two fascist regimes' drive for rearmament and autarky, gearing their national economies up for war, were political decisions, in pursuit of political and ideological goals, and imposed on Italian and German society and economy. The businesses which benefited from the regimes' policies did so because of the congruence of interests and fascist policies, not because those businesses determined or directed those policies.

Marxists, naturally enough, assume that the only 'real' revolutions are on the left. Fascism was anti-socialist, was supported by conservative forces because of its anti-socialism, and so, apparently, acted in conservative social and economic interests. Maybe they are right. But by any reasonable definition of 'revolution', the usually violent attempt to transform, that is, change fundamentally, political institutions and leadership, social structures and values, fascism was 'revolutionary'.

The context of fascism

So the book has, finally, defaulted on the grand structural explanation of the fascist phenomenon. It has taken refuge in *context*, which is where historians go in order to find meaning for the phenomenon they are examining. At times, the book must have appeared to be a history of Europe from the 1890s to 1945, and there should be no apologies for this. For one thing, such a history needs to be written. For another, locating fascism in the wider period of early twentieth-century European history puts one story in the context of a bigger story, and the larger context gives a meaning, an interpretation, to fascism.

The book will have succeeded in its aims if you now understand why there were so many fascist movements in inter-war Europe, and so few fascist regimes, and why fascist movements were stronger in Central and Eastern Europe than in Northern and Western Europe. The relative strength and weakness of fascist movements were related to the degree of severity of the various and overlapping forms of the general crisis of the Versailles system, and to the resilience of existing governments and political systems in coping with them. The interconnected elements of this general post-war European crisis, giving rise to the general phenomenon of fascism were, in

the 1920s, the actuality or fear of socialist revolution; national defeat and humiliation in the First World War, involving loss of territory, and contested frontiers; the collapse of multinational empires into new national states facing real problems of national identity and integration; the very difficult transition from wartime to peacetime economies, and from one kind of political system, monarchy, to another, parliamentary democracy. In some countries, Austria, Germany, Hungary and Italy, all components of this wartime-induced post-war crisis were present. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the general crisis of the Great Depression resulted in the formation of new fascist movements, in Britain, France, Hungary, the Low Countries, Scandinavia and Spain, and increased weight to existing movements, in Austria, Finland, Germany and Romania.

The legitimacy and viability of new post-war democratic political systems were particularly under challenge in the countries of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, whose peoples were inexperienced or untried in the ways of parliamentary democracy. Fascism was an especially significant political force in some parts of Eastern Europe because of the severity and intractability of ethnic nationalistic tensions following the Versailles settlement. The untidy but probably inescapable mismatch of state and ethnic boundaries in the region threw up any number of long running 'civil wars' between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' which fascist movements could both foment and exploit.

Interestingly, while there was a discernible general drift away from democratic political systems in inter-war Central and Eastern Europe, in face of the various facets of the post-war crises, this did not usually work to the ultimate advantage of fascism. An authoritarian political climate might have seemed the ideal one for fascist movements to triumph. But the authoritarian governments in Spain, Portugal, Austria and Eastern Europe, had a competitive and pre-emptive relationship with their national fascist movements, and kept them from power. Socio-economic stabilisation occurred under authoritarian auspices in these countries, perhaps the clearest indication we have of the 'revolutionary' character of fascist movements, whom authoritarian governments opposed and repressed.

Conversely, fascism was relatively weaker in the countries of Northern and Western Europe, where the post-war crises passed without shaking fundamentally the credibility of democratic political systems. The democratic political class coped, in other words, and closed down the political opportunities and openings for fascism as a radical alternative system. This was not a given, or inevitable situation, but a contingent one. Fascism was such a serious threat and alternative to democratic politics that it had to be opposed, in order to be defeated. The triumph of Nazism in Germany, in this sense, cast a long shadow over democratic Northern and Western Europe in the 1930s. The communist left, eventually, and the socialist and democratic left combined to defeat fascism in peacetime in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Spain, sometimes doing so by forming formal and informal Popular Front coalitions, sometimes by legal repression,

more often by acting in ways which prevented a crisis in the system becoming a crisis of the system. Fascism emerged and developed wherever and whenever crisis persisted; it was marginalised in and by conditions of political stability. So, if the book has to end with an historical formula which 'works', then the 'constant' was crisis, or crises; the 'variables' were the severity and intensity of the crisis and the legitimacy or not of the democratic political systems which the crises put to the test.

The two fascist regimes in Italy and Germany showed what could be expected of fascist 'national revolutions' being enacted across Europe, the attempt to 'revolutionise' their societies by and through war, the only meaningful test for fascists. The Second World War in Europe was the culmination of an ideological war with fascism fought within and between European countries. This was evident in the way post-war Western Europe, at least, was recast on democratic bases which were not simply a return to 1919, but which took account of the lessons of the Depression and of fascism's economic and political nationalism.

Glossary

accidentalism The political idea adopted by some Catholic political parties that it did not matter to Catholics what kind of government they lived under, as long as the interests of the Catholic Church and religion were upheld.

Anschluss The political and territorial union of Austria and Germany, realised by Hitler's occupation of Austria in 1938.

anti-Semitism The feeling of hatred towards Jews, expressed in policies or by political movements which seek to curb or remove the presence and influence of Jews in society.

appeasement The policy followed by Britain between 1936 and 1939 which attempted to keep peace in Europe by making concessions to the Axis powers.

Ausgleich Literally 'compromise', the 1867 agreement between the Austrian Habsburg emperor and Hungary which effectively gave Hungary self-rule within the Habsburg empire, thereafter called the 'Austro-Hungarian' empire or the 'Dual Monarchy'.

autarky National economic self-sufficiency, a goal for both fascist regimes from the mid-1930s.

avant-garde A term describing innovative and vanguard cultural and political movements.

Axis, Rome–Berlin The name coined by Mussolini in late 1936 to mark the co-operative relationship between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, formalised in the political and military alliance between the two in 1939, the 'Pact of Steel'.

blitzkrieg Literally, 'lightning war', the term applied to the strategy followed by Hitler to achieve his rapid military victories in Poland and Northern and Western Europe, 1939–40 and in the Soviet Union, 1941–42.

charismatic rule A system of government where the political leader's claim to rule stems from the personal sway and authority he exercises over his followers or his people as an extraordinary person seen to embody some higher and superior power or force. Mussolini's position as *Duce* and Hitler's as *Führer* were 'charismatic'.

