

clear that it contained certain essentially new factors, that it belonged to a new breed. But this was not widely realized at the time. Everyone agreed that Nazism and fascism were extremely nationalistic in orientation and that they were antidemocratic. Beyond this, however, there was no unanimity, and since it is only natural to interpret new phenomena in the light of old ones, some analysts referred to the Bonapartist model (the great Napoleon as well as his descendant Napoleon III). Others saw fascism in the tradition of the extreme right-wing, antiliberal groups of the late nineteenth century. Defining fascism was difficult because only two countries ever became fascist. During World War II, the Vichy-style regimes under Axis tutelage cannot truly be considered fully fledged fascist, even though some, such as Croatia, tried hard to move in that direction.

Fascism was also not a static phenomenon. During its early period, Italian Fascism was radical in its orientation, but once it seized power it became more moderate in essential respects. Then in its last stage, it again returned to its radical beginnings.

Italian Fascism meant something different in the cities and in the countryside. Only six years passed from the time the Nazi regime came into power until it unleashed the war, when all domestic concerns were subordinated to the war effort. We can only speculate what Nazi policy would have been if Germany had won the war, whether, for instance, the economic system would have been changed, whether it would have turned against the church, whether those people considered racially inferior would have been killed or expelled, whether the regime would have moderated its policies, or whether, in sociological terms, *routinization* and *normalization* would have taken over.

One of the few issues on which there was a consensus at the time was the assumption that fascism was a European phenomenon. This seems true even now in regard to "historical" fascism. At that time, fascism in very backward countries was technically impossible because the masses could not be mobilized and propaganda and terror were not yet sufficiently effective. Whether this is still true today is less certain, because with the spread of modern technologies the preconditions for non-European varieties of fascism do exist now in many parts of the world.

What made fascism different from earlier dictatorships was the presence of a mass party that monopolized power through its security services and the army and that eliminated all other parties, using considerable violence in the process. This new style of party was headed by a leader who had virtually unlimited power, was adulated by his followers, and was the focus of a quasi-religious cult. The party's doctrine became an obligatory article of faith for not only its members but all other citizens and was constantly projected by means of a powerful propaganda machinery. Such a party—and, later, a

apparatus—would not have been feasible earlier in history because it would have been impossible to impose similar political, social, and cultural controls and to influence masses of people so intensively.

What we have said so far also applies to the Communist regimes. True, the interference of the fascist state in the economy was much less far-reaching than under Communism. Soviet ideology stressed the class character of the regime or, rather, the gradual abolition of (antagonistic) classes. Conversely, in fascist doctrine, solidarity of the classes was the main aim. Communism was strictly atheistic, whereas fascism was openly religious, striving for an accommodation with organized religion on the condition that the church accept the state as its political overlord and subordinate it. Whereas fascism was overtly nationalistic, militaristic, and expansionist, Communism was theoretically internationalist and antimilitaristic and had no dreams of territorial expansion. But in reality the differences, especially from the 1930s onward, were not always visible to the eye.¹

The two systems were quite similar, almost identical, in some respects but different in others, so they were bound to collide once fascism prevailed in Germany. Hitler had persuaded himself that unless Germany acquired new *Lebensraum* in his lifetime, it would collapse, because it did not have sufficient raw materials to provide a decent standard of living for its citizens and also to maintain its status as a great power.

The Soviet regime was under no such immediate pressure, although in the long term it could feel secure only if Soviet-style Communism prevailed at least in Europe and contingent parts of Asia. But Stalin did not have the same desperate urgency to expand right away.

What conditions favored the rise of these new types of mass parties, and under what circumstances did fascism find it impossible to progress? Although "conditions" are only one of the factors in this equation, they are an important one. "Conditions" alone, however, would not have brought about the triumph of Hitler and Mussolini. On the other hand, in the absence of a favorable political constellation, even the greatest political movement would have failed to make headway.

In both Germany and Italy, the Nazi and Fascist seizure of power was greatly facilitated by the leading figures of the old order: in Germany by the conservatives and Hindenburg's entourage and in Italy by the Conservatives and the monarchy. Hitler was the leader of the strongest parliamentary party, and based on the constitution, a case could be made in favor of electing him to be the next chancellor. Aware of their own weakness, the conservatives assumed that it would be possible to rein in the Nazis and make them behave "reasonably." The pressures in Italy eleven years earlier that had brought about the Fascist takeover had been similar.

