NINE

Toward a General Theory of Fascism

In 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, and only now is the study of fascism 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 been singularly vulnerable to subjective viewpoints and more often than not has consequently been used to fight contemporary polemical battles.

In a justified reaction against the fascist stereotype, recent scholarship has been suspicious of general theories of fascism. As many local and regional studies show, on one level it may have presented a kaleidoscope of contradictory attitudes; nevertheless, these attitudes were based upon common assumptions. To be sure, any general theory of fascism must be no more than a hypothesis which fits most of the facts. We shall attempt to bring together some of the principal building blocks for such a general theory—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 we 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.[1] 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 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, 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. Moreover, the contention that these theories really compare fascism not with Lenin's bolshevism but with Stalinism seems fully 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 World War II, when they came to fulfill the same functions as they had earlier for fascism. In 1966, *Pravda* wrote that rallies, ceremonial processions, speeches, and concerts gave emotional strength to the political commitment of the people.[2] 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 placed undue emphasis upon the supposedly monolithic leadership cult. Here again, this was introduced into the Soviet Union by Stalin and not 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. 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.[3] The term "propaganda," always used in this context, leads to a misunderstanding of the fascist cults and their essentially organic and religious nature. In times of crisis they provided many millions of people with a more meaningful involvement than representative parliamentary government—largely because they were not themselves a new phenomenon, but were instead based upon an older and still lively tradition of popular democracy, which had always opposed European parliaments.

Even the widespread notion that fascism ruled through terror must be modified. Rather, it was built upon a fragile 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 volkish faith with his fellow Germans, and his tangible successes in domestic and foreign policy 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 supporters woke up to fascist reality, it was too late to resist, except by martyrdom. Mass popular consensus during the first years of fascism allowed it to develop an effective secret police—outside and above regular channels and procedures[4]—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. Not only must historical development be taken into account, but also the existence and extent of a consensus, which, although differing in scope in the three 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 antiparliamentary and antipluralistic traditions of the nineteenth century in order to face the collapse of social, economic, and political structures in their nations during and after World War I. 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,[5] 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 religious enthusiasm was transferred to civic rites.[6]

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, 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 uniforms 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, 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—though, indeed, few representative governments have withstood the pressures of modern economic, political, and social crises, especially when these coincided with defeat in war and unsatisfied national aspirations.[7] Wherever interwar totalitarian 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 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, but totalitarianism 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."[8] 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 communication 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 coexisted to a greater extent.) Economic policy was subordinated to the political goals of fascism, but in Germany, at least, this did not preclude nationalization (for example, the so-called Hermann Goering Steel Works). By and large, however, fascism worked hand in hand with the larger industrial enterprises.

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.[9] 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 against 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.[10] Such National Socialism was in the air as a "Third Force" in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Marxism was a force to be reckoned with and capitalist development seemed accompanied by a soulless positivism: a world where only material values counted. There were 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 by the Hessian Peasants' Movement led by Otto Boeckel.

In Italy, argument for the "Third Force" resulted from World War I—the interventionist struggle and the subsequent war experience seemed to transcend vested interests and political parties. 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 the 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. They appealed both to the revolutionary spirit and to a sense of Italy's historic national mission as "Revolutionary Veterans." It is typical that when the Fascist Party was founded in Ferrara, it was a youth group, "Third Italy," which took the initiative.[11] 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 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.[12]

Yet this "Third Force" became ever less revolutionary and more nationalistic as fascists or 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.

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 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.[13]

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).[14] Yet he also retained the traditional elements that were so much a part of this kind of revolution, calling for the maintenance of a state authority, preferably that of a monarch, 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, and to the victory of Rome

over Carthage.[15] Utopia and traditionalism were linked, a point to which we shall return when discussing the new fascist man.

Ernst Bloch calls this urge to "overcome"—the mystical and millenarian dynamic—the "hidden revolution" essential to the realization of the true socialist revolution.[16] 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 revolutions 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. 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; it was, after all, a language of faith. In 1935, 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."[17]

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;[18] not inherently psychotic or revolutionary, but a normal strain of popular piety running through

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 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 antirational tradition was searched for precedents.[19] Yet when all was said and done, such efforts were sporadic, and some leading fascists retained their skepticism about "*romanità*" or civic 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 analytical intellect. In a play by Hans Johst, the young Leo Schlageter, about to fight against the French occupation of the Ruhr Valley, and his socialist father speak 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![20]

