

available in English up to now, but it has also seen extensive change from the original version. Though there exists no single key which will unlock the secrets of fascism, as we stated at the beginning of this introduction, it is hoped that the essays in this volume come close to fascist reality through the various experiences they analyze within the general framework set by the first chapters.

---

## Toward a General Theory of Fascism

**I**N OUR CENTURY two revolutionary movements have made their mark upon Europe: that originally springing from Marxism, and the fascist revolution. The various forms of Marxism have occupied historians and political scientists for many decades, while the study of fascism was late catching up. Even so, because of the war and the fascist record in power, fascism has remained synonymous with oppression and domination; it is alleged that it was without ideas of its own, but merely a reaction against other more progressive movements such as liberalism or socialism. Earlier scholarship concerning fascism has more often than not been used as an occasion to fight contemporary polemical battles.

In a justified reaction against stereotyping, recent scholarship has been suspicious of general theories of fascism. As many local and regional studies show, while on one level fascism may have presented a kaleidoscope of contradictory attitudes, nevertheless these attitudes were based upon some common assumptions. We shall attempt to bring together some of the principal building blocks for such common assumptions—there seem to be enough of them to construct at least a provisional dwelling. Germany and Italy will dominate the discussion, as the experience of European fascism was largely dominated by

Italian fascism and German National Socialism. The word "fascism" will be used without qualification when both these movements are meant. From time to time I shall also refer to various other fascisms in Europe, but only specifically or as subsidiary examples.

We can best develop a general theory of fascism through a critique of past attempts to accomplish this task. Some historians have seen an integral connection between bolshevism and fascism. Both were totalitarian régimes and, as such, dictatorships based upon the exclusive claim to leadership by one political party.<sup>1</sup> Although such an equation was often politically motivated, it was not, as its opponents claimed, merely a child of the cold war.

Both movements were based on the ideal, however distorted, of popular sovereignty. This meant the rejection of parliamentary government and representative institutions on behalf of a democracy of the masses in which the people would in theory directly govern themselves. The leader symbolized the people; he expressed the "general will"—but such a democracy meant that, instead of representative assemblies, a new secular religion mediated between people and leaders, providing, at the same time, an instrument of social control over the masses. It was expressed on the public level through official ceremonies, festivals, and not least, the use of political imagery, and on a private level through control over all aspects of life by the dictates of the single political party. This system was common in various degrees to fascist and bolshevist movements.

The danger inherent in subsuming both systems under the concept of totalitarianism is that it may serve to disguise real differences, not only between bolshevism and fascism but also between the different forms of fascism themselves. Moreover, the contention that these theories really compare fascism not with the early, more experimental years of bolshevism, but with Stalinism instead seems justified. Indeed, totalitarianism as a static concept often veils the development of both fascism and bolshevism. In Soviet Russia, for example, the kind of public ceremonies and festivals that mark the fascist political style were tried early in the régime but then dropped, and not

resumed until after the Second World War, when they came to fulfill the same functions as they had for fascism earlier. In 1966, *Pravda* wrote that rallies, ceremonial processions, speeches, and music gave emotional strength to the political commitment of the people.<sup>2</sup> Fascism, too, did not remain static, although even some critics of totalitarian theory apparently see it as unchanging. There is, for example, a difference between fascism as a political movement and as a government in power.

Theories of totalitarianism have also placed undue emphasis upon the supposedly monolithic leadership cult. Here again, this was introduced into the Soviet Union by Stalin rather than at first by Lenin. Even within fascism, the cult of the leader varied: Piero Melograni has written on how the cult of "Il Duce" and fascism were not identical, and that it was "Mussolinianism" which won the people's allegiance.<sup>3</sup> In Germany there is no discernible difference between Hitlerism and National Socialism.

More serious is the contention, common to most theories of totalitarianism, that the leader manipulates the masses through propaganda and terror: that free volition is incompatible with totalitarian practice.<sup>4</sup> The term "propaganda," always used in this context, leads to a serious misunderstanding of the fascist conception of politics and its essentially organic and religious nature. In times of crisis such politics provided many millions of people with a more meaningful involvement than representative parliamentary government—largely because it was not itself a new phenomenon, but instead based upon an older and still lively tradition of direct democracy, which had always opposed European parliaments.

Even the widespread notion that fascism ruled through terror must be modified; rather, it was built at first upon a popular consensus. Tangible successes, the ability to compromise and to go slow, combined with the responsive chord struck by fascist culture, integrated Italians and Germans into this consensus which undoubtedly was more solid in Germany than Italy. Hitler, after all, shared a folkish faith with many of his fellow Germans, especially in times of crisis,

and his tangible successes in domestic and foreign policy up to the Second World War were much more spectacular than Mussolini's achievements.

Terror increased with the continued survival of the régimes, for disillusionment with fascism in power could easily lead to unrest. By the time many earlier fellow travelers woke up to fascist reality, it was too late to resist, except by martyrdom. Mass popular consensus during the first years of fascism in power allowed it to develop a secret police—outside and above regular channels and procedures<sup>5</sup>—as well as the special courts needed to reinforce its actions. This was easier in the Soviet Union since the revolution had destroyed the old legal framework; while in Germany and Italy traditional safeguards paradoxically continued to exist and even to be used side by side with arbitrary action. In Germany, judges freed some concentration camp inmates as late as 1936.

Terror must not then be treated as a static concept, but as something that develops in intensity. Moreover, there was a great deal of disharmony and disunity on the local level in its application. Manpower in Germany, for example, was scarce and the secret police depended in large part on plentiful private denunciations.<sup>6</sup> Not only must historical development be taken into account, but also the existence and extent of a popular consensus, which, although differing in scope in the so-called totalitarian nations, did exist at some time in each of them.

Despite all these caveats, both bolshevists and fascists reached back into the anti-parliamentary and anti-pluralistic traditions of the nineteenth century in order to face the collapse of social, economic, and political structures in their nations during and after the First World War. So-called totalitarianism was new only as a form of legitimate government: it derived from a long tradition; otherwise it would not have received such immediate mass support. Beginning its modern history with the French Revolution, that tradition continued to inform both the nationalism and the quest for social justice of the nineteenth century. Even if Jacob Talmon's concept of "totalitarian

democracy" rests, as some have claimed, upon a misreading of the Enlightenment,<sup>7</sup> men like Robespierre and Saint-Just shared in such misconceptions. Rousseau's "general will," his exaltation of "the people," was bent by the Jacobins into a dictatorship in which the people worshipped themselves through public festivals and symbols (such as the Goddess of Reason), where traditional religious enthusiasm was first transferred to civic rites.<sup>8</sup>

The distinction between private and public life was eradicated, just as totalitarian régimes would later attempt to abolish such differences. Public allegiance through active participation in the national cults or party organizations, was the road to survival, and as, for example, the Jacobins used dress as an outward sign of true inner allegiance (the revolutionary cap and trousers instead of breeches), so fascists and bolshevists integrated various dress codes into their systems. Nationalist movements during the nineteenth century carried on these traditions, even if at times they attempted to compromise with liberal values. The workers' movement, though most of it was in fact wedded to parliamentary democracy, also stressed outward symbols of unity as in the serried ranks and Sunday dress of May Day parades, massed flags, and the clenched fist salute. Italy was less influenced by this legacy, but it also played a part in the fight for national unity. At the turn of the century, the radical Left and the radical Right were apt to demand control of the whole man, not just a political piece of him.

Bolshevism and fascism attempted to mobilize the masses, to substitute modern mass politics for pluralistic and parliamentary government. Indeed, parliamentary government found it difficult to cope with the crises of the postwar world, and abdicated without a struggle, not only in Germany and Italy but also in Portugal and, where it had existed immediately after the war, in the nations of eastern Europe. The fascists helped the demise of parliamentary government, but that it succumbed so readily points to deep inherent structural and ideological problems—and, indeed, few representative governments have withstood the pressures of modern economic, political, and social crises, especially when these coincided with unsat-

isfied national aspirations and defeat in war.<sup>9</sup> Wherever during the interwar years one-party governments came to power, they merely toppled régimes ripe for the picking; this holds good for Russia as well as for Germany and Italy. But unlike bolshevism, fascism never had to fight a proper civil war on its road to power: Mussolini marched on Rome in the comfort of a railway carriage, and Hitler simply presented himself to the German president. Certainly, representative government and liberal politics allowed individual freedom to breathe and prosper, but the new post First World War political movements cannot be condemned without taking the collapse of existing parliaments and social structures into account. We must not look at a historical movement mainly from the viewpoint of our political predilections, lest we falsify historical necessity.

If some historians have used the model of totalitarianism in order to analyze fascism, others, and they are in the majority, have used the model of the "good revolution."<sup>10</sup> The French, American, and especially the Russian revolutions, so it is said, led to the progress of mankind, while fascism was an attempt to stop the clock, to maintain old privilege against the demands of the new classes as represented by the proletariat. In reality, fascism was itself a revolution, seizing power by using twentieth-century methods of mass mobilization and control, and replacing an old with a new élite. (In this sense, National Socialism brought about a more fundamental change than Italian fascism, where new and traditional élites co-existed to a greater extent.) Economic policy was subordinated to the political goals of fascism, but in Germany, at least, this did not preclude nationalization (as for example, the huge Hermann Goering Steel Works). By and large, however, fascism worked hand in hand with the larger industrial enterprises. Fascism, as Stanley Payne, writing the most authoritative history of fascism sees it, was a radical force seeking to create a new social order.<sup>11</sup>

Yet a one-sided emphasis either upon economic factors or upon the proletariat obscures our view of the revolutionary side of fascism. Fascism condemned the French Revolution but was also, at least in

its beginnings, a direct descendant of the Jacobin political style.<sup>12</sup> Above all, the fascist revolution saw itself as a "Third Force," rejecting both "materialistic Marxism" and "finance capitalism" in the capitalist and materialist present. This was the revolutionary tradition within which fascism worked. But it was not alone in such an aim; in the postwar world, many left-wing intellectuals rejected both Marxist orthodoxy and capitalism. Unlike the fascists, however, they sought to transcend both by emphasis on the triumphant goodness of man once capitalism was abolished.