It is impossible, even with the benefit of hindsight, to say with any certainty whether Hitler and Mussolini would have dared to seize power without such legal sanction. And even if they had dared it, there is no certainty that they would have been successful. Elsewhere, violent fascist coups did fail, but this is not conclusive evidence, since Nazism and Italian Fascism were stronger than those who were defeated, and the resistance against them was weaker.

Why did strong fascist movements develop in some countries but not in others, and what attracted men and women and generated an enthusiasm much greater than that among the democratic parties? Observers from Britain and France visiting Germany and Italy in the 1930s expressed admiration and even envy when reporting the new spirit of optimism in the fascist regimes. Fascism prevailed in countries in which the old order seemed no longer to work, in which democracy was not deeply rooted, in which the waves of nationalist resentment were running high, and which felt threatened by economic breakdown and social disorder. Without World War I and the postwar crises, fascism would have remained a small sect if it had emerged at all. Therefore, large segments of the population in these countries were ready to support a movement that, unlike other parties, professed not to pursue narrow partisan or class interests but, rather, announced that it stood for the values of the whole community, that it strove for unity and order, and that this was the only way to save the country from chaos.

Such explanations can be contested on various grounds. One could argue, for instance, that the postwar crisis in Italy had been more acute in 1920 than in 1921, and more acute in 1921 than in 1922 when the march on Rome took place. By 1922 the immediate crisis was passing and the revolutionary challenge had been defeated. Mussolini's assessment, in any case, was unambiguous: "To maintain that the Bolshevik danger still exists in Italy is to mistake fear for reality" (*Popolo d'Italia*, July 2, 1921).

Or one could argue that the German economic crisis of 1923 was as grave as that in 1933 but that in 1923 Nazism was a mere local phenomenon that was easily defeated. The German crisis reached its nadir in 1932, and so if the center-right government had been able to stay in power for one more year, the situation might have improved. Indeed, some of the "chains of Versailles" (referring to the hated World War I peace treaty) had been broken even before Hitler became chancellor. But the economic recovery and the concessions by the Allies came too late: The crisis had a cumulative effect, and too many people in Germany had lost hope. The system was not corrupt, however, even though Nazis and Communists were forever claiming that it was. If anything, the regime was too honest—

and too devoid of imagination. The German people saw only too clearly that the government was baffled by the depth of the crisis and the failure of the medicines it had administered. For its part, the government made no secret of the fact that it was at the end of its tether, that it did not know how to cope. Such governments are bound to fall in the face of a determined challenger.

Whereas Germany had been the great loser of World War I, Italy had been among the victors. But Italy had not come close to receiving the spoils of victory it had hoped for. Furthermore, nationalist passions were running as high as they were in Germany; only two generations had passed since the nation had unified, and the people did not yet feel that their country was secure, a self-evident fact.

The depth of the economic crisis cannot serve as the only clue to the advent of Nazism or Fascism. The United States and Britain were as much affected as Germany was by the Great Depression. Indeed, the impact on America was probably even greater, simply because Americans were altogether unprepared for the disaster; they had taken constant progress for granted. Germans on the other hand, had already had such traumatic experiences. Despite major unemployment and economic decline, fascism in England remained a marginal phenomenon, even though its leader, Sir Oswald Mosley, had at least as much popular appeal as the continental fascist leaders did. In the United States there were all kinds of fascist or ultrafascist organizations, but they never achieved a political breakthrough. British fascism had attractive popular leaders, and Jacques Doriot, a Communist, had been one of the most popular figures in France before he became a fascist. But in neither Spain nor France was personal popularity of decisive importance.

Instead, the postwar crisis was a moral and cultural crisis. Before 1914, European societies had been far from democratic in many respects, but despite all their imperfections, they were more civilized than ever before. Human rights were increasingly respected, and few dared dismiss them as of no consequence. Moreover, the false accusations against an obscure French officer of Jewish origin had turned into a major European scandal. World War I, with its hecatombs of victims and its enormous destruction, changed all this and had lasting consequences. The chauvinist orgies led to a brutalization of public life. The sanctity of human life no longer counted after millions had been killed. Although there had been cases of political murder in the world before 1914, in civilized countries it would have been unthinkable to advocate or justify it, let alone establish extermination camps for whole groups of people. Tsarist Russia had been the most backward and cruel regime in Europe, but the murder of its victims was

only a microscopic fraction of the millions put to death by its successor regime. In addition, the moral breakdown after World War I was more profound even than the economic crisis.