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,"[21] and this phrase is repeated word for word in National Socialist literature. Horia Sima, one of Codreanu's successors in the leadership of the Rumanian 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."[22] 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.[23] 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 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 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, not for a "chaos of the soul." 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. Fascism offered them this chance. It is well to note in this connection that 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—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 come to be the 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?" Monuments to the soldiers who fell in World War I 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 Langenmarck (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 supposedly 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.[24]

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 paradoxically built upon the war experience, which,

in different ways, had shaped the outlook of Mussolini and Hitler 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 some became pacifists, many 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;[25] 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 the stronger. The communists who were ready to discard this past found it impossible to redirect loyalty away from the fatherland and toward a Red Army.[26] 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 events 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 excite-

ment, 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 became for many a 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.[27] 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 directed 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, World War I 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 nicely 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 photos of the 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.[28] 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 these dual processes 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 World War I. The Nazis, in common with all fascists, had always condemned half measures as typically bourgeois and antirevolutionary. 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.[29] During the desperate years of the Republic of Salò, Mussolini also resorted to brutal measures, even executing pupils who refused to attend school.[30] 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 as 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.[31] There was no doubt here about the "greatness and necessity of war."[32] 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 an example to end class divisions within the nation. "Not class war but class solidarity" reigned in face of death, wrote an Italian socialist in 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.[33]

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 legendary 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; but it had to focus upon the leader, who would direct it into the proper "eternal" 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 mass ceremonies. These were the techniques that went into the taming of the revolution and that made fascism a new religion with rites long familiar through centuries of religious observance. Fascist mass meetings seemed something new, but in reality they contained predominantly traditional elements in technique 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."[34] Similar signs can be discerned as Nazism developed, but here the SS managed to capture the activist spirit. Had it not been for the war, Hitler might well have had difficulty with the SS, which thought of itself as an activist and spartan élite. 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.[35] 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 the most basic of bourgeois moral prejudices. 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.[36] 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 Rumanian Iron Guard. The Nazis substituted racism for religion, but

once more, the morality was that shared with the rest of the bourgeoisie.

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, seems 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.[37] 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 the stereotyped ideal of male beauty already mentioned. 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 bourgeois world (as did racism in central 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. There was no repeating the brief relaxation of 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.[38] Italian fascism, Renzo De Felice has told us, was in large part an expression of the emerging middle classes, the bourgeois who were already an important social force and were now attempting to acquire political power.[39] This is exactly the opposite of the Bonapartist analysis, 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, many 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."[40] 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, had become 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 new 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.[41] The Hitler government of 1933, which they did support, was a coalition in which conservatives predominated. When, six months later, the conservatives left the cabinet, industrialists compromised with Hitler, 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 World War I, he drew the lesson that man's world view was primary in determining his fate.[42] It was the fascist myth which had cross-class appeal, and which, together with the tangible successes of the régimes, made possible the consensus upon which they were at first based.

Fascist movements seem to have been most successful in mobilizing the lower classes in underdeveloped 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 participation, for Marxist movements were 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 could for them certainly take second place.

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 hostile to fascist traditions. It was a scavenger which attempted to annex 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 scavenging; 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 the Nazis. It has 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, and the respectability at the core of bourgeois 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 World War II. 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.[43]

Unfortunately, we have seen no detailed analysis of similar novels popular in the Italy of the 1920s and 1930s.[44] But both National Socialism and Italian fascism used the phrase "romantic realism" to describe realistic character portrayal within a romantic setting.[45] In Italy, such realism was expressed through the strictness of classical form. Thus Francesco Sapori could summarize these aspirations: "Live romantically, as well as according to the classical idea. Long live Italy!"[46] Sapori 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 directed by Mussolini's friend 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 nonapproved literature could easily be obtained, at least until the war broke out. Parallels can also be drawn between Italian and German architecture under fascism, though in Italy a party building could still reflect avant-garde style. (In Germany, among nonrepresentational buildings and

even in military barracks, the otherwise condemned Bauhaus style often continued.) The Mussolini Forum 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.[47]

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 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 as fully developed in Italy as in Germany; and the régime was less concerned with the total control of culture. The illusion that the Italian fascist dictatorship was an innovative force in the arts could persist into the 1930s,[48] but in Germany no such illusion was ever possible. However, these 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 accepted the opposition to 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 bourgeois moral standards, and absence of self-discipline all sprang from the degeneration of their physical organism. The Nazis, of course, illustrated their opposition to modernity by the exhibition of "degenerate art," and Hitler and Mussolini prided themselves on the 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 national bases.