Fascism retreated instead into the nationalist mystique. But here, once more, it followed a precedent. French socialists of the mid-nineteenth century, and men like Édouard Drumont toward the end of the century, had combined opposition to finance capitalism and the advocacy of greater social equality with an impassioned nationalism. They were National Socialists long before the small German Workers' Party took this name. Such National Socialism was in the air as a "Third Force" in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Marxism was to be reckoned with and capitalist development seemed accompanied by a soulless positivism in a world where only material values counted. There were early national socialist movements in France (in which former leaders of the Paris Commune, with their Jacobin traditions, joined, but also some anarchists and bourgeois *bien-pensants*), in Bohemia, and even in Germany, advocated at the turn of the century by the Hessian Peasants' League led by Otto Boeckel.<sup>13</sup>

In Italy, argument for the "Third Force" resulted from the First World War—the struggle to get Italy to intervene in this war, and the subsequent war experience seemed to transcend vested interests and political parties.<sup>14</sup> There was indeed a similar reaction among a good many veterans in Germany (but not in France, which had won the war and successfully weathered postwar upheaval). Yet in Italy, unlike Germany, the "war experience" carried revolutionary implications. Mussolini was joined in this hope by students and by revolutionary syndicalists who wanted to abolish the existing social and economic

order so that the nation could be regenerated through the searing experience of war. After the war as "revolutionary veterans" they appealed both to the revolutionary spirit and to a sense of Italy's historic national mission. It is typical that when the local Fascist Party was founded in 1920 in Ferrara, it was a youth group called the "Third Italy" which took the initiative.<sup>15</sup> In Germany and Italy—nations plunged into crisis by the war—and also among many political groups of other nations, the "Third Force" became an alternative revolution to Marxism, a retreat into the organic community of the nation when the world seemed to be dominated on the one hand by the mysterious power of money and on the other by the Marxist conspiracy.<sup>16</sup>

Yet this "Third Force" became ever less revolutionary and more nationalistic as fascists and Nazis strove for power. Mussolini broke with the revolutionary syndicalists early on and tamed his youth organization but stayed with the Futurists, whose revolutionary ardor took the fast sports car as its model rather than the nationalization of production. Hitler got rid of social revolutionaries like Otto Strasser who wanted to challenge property relationships, however slightly. Yet we must not limit our gaze to property relationships or the naked play of power and interest; such issues alone do not motivate men. It was the strength of fascism everywhere that it appeared to transcend these concerns, gave people a meaningful sense of political participation (though, of course, in reality they did not participate at all), and sheltered them within the national community against the menace of rapid change and the all too swift passage of time. At the same time it gave them hope through projecting a utopia, taking advantage of apocalyptic longings.

National Socialism was able to contain the revolutionary impetus better than Italian fascism because in Germany the very term "Third Force" was fraught with mystical and millenarian meaning. The mythos of the "Third Force" became a part of the mythos of the "Third Reich," carrying on a Germanic messianic tradition that had no real equivalent in Catholic Italy. The prophecy by Joachim of Flora about the future "Third Age," which would be a kingdom of the

spirit—the biblical millennium—had become an essential ingredient of German Protestantism, as had the three mystical kingdoms of Paracelsus: that of God, the planets, and the Earth. The German mystics such as Jakob Böhme believed that man, by overcoming his baser self and seeking harmony within nature, could rise from Earth to the kingdom of God—an important emphasis on "becoming" or joining the eternal spirit of the race rather than "being"; on the quest for the "genuine" as exemplified first by nature and, later, by the "Volk" itself.<sup>17</sup>

Moeller van den Bruck, whose book *The Third Reich* (1923) was originally entitled *The Third Way*, brought this tradition up to date for a defeated nation: the Germanic mission would transcend all the contradictions inherent in modern life, including Germany's defeat in war; Germans must struggle continually toward utopia, which he equated with the German Reich of the future. To be sure, Moeller was pragmatic in his demand for political action, his advocacy of the corporate state, and his desire to institute a planned economy (hence his praise of Lenin's new economic policy).<sup>18</sup> Yet he also retained the traditional elements that were so much a part of this kind of revolution, calling for the maintenance of state authority, preferably that of a monarchy, as well as of the family structure.

However, for Moeller the pragmatic was always subsumed under the messianic. The arrival of the "Third Reich" would automatically solve all outstanding problems. Such a belief was part of the "Third Force" in Germany: the purified national community of the future would end all present difficulties and anxieties, social inequalities and economic crises. Man would then "overcome" the dialectic of earthly life. Small wonder that the Nazis enthusiastically annexed the fairy tale and folk legend to their cause. However, this vision of the future was rooted in the past—it was the traditional fairy tale which the Nazis used in creating their emphasis upon the modern Volk. Precedent was always an integral part of the Nazi ideology, and of Italian fascism too—as when in the fourth year of Mussolini's government the ancient monuments of Rome were restored. For Mussolini,

however, history was never more than a platform from which to jump into an ill-defined future.

Hitler and Goebbels's obsession with history reached a climax at the moment of defeat: in 1945, they clung to memories of Frederick the Great, who had been saved from certain defeat by the opportune death of the Czarina Elizabeth, as well as remembering the victory of Rome over Carthage.<sup>19</sup> Utopia and traditionalism were linked, a point to which we shall return when discussing the new fascist man.

Ernst Bloch called this urge to "overcome"—the mystical and millenarian dynamic—the "hidden revolution" essential to the realization of the true socialist revolution.<sup>20</sup> Men must hope before they can act. National Socialism claimed to represent this "inner dynamic," though it was always careful to state that the "Third Reich" stood at the threshold of fulfillment and that a period of struggle and suffering must precede eventual salvation. And indeed, in the end, this revolutionary tradition did transfer a religious enthusiasm to secular government.

While few would deny that in order to understand communism or bolshevism we have to comprehend their revolutionary tradition, fascism has often been discussed as if it had no such tradition. The revolutionary appeal of fascism is easy to underestimate in our own time; the object has been to de-mystify, and a new positivism has captured the historical imagination.

The fascist revolution built upon a deep bedrock of popular piety and, especially in Germany, upon a millenarianism that was apt to come to the fore in times of crisis. More about this tradition will be said in the chapter below on the occult origins of National Socialism. The myths and symbols of nationalism were superimposed upon those of Christianity—not only in the rhythms of public rites and ceremonies (even the Duce's famed dialogues with the masses from his balcony are related to Christian "responses")—but also in the appeal to apocalyptic and millenarian thought. Such appeals can be found in the very vocabulary of Nazi leaders. Their language grew out of Christianity as we mentioned in the introduction; it was, after all,

a language of faith. In 1935, for example, at Munich's *Feldherrnhalle*, where his *putsch* of 1923 had resulted in a bloody fiasco, Hitler called those who had fallen earlier "my apostles," and proclaimed that "with the Third Reich you have risen from the dead." Many other examples spring to mind, as when the leader of the Labor Front, Robert Ley, asserted that "we have found the road to eternity." The whole vocabulary of blood and soil was filled with Christian liturgical and religious meaning—the "blood" itself, the "martyrdom," the "incarnation."<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, historians have recently found that in the past, millenarianism was not simply a protest by the poor against the rich, but a belief shared by most classes;<sup>22</sup> not inherently psychotic, but a normal strain of popular piety running through the nineteenth century and into twentieth-century Europe, and common to all nations. This background was vital for the cross-class appeal of National Socialism, and perhaps, despite a different emphasis, for Italian fascism as well: the "new man," for whom all fascism yearned, was certainly easily integrated into such popular piety as it became transformed into political thought.

The "Third Force" in Italy did not directly build upon a mystical tradition, though it existed there as well as in Germany. Rather than referring to Savonarola, for example, Giovanni Gentile the important fascist philosopher saw in the fascist state a Hegelian synthesis, which resolved all contradictions. In consequence, German idealism was more important in Italian fascism, derived from Gentile, than in National Socialism, though some Nazi philosophers used Hegel to prove that Hitler had ended the dialectic of history. After the Concordat of 1929, Italian fascism, seeking to rival the Church, became increasingly the religion of the state. The will to believe was emphasized, and the Italian anti-rational tradition was searched for precedents.<sup>23</sup> Yet when all was said and done, such efforts were sporadic, and some leading fascists retained their skepticism about "*romanità*" or civil religions.

While the "Third Force" is vital for understanding fascism, its importance should not be exaggerated. For fascism, it was always "the

experience" that counted, and not appeals to the intellect. In a play by Hans Johst, written in 1934, the young Leo Schlageter, about to fight against the French occupation of the Ruhr Valley after the First World War, facing his socialist father speaks these lines:

*Son:* The young people don't pay much attention to these old slogans anymore . . . the class struggle is dying out.

*Father:* So . . . and what do you live on then?

*Son:* The Volk Community . . .

*Father:* And that's a slogan . . . ?