The cultural crisis coincided with the eclipse of state power, the increasing lack of confidence among the ruling stratum, and the reluctance to deal forcefully with fascist street violence. The forces of order could have stamped out armed attacks (as they had in Munich in 1923), but instead they took only halfhearted measures, too few and too late. As the result of such hesitation and weakness, the fascist paramilitary units received fresh impetus. They became more aggressive, and once their number had swollen, dealing with them became more risky.

The historical record shows that fascism (like terrorism) could succeed only in a liberal democratic system. It had a chance only where it could freely agitate. When competing with a military dictatorship (Romania or Spain)—let alone a Communist regime—it invariably suffered defeat. Even in a mildly authoritarian regime such as that in Austria, it failed in 1934. Fascists despised, rather than hated, the democratic institutions: They regarded the parliament as a *Schwatzbude*, a place where unending inconclusive debates took place and where politicians were held in contempt because of their weakness. This mood could be found not only in the extreme Left and Right but also among many who did not consider themselves radicals. In the end, democracy collapsed because not enough democrats were willing to defend it.

What sections of the population were attracted to fascism? They varied from country to country, according to political tradition and social conditions. In general, the lower middle class showed the greatest affinity to fascism, particularly those who had suffered the most from the Great Depression. The Nazis made inroads among the peasantry, which was hard hit, and also among the middle class, which had lost its savings during the inflation and now faced further losses. Italian Fascism found support among war veterans who could not be reintegrated into civilian life and among students who were unable to find employment upon graduation.

A closer examination shows that there was no rigid pro-Nazi pattern according to class, generation, or gender. Before 1933 there was no significant difference in Germany between male and female voters or among voters of different age groups. Although the Nazi leaders were younger than their rivals, their voters were not. Up to 1931 the Nazis were, to a significant extent, a part of the lower middle class, but after 1931 they gained support from both the lower and upper social classes.

All that can be said with certainty is that the Nazis were stronger in Protestant than in Catholic regions; they did not make significant inroads on the positions of the Catholic Center Party. Fascism faced similar difficul-

in other countries, except in Croatia and Slovakia, where the church supported the local fascists.

There was an interesting difference between the votes in big cities and small towns. If the Nazi vote was 37 percent on average; nationwide, in the 1932 elections, the small town vote was 42 percent, whereas in the big cities such as Berlin and Hamburg it was closer to 33 percent. The working class was not immune to the Nazi upsurge; in fact, more workers and employed voted for the Nazis in 1932 than for the Social Democrats and Communists together. Both Nazism and Italian Fascism mobilized sections of the population that had previously been inactive.

The situation in Italy was different inasmuch as the *fasci* originally appeared in northern Italy and only gradually spread to the south. Subsequently, however, the south became a stronger bulwark of Fascism than the north, and this is true also with regard to neofascism in the postwar era. Agrarian fascism was also a significant factor in Italy—a reaction of the big landholders in the Po Valley and also of the smallholders in Emilia Romagna against the growing strength of the landless farmworkers. In Western Europe, fascism did not gain a foothold in the countryside in either France or the Netherlands, and in Britain it was hardly found outside London.

In Romania and Hungary, on the other hand, the fascists had support in the countryside, and the Finnish Lapua was predominantly agrarian. White-collar workers were fairly strongly represented in most fascist movements, whereas working-class representation varied greatly: It was initially strong in France and relatively strong in Spain, but less so in Eastern Europe, except in Hungary. The reason was largely accidental—a popular leader who joined the fascists would bring with him his followers. Students were strong supporters of the fascist movements in Spain and Romania, and so in these countries fascism was in the early years a phenomenon confined mainly to particular universities. Likewise, the Nazis emerged victorious in Germany's university elections well before they became a major political factor nationwide. Nonetheless, there were few university graduates in the higher echelons of the Nazi Party; Goebbels, Hans Frank, and Ley were rare exceptions. Whereas the last Weimar governments were made up largely of members of the free professions, there were considerably fewer such persons in the Nazi and Fascist governments. Only five of the Nazi *Gauleiter* were university or technical school graduates; the seventeen *Reichsleiter* had a more elitist background. Primary school teachers were strongly represented in the Nazi elite, even though on various occasions Hitler expressed contempt for a profession that, he claimed, attracted only people of limited intelligence.

The general mood in the Nazi and Fascist leaderships was anti-