- collaborationism** The kind of co-operation with the Nazis of people and political movements in Nazi-occupied Europe during the Second World War which sprang from an ideological affinity and commitment to Nazism.
- collective security** A system exercised by international organisations for keeping peace and security among member states on the principle of concerted action by all in defence of each. Article 10 of the League of Nations covenant expressed this principle.
- Comintern** An abbreviation for the Communist International, also called the Third International, the international organisation of communist parties founded by Lenin in 1919, in order to spread communist revolution and co-ordinate the activities of communist parties with those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
- corporatism** A body of ideas which envisaged a socio-economic and political system based on the representation of people by economic and productive function, in sectoral organisations which apparently harmonised the interests of workers, managers and the state. There were democratic, Catholic, authoritarian and fascist versions.
- coup (or *putsch*)** A violent military or paramilitary seizure of power.
- dirigiste*** The term used to describe a government which intervenes to control and direct the economy and society.
- Entente*** Literally, 'agreement', this term referred to the First World War alliance of Britain, France and Russia.
- epiphenomenon** A subsidiary phenomenon, the by-product of some larger process.
- fascistisation** The process of making 'fascist' government and state institutions, society and the economy, carried out by the fascist party.
- final solution** The term applied by the Nazis to mean the mass systematic killing of Europe's Jews, from early 1942.
- generic** General; displaying characteristics common to each member of a group.
- Great Depression** The global economic crisis of 1929–33.
- hyper-nationalism** A very extreme nationalism.
- ideal type** An abstract concept or model devised to facilitate the 'scientific' definition and analysis of facets of human activity.
- ideology** A body or set of ideas which informs and inspires political action.
- integral nationalism** A view of the nation as being analogous to the human body, a 'living' and developing organism, and as an ethnic community held together by its sense of a shared past, present and glorious future.
- irredentism** A term originating in late nineteenth-century Italy, to describe the programme of those Italians who claimed for their newly-unified state regions regarded as 'Italian' which were still outside national territory. The term was then applied to any similar claim to 'redeem' national territory from foreign rule.

- laissez-faire capitalism** An economic system of free trade and free enterprise where, as a matter of principle, there is no attempt to constrain the play of market forces.
- League of Nations** The international organisation set up in 1919 to safeguard the post-war treaties and keep peace between nations.
- Lebensraum (or spazio vitale)** Literally, 'living space', the term was used by the German Nazis and Italian Fascists to denote the territorial expansion which they regarded as essential to the survival and strengthening of their peoples.
- Little Entente** The anti-Hungarian alliance of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, completed in 1921.
- Locarno treaties** The treaties signed in 1925 by which Britain and Italy guaranteed the borders in Western Europe of Belgium, France and Germany, as established in the Versailles Treaty.
- modernisation** A term used to describe the process of the multifaceted transition from 'backward' to 'modern' societies.
- myth** Words, symbols and images which convey a set of visionary beliefs aiming to engage and mobilise people's psychological energies and emotions behind political action.
- national self-determination** The principle applied to the territorial re-ordering of Europe after the First World War, by which each ethnic nation had its own territory and state, and a democratic system of government.
- national syndicalism** A set of ideas which merged revolutionary syndicalism with nationalism, and envisaged the reorganisation of the national economy into unions of 'producers'.
- New Order** The term given to German Nazi plans for the reorganisation of Europe during and as a result of German occupation of defeated countries from 1940.
- plutocracy** Meaning government by a wealthy elite, the term was used by fascists to denigrate 'finance' capitalism, the power of bankers and financiers in capitalist economies.
- Popular Front** The political strategy adopted by the Soviet Union and European communist parties from 1934 to 1939, which aimed to link communist parties to other left-wing and centrist parties in broadly-based anti-fascist political alliances. The strategy was also applied to international relations, with the USSR seeking to deter the expansionism of the fascist powers.
- positivism** A way of thinking, dominant in the late nineteenth century, which saw man as capable of knowing only 'real' phenomena, the meaning of which was unlocked by the use of reason.
- proportional representation** An electoral system with many variations which distributes seats to political parties in an elected parliament in direct proportion to the number of votes gained by each party.

- proto-fascism** The term for what is seen as an earlier and primitive, rather than fully-fledged, form of fascism.
- Quadragesimo Anno*** Literally, 'fourtieth year', the title of Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical, which restated and refined the Catholic teaching outlined in Pope Leo XIII's famous 1891 encyclical, *De Rerum Novarum*.
- reparations** The heavy payments claimed by the victorious powers in the First World War from the defeated powers, to compensate them for the losses suffered during the war on the grounds that the latter were 'responsible' for causing the war.
- revisionism** The desire of various European countries to 'revise' the post-war peace treaties so as to recover territory which they had lost or failed to gain, in those treaties.
- Social Darwinism** The application, or misapplication, of Darwin's theory of evolution to society, politics and international relations.
- successor states** The new Central and East European states which emerged from the post-war peace treaties and the dismemberment of the defeated multinational Austro-Hungarian empire.
- total war** The term derived from the experience of the First World War to indicate the need for the government's mobilisation of all the country's human and material resources, and the interdependence, rather than the separation, of the 'home' and 'fighting' fronts.
- totalitarian** The term first coined by Mussolini to legitimise the Italian Fascist state's attempt to dominate and direct all aspects of people's existence so as to 'make' fascists out of Italians and create a new 'civilisation' and way of life. Totalitarian goals and techniques were adopted implicitly or explicitly by all inter-war fascist movements and regimes.
- Versailles system** Taking its name from the Treaty of Versailles signed with Germany in 1919, the term referred to the whole batch of post-war treaties and the political and territorial changes in Europe they brought about.
- völkisch*** Literally, 'national', the term describes what German nationalists saw as the distinctive, superior and mystical nature of ethnic German culture.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Between 1965 and 1990, De Felice published seven volumes of the Mussolini biography. The historiographical controversy generated by the man and his work is only just beginning to filter into English language histories of Italian Fascism, and is best followed in Richard Bosworth's two books mentioned in the bibliography.

1 The roots of fascism

- 1 Croce used the term in 1943–44, significantly at the time when Fascism was being defeated, and thoughts were turning to the shape post-war and post-Fascist Italy would take. See De Felice, R. (1974) *Le interpretazioni del fascismo*, Bari: Laterza.