*Son:* No, it's an experience!<sup>24</sup>

It was an organic view of the world, which was supposed to take in the whole man and thus end his alienation. A fundamental redefinition is involved in such a view of man and his place in the world. "Politics," wrote the Italian fascist Giuseppe Bottai, "is an attitude toward life itself,"<sup>25</sup> and this phrase is repeated word for word in National Socialist literature. Horia Sima, one of Codreanu's successors in the leadership of the Romanian Iron Guard, summed it up: "We must cease to separate the spiritual from the political man. All history is a commentary upon the life of the spirit."<sup>26</sup> When fascists spoke of culture, they meant a proper attitude toward life: encompassing the ability to accept a faith, the work ethic, and discipline, but also receptivity to art and the appreciation of the native landscape.<sup>27</sup> The true community was symbolized by factors opposed to materialism, by art and literature, the symbols of the past and the stereotypes of the present. The National Socialist emphasis upon myth, symbol, literature and art is indeed common to all fascism.

If, then, fascism saw itself as a cultural movement, any comparative study must be based upon an analysis of cultural similarities and differences. Social and economic programs varied widely, not only between different fascisms but within each fascist movement. Some historians and political scientists have stumbled over this fact; for them, culture defined as "attitudes toward life" is no substitute for neatly coherent systems of political thought. They believe, as

mentioned in our introduction, that fascism was devoid of intellectual substance, a mere reflection of movements which depend upon well-constructed ideologies. This has led many of them to underestimate fascism, to see it as a temporary response to crises, vanishing when normality is restored (though Italian fascism, with its twenty years in power, is surely more than a "temporary response"). In reality, fascism was based upon a strong and unique revolutionary tradition, fired by the emphasis on youth and the war experience; it was able to create a mass consensus that was finally broken only by a lost war.

Fascism was a movement of youth, not only in the sense that it covered a definite span of time but also in its membership. The *fin de siècle* had seen a rebellion of the young against society, parents, and school; they longed for a new sense of community. These youths were of bourgeois background, and their dominant concern for several generations had been with national unity rather than with social and economic change—for which they felt little need. Thus they were quite prepared to have their urge to revolt directed into national channels, on behalf of a community which seemed to them one of the "soul" and not an artificial creation. Such were the young who streamed not only into the earlier German Youth Movement but also into the *fasci* and the S.A., and who made up the cadres of other fascist movements. Returned from the war, they wanted to prolong the camaraderie of the trenches or if they were too young to have fought, repeat an experience which had been idealized in retrospect. Fascism offered them this chance. It is well to note in this connection that the early fascists were a new grouping, not yet bureaucratized, and that their supposed open-endedness made them appear more dynamic than rival political parties. The leaders, too, were young by the standards of that age—Mussolini became prime minister at thirty-nine; Hitler attained the chancellorship at forty-four.

Youth symbolized vigor and action; ideology was joined to fact. Fascist heroes and martyrs died at an early age in order to enter the pantheon, and symbolic representations of youth expressed the ideal type in artistic form. This was the classical ideal of beauty, which had

become the manly stereotype. There must have been many who, like Albert Speer's mother, voted for the Nazis because they were young and clean-cut. The hero of the Italian novel *Generazione* (*Generations*, 1930), by Adolfo Baiocchi, finds his way from communism to fascism. His final conversion comes when he sees his former comrades, now unattractive, dirty, and disheveled, taken away by the police after an unsuccessful attempt at revolution: "These are the men of the future?" Similarly in the Nazi film *Hitler-Junge Quex* (1933), the communists were slovenly and disheveled while the Hitler Youth were clean-cut, true and respectable men. Monuments to the soldiers who fell in the First World War often represented young Siegfrieds or Greek youths. Indeed, this stereotype was reinforced by the war when the cult of youth joined the cult of the nation.

The war became a symbol of youth in its activism, its optimism, and its heroic sacrifice. For Germans, the Battle of Langemarck (November, 1914), where members of the German Youth Movement were mowed down in thousands, came to stand for the sacrifice of heroic youth. The flower of the nation, so the myth tells us, went singing to their death. One writer, Rudolf Binding, asserted that through this sacrifice only German youth had the right to symbolize national renewal among the youth of the world.<sup>28</sup>

Benito Mussolini also declared himself the spokesman of a youth that had shown its mettle in war. While Hitler promised to erase the "shame of Versailles," Mussolini wanted to complete Italy's "mutilated" victory in the Great War. Both took up the slogan of the young and old nations which gained currency after the war, as a reassertion of the defeated against the victors.

Fascism thus built upon the war experience, which, in different ways, had shaped the outlook of Mussolini and Hitler themselves toward the world: the former moving from a Nietzschean rather than a Marxist socialism to ideals of nationalism and struggle; the latter deepening his ever present racist world view. Above all, for millions of their contemporaries the war was the most profound experience of their lives. While a very few became pacifists, many more attempted

to confront the mass death they had witnessed by elevating it into myth. Both in Germany and Italy the myth of the war experience—the glory of the struggle, the legacy of the martyrs, the camaraderie of the trenches—defeated any resolve never to have war again. France, the victorious and satisfied nation, saw the rise of powerful veterans' movements which proclaimed an end to all war;<sup>29</sup> but in Germany and Italy such movements proclaimed the coming resurrection of the fatherland.

The Left in Germany and Italy, as in all other nations, had difficulty in coming to grips with this war experience, shared though it was by their own members. Social Democrats and communists sometimes paraded in their old uniforms (but without decorations), and founded self-defense and paramilitary organizations, like the *Reichsbanner* in Germany (which was supposed to defend the Republic). But in the last resort the Left was halfhearted about all this, and its didactic and cosmopolitan heritage, as well as its pacifist traditions, proved stronger. The communists while they were ready to discard this past, found it impossible to redirect loyalty away from the fatherland and toward the Red Army.<sup>30</sup> To this day, few historians have investigated the Left's confrontation with the war experience, perhaps in itself a comment on the continued underestimation of this myth as a political force. Here was a political void readily occupied by the fascists.

The war experience aided fascism in another, more indirect manner. The front-line soldiers had become immune to the horrors of war, mass death, wounded and mutilated comrades. They had faced such unparalleled experiences either with stoicism or with a sense of sacrifice—war had given meaning to their dull and routine lives. Indeed, the war experience, despite all its horrors, catered to the longing for the exceptional, the escape from the treadmill of everyday life and its responsibilities. The political liturgy of fascism with its countless festivals catered to the same dream of excitement, of taking part in meaningful action. Typical was the expression, often repeated during the war, that death in battle had made life worthwhile.

Whatever the actual attitudes of the front-line soldiers during the



war, their war experience later took on the appearance of myth, concretized through countless war cemeteries and memorials. The cult of the fallen soldier was central to the myth of the war experience in defeated Germany and Italy, and the dead were used to spur on the living to ever greater efforts of revenge. Mussolini put it succinctly: "A people which deifies its fallen can never be beaten." It was said that Hitler offered up his conquests on the altar of the war dead.<sup>31</sup> The horrors of war became part of an as yet incomplete struggle for national and personal fulfillment.

The acceptance of war was aided by new techniques of communication, which tended to trivialize mass death by making it a familiar part of an organized and channelled experience shared by thousands. For example, the battlefields of France and Flanders were among the tourist attractions organized by Thomas Cook and Sons. The massed and impersonal military cemeteries were faced by an equally impersonal mass of tourists, who could buy souvenir shells, helmets, and decorations. Still more important, the First World War was also the first war in the era of photography. During the war, postcards, films, and newsreels showed happy and healthy soldiers, and emphasized their work of destroying farms, towns, and churches rather than the dead and wounded. After the war, tourists could photograph the trenches, but what had once been experienced in these trenches was now for the most part tidied up and surrounded by flowers and shrubs.

Most people, however, were familiar with the face of war through the countless picture books that appeared after 1918. The illustrations and photographs of the peaceful dead or wounded were presented as a part of a glorious struggle, a desirable sacrifice that would reap its deserved reward. One such book, typical of the genre, called the war both horrible and yet a purveyor of aesthetic values. Arms were depicted as symbols of the highest human accomplishment, armed conflict as the overcoming of self in the service of collective ideals and values.<sup>32</sup> Horror pictures were transcended, suffused with ideals of sacredness and sacrifice; the dead and mangled corpses of soldiers

were by association equated with the body of Christ in the service not of individual, but of national salvation.

Through this dual process of trivialization and transcendence, the war experience served the purposes alike of the dynamic of fascism and of the movement's brutality. Death and suffering lost their sting; the martyrs continued to live as a spiritual part of the nation while exhorting it to regenerate itself and to destroy its enemies.

Joseph Goebbels's definition of the nature of a revolutionary, written in 1945 when Germany faced defeat, is typical of the process of brutalization begun by the First World War. The Nazis, in common with all fascists, had always condemned half-measures as typically bourgeois and anti-revolutionary. Goebbels now defined as "revolutionary" those who would accept no compromise in executing a scorched earth policy, or in shooting shirkers and deserters. Refusal to carry out such actions marked the worn-out old bourgeois.<sup>33</sup> During the desperate years of the Republic of Salò, Mussolini also resorted to brutal measures, even at times threatening to execute pupils who refused to attend school.<sup>34</sup> There is little doubt that the myth of the war experience made fascist brutality more acceptable and fascism itself more attractive. Here was none of the ambivalence, shared by socialists and liberals, toward what millions must have regarded—if they survived—as a great experience, and perhaps, as we have mentioned, even the high point of their otherwise uneventful lives.