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 bourgeois thought were not rejected (as so many historians have claimed) but instead annexed—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 annexed 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 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, Italian 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.[49] 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 social basis of fascism. This

antibourgeois rhetoric was undoubtedly part of the resentment that fascist leaders, usually from modest backgrounds, felt against so-called society.

Fascists not only borrowed socialist rhetoric, they also made use of some ritual examples 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 electicism, useful socialist examples were also appropriated.[50]

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 a plane in order to make many 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 through an awesome storm (this story with its obvious analogy was required reading in Third Reich schools). But Mussolini shared this passion, and in both régimes air force leaders 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.[51] 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.[52] 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 antiscientific bias. There, for example, Enrico Fermi flourished during the 1930s until the proclamation of the racial laws. In Germany, volkish thought transformed the scientist into a provincial. For example, Third Reich films 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 use of lighting in mass festivals).

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 the whole gave the proper attitude toward life. Fascism attempted to cater to everything 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 (or proved to have) 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 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 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. 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 stereotype for all fascist movements. He was, naturally, masculine: fascism represented itself as a society of males, a result of 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 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.[53] 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 absent even at such events as the exhibition honoring the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome (1933).[54] The inner characteristics of this new man were more clearly defined: athletic, persevering, filled with self-denial and the spirit of sacrifice. At the same time, the new fascist man must be energetic, courageous, and laconic.[55] 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 a different direction from that of Italy. Volkish thought had always advocated the ideal of the "Bund" of males; the 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 grown out of the war—energy come alive, as Ernst Jünger put it; lithe, muscular bodies, angular faces, and eyes hardened by the horrors they had seen.[56] 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.[57] There was never any doubt about how the ideal German looked, and it is impossible to imagine a Nazi exposition without the presence of the 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 largely stillborn 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.[58] Indeed, while the nude male was commonplace in German volkish art, the female was usually veiled: the modest and chaste bearer of the children of the race had to be hidden from public view. (Adolf Hitler thought that he must hide Eva Braun from public scrutiny, while Mussolini took no such pains about his wife or his mistresses.)

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. The ideal man of Italian fascism created new values.[59] If we look at the famous definition of fascism given by Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile in the *Encyclopedia Italiana* (1932), "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 this 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").[60] The Universal Roman Exhibition of 1942 illustrated such principles concretely. Indeed, the new Rome built for this exhibition (Rome Eure) was allegedly to transmit this 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 intentions were symbolized by the completion of the archaeological excavations of Ostia Antiqua, creating access to it by means of an Autostrada, and as the catalogue tells us, thus making the new Rome encompass the old,[61] except that by 1942 what was supposed to be unique had been tamed into a historical eclecticism.

In fact, the new fascist man in Italy ignored history no more than his Nazi counterpart.[62] The cult of the Roman past was pervasive; it determined the fascist stereotype whenever 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 future years and a thousand years of the past,"[63] in one phrasing of this well-known Nazi attitude. 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.[64]

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 writers grouped around the

newspaper *Je Suis Partout*. It was the camaraderie of trench life, which many 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 annex 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.[65] 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."[66]

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 praise the "provisional," the idea that all existing reality could be destroyed at any moment.[67] 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. Between the wars the young men in the Latin Quarter wanted to be original and spontaneous, while longing for an end to intellectual anarchy.[68] 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 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.[69] 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 antiparliamentary 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 closer to home in Scandinavia. The Italian fascist Foreign Ministry sponsored archaeological expeditions to revive the idea of the Roman Empire,[70] 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 1938, racism did not exist. 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 Flam-

and, or the Walloon? From the Flemish side, the newspaper *De Daad* inveighed against race hatred and called upon "upright Jews" to repudiate the Marxists in their midst.[71]

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.[72] This state of affairs did not last. By 1938 Mussolini had turned racist, and not wholly because of German influence. Through racism he tried to reinvigorate his ageing fascism, 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 were to be found the masses of Jewry, still under quasi-ghetto conditions. They were largely a distinct 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 nonassimilated Jews remained to demonstrate the clash of cultures that underlay much of the anti-Semitism in the region. Moreover, in countries like Rumania 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 Rumanian 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 onward, the masses 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 "Jewish question." This led to a further differentiation of National Socialism from western or southern fascism. For

Hitler, unlike Mussolini, the enemy was not a vague liberalism or Marxism; it was physically embodied by the Jews. 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, 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 a crucial role in this economic revival, but so did traditional investments and public works. 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 writes, in the only recent biography of Hitler to bring us new insights,[73] that by 1938 the Nazi régime had converted even former adversaries by the sheer weight of its political and economic success. 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 the 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 war, Mussolini maintained a consensus only with difficulty.