6 The phenomenon of fascism

- 1 The treatment of modernisation and its connection to fascism can be followed in almost any book by the prolific American political scientist, A.J. Gregor, such as his (1974) *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Gregor takes fascism to be 'modernising'. Fascism, or Nazism, as 'anti-modern' is explored by H.A. Turner; fascism as both 'modernising' and 'anti-modern' is developed by A. Cassels. Both contributions are reproduced in Turner, H.A. (ed.) (1975) *Reappraisals of Fascism*, New York: New Viewpoints.

Guide to further reading

As indicated in the Introduction, the study of fascism is no empty playground, but an overcrowded space where a mob of children jostle each other for a kick of the ball. So this selected bibliography is very selective indeed.

Pride of place should go to those books which attempt the difficult task of being general and comparative. Roger Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism*, London, Routledge, 1993, is probably the most significant and original recent contribution to the general theory and definition of fascism. Whether or not you agree with his view of the essence of fascism, the vision is plausible and cogently argued-out, and it is not all theoretical. The book is dense, but user-friendly. He kindly indicates which bits you can safely skip in your passage through the book, though you should read it all, if only to see a mind at work. He has supplemented this with *Fascism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, a very good selection of primary and secondary sources on fascism and its historiography, where the commentary largely repeats what you find in *The Nature of Fascism*.

Stanley Payne's *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, London, UCL Press, 1995, has less obvious conceptual verve, but he does bring the political scientist's concern to impose an order and pattern on apparently disparate political movements. While being exhaustive and comprehensive in his treatment, he does also provide a plausible and convincing historical explanatory framework to fascism, expanding on his earlier more schematic book, *Fascism. Comparison and Definition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

Both Griffin and Payne also take the reader into areas where I have not dared to tread: 'global' fascism and post-1945 'neo-fascism'. Roger Eatwell's *Fascism. A History*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1995, goes into post-war 'neo-fascism', too. His book is not as grand as it claims to be, but it is still very good. Its coverage of fascist movements is far from comprehensive, with barely anything on some of the largest movements in Eastern Europe.

Walter Laqueur's *Fascism. A Reader's Guide: Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, London, Penguin, 1979, still has some useful and interesting articles, including Linz's comparative study of the electorates, membership and personnel of fascist movements. But its historiographical essays

probably need refreshing. S.U. Larsen *et al.* (eds) *Who were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, Bergen, Universitets Forlaget, 1980, is still very useful on the ground covered by Linz. Much space is devoted to the relatively insignificant movements in Scandinavia and Western Europe, and in some of these articles, the approach is microcosmic to the point of invisibility. A survey of the psycho-social bases of the BUF draws on all of fifteen people. But in-depth analyses of the political affiliations of the lumberjack communities of Western Norway at least throw up explanations for insignificance, which can be applied or adapted to other contexts.

The other comparative works, naturally enough, concentrate on the two major fascisms in Italy and Germany. MacGregor Knox has recently brought together in a single volume, *Common Destiny. Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, his articles on Italian Fascism and German Nazism, usually productively compared, especially in a seminal piece, 'Conquest, Foreign and Domestic, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany', which originally appeared in the *Journal of Modern History* 56, 1, 1984. This is comparative history at its best, illuminating our understanding of both sides of the comparison and of what Mussolini and Hitler singly and together were about. It seems odd that such a fruitful comparison nevertheless leads MacGregor Knox to deny the phenomenal aspect of European fascism(s). Alexander De Grand's *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The Fascist 'Style' of Rule*, London, Routledge, 1995, is a distilled, compressed and at the same time, clear and comprehensive treatment, almost the perfect read for students.

The same can be said, even more so, for Ian Kershaw's *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London, Arnold, 3rd edn, 1993, a sublime combination of historiography and historical synthesis which practically removes the need to teach the topic. The length of his massive two-volume biography of Hitler, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris*, London, Allen Lane, 1998, and *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis*, London, Allen Lane, 2000, probably puts it beyond the reach of many readers. But, again, it is worth the effort, with much creative tension coming from an essentially 'functionalist' historian of the Third Reich tackling its dominant individual figure. As a result, the books are very strong on the conditioning contexts in which Hitler and his system of rule operated. For those who cannot face the full biography, Kershaw's much shorter *Hitler*, Harlow, Longman, 1991, is an excellent insight into how charismatic leadership actually worked in Nazi Germany.

The only half-decent biography of Mussolini in English, and there is a real gap in the market here, is that by Denis Mack-Smith, *Mussolini*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981, which is funny, entertaining, brilliantly sustained and, in its remorseless concern to expose the absurdities of Mussolini and his regime, condescending. Thankfully, no reader who only knows English has yet been exposed to the recently-deceased Italian historian Renzo De Felice's mammoth encyclopaedic multi-volume biography of

Mussolini. It is often unintelligible in Italian, let alone English, and yet his contradictory judgements of Mussolini have stirred up considerable controversy among historians of Italy. Echoes of De Felice's work are, at last, beginning to appear in some English language histories of Italian Fascism. John Whittam acknowledges his debt to De Felice in his decent summary account, *Fascist Italy*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995, though it is difficult to see precisely how his treatment of Italian Fascism is affected by having ploughed through De Felice's work.

The maestro's biography of Mussolini is nicely contextualised in the lively, combative historiographical survey by Richard Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism*, London, Arnold, 1998, which is particularly good on picking up and picking on the currently fashionable 'cultural' studies mode of studying Italian Fascism. The controversial implications of the De Felician school's treatment of Mussolini's foreign policy emerge clearly enough in Richard Lamb's speculative 'what if' *Mussolini and the British*, London, John Murray, 1997, the antidote to which are MacGregor Knox's article cited above and my own book, *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1995. De Grand's *Italian Fascism. Its Origins and Development*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 3rd edn, 2000, remains probably the best short-hand account of Italian Fascism, its sensible and pragmatic commentary on what Fascism actually did, very much against the grain of the 'totalitarian' and 'fascistising' speculations of the 'cultural' approach to fascist studies. Philip Cannistraro (ed.) *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, Westport, CO, Greenwood Press, 1982, is much fuller than a dictionary, with De Felice contributing one of many near-article-length entries. Edward Tannenbaum's *Fascism in Italy. Society and Culture, 1922–1945*, London, Allen Lane, 1973, came out some time ago, but is still an excellent and digestible single-volume survey of the Italian Fascist regime.