The crucial role which the war experience played in National Socialism is well enough known. The war was "a lovely dream" and a "miracle of achievement," as one Nazi children's book put it. Any death in war was a hero's death and thus the true fulfillment of life.<sup>35</sup> There was no doubt here about the "greatness and necessity of war."<sup>36</sup> In Mussolini's hands, this myth had even greater force because of the absence of a truly coherent volkish ideology in Italy. The fascist struggle was a continuation of the war experience. But here, as in Germany, the glorification of struggle was linked to wartime camaraderie and

put forward as a method to end class divisions within the nation. "Not class war but class solidarity" reigned in the face of death, wrote an Italian fascist who had been a syndicalist up to the last months of the war; it was not a conflict between potentates or capitalists but a necessity for the defense of the people. Historical materialism was dead.<sup>37</sup>

The *élan* of the battlefield was transformed into activism at home. The *fasci* and the German storm troopers regarded their postwar world as an enemy, which as patriotic shock troops they must destroy. Indeed, the leaders of these formations were in large part former front-line officers: Roehm, the head of the S.A.; Codreanu, founder of the Iron Guard; De Bono in Italy and Szalasi in Hungary—to give only a few examples. But this activism was tamed by the "magic" of the leadership of which Gustave Le Bon had written toward the end of the nineteenth century. Among the returned veterans it was even more easily controllable, for they desperately sought comradeship and leadership, not only because of the war experience but also to counteract their sense of isolation within a nation that had not lived up to their expectations.

The revolutionary tradition of the "Third Force" contained ingredients essential to this taming process: stress upon the national past and the mystical community of the nation; emphasis upon that middle-class respectability which proved essential for political success. The cult element to which we referred earlier gave it direction by channeling attention toward the eternal verities, which must never be forgotten. Activism there must be, enthusiasm was essential; the leader, aided by fascist methods of self-representation would direct it into the proper channels.

Here the liturgical element must be mentioned again, for the "eternal verities" were purveyed and reinforced through the endless repetition of slogans, choruses, symbols, and participation in group and mass ceremonies. These were the techniques that went into the taming of the revolution and that made fascism a new religion annexing rites long familiar through centuries of religious observance. Fascist mass meetings seemed something new, and so they were in the

technology used and the *mis-en-scène*, but they also contained predominantly traditional elements in the technique of mass participation as well as in ideology.

To be sure, this process did not always work. The youthful enthusiasm that reigned at the outset of the movement was apt to be disappointed with its course. Italy, where fascism lasted longest, provides the best example, for the danger point came with the second fascist generation. There, the young men of the "class of '35" wanted to return to the beginnings of the movement, to its activism and its war on alienation—in short, to construct the fascist utopia. By 1936, they had formed a resistance movement within Italian fascism, which stressed that "open-endedness" the revolution had at first seemed to promise: to go to "the limits of fascism where all possibilities are open."<sup>38</sup> Similar signs can be discerned as Nazism developed, but here the SS managed to capture the activist spirit. Had it not been for the Second World War, Hitler might well have had difficulty with the SS, which thought of itself as an activist and spartan elite. But then fascism never had a chance to grow old except in Italy; given the ingredients that went into the revolution, old age might have presented the movement with a severe crisis.

But in the last resort taming was always combined with activism, traditionalism inevitably went hand in hand with a nostalgic revolution. Both Hitler and Mussolini disliked drawing up party programs, for this smacked of "dogmatism." Fascism stressed "movement"—Hitler called his party a "*Bewegung*," and Mussolini for some time favored Marinetti's Futurism as an artistic and literary form that stressed both movement and struggle. All European fascisms gave the impression that the movement was open-ended, a continuous Nietzschean ecstasy. But in reality definite limits were provided to this activism by the emphasis upon nationalism, sometimes upon racism, and by the longing for a restoration of traditional morality. The only variety of fascism of which this is not wholly true is to be found among the intellectuals in France. There a man like Drieu La Rochelle continued to exalt the "provisional"—the idea that all existing reality

can be destroyed in one moment.<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere that reality was "eternal," and activism was directed into destroying the existing order so that the eternal verity of Volk or nation could triumph, and with it the restoration of traditional morality.

The traditionalism of the fascist movement coincided with existing society's most basic moral values. This was to be a respectable revolution. When Hans Naumann spoke at the Nazi book-burning in 1933, he exalted activism; the more books burned the better. But he ended his speech by stressing the traditional bonds of family and Volk. Giuseppe Bottai, too, had called for a "spiritual renewal," and, in Belgium, the leading Rexist Jean Denis held that without a moral revolution there could be no revolution at all.<sup>40</sup> Some fascisms defined the moral revolution within the context of a traditional Christianity: this is true of the Belgian Rexist movement, for example, as well as of the Romanian Iron Guard. The Nazis substituted racism for religion, but once more, the morality was that shared with the rest of respectable society.

Almost all analyses of fascism have been preoccupied with the crucial support it received from the bourgeoisie. However, the Marxist model, based upon the function of each class in the process of production, is much too narrow to account for the general support of fascism. A common ethos united businessmen, government officials, and the intellectual professions that made up the bourgeoisie.<sup>41</sup> They were concerned about their status, access to education, and opportunity for advancement. At the same time they saw their world as resting upon the pillars of respectability: hard work, self-discipline, and good manners—always exemplified in a stereotyped ideal of male beauty which the Nazis annexed as one of their prime symbols.<sup>42</sup> The so-called middle-class morality, which had come to dominate Europe since the end of the eighteenth century, gave them security in a competitive world. Moreover, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the very structure of this world was challenged through the youthful revolt against accepted manners and morals by some schoolboys, bohemians, radicals, and the cultural avant garde.

Nationalism annexed this world of respectability, as did racism in central and eastern Europe, promising to protect it and to restore its purity against all challengers. This explains the puritanism of National Socialism, its emphasis upon chastity, the family, good manners, and the banishment of women from public life. However, there is no evidence that the workers did not also share such longings: the workers' culture did not oppose the virtues of the bourgeois consensus, it had co-opted the standards of respectability long ago. There was no repeating the brief relaxation of normative manners and morals that occurred in the years following the October Revolution in Russia.

Thomas Childers has supplied much evidence concerning the amorphous nature of the Nazi electorate. The Nazis, in the end, capitalized on the resentment felt by all classes, including the working class.<sup>43</sup> Italian fascism, Renzo De Felice has told us, was in large part an expression of the emerging, mobile, middle classes, the bourgeois who were already an important social force and were now attempting to acquire political power.<sup>44</sup> This is exactly the opposite of the Bonapartist analysis, once so popular among the Left, which adapts to fascism Karl Marx's discussion of the dictatorship of Napoleon III. The middle class gave up political power, so the argument runs, in order to keep their social and economic power.

As a matter of fact, in Italy, and also in other European fascist movements, some important leaders came from the Left: for the most part they were syndicalists inspired by the war and the activism promised by the movement. Jacques Doriot, the only really significant leader of French fascism, traveled from the militant Left to fascism—a road, as Gilbert Allardyce has shown, not so different from that of Mussolini earlier. Doriot wanted a greater dynamic within French communism, and was impatient with party bureaucracy and discipline. As a fascist, he advocated "a revolution in France with French materials."<sup>45</sup> Nationalism became the refuge for such frustrated revolutionaries. National Socialism did not, by and large, attract former leaders of the Left. German Social Democrats and communists were too disciplined

to desert so easily; moreover, they formed an almost self-contained subculture, whose comfort was not readily rejected. Revolutionary traditions, lively in Italy and France, easily became fossilized dogma in Germany.

Fascism thus attracted a motley crowd of followers from different backgrounds and of all classes, even though the bourgeoisie provided the backbone of the movement and most of the leaders. Rather than renewed attempts to show that fascism could not attract the working class, at best a partial truth, the very diversity of such support needs analysis. Most large-scale business and industrial enterprise, as we now know, did not support the Nazis before their seizure of power, and indeed looked upon them as potential radicals.<sup>46</sup> The Hitler government of 1933, which they did support, was at first a coalition in which conservatives predominated. When, six months later, the conservatives left the cabinet, industrialists compromised with Hitler, just as the Industrial Alliance in Italy came to support Mussolini. But even so, the primacy of fascist politics over economics remains a fact: the myth pushed economic interests into a subservient position. Until the very end, Adolf Hitler believed that a political confession of faith was the prerequisite for all action. From his experience in the First World War, he drew the lesson that man's world view was primary in determining his fate.<sup>47</sup> It was the fascist myth which had cross-class appeal, and which, together with the very tangible successes of the régimes, made possible the consensus upon which they were at first based.

Fascist movements seems to have been most successful in mobilizing the lower classes in underdeveloped European countries where the middle class was small and isolated. Spain provides one example in the West, and it is true of the Iron Guard as well as of the Hungarian fascist movement in eastern Europe. To be sure, in those countries the bourgeoisie was not as strong as elsewhere; but another factor is of greater importance in explaining the fascist appeal to the laboring and peasant classes. Here, for the first time, was a movement which tried to bring these segments of society into political partici-

pation, for in such nations Marxist movements were strictly prohibited. The stress upon an end to alienation, the ideal of the organic community, brought dividends—for the exclusion of workers and peasants from society had been so total that purely economic considerations did not provide the sole or perhaps even the principal reason for joining.

The fascist myth was based upon the national mystique, its own revolutionary and dynamic traditions, which we have discussed, and the continuation of the war experience in peacetime. It also encompassed remnants of previous ideologies and political attitudes, many of them paradoxically hostile to fascist traditions. It was a scavenger which attempted to co-opt all that had appealed to people in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century past: romanticism, liberalism, and socialism, as well as Darwinism and modern technology. Too little attention has been paid to this co-optation; it has been subsumed under the so-called eclecticism of fascism. But in reality all these fragments of the past were integrated into a coherent attitude toward life through the basic fascist nationalist myth.