Like many other historians, Haffner fails to recognize Hitler's success as a mass politician in 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, on the contrary, just because the preferences and desires of the people coincided so largely with those of the régime, the new political style won their acclaim. Gustave Le Bon had stressed that successful leadership must genuinely share the myths of the people—and both Hitler and Mussolini were his disciples.[74]

We know that real wages fell in Germany, and that the Italian workers and peasants did not materially benefit from their 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 sober analysis of reality.

Moreover, men, and not just material forces, do make history—not just the leader himself but also the likes and dislikes, wishes and 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 local riots that preceded all new steps in his Jewish policy are a good example. His tactic of making an aggressive move in foreign or Jewish 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 avoiding 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."[75] 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 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 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 a traditional empire—*"Lebensraum"*—and the extermination of the Jews. His devotion to genocide summarized the difference between Germany with its volkish tradition and Italy with its 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 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. Sebastian Haffner's analysis makes sense here. Hundreds of thousands of Germans died so that Hitler could, at the last moment, kill hundreds of thousands of Jews.[76]

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 mystical tradition asserted itself, as we saw when discussing the "Third Way," not mediated by Jakob Böhme but by an obscure and bizarre racism.

Haffner's speculation as to why Hitler kept on fighting fits better into our picture of the Führer than the usual interpretation (adopt-

ed 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 the recently published *Goebbels' Diaries* of 1945 does not seem to have lost control, though perhaps he realized earlier than anyone else that the war was lost.[77] 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 World War I 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 (four volumes between 1966 and 1974, with one more to appear). Admittedly, Mussolini had no Auschwitz and, unlike Germany, Italy had an important antifascist movement. The Duce also showed more human dimensions than the Führer. Yet the materials for a biography of Hitler exist, and are certainly as extensive as the resources that made De Felice's biography possible. But with the exception of the short and impressionistic book by Haffner, 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 blinded soldier, led to his hatred of the Jews. Scholarship has not really advanced beyond Alan Bullock's pioneering work, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, of 1952. German historians, even of the younger generation, have avoided the figure of the Führer and concentrated instead upon the impersonal causes of National Socialism. The biographies of Hitler have been written by those outside the historical profession. Yet to write about National Socialism 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 seeking to escape concrete economic and social change by a retreat into ideology—the "revolution of the spirit" of which Mussolini spoke; or Hitler's "German revolution." However, it 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 bourgeois desire for law and order, with those middle-class virtues that fascism promised to protect against the dissolving spirit of modernity. It also clashed with the desires of a head of state who represented 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 result was that activism had to exist side by side with the effort to tame it. 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 "natural," "genuine," and 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.

Support of fascism was not built merely upon appeal to vested interests. Social and economic factors proved crucial in the collapse after World War I, and in the Great Depression, 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 to-

ward 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, the fascist dream turned out to be a nightmare. It is not likely that Europe will repeat the fascist or the National Socialist experience. 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, ready to absorb and exploit the appropriate myths. The danger of some kind of 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 essay 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.

TEN

The Mystical Origins of National Socialism

AFTER NEARLY FORTY YEARS of research, the intellectual origins of National Socialism are no longer shrouded in darkness. The intensity of German national feeling itself is no longer a sufficient explanation for the rise of National Socialist ideology. Today we are forced to realize that a more complex cultural development gave its impress to that movement long before it crystallized into a political party.[1] At the very center of this development were ideas that were both of a national and of a romantic and mystical nature, part of the revolt against positivism which swept Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In Germany this revolt took a special turn, perhaps because romanticism struck deeper roots there than elsewhere. The mystical and the occult were taken both as an explanation and as a solution to man's alienation from modern society, culture, and politics. Not by everyone, of course, but by a minority that found a home in the radical Right. As such, mystical and occult ideas influenced the world view of early National Socialism, and especially of Adolf Hitler, who to the end of his life believed in "secret sciences" and occult forces. It is important to unravel this strand of Nazi ideology because this mysticism was at the core of much of the irrationalism of the movement, and especially of the world view of its leader. Such ideas coursed underneath the banality and respectability of National So-