Nothing really touches J. Noakes and G. Pridham's four volume collection of original documents, *Nazism, 1919–1945. A Documentary Reader*, Exeter, Exeter University Press, 1983–1998, as a usable teaching and learning tool for students, combining wide-ranging and well-chosen sources with an impeccable commentary. It is a model for its kind, and at long last, documentary studies of Italian Fascism are beginning to appear. Charles Delzell's *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919–1945. Selected Documents*, London, Macmillan, 1971, used to be on its own in this respect, even though it does not focus exclusively on Italian Fascism, and oddly, without explanation, brings together Mussolini, Salazar and Franco as exemplars of something called 'Mediterranean' fascism. Now there are J. Pollard *The Fascist Experience in Italy*, London, Routledge, 1998 and J.T. Schnapp *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2000.

Bibliography

This bibliography contains the books and articles quoted in the text, and other works which have been particularly useful. It is a highly selective bibliography, and by no means contains all of the good books on fascism which have been written and which I have read. The Payne and Griffin books mentioned in the Introduction both have very full bibliographies.

- Allardyce, G. (1966) 'The Political Transition of Jacques Doriot', *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, 1, 56–74.
- (1979) 'What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept', *American Historical Review* 84, 2, 367–88.
- Aquarone, A. (1965) *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, Einaudi, Turin.
- Austin, R. (1990) 'The Conservative Right and the Far Right in France: the Search for Power, 1934–1944', in *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe*, M. Blinkhorn (ed.), Unwin Hyman, London.
- Beetham, D. (ed.) (1983) *Marxists in Face of Fascism: Writings by Marxists on Fascism from the Interwar Period*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Bosworth, R.J.B. (1993) *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War, 1945–1990*, Routledge, London.
- (1998) *The Italian Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives on the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism*, Arnold, London.
- Broszat, M. (1981) *The Hitler State: the Formation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*, Longman, London.
- Carsten, F.L. (1976) *The Rise of Fascism*, Methuen, London.
- Costa Pinto, A. (1986) 'Fascist Ideology Revisited: Zeev Sternhell and His Critics', *European History Quarterly* 16, 4, 465–83.
- (1991) *The Salazar New State and European Fascism. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, European University Institute, San Domenico.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1968) *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- De Grand, A. (1995) *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The Fascist 'Style' of Rule*, Routledge, London.
- Delzell, C.F. (ed.) (1971) *Mediterranean Fascism, 1919–1945. Selected Documents*, Macmillan, London.
- Ellwood, S.M. (1987) *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era: Falange Española de las JONS, 1936–1976*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Griffin, R. (1993) *The Nature of Fascism*, Routledge, London.

- (ed.) (1995) *Fascism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- (1998) 'The Sacred Synthesis: the Ideological Cohesion of Fascist Cultural Policy', *Modern Italy*, 3, 1, 5–28.
- Herf, J. (1984) 'The Engineer as Ideologue: Reactionary Modernists in Weimar and Nazi Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, 4, 631–48.
- Herzstein, R.E. (1982) *When Nazi Dreams Come True*, Abacus, London.
- Huntington, S.P. and Moore, C.H. (eds) (1970) *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society. The Dynamics of One-Party Systems*, Basic Books, New York.
- Jacomet, A. (1975) 'Les chefs du francisme: Marcel Bucard et Paul Guiraud', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 97, 1, 45–66.
- Janos, A.C. (1982) *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Kershaw, I. (1991) *Hitler*, Longman, Harlow.
- (1993) *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Arnold, London.
- Klemperer, V. (1998) *I Shall Bear Witness. The Diaries of Victor Klemperer*. Abridged and translated by M. Chalmers. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Knox, M. (1984) 'Conquest, Foreign and Domestic, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany', *Journal of Modern History* 56, 1, 1–57.
- Lackó, M. (1980) 'The Social Roots of Hungarian Fascism: the Arrow Cross', in *Who were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, S.U. Larsen et al. (eds), Universitets Forlaget, Bergen.
- Lamb, R. (1997) *Mussolini and the British*, John Murray, London.
- Laqueur, W. (1976) *Fascism: a Reader's Guide. Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, Penguin, London.
- Ledeon, M. (1972) *Universal Fascism: the Theory and Practice of the Fascist International*, Howard Fertig, New York.
- Levey, J. (1973) 'Georges Valois and the "Faisceau": the Making and Breaking of a Fascist', *French Historical Studies* 8, 2, 279–304.
- Lindstrom, U. (1983) *Fascism in Scandinavia, 1920–1940*, University of Umea Press, Umea.
- Mack-Smith, D. (1981) *Mussolini*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Mason, T. (1968) 'The Primacy of Politics. Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany', in *The Nature of Fascism*, S.J. Woolf (ed.), Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Michaelis, M. (1973) 'I rapporti tra fascismo e nazismo prima dell'avvento di Hitler al potere (1922–1933)', part 1, '1922–1928', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 85, 3, 544–600.
- (1978) *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Morgan, P. (1995) *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- (1998) 'The Prefects and Party-State Relations in Fascist Italy', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 3, 3, 241–72.
- (1999) "'The Party is Everywhere": the Italian Fascist Party in Economic Life, 1926–1940', *The English Historical Review* 114, 455, 85–111.
- Mühlberger, D. (1987) *The Social Basis of European Fascist Movements*, Croom Helm, London.
- Mussolini, B. (1934) *Scritti e discorsi*, vol. 5, *Dal 1925 al 1926*, Hoepli, Rome; (1935) vol. 9, *Dal 1934 al 1935*, Hoepli, Rome.
- Noakes, J. and Pridham, G. (eds) (1999) *Nazism, 1919–1945. A Documentary Reader*,