The romantic tradition infused the national mystique, but it was also present in the literature and art supported by the fascists, especially by the Nazis. It had supplied the framework for a popular culture that had changed little during the preceding century. Adventure, danger, and romantic love were the constant themes, but always combined with the virtues we have mentioned: hard work, sexual purity, in short the respectability at the core of normative morality. Here the novels of Karl May in Germany, with a circulation of half a million by 1913 and 18 million by 1938, are typical. They were set in faraway places—the American plains or the Orient—and combined a romantic setting with the defense of good against evil, bodily purity, law and order, against those who would destroy them. Interestingly enough, many Nazis wanted to ban May's stories because he exalted the American Indian race and pleaded for tolerance and understanding between peoples. Hitler, however, had his novels distributed to the armed forces during the Second World War. He once said that

Karl May had opened his eyes to the world, and this was true of many millions of German youth. The virtues which American Indian heroes defended against evil European trappers were precisely those the Nazis also promised to defend. They called themselves tolerant—but the tolerance and compassion that fill May's novels would come about only after Hitler had won his battles, and eliminated the “intolerant” Jewish world conspiracy.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, we have seen no detailed analysis of similar novels popular in the Italy of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>49</sup> But both National Socialism and Italian fascism used the phrase “romantic realism” to describe realistic character portrayal within a romantic setting.<sup>50</sup> In Italy, such realism was expressed through the strictness of classical form. Thus Francesco Saponi could summarize these aspirations: “Live romantically, as well as according to the classical idea. Long live Italy!”<sup>51</sup> Saponi was a member of the “Novocento” (Twentieth Century) group of writers and artists who wanted to create a native Italian style that was both natural and neo-classical. Though inspired by Mussolini's friend (and mistress) Margherita Sarfatti, it was but one of several competing cultural groups in fascist Italy. “Magic realism” was their formula, created by the writer Massimo Bontempelli. Such romantic realism had already informed popular literature in the past, and provided a mystical and sentimental dimension even while proclaiming a clarity of purpose everyone could understand. Painters like Casorati in fascist Italy or Adolf Ziegler in Germany (Hitler's own favorite) provided corresponding examples in the visual arts.

Admittedly, here as elsewhere “magic realism” exemplified only one trend in Italy, while in Germany it was officially approved and furthered. But even in Germany non-approved literature could be obtained, at least until the war broke out. Parallels can also be drawn between Italian and German architecture under fascism, though in Italy even a party building could still reflect avant-garde style. (In Germany, among non-representational buildings and even in military barracks, the otherwise condemned Bauhaus style often surfaced.) The athletic stadium, “Forum Mussolini,” was praised for the same

“simplicity of style,” the hard lines, displayed by the Nazi Nuremberg Stadium. The plea that architectural material must be genuine and subordinated to that “divine harmony” which reflected the Italian spirit was duplicated in Germany.<sup>52</sup>

Romanticism was integrated into fascism all the more easily because it had always provided the major inspiration for nationalist thought. “Magic realism” stood side by side with the romanticized view of the past: whether it was the ancient Germans who had defeated the Roman Legions, or those Roman ruins that were now bathed nightly in a romantic light, the kind of illumination so attractive to Italian fascism. Differences between the two political styles existed. The liturgy was not quite as all-embracing in Italy as in Germany; and the regime was less concerned with the total control over culture. There was some truth to the contention that the Italian fascist dictatorship was an innovative force in the arts which could persist into the 1930s,<sup>53</sup> but in Germany no such assertion was ever possible except in the first years of the regime when some leaders like Goebbels patronized the Expressionists until Hitler himself put a stop to it. However, for such nationalist movements, these differences are matters of degree, not absolutes. Some of the differences may relate to the fact that Mussolini was a journalist, never really comfortable with the visual expressions of fascism, while Hitler thought of himself as an architect and was not truly interested in the written word.

Liberal ideas were interwoven with romanticism. Middle-class manners and morals would lead to success (the Cinderellas of popular literature were models of respectability). But as there was no real Horatio Alger tradition in Europe, it was the “pure heart” that counted and made possible Cinderella's progress from kitchen to ballroom. Moreover, fascists everywhere believed in the threat posed by degeneration which the liberal Max Nordau had popularized during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Nordau saw the moderns in art and literature as literally sick people, maintaining that their lack of clarity, inability to uphold moral standards, and absence of self-discipline all sprang from the degener-

ation of their physical organism. The Nazis, of course, illustrated their opposition to artistic modernism by the exhibition of "degenerate art," and Hitler and Mussolini prided themselves on the supposed clarity of their rhetoric. Fascism deprived the concept of degeneration of its original foundations: clinical observation linked to a universe ruled by scientific laws. But this was typical of such annexations—the popular and traditional superstructure was absorbed but now set upon racial or nationalist foundation.

The concept of degeneration had provided the foil to the liberal's concept of clarity, decency, and natural laws. Fascism also took over the ideals of tolerance and freedom, changing both to fit its model. Tolerance, as mentioned earlier, was claimed by fascists in antithesis to their supposedly intolerant enemies, while freedom was placed within the community. To be tolerant meant not tolerating those who opposed fascism: individual liberty was possible only within the collectivity. Here once more, concepts that had become part and parcel of established patterns of thought were not rejected (as so many historians have claimed) but instead co-opted—fascism would bring about ideals with which people were comfortable, but only on its own terms.

Socialism was also emasculated. The hatred of capitalism was directed against finance capitalism only. At first glance, the opposition to the bourgeoisie seemed shared equally between Nazis and socialists, as both thundered against the moribund bourgeois era. However, fascism cut away the class basis of socialist opposition to the bourgeoisie and substituted the war between generations. "Bourgeois" no longer meant a class of exploiters, but the old and worn out, those who lacked a vibrant dynamic. The setting of the young against the old was a theme which, as we saw earlier, fascism co-opted from the *fin de siècle* and then transferred from people to nations. Thus young nations with their dynamic fascist youth confronted the old nations with their ancient pot-bellied parliamentarians. This was the fascist "class struggle," and here the socialist vocabulary was employed. In this, the Italian fascists went beyond the National

Socialists. Fascist students exalted the Latin, Roman, fascist revolution at the expense of the fat and pacifist bourgeois. Indeed, in Italy the lower middle class (never clearly defined) was constantly berated as being incapable of grasping the myths of nationalism and war, and as lacking any power of social interaction. It is perhaps ironic that certain Italian fascists saw their adversary as precisely that lower middle class which, according to some modern historians, constituted the most important social basis of fascism. This anti-bourgeois rhetoric was undoubtedly also part of the resentment that fascist leaders, usually from modest backgrounds, felt against so-called established society.

Fascists not only borrowed socialist rhetoric, they also made use of some rituals provided by working-class meetings: the massed flags, and the color red, for example. Moreover, some of the socialist workers' cultural and sports organizations were adapted to fascist ends. The liturgy was for the most part based on nationalist precedent from the previous century, but, with typical eclecticism, useful socialist examples were also appropriated.<sup>54</sup>

Fascism absorbed important parts of well-established ideologies like romanticism, liberalism, or socialism; but it was also not afraid to annex modern technology if this could be embedded within fascist myths. Indeed, the dictators were singularly perceptive in their appreciation of technological advance.

Both Hitler and Mussolini had a passion for speed—aircraft and powerful cars provided one outlet for their activism. Hitler was the first German politician to use an airplane in order to make campaign appearances throughout Germany on the same day. Use of the latest technology was immediately linked to Nazi ideology: Hitler literally dropping from the sky, Hitler by his personal courage helping to pilot his plane throughout an awesome storm (this story with its obvious biblical analogy was required reading in Third Reich schools). But Mussolini shared this passion, and in both régimes air aces like Hermann Goering or Italo Balbo had a special status and were surrounded by an aura of adventure and daring.

Anson Rabinbach has shown how technology was used to improve modes of production in Germany, how the program known as the "Beauty of Labor" turned fear of the machine into a glorification of technology through emphasis on efficiency and volkish aesthetics.<sup>55</sup> The newest technology was annexed to an ideology that looked to the past in order to determine the future.

Little is as yet known of how Italian fascism absorbed and used traditional modes of thought as well as the newest technology. In fact, the Italian Nationalist Association (founded in 1910), which was to be Mussolini's partner in fascist rule, combined emphasis upon industrial growth and modern technology with the nationalist mystique.<sup>56</sup> Nationalism, and even volkish thought, were not necessarily opposed to modernization, provided it was made to serve the ideology of the régime, which in turn justified it. That is why, for example, the Nazis supported modern technology and industrial planning, but opposed modern physics as a "Jewish science"—pragmatism was accepted, but any science resting on an abstract theoretical base had to be examined for racial purity.

Italian fascism had no such anti-scientific bias. There, for example, the physicist and Nobel Laureate Enrico Fermi flourished during the 1930s until the proclamation of the racial laws. In Germany, Volkish thought transformed the scientist into a provincial. Films in the Third Reich, for example, praised the faithful family physician, and favorably contrasted this avuncular type to a many-sided scientist like Rudolf Virchow. For all that, Germany as well as Italy integrated technology into fascism, using it to praise and further modernization as well as to enhance the political liturgy (as in Albert Speer's dome of light in mass festivals, borrowed from the anti-aircraft batteries of the defense establishment).<sup>57</sup>

Within its basic presuppositions of revolution, nationalism, and the war experience, fascism contained two rhythms: the amoeba-like absorption of ideas from the mainstream of popular thought and culture, countered by the urge toward activism and its taming. Both were set within the nationalist myth, and all together provided the

proper attitude toward life. Fascism attempted to cater to everything people held dear, to give new meaning to daily routine and to offer salvation without risk. The fact that Adolf Hitler shared in popular tastes and longings, that in this sense he was a man of the people, was one vital ingredient of his success. Mussolini entertained intellectual pretensions that Hitler never claimed, nor did he share the tastes of the people, perhaps because in Italy popular culture was diversified in a nation with stronger regional traditions and ties than Germany.

The frequent contention that fascist culture diverged from the mainstream of European culture cannot be upheld; on the contrary, it absorbed most of what had the greatest mass appeal in the past. In fact, it positioned itself much more in this mainstream than socialism, which tried to educate and elevate the tastes of the worker. Fascism made no such attempt: it accepted the common man's preferences and went on to direct them to its own ends. Moreover, the lack of original ideas was not a disadvantage, as many historians have implied, for originality does not necessarily lead to success in an age of democratic mass politics. The synthesis which fascism attempted between activism and order, revolution and the absorption of past traditions, proved singularly successful. To be sure, Marxism, conservatism, and liberalism made original contributions to European thought, but they underwent a long period of gestation, and by the time they became politically important movements, they had founded their own traditions. Fascism, appearing as a political force only after the First World War, had no time to create a tradition for itself: like Hitler, it was in a hurry, confronted with an old order that seemed about to fall. Those who did not strike at once were sure to be overtaken by other radicals of the Left or Right.

Yet fascism would never have worked without the tangible successes achieved by fascist régimes; social and economic factors are not to be ignored and we shall return to them later. But the preeminence of the cultural factors already discussed is certainly the other half of the dialectic. Without them, the ways in which the men and women of those times were motivated cannot be properly understood.

What, then, of the fascist utopia? It was certainly a part of the fascist myth. The fairy tale would come true once the enemies had been defeated. The happy ending was assured. But first men must “overcome”—the mystical ingredient of National Socialism was strong here; and in Italy, the ideal of continuing the wartime sacrifice was stressed. The happy end would bring about the “new Rome” or the Third German Empire, infused with middle-class virtues, a combination of the ancient past and the nineteenth-century bourgeois ideal. The new fascist man would usher in this utopia—and he already existed, exemplified by the Führer and the Duce. Eventually, it was implied, all Germans or Italians would approach their example.

The new fascist man provided the ideal stereotype for all fascist movements. He was, naturally, masculine: fascism represented itself as a society of males, re-enforced by the struggle for national unity that had created fellowships such as “Young Italy,” or the German fraternities and gymnastic societies. Moreover, the cult of masculinity of the *fin de siècle*, which Nietzsche himself so well exemplified, contributed its influence. More immediately, a male society continued into the peace the wartime camaraderie of the trenches, that myth of the war experience so important in all of fascism. The masculine ideal did not remain abstract, but was personified in ideals of male strength and beauty.

Such an ideal may be vague, as in a children’s book where the Duce is described as being as beautiful as the sun, as good as the light, and as strong as the hurricane.<sup>58</sup> It is less vague in sculptures of the Duce as a Renaissance prince or, more often, as the emperor Augustus. In addition, the innumerable pictures of the Duce harvesting, running, boxing—often bare-chested—projected a strong and invulnerable masculinity. Yet such stereotypes were not all-pervasive in Italy; they were all but absent even at such events as the exhibition honoring the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome (1933).<sup>59</sup> The inner characteristics of this new man were expressed through the strength and harmony of his body: athletic, persevering, in control of his passions, filled with self-denial and the spirit of sacrifice. At the same time, the

new fascist man must be energetic, courageous, and spartan.<sup>60</sup> The ideal fascist was the very opposite of muddleheaded, talkative, intellectualizing liberals and socialists—the exhausted, tired old men of the old order. Indeed, Italian fascism’s dream of an age-old masculine ideal has not vanished from our own time.

Germany shared such ideals of the male society and the new fascist man, but much more consistently. This gave the Nazi utopia quite a different direction from that of Italy. Volkish thought had always advocated the ideal of the “Bund” of males; the German Youth Movement reinforced the link between the fellowship of men and the national mystique, while the war completed the task. Mussolini might talk about the war and the continuing struggle, but right-wing Germans believed that a new race of men had already emerged from the war—energy come alive, as Ernst Jünger put it; lithe, muscular bodies, angular faces, and eyes hardened by the horrors they had seen.<sup>61</sup> Here the inner nature of the new race was immediately connected with its outward features. Whenever Adolf Hitler talked about the “new German,” he wasted little time on the inner self of the Aryan but instead defined him immediately through an ideal of beauty—“*Rank und Schlank*” (slim and tall) was his phrase.<sup>62</sup> There was never any doubt about how the ideal German looked, and it is impossible to imagine a Nazi exposition without the presence of this stereotype.

Racism made the difference. It gave to volkish thought a dimension which Italian fascism lacked. To be sure, as we shall see later, an effort was made to introduce this dimension into Italy with the Racial Laws of 1938, but these were by and large less successful as far as the stereotype was concerned. The Aryan myth had from its beginning in the eighteenth century linked the inward to the outward man, and combined scientific pretensions with an aesthetic theory that saw in Greek sculpture the ideal of male beauty.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, while the nude male was commonplace in German volkish art (see Chapter Ten), the female was usually veiled: the modest and chaste bearer of the children of the race had to be hidden from public view.



Was the fascist man then tied to the past or was he the creator of new values? Renzo De Felice has seen here one of the chief differences between Italian fascism and German National Socialism. For the Germans, the man of the future had always existed, even in the past, for the race was eternal, like the trunk of a tree, while the ideal man of Italian fascism created new values.<sup>64</sup> If we look at the famous definition of fascism given by Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile in the *Encyclopedia Italiana* (1932), the new "fascist man" is, on the one hand, set within the Italian patriotic tradition, and, on the other, supposed to live a superior life unconstrained by space and time. He must sacrifice his personal interests and realize that it is his spirituality which gives him human values. But his spirituality must be informed by history, meaning Italian traditions and national memories. Such an apparent paradox of standing within and yet soaring above tradition accompanied most discussions of the new fascist man in Italy. Man must proceed to ever higher forms of consciousness, culture must not crystallize, and yet the great Italian authors of the past must be studied ("These are germs which can fructify our spirit and give us spontaneity").<sup>65</sup> The Universal Roman Exhibition of 1942 illustrated such principles concretely. Indeed, the new Rome built for this exhibition (*Rome Eura*) was supposed to transmit its heritage to its own day, as shown by the effort to imitate all the Italian architectural styles of the past: Roman, Renaissance, and Baroque. But the exhibition was also supposed to be a signpost for the future. These diverse intentions were symbolized by the completion of the archaeological excavations of Ostia Antiqua (Roman Ostia), creating access to it by means of an Autostrada, and as the catalogue tells us, thus making the new Rome encompass the old,<sup>66</sup> except that by 1942 what was supposed to be unique had been tamed into an historical eclecticism.

In fact, the new fascist man in Italy ignored history no more than his Nazi counterpart.<sup>67</sup> The cult of the Roman past was pervasive; it determined the fascist stereotype wherever we do find it. But this past remained, at least until the final years of the régime, a jumping-off point for the ideal fascist man of the future. Tradition informed his

consciousness, but he himself had to rise beyond it without losing sight of his starting point. Such a flexible attitude toward the ideal reflected the greater openness of Italian fascism to the new in both art and literature. This utopia was willing to leave the door to the future halfway open, while in Germany it was shut tight. The difference reflects the groping of Italian fascism for an ideology, its greater emphasis upon struggle and energy, its syndicalist and Futurist elements.

The new German incorporated the eternal values of the race, summarized in a frequently used admonition: "You yourself represent a thousand years of the future and a thousand years of the past."<sup>68</sup> The SS, the most dynamic of all party organizations, fits into this picture. True, an official SS publication tells us that the SS man should never be a conformist, and every SS generation should improve upon its predecessors. Yet the maxim that "history is human fate" meant emphasis upon racial ancestry, that the accomplishments of the past dominated the present and determined the future.<sup>69</sup>

Was this ideal man then to be stripped of his individuality? Was individuality not a part of the fascist utopia? For liberal democracy and for social democracy, the final goal of all social organization was the good of the individual. Did fascism really change this goal? To do so, it would have to eradicate one of the deepest utopian traditions. But it was the pattern of fascism to annex and bend to its purpose, rather than change concepts deeply rooted in the national consciousness, and individualism was not exempted from this pattern, being at the same time retained and redefined. In contrast to unlimited economic and social competition, setting man against man, the ideal of an organic community had taken root in the previous century. The German Youth Movement had thought of itself as such a community, voluntarily joined but based upon shared origins. The ideal of the "équipe" played a similar role among French fascist intellectuals, a team spirit grounded in a common world view, exalted by the young male writers grouped around the fascist newspaper *Je Suis Partout* (see Chapter Nine). It was the camaraderie of trench life, which, as we

have mentioned repeatedly, many men had actually experienced, and which for others had become a myth that seemed to provide the model for the ideal society. To be sure, they had been conscripted, but this awkward fact was ignored as veterans thought back to comradeship under fire, when each man had had to subjugate his will to that of the others in his unit in order to survive.