- vol. 1, *The Rise to Power, 1919–1934*, Exeter University Press, Exeter; (1997a) vol. 2, *State, Economy and Society, 1933–1939*, Exeter University Press, Exeter; (1997b) vol. 3, *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination*, Exeter University Press, Exeter; (1998) vol. 4, *The German Home Front in World War II*, Exeter University Press, Exeter.
- Overy, R.J. (1987) *The Origins of the Second World War*, Longman, London.
- Paxton, R.O. (1982) *Vichy France. Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Payne, S. (1987) *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- (1995) *A History of Fascism, 1919–1945*, UCL Press, London.
- Schieder, W. (1994) 'Fascismo e Nazionalsocialismo nei primi anni trenta', *Italia Contemporanea* 196, 509–17.
- Rich, N. (1974) *Hitler's War Aims, Vol. 2, The Establishment of the New Order*, André Deutsch, London.
- Schoenbaum, D. (1967) *Hitler's Social Revolution. Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London.
- Skidelsky, R. (1980) 'Reflections on Mosley and British Fascism', in *British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Interwar Britain*, K. Lunn and R.C. Thurlow (eds), Croom Helm, London.
- Smith, M.L. (1987) 'Neither Resistance nor Collaboration: Historians and the "Nederlandse Unie"', *History* 72, 235, 251–78.
- Soucy, R. (1966) 'The Nature of Fascism in France', *Journal of Contemporary History* 1,1, 27–55.
- (1986) *French Fascism: the First Wave, 1924–1933*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- (1995) *French Fascism: the Second Wave, 1933–1939*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Sternhell, Z. (1978) *La droite révolutionnaire, 1885–1914. Les origines françaises du fascisme*, Seuil, Paris.
- (1979) 'Fascist Ideology', in *Fascism: a Reader's Guide*, W. Laqueur (ed.), Penguin, London.
- (1986) *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France*, University of California Press, London.
- Sznajder, M. and Asheri, M. (1994) *The Birth of Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Stone, M.S. (1998) *The Patron State. Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Tannenbaum, E.R. (1973) *Fascism in Italy. Society and Culture, 1922–1945*, Allen Lane, London.
- Weber, E.J. (1966) 'The Men of the Archangel', *Journal of Contemporary History* 1,1, 101–26.
- Wiskemann, E. (1966) *The Rome–Berlin Axis*, Collins, London.
- Wolf, D. (1969) *Doriot: du communisme à la collaboration*, Fayard, Paris.

Index

- Academic Karelia Society (AKS) 88–9
accidentalism 200
Acerbo electoral law xiv, 123
Action Française xii, 18, 20, 21, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56–7, 62, 103, 184
Agrarian parties 43, 62; Romania 81, 82, 83; Scandinavia 90, 92
Albania 173
Anschluss xviii, 72, 74, 76, 79, 109, 145, 148, 153, 163, 167, 178, 182, 200
anti-bourgeois campaign 150–1, 175
Anti-Comintern Pact xviii, 154, 174
Anti-Europa 167, 168
anti-fascism 198; Britain 96; *see also* Popular Front
anti-Semitism 176, 183, 192, 196, 200; Britain 97; France 104; Germany xvii, 155–6, 179–80; Hungary 40, 75, 77, 78, 80; Italy xviii, 151, 174, 175–6; Norway 92; Romania 43–4, 84, 85, 170; *see also* race, racial policy
Antonescu, Ion xix, 85, 188
appeasement 118, 154, 171, 200
Arditi 46
Arpinati, Leandro 143
Arrow Cross xvii, xviii, 65, 77–81, 116, 117, 160, 166, 188, 196
Associazione Nazionale dei Combattenti (ANC) 47, 60
Austria xvii, xviii, 7, 30, 31, 155, 159, 160, 166, 167, 182, 198
Austria–Hungary xii, 6, 7, 8, 19, 21, 23, 26, 31, 39, 78, 200
Austrian National Socialist German Workers' Party xv, 21, 35, 37, 59, 64, 72, 73, 74, 160, 163
autarky 147, 148, 196, 197, 200
authoritarian governments 8, 195, 198; Austria 35, 73, 74, 114, 170; Belgium 100; Hungary 166, 195; Portugal 114, 170, 177, 184, 195; Romania 83–4, 114, 166, 195; Spain 112–13, 114, 177, 184, 195; *see also* Vichy regime
Axis, Rome–Berlin xvii, 85, 88, 148, 149, 161, 166, 171, 172–7, 181, 187, 200
Balbo, Italo 135
Barrès, Maurice xii, 20, 22
Bavaria xiii, 35, 37, 38
'Beer Hall' *putsch* xiv, 38, 65, 162
Belgium xviii, 98, 163, 179
Bessarabia xviii, 41, 43, 45, 85
Bethlen, Istvan 39, 40, 75, 76
biennio rosso xiv, 47–8, 62, 194
Blomberg, Field Marshal Werner von 153, 158
Blum, Léon 107
Bocchini, Arturo 157
Bolsheviks xiii, 6, 9, 10, 13, 25, 27, 29, 31, 53, 87, 88, 119, 161, 167, 174, 182, 183, 185
Bormann, Martin 178
Bottai, Giuseppe 135, 140, 167, 170
Britain xii, xvi, 6, 7, 8, 23, 148, 149, 153, 161, 173, 175, 177
British Union of Fascists (BUF) 21, 93, 95–7, 193
Brüning, Heinrich xvi, 68
Bucard, Marcel xvii, 103, 104
Bulgaria 7, 9, 30, 85
Caporetto, battle of xiii, 27
Carlism 111, 112, 113
Carol II, King of Romania xvi, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85
Cartel des Gauches: 1924–8 xv, 52–3, 58; 1932 xvi, 103, 104, 107

- Catholic church: Belgium 100; Germany 196; Italy 123, 134, 146, 151, 152; Netherlands 101; Spain 109, 113, 196
- Catholic parties 116; Austria 33, 34, 35, 72, 73; Belgium 98, 99, 100; Czechoslovakia 9; Germany 30; Italy 47, 60; Netherlands 98; Spain 111, 112
- Cercle Proudhon* xii, 20, 21, 54
- Chamberlain, Neville 172
- charismatic authority 26, 44, 65, 66, 131–8, 153, 154, 180, 200; *see also* Duce, Führer, leader principle
- Ciano, Galeazzo 145, 151, 154, 171
- civil service 120; Germany 120, 121, 133, 138–9; Italy 120, 123, 130, 143, 157
- Codreanu, Corneliu xv, xviii, 43–6, 62, 115
- collaborationism 172, 181, 182, 183–9, 201
- combatantism 25, 28, 54; *see also* First World War; war veterans
- Comintern xiii, 3, 10, 52, 106, 168, 169, 197, 201; *see also* communism, communist parties
- Comitato d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma* (CAUR) 168, 171, 174
- communism 31, 52, 118; Austria 32; Bulgaria 10; Finland 87–8; France 10, 53, 106, 107, 108; Germany xiii, xiv, 3, 10, 32, 35, 37, 38, 67–8, 69, 70, 120; Italy xiv; Spain 166; *see also* Comintern
- Concordat 151, 152
- Confederacion Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA) 111, 112, 116
- Confindustria* 124, 141
- conservatism and fascism 62–3, 103, 107
- co-ordination 121, 122, 124
- Corfu, occupation of xiv
- corporations 170, 171, 191–2, 196, 201; Austria 34, 73; Britain 95; Catholic 170; Finland 90; France 55, 56, 57, 184; Hungary 40, 76, 78; Italy xvii, 27, 124, 140–2, 169; Romania 45
- Corporations, Ministry of xv, 135
- Corradini, Enrico xii
- Coselschi, Eugenio 168, 169, 171
- Coty, François 57, 103, 104
- crisis agreements 92, 118
- Croce, Benedetto 15, 204
- Croix de Feu* 51, 103, 107
- culture, Fascist Italy 149–51
- Cuza, Alexander 43
- Czechoslovakia xiv, xviii, 6, 7, 8, 9, 76, 118, 131, 153, 155
- Danish National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP) 90, 115
- D'Annunzio, Gabriele xiii, 18, 131
- Darnand, Joseph 188–9
- Darré, Walter 122
- Darwin, Charles 16
- Dawes Plan xiv, 38; *see also* reparations
- Déat, Marcel 104, 105, 184, 188
- De Felice, Renzo 4, 148, 149, 152, 204, 206, 207
- Degrelle, Léon 99, 100, 101, 105, 172, 182, 185
- Delagrangé, Marcel 57
- De Man, Hendrick 94, 102, 104, 105
- Denmark xviii, 7
- Dollfuss, Engelbert xvi, 35, 72, 73, 74, 83, 113, 114, 127, 166, 170
- Doriot, Jacques xvii, 20, 22, 105–6, 107, 108, 118, 172, 185, 189, 192
- Drieu La Rochelle, Pierre 108, 109
- Duce* 131, 132, 134, 136; *see also* charismatic authority; Mussolini, Benito
- East Karelia 87, 88
- economy 11–13, 16; Britain 12; France 53, 58; Germany 12, 37; Italy 12, 142; Romania 85; Russia 12; USA 12; *see also* autarky; Four Year Plan; Great Depression
- Eichmann, Adolf 156
- Enabling Act xvi, 120
- Eritrea 145, 175
- Estonia 7, 88
- Ethiopia, conquest of xvii, 74, 132, 142, 145, 147, 148, 167, 173, 174, 175
- Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution xvi, 150
- Faisceau*, *Le* xv, 21, 52, 54–8, 62, 103, 107, 108, 117, 163, 194
- Falange Española* xvii, 65, 90, 110–12, 115, 116, 166, 171
- Falange Española Tradicionalista* xviii, 112–13, 187
- farmers 116, 122
- fasci di combattimento* xiii, 46, 48; *see also* Italian Fascist Party
- fascism: definition 13–14, 15, 197; generic phenomenon 1; ideology 5, 15–23, 114–15; interpretations 1–4, 190–7
- Fascist International xvii, 45, 167–71
- fascist internationalism 84, 159–89
- fascist movements 13, 198; Austria 33–5, 71–4, 169, 176; Belgium 98, 99–101, 160, 169, 183, 187; Britain 21, 93–7, 160; Denmark 169; Finland 89–90, 176; France 51–8, 103–9, 160, 169, 183; Germany 3, 35–8, 65–71, 176; Hungary

- 39–41, 77–81, 176; Ireland 169; Italy 28, 46–51; Lithuania 169; Netherlands 98, 101, 160, 169, 183, 187; Norway 65, 90, 91, 92, 169, 176, 183, 187; Portugal 113, 114, 169; Romania 42, 43–6, 82–6; social composition 59–60, 116–17, 195–6; Spain 110–14, 169; Switzerland 169
- fascist regimes 5, 14, 119–58, 199
- Fatherland Front 73, 74, 114
- Fatherland Party xii, 36
- Federzoni, Luigi xii
- fiduciari di fabbrica* 144
- 'final solution' 179–80, 197, 201; *see also* anti-Semitism; race
- Finland 8, 86–7; civil war xiii, 10, 87, 89
- First World War xii, 29, 198; cultural effects 11–12, 23–4; economic effects 11–12, 23–4; interventionism, Italy xii, 18, 20, 22, 26–7; nationalism 29–31; political effects 6–7, 9, 15, 23–6, 31
- Fiume xiii
- Flanders 99, 101
- Flemish National Front (VNV) xvii, 65, 99, 101, 160, 163
- Four Year Plan xvii, 146, 147
- Four Year Plan Office 154, 158, 179, 197
- France xii, xviii, xix, 6, 19, 23, 30, 145, 148, 149, 152, 153, 173, 175, 177, 179, 183
- Francisme* xvii, 52, 103–4, 117, 171
- Franco, Francisco xviii, xix, 83, 112, 113, 114, 120, 148, 165, 166, 187
- Freikorps* xiii, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37
- Fritsch, Colonel General Weiner Freiherr von 153, 158
- Front for National Rebirth 83, 114
- Führer* xvii, 65, 66, 121, 133, 134, 137, 138, 152, 154, 155, 156, 178, 180, 182; *see also* charismatic authority; Hitler, Adolf; leader principle
- Futurism xii, 18, 19, 46
- Gauleiter* 66, 121, 132, 137, 155, 178, 182
- German Labour Front (DAF) 122, 128, 137–8, 140
- German National People's Party (DNVP) 36, 67, 68, 70, 71, 121, 162
- German Workers' Party (DAP) xiii, 21, 35, 36
- Germany xii, xv, xvii, xviii, 6, 7, 9, 10, 19, 23, 30, 31, 53, 60–1, 119, 160, 198
- Giolitti, Giovanni 15
- Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL) 143
- Goebbels, Joseph xvii, 127, 128, 130, 192
- Gömbös, Gyula xiv, xvi, xviii, 39–41, 62, 64, 75–6, 80
- Göring, Hermann 133, 137, 154, 156, 158, 178, 180
- Grand Council of Fascism xiv, 123, 133, 134
- Grandi, Dino 135
- Great Depression xv, 12–13, 201; economic effects 74–5, 81, 90–1, 109–10, 146–7; political effects 12–13, 34, 37–8, 64, 67–8, 71–2, 86, 93–4, 99, 102, 118, 141, 161, 168, 196, 198
- Greater Britain, the* 94, 95, 108, 115, 192
- Greece xix, 173
- Griffin, Roger 1, 20, 34, 100, 205, 208–9
- Grossraumwirtschaft* 76
- Hedilla, Manuel 112
- Heimwehr* xiii, xv, xvi, 32, 33–5, 62, 72, 73, 117, 160, 163, 166
- Hess, Rudolf 133, 178
- Himmler, Heinrich xviii, 137, 156, 178, 182; *see also* SS
- Hindenburg, Paul von xvii, 70, 71, 121, 134
- Hitler, Adolf: up to 1920 xiii, 21; as Nazi leader, 1920–33 xiv, 22, 26, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 65–7, 71, 74, 131, 162; as dictator, 1933–9 xvi, xvii, xviii, 5, 24, 76, 85, 120, 121, 126, 135, 136–7, 138, 148, 149, 153, 154, 155, 158, 161, 172, 173, 174; in Second World War, 1939–45 xx, 178, 180, 181, 183
- Horthy, Nicholas xiv, 32, 39, 40, 41, 75, 76, 79, 80, 188
- Hungarism 77–8
- Hungary xviii, xx, 7, 9, 30, 31, 32, 39, 41, 85, 160, 188, 198
- Iceland 8
- Imrédy, Bela 77, 79, 117
- industrial workers 11, 116, 117, 122, 140, 196
- Institute of Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) xvi, 146–7, 197
- intersyndical committees 142–4
- Ireland 8
- Iron Guard xv, 43–6, 59, 64, 82–6, 90, 115, 117, 160, 166, 169, 170, 171, 188, 196
- Italian Fascist Party (PNF): 1921–5 xiv, 48–9, 50, 59, 62, 122, 123; 1925–43 129, 130, 131, 133, 135, 139–40, 142–4, 150, 151, 187; *see also fasci di combattimento*
- Italian Nationalist Association (ANI), and Nationalists xii, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 47, 50