Fascism could all the more easily co-opt this idea of community since nationalism had always advocated it: individualism is only possible when men voluntarily join together on the basis of a common origin, attitude, and purpose. Fascism dropped the voluntary aspect, of course, but only as a temporary measure. Education was directed to help the young understand that "*Credere, Obedire e Combattere*" on behalf of the national community was the true fulfillment of individualism.<sup>70</sup> The prospectus of the élite Nazi school at Feldafing sums up this redefinition of individualism: "He who can do what he wants is not free, but he is free who does what he should. He who feels himself without chains is not free, but enslaved to his passions."<sup>71</sup>

Individualism under fascism then meant self-fulfillment while sheltering within the collectivity, having the best of both worlds. It is therefore mistaken to characterize fascism simply as anti-individualist, for this ignores the longing for a true community in which the like-minded joined together, each through his own power of will. The French fascist intellectuals, merely a coterie out of power, could as we have seen praise the provisional, yet for all this Nietzschean exaltation, one of their number, Robert Brasillach, not only found refuge in an "inner fatherland" but also saw in his beloved Paris a collection of small villages in which he could be at home.<sup>72</sup> Between the wars the young men in the Latin Quarter wanted to be original and spontaneous, while longing for an end to intellectual anarchy.<sup>73</sup> Fascism gave them the means to do all that and still remain sheltered by the national community.

These French fascists expressed an *élan* typical of fascism as a movement out of power, though even here the dynamic had to be tamed. Fascism in power, as we saw earlier, was often a disappointment to the

young fascist activists. Although it kept much of the earlier rhetoric, once in power it inevitably became the Establishment. Indeed, Stanley Payne's suggestion that at that point the differences between fascism and the reaction become less marked seems close to the facts, if not to the professed ideology.<sup>74</sup> The reactionaries, men like Francisco Franco, based themselves on the traditional hierarchies, on the status quo and, as often as not, took as their ideology the Christianity of the Catholic Church. The fascist revolutionary base, the dynamic nationalist attitudes, and the prominent rhythms were lacking. However, before the relationship between fascism and the reaction can be redefined, more detailed comparison is needed between, for example, the various stages of Mussolini's government and the evolution of Franco's rule in Spain. Here, once again, the particular national histories of those countries are of great importance.

Although national differences culminated in the distinctions between the "new fascist man" of Italy and of Germany, all fascism essentially went back to the anti-parliamentary tradition of the nineteenth century in order to redefine popular participation in politics. Both such participation and individual liberty were supposedly part of a collective experience. It must not be forgotten that, in the last resort, all fascisms were nationalisms, sharing the cult of national symbols and myths as well as the preoccupation with mythical national origins. Himmler sent an expedition to Tibet in order to discover Aryan origins, while other young Germans searched for the original Aryans in Scandinavia, closer to home. The Italian fascist Foreign Ministry sponsored archaeological expeditions to revive the idea of the Roman Empire,<sup>75</sup> while Mussolini restored Rome's ancient ruins, saying that the city was Italian fascism's eternal symbol. The Museum of Classical Antiquity, named after the Duce, was situated in the Campodoglio, in the heart of ancient Rome. Nationalism meant emphasis upon origins and continuity, however much the Italian fascist man was supposed to be a man of the future.

Racism and anti-Semitism were not a necessary component of fascism, and certainly not of those parts of the movement that looked

for their model to Italy, where until 1936, racism was not part of official doctrine. Léon Degrelle, the leader of the Belgian Rexists, at one time explicitly repudiated that racism which he was later to embrace wholeheartedly (to become Hitler's favorite foreign National Socialist). What, he asked, is the "true race"—the Belgian, the Flemish, or the Walloon? From the Flemish side, the fascist newspaper *De Daad* inveighed against race hatred and called upon "upright Jews" to repudiate the Marxists in their midst.<sup>76</sup>

Even Dutch National Socialism under Anton Andriaan Mussert did not at first appeal to racism and kept silent about the Jews, an attitude the German Nazis were later to find incomprehensible. The French fascist group around the newspaper *Je Suis Partout* did go in for anti-Semitism, but even here the Germans were accused of exaggerating the racial issue, for good relations were possible with a foreign people like the Jews.<sup>77</sup> This state of affairs did not last. By 1936 Mussolini had embraced racism and though, as we mentioned, racism was not really successful in Italy, Mussolini himself first used it in 1936 against blacks during the Ethiopian war, and then through the racial laws of 1938 against the Jews. We shall never know whether Mussolini himself became a convinced racist, but he did increase the severity in the draft of the racial laws which had been submitted to him.<sup>78</sup> The proclamation of these laws was not solely due to German influence, though much of their content and their method had to be imported from the north. Rather, Mussolini may have embraced racism out of opportunism (in the Ethiopian war it lay readily at hand), or to give fascism a clearly defined enemy like the Jews in order to reinvigorate his ageing movement, to give a new cause to a young generation becoming disillusioned with his revolution.

It was only in central and eastern Europe that racism was from the beginning an integral part of fascist ideology. In eastern Europe, the masses of Jewry were to be found still living under quasi-ghetto conditions. They were a distinctive part of the population and vulnerable to attack. Jews prayed differently, dressed differently, and spoke a different language (Yiddish). Even if some were assimilated, enough

non-assimilated Jews remained to demonstrate the clash of cultures that underlay much of the anti-Semitism in the region. Moreover, in underdeveloped countries like Romania or Hungary the Jews had become *the* middle class, forming a vulnerable entity within the nation as that class which seemed to exploit the rest of the population through its commercial activities. No wonder the Romanian Iron Guard, in appealing to the nationalism of the peasants, became violently anti-Semitic and even racist despite their Christian orientation—for they had begun as the "Legion of the Archangel Michael."

From the 1880s on, a great part of East European Jewry began to emigrate into the neighboring countries, predominantly Germany and Austria. The account in *Mein Kampf* of how sharply Hitler reacted to the sight of such strangers in prewar Vienna may well have been typical. However that may be, the facts of the situation in that part of Europe gave fascism an enemy who could be singled out as symbolizing the forces that must be overcome. Hitler built upon the so-called "Jewish question," and until the late 1930s this led to a further differentiation between National Socialism and western or southern fascism. For Hitler, unlike Mussolini, the enemy was not just a vague liberalism or Marxism; he was physically embodied by the Jews who supposedly had created liberalism and Marxism, and who were the sworn enemies of all nations. Building on the central European tradition of a racist-oriented nationalism, he could give to the enemy of his world view a concrete and human shape.

We have discussed Italian fascism and National Socialism as placing their emphasis upon culture. Both Mussolini and Hitler attempted to epitomize their movements, to provide in their own persons living symbols and an integrative force. Discussing the movements without the leaders is rather like describing the body without the soul. Astute politicians that they were, neither could have succeeded without an instinct for the tastes, wishes, and longings of their people; both ended states of near civil war which they themselves had largely created, managing to provide economic stability and success in foreign policy. Hitler's success was the more spectacular.

Between 1933 and 1936, he led Germany from the depths of a depression to full employment. Rearmament played only a limited role in this economic revival, traditional investments and public works were more important. Hitler was instrumental in the building of a powerful army, and his successes in foreign policy need no further comment. It is true, as Sebastian Haffner wrote in one of the most insightful biographies of Hitler, that by 1938 he had converted even those who had earlier voted against him by the sheer weight of his political and economic success.<sup>79</sup> But here again such consensus, in the last resort, rested upon shared myths and aspirations which, because of this achievement, seemed nearer realization.

Mussolini could at first claim equal success. The population had reason to be satisfied. If in Italy the Duce had not restored work to 6 million unemployed or torn up the Treaty of Versailles, he had brought order and a certain dynamic to a government that had been inert and corrupt. Moreover, Italy avoided most of the European depression. Even conservatives, who did not want a fascist revolution, could be content with the quality of life. However, by 1938, under the pressure of the unpopular German alliance and then an unpopular Ethiopian war, Mussolini maintained a consensus only with difficulty.

Like many other historians, Sebastian Haffner fails to recognize Hitler's success as a politician in the age of the masses using the new style of politics based upon traditional emotions and myths. He therefore easily distinguishes between Hitler and a German people who, in his view, merely responded to the Führer's tangible gains. In fact, to the contrary, just because the desires of the people coincided so largely with those of the régime, the new political style won their acclaim. Gustave Le Bon, in his book *The Crowd* (1895), had stressed that successful leadership must genuinely share the myths of the people—and both Hitler and Mussolini were his disciples.<sup>80</sup>

We know that real wages fell in Germany and that the Italian workers and peasants did not materially benefit from the fascist régime. But it would seem that, to many of them, this mattered less than the gain in status. Those who have tried to prove otherwise apparently

believe that material interests alone determine men's actions. Hitler and Mussolini knew that what mattered was how people would perceive their position: myth is always more important as a persuader than the sober analysis of reality.

Moreover, people, and not just material forces, do make history—not just the leader himself but also the likes and dislikes, wishes and, above all, the perceptions of the followers. Whenever he took an action which might upset many Germans, Hitler tried—successfully—to appear to be the pushed rather than the pusher. The staging of the local riots that preceded all new steps in his Jewish policy are a good example. His tactic of making an aggressive move in foreign policy and then proclaiming it as his very last, confused friend and foe alike. Mussolini's policies until the mid-1930s were more modest, but he too combined gestures with patience, moving slowly in order to accomplish his ends. Yet Mussolini came to power much earlier than Hitler, and his achievement, as we have seen, was in minimizing the economic depression Hitler had to overcome. Speaking of the fascist consensus in Italy, Renzo De Felice puts it graphically: "The country was thinking more about the evils that fascism had avoided than whether it brought true benefits."<sup>81</sup> There was a difference between the consensus in Italy and in Germany, even though the two dictators' approaches to politics and their successful emphasis upon the myths that determine human perceptions were similar.