- Italian Social Republic (RSI) xix, 187–8
 Italy xii, 6, 7, 15, 19, 23, 26, 30, 34, 39, 47–8, 60–1, 119, 160, 187, 198
- Japan xviii, 174
Jaunes, Les 20
Jeunessees Patriotes 51, 52, 55, 57, 58, 62, 103
Juventud de Acción Popular (JAP) 112
- Kapp *putsch* xiv, 35
 king of Italy *see* Victor Emmanuel III
 ‘Korneuberg Oath’ xv, 34, 35
- Langbehn, Julius xii, 19, 22
 Lapua movement xv, 64, 89
 Lateran agreements xv; *see also* Church, Catholic
- Latvia 7
 ‘leader principle’ 26, 65, 66, 131, 132, 134, 136–7, 173; *see also* charismatic authority
- League of National Christian Defence (LANC) 43, 62, 82
 League of Nations xiii, xv, xvii, 6, 7, 30, 74, 84, 142, 145, 148, 173, 174, 202
 League of Netherlands National Solidarists (Verdinaso) 65
 Le Bon, Gustave xii, 17, 21
Légion 52
 Legion of the Archangel Michael: *see* Iron Guard
- Lenin, V.I. Ulyanov 9, 119
 Ley, Robert 122, 128, 137, 138, 162
 Lindholm, Sven 91
 Lithuania 7, 61
 Little Entente xiv, 9, 76, 84, 202
 living space 144, 177, 181, 182, 202
 Locarno agreement xv, 153, 202
- ‘March on Rome’ xiv, 38, 50, 119, 161, 162, 163
 Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso xii; *see also* Futurism, Futurists
- Marxism 17, 20, 27, 36; and fascism 1, 3–4, 49, 52, 62, 78–9, 128, 194–7
 Matteotti, Giacomo xv, 123, 124
 Maurras, Charles xii; *see also* *Action Française*
 Mazzini, Giuseppe 7
 Militia, Italian Fascist (MVSN) xiv, 123, 124, 135, 157
 modernisation 202; and fascism 4, 190–4, 204
 Mosley, Oswald 21, 29, 93–5, 97, 108, 118, 172, 192, 195
- Munich conference xviii, 153; *see also* appeasement
- Mussert, Anton 101, 181, 184, 186
 Mussolini, Benito: as a socialist xii, 18, 21, 22; during the First World War 21, 22, 26, 28, 194, 195; as a Fascist, 1919–22 xiv, 46, 50, 61, 127; as Prime Minister, 1922–5 xv, 119, 120, 122; as dictator, 1925–40 xviii, 5, 13, 33, 34, 66, 73, 74, 76, 117, 125, 126, 130, 131, 132, 135, 136, 139, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148, 149, 151, 152, 162, 163, 166, 167, 171, 173, 174, 191, 192; in Second World War, 1940–5 xviii, xix, xx, 187
 myth 18, 202
- National Government xvi, 95, 96, 118
 National Legionary State xix, 85
 National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP): 1920–33 xiii, xvi, 21, 26, 35–8, 64, 65–71, 110, 115, 116, 131; 1933–9 121, 129, 130, 155, 163, 187; 1939–45 178, 179
- National Socialist Movement (NSB) xvi, xix, 65, 98, 101, 116, 117, 186, 187
 National Socialist Workers’ Party 91
 national syndicalism 22, 27, 28, 62, 110, 111, 112, 191–2, 196, 202; *see also* corporations
- National Syndicalist Movement xvi, 113, 114
 National Union: Hungary 39, 41, 62, 75, 76; Norway xvii, 65, 90, 91, 92, 171, 186, 187; Portugal 114
 national rivalry 8–9, 19, 41–3, 159–60
 Nazi–Soviet pact xviii, 85, 88
Nederlandse Unie xviii, 105, 186
 neo-socialists 94, 104; *see also* Déat, Marcel
 Netherlands xviii, 7, 98, 179
 New Order, Nazi 171, 179, 181–3, 184, 186, 187, 189, 202
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 16, 17, 18, 21
 non-belligerency: Italy 152; Spain xix, 166, 187
 Norway xvii, xviii, 179
- Occupied territories, wartime xix, 105, 178, 179, 186
Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB) 143
Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (OND) 140
- ‘Pact of Steel’ xviii, 148, 149, 152, 172–4
 Palazzo Chigi agreement xiv, 124
 Pan-German League xii, 19, 21, 36

- Papen, Fritz von xvi, 71, 121, 153
Parti Populaire Français (PPF) xvii, 20, 65, 103, 107, 108, 109, 171, 189
Parti Social Français (PSF) 107
 Party of the National Will: *see* Arrow Cross
 Party of Racial Defence xiv, 39–41, 76
 Payne, Stanley 1, 189, 190, 205, 210
 People's Patriotic Movement (IKL) xvi, 64, 89–90
 Pétain, Philippe xviii, 184; *see also* Vichy regime
 pillarisation 98, 101, 102, 116
 Pilsudski, Josef xv
 Pius XI, Pope xvi, 134–5, 151, 170; *see also* Church, Catholic
 Poincaré, Raymond 53, 55, 58
 Poland xv, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 30, 61, 76, 152, 178, 179, 180
 police, in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany 156–7, 178, 186
Popolo d'Italia, *Il* 26, 28
 Popular Culture, Ministry of xviii, 149, 175
 Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Ministry of xvii, 127, 149
 Popular Front xvii, 3, 106, 118, 198, 202; France xvii, xviii, 107, 109, 167, 184; Spain xvii, 111, 112, 166
 Portugal xv, xvii, 7, 39, 61
 positivism, and reaction against 16–19, 202
 prefects 139, 142, 143, 144, 157
 Preto, Rolão xvi, 113, 114
 Primo de Rivera, José Antonio 110, 111, 112, 113, 192
 Primo de Rivera, Miguel xiv, 110
 proto-fascism 20, 22, 34, 203
Quadragesimo Anno xvi, 170, 203
 Quisling, Vidkun xvii, xix, 90, 92, 172, 182, 184, 186, 187
 race 169–70, 191; Belgium 100; France 104, 108; Germany xviii, 36, 177, 178, 179–80; Hungary 77–8; Italy 151, 167; *see also* anti-Semitism
ras 122, 131
Redressement Français 57
 Reich Food Estate 122
 reparations 12, 30, 53, 67, 203
 revisionism 30, 39, 40–1, 73, 76, 78, 84, 85, 145, 160, 161, 203; *see also* Versailles system
 revolutionary syndicalism 18, 21, 22, 26, 27, 46
 Rex movement xvii, 65, 98, 99–101, 105, 116, 118, 160, 171, 186, 187, 193
 Rhineland, remilitarisation xvii, 173
 Ribbentrop, Joachim 153, 158
 Rocco, Alfredo 21, 135, 141
 Romania xiv, xvi, xviii, xix, 7, 9, 10, 30, 39, 41–3, 76, 88, 188
 Romanità 150, 191
 Rosenburg, Alfred 163, 169
 Ruhr, occupation of xiv, 12, 37, 53
 Russia xii, 9, 10, 11, 23
 Russian Revolution, February 1917 6, 31, 87, 119
 Ruthenia xviii, 81
 St Germain, treaty of xiii
 Salazar, Antonio de Oliveira xvii, 83, 113, 114, 127, 170
 Sauckel, Fritz 179
 Schacht, Hjalmar 147, 158
 Schirach, Baldur von 183
 Schleicher, Kurt von xvi, 71
 Schuschnigg, Kurt von 74
Schutz Staffeln (SS) xviii, 121, 156, 157, 178, 179, 180, 182, 185, 186, 187
 Scorza, Carlo 130
 Scythe Cross xvi, 77
 Second World War 166, 167, 199
 Sima, Horia 84
 Slovakia xviii, 80
 social darwinism 16, 17, 203
 socialist parties 11, 29, 116; Austria xv, 32, 33, 34, 72, 73; Belgium 104–5; Britain 95; Czechoslovakia 9; Finland 86; France 52–3, 102, 104; Germany 12–13, 30, 32, 36, 37, 50–1, 60–1, 67–8, 69, 70, 86, 120; Hungary 39; Italy xii, 18, 26, 47–8, 51, 60; Netherlands 102, 104; Scandinavia 11, 86, 111; Spain 11, 111
Solidarité Française 103
 Somalia 145
 Sorel, Georges xii, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22
 Soucy, Robert 51, 52, 54, 56, 103, 104, 107, 210
 Soviet Republics xii, 10, 31, 32–3, 35, 37, 39, 40
 Soviet Union (USSR) xvii, xix, 10, 30, 36, 43, 64, 84, 86, 87, 88, 106, 107, 108, 118, 124, 161, 169, 171, 174, 180, 183, 186
 Spain xiv, xvi, 7, 39, 61, 167
 Spanish Civil War xvii, 46, 112, 114, 165, 166–7
 Speer, Albert 179

- squadrim 48, 49–50, 58, 96, 116, 122, 123, 126, 131, 132, 139, 151
- Stahlhelm* 162
- Stalingrad xix
- Starace, Achille 129, 143, 144
- Starhemberg, Prince Ernest Rudiger von 33, 35
- Stavisky riots xvii, 102–3, 106
- Sternhell Zeev 15–16, 19–20, 22, 51, 104, 105, 210
- students 42–3, 46, 59, 195
- Sturmabteilung* (SA) 35, 37, 67, 121, 156
- Sveriges Nationella Ungdomsförbund* (SNU) 91, 92
- Sweden 7, 8
- Swedish Fascist People's Party 91
- Swedish National Socialist Party 91
- Switzerland 8
- syndicalism: Italy xv, 122, 124, 141–3; Spain 113; *see also* corporations
- Szálasi, Ferenc xvii, xix, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 85, 117, 160, 188
- Taittinger, Pierre 55, 56, 62
- Third Way 94, 104, 168
- totalitarianism 5, 14, 21, 24, 45, 50, 101, 104, 110, 113, 114, 124–31, 145, 149, 151, 167, 169, 170, 171, 177, 184, 193, 203
- Transylvania xix, 41, 42, 81, 160
- Trianon, treaty of xiv, 9, 39, 41, 78
- Turati, Augusto 131, 132, 135, 139
- Turkey 6
- Tyrol 33, 34, 159, 162
- United States of America (USA) xii, 6, 161, 175
- universal fascism 13, 117, 168; *see also* fascist internationalism
- Ustasha* movement 163
- Valois, Georges xv, 21, 22, 52, 54–6, 58, 61, 62, 117, 163, 192, 194, 195
- Versailles system 6, 8, 13, 120, 160, 197, 198, 203
- Versailles, treaty of xiii, 12, 30, 36, 153
- Vichy regime xviii, xix, 184, 186, 188–9
- Victor Emmanuel III, king of Italy 50, 120, 122, 133, 134, 152, 153, 187
- Vienna agreements xviii, xix, 80–1, 85
- violence, fascist 4–5, 17, 18, 49–50, 60, 82, 96
- Voce, La* xii, 18
- völkisch* nationalism 19, 36, 37, 127, 203
- volksgemeinschaft* 70, 128–9
- Waffen SS* 156, 178, 182, 185, 187; *see also* SS
- Wallonia 99, 101, 186
- Wannsee conference xix, 180
- war veterans 23, 38, 47, 59–60, 102, 195
- Weimar Republic xii, 12, 22, 32, 36, 38, 51, 162, 195
- Wilson, Woodrow xiii, 6
- Young Plan xv, 67
- Yugoslavia xiv, xv, xix, 7, 9, 30, 34, 39, 76, 163
- Zeeland, Paul van 100