The desired end was different also. Mussolini's long-range objectives were traditional: to create an empire built upon the example of ancient Rome. Hitler's long-range goals of racial domination were not traditional. A wide gulf divided Adolf Hitler, the provincial whose exposure to the far-out racist sects of Vienna provided his intellectual awakening, and Mussolini, who emerged from the conflicts within international socialism. Mussolini confessed himself to be influenced by some of the masters of European thought—such men as Gustave Le Bon, Georges Sorel, William James, and Vilfredo Pareto—while Hitler, also a pupil of Le Bon, was mainly taken with the thoughts of obscure racist sectarians like Lanz von Liebenfels, Alfred Schuler, or

Dietrich Eckart, who but for their disciple's success would have remained deservedly unknown. From one perspective Mussolini may be called a man of the world, and Adolf Hitler a true believer, a member of an obscure racist-theosophical sect. But then this man who believed in secret sciences, Aryan mythologies, and battles between the powers of light and darkness, through his political genius turned such ideas into the policies of a powerful nation. Hitler's goal was both the acquisition of a traditional empire—"Lebensraum"—and the enslavement of the Slavs to the superior race as well as the extermination of the mentally and physically handicapped, the gypsies and above all the Jews. His devotion to genocide summarized the difference between Germany where the Volkish tradition of nationalism triumphed, and Italy with its more humanitarian nationalism of the *Risorgimento*.

Because of his ideological commitment, Hitler showed a tenacity that was absent in Mussolini. This is exemplified on one level by comparing Mussolini, the bon vivant and womanizer, with Hitler, the lonely, spartan figure. But on a more important level, it may have meant, as Sebastian Haffner states, that Hitler, knowing the war was lost, would nevertheless continue the conflict so that he could kill as many Jews as possible before the inevitable end. Hundreds of thousands of Germans died so that Hitler could, at the last moment, kill hundreds of thousands of Jews.<sup>82</sup>

Mussolini was cynical about the potentialities of his own people, and even came to despise them toward the end of his rule. But while Hitler felt himself in the end betrayed by the German people, for the most part he thought in apocalyptic terms. Every action had to contribute to a "final end": indeed, Hitler himself believed in finite time—it was during the short span of his own life, he was fond of remarking, that the Aryan must triumph over Jew and find his *Lebensraum*. The German occult tradition asserted itself, as we saw when discussing the "Third Way," not mediated by Jakob Böhme but by an obscure and bizarre racism.<sup>83</sup>

Haffner's speculation as to why Hitler kept on fighting fits better

into our picture of the Führer than the usual interpretation (adopted by all other biographers as the sole explanation), that in the end he became a captive of his own myth of invincibility. It is quite possible that Hitler lost contact with reality at some point shortly before the end of the war; however, the Hitler who emerges from Joseph Goebbels' Diaries does not seem to have lost control, though perhaps he realized earlier than anyone else that the war was lost.<sup>84</sup> To be sure, Hitler and Mussolini became isolated during the course of the war, but the consistency of Hitler's whole life makes the tenacity of his end believable as well. Mussolini changed, whereas Hitler from the end of the First World War onward remained locked in his unchanging world view.

Any comparison of Hitler and Mussolini becomes difficult because of the absence of works on Hitler that in historical detail and powerful analysis correspond to Renzo De Felice's monumental biography of Benito Mussolini. Admittedly, Mussolini had no Auschwitz and, unlike Germany, Italy had an important anti-fascist movement. The Duce also showed more human dimensions than the Führer. Yet the materials for a large scale biography of Hitler exist, and are certainly as extensive as the resources that made De Felice's biography possible. But in spite of the availability of such documentation, up to now each recent biography of Hitler has merely added minor facts, without any new interpretations of note. To be sure, psychohistorians have begun to analyze the record of Hitler's life in an attempt to find new insights. Yet it is difficult to accept their contention that his mother's death by cancer determined the structure of his entire life, or that the hallucinations of Hitler, the temporarily blinded soldier, led to his hatred of the Jews. Scholarship has not really advanced much beyond Alan Bullock's pioneering work of 1952 *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*. German historians, even of the younger generation, have for the most part avoided the figure of the Führer and concentrated instead upon the more impersonal causes of National Socialism. The biographies of Hitler which do exist have for the most part been written by those outside the historical profession. Yet to write about National Social-

ism while omitting to confront Adolf Hitler, who was at the heart of it, means shirking a true confrontation with the past.

The building blocks for a general theory of fascism now seem to lie before us. Fascism was everywhere an "attitude toward life," based upon a national mystique which might vary from nation to nation. It was also a revolution, attempting to find a "Third Way" between Marxism and capitalism, but still emphasizing ideology over economic change, the "revolution of the spirit" of which Mussolini spoke, or Hitler's "German revolution." However, fascism encouraged activism, the fight against the existing order of things. Both in Germany and Italy, fascism's chance at power came during conditions of near civil war. But this activism had to be tamed, fascism had to become respectable for activism was in conflict with the general desire for law and order, with those middle-class virtues that fascism promised to protect against the dissolving spirit of modernity. Fascism in power was also sometimes constrained by a head of state who continued to represent the old order and who could not be ignored. While Hitler was freed from this constraint by President von Hindenburg's death in 1934, Mussolini always had to report to King Victor Emmanuel. The main dilemma, however, which faced fascism was that activism had to exist side by side with the effort to tame it and to keep it under control. This was one of the chief problems faced by Hitler and Mussolini before their rise to power and in the early years of their rule.

Fascism could create a consensus because it annexed and focused those hopes and longings that informed diverse political and intellectual movements of the previous century. Like a scavenger, fascism scooped up scraps of romanticism, liberalism, the new technology, and even socialism, to say nothing of a wide variety of other movements lingering from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. But it threw over all these the mantle of a community conceived as sharing a national past, present, and future—a community that was not enforced but presumably "natural," or "genuine," with its own organic strength and life, analogous to nature. The tree became the

favorite symbol; but the native landscape or the ruins of the past were also singled out as exemplifying on one level the national community, a human collectivity represented by the Fascist Party.

Fascism with its glorification of war and struggle needed enemies and some of these we have mentioned already. Foreign nations considered hostile were not close or tangible enough, thus internal enemies were essential. Racism as we saw focused upon tangible enemies like the Jews or Gypsies, but fascism in general also provided a category of "asocials," men and women who were said to be without any sense of community. The so-called asocials were homeless people like the beggars or vagabonds, the mentally impaired and so-called sexual deviants. They were not usually of an inferior race, but as aryan or good Italians were thought to undermine the nation or race, to lead it into degeneration. These enemies could, at times, be reformed, but in Germany if they resisted they too were doomed. Indeed, German homosexuals, for example, were classified as either merely shamming when they could perhaps be saved, or hereditary and must be exterminated.

These were, of course, precisely those members of the population whom normative society had always deplored and pushed to the margins of existence. Here again fascism trod on familiar ground with, in the case of Germany, one all important difference: in the quest for utopia the asocials were to be killed, exterminated, a procedure which settled, respectable society rejected. Indeed, the Nazis felt that the extermination process had to be kept a dark secret. The belief in racism made the difference here between prison, being an outcast and death. Whether it focused upon its enemies or attempted to inculcate its attitude towards life, basically fascism invented nothing new, but pushed already present hopes, fears and prejudices to their logical conclusions.

Support for fascism was not built merely upon appeal to vested interests. Social and economic factors, to be sure, proved crucial in the collapse after the First World War, and in the Great Depression, while the social and economic successes of fascism gave body to fascist

theories. But—and this seems equally crucial—political choices are determined by people's actual perception of their situation, their hopes and longings, the utopia toward which they strive. The fascist "attitude toward life" was suffused by cultural factors through which, as we have attempted to show, the movement presented itself; it was the only mass movement between the wars that could claim to have a largely cross-class following.

In the end, it is not likely that Europe will repeat the fascist or the National Socialist experience. However, the fragments of our Western cultural and ideological past which fascism used for its own purposes still lie ready to be formed into a new synthesis, even if in a different way. Most ominously, nationalism, the basic force that made fascism possible in the first place, not only remains but is growing in strength—still the principal integrative force among peoples and nations. Those ideals of mass politics upon which fascism built its political style are very much alive, for ours is still a visual age to which the "new politics" of fascism were so well attuned. The method used to appeal to the masses (or public opinion as it is called today), if not the form or content, is in our time, for example, reflected in the public relations industry<sup>85</sup> and refined through the use of television as an instrument of politics. Symbols and myth are still used today though no longer in order to project a single and official attitude, but instead a wide variety of attitudes towards life. The danger of successful appeals to authoritarianism is always present, however changed from earlier forms or from its present worldwide manifestations.

Speculations about the future depend upon an accurate analysis of the past. This chapter is meant to provide a general framework for a discussion of fascism, in the hope of leading us closer to that historical reality without which we cannot understand the past or the present.

## Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some Considerations

FASCIST SCHOLARSHIP has become increasingly aware of the role which aesthetics played in the movement's appeal and that exploring the link between aesthetics, politics and society could open up new dimensions in our understanding of fascism. This aspect of the fascist movement is no longer brushed aside as mere propaganda, an attempt to manipulate the people against their will. Instead of emphasizing propaganda and terror, fascist scholarship has been increasingly concerned with aesthetics, and the building of a temporary consensus.

The study of Italian fascism has been neglected outside Italy and perhaps England, and while Nazi aesthetics have quite often received attention, it was Italy which successfully pioneered the use of aesthetic sensibilities for political purposes. All of fascism shared an aesthetic, but knowing more about the Italian case will enable us better to judge the similarities and possible differences which existed within a common fascist aesthetic between nations like Italy and Germany.

The aesthetic of fascism should be put into the framework of fascism seen as a civic religion, a non-traditional faith which used liturgy and symbols to make its belief come alive. Civic religion is distinguished from traditional religion by its primary concern with