

‘Fascism’, ‘Para-fascism’ and ‘Fascistization’: On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories

Introduction

In 1928 Benito Mussolini was about to celebrate his sixth year in power and the third year of his dictatorial rule. Germany was still enjoying the ephemeral interlude of uneasy democratic stability and economic recovery, while the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) was entering the most painful period of its soul-searching after its devastating electoral showing in the 1928 Reichstag elections. In Spain, General Primo de Rivera presided over an authoritarian regime with the backing of the military but did not shy away from declaring his admiration for Italian Fascism and its charismatic founder.¹ While radical nationalist movements with aggressive anti-socialist and often anti-Semitic ideologies appeared at an alarming rate across the continent, most European states continued to bask in the mirage of post-Locarno stabilization and return to bourgeois normality — what Charles Maier called the ‘bourgeois equilibrium’ of the 1920s after the upheavals of the First World War and of the immediate postwar crisis of transition from war to peacetime conditions.² At that particular conjecture only the Marxists had consistently employed the word, ‘fascism’ in generic terms, namely as a particular form of movement/regime whose relevance extended beyond the obvious Italian case. Such an interpretation of the events of 1919–22 in Italy rested on the fundamental assumption that fascism was an inherent possibility (or, for some, inevitability) in the development of the capitalist system.³ While the majority of commentators in the 1920s viewed the rise and

success of Mussolini's movement as a peculiarly (and not necessarily negative) Italian phenomenon, tailored to the chronic deficiencies of the modern Italian state and political structures,⁴ from the outset Marxists were eager to detect a menacing analogy between the appointment of Mussolini in 1922 and the triumph of the authoritarian right under Admiral Horthy in Hungary in 1919, in the aftermath of the short-lived Bela Kun revolution. For them, the March on Rome and the events that it triggered off constituted proof of a plot against the proletariat that had been rehearsed in Hungary and tested successfully in Italy as a prelude to a wider pan-European 'counter-revolutionary' assault on the working classes.⁵

The willingness with which early Marxist accounts equated any form of anti-socialist reaction and dictatorial rule in the inter-war period with 'counter-revolution' and eventually fascism; has provided the basis for extended usage of the term 'fascism' — a term that itself has survived, at least on a cliché level, to the present day. In recent years the most conceptually sophisticated models of generic fascism have been concentrated on a definition of its shared ideological core, but largely have viewed the experience of 'fascist' *rule* with considerable scepticism in terms of its capacity for providing accurate further information about the essence of fascism as an intellectual entity.⁶ The conventional distinction between *fascism* proper (largely confined to the German and Italian regimes) and *para-fascism* (a larger category of regimes that adapted or aped 'fascist' formal and organizational features, but did not share the revolutionary ideological vision of genuine fascism) has been intended as a corrective to the earlier indiscriminate branding of dictatorial inter-war regimes as 'fascist'.⁷ However, what remains unclear is whether the distinction between the two categories of fascist and para-fascist regime refers to a difference of quality or simply degree. In other words, while nowadays the bulk of research on fascism acknowledges that the Italian Fascist and Nazi regimes were substantially more radical, extreme and developed than, say, the Franco system in Spain, or Horthy's authoritarian regime, it is still not clear from an analytical point of view whether the latter should be examined within the framework of 'fascism' (as less extreme and developed variants) or traditional authoritarian dictatorship (a separate genus of political regime).⁸

The aim of this article is to argue that a distinction between

'fascist' and 'para-fascist' regime is problematic because it assumes a common and static understanding of what fascism meant to its contemporaries. Instead, it will be asserted that the meaning of 'fascism' continued to evolve, change contours and diversify throughout the 1920s and 1930s, resulting in a host of different understandings. As a result of the particular circumstances in which the fascist leaderships were admitted to power in Italy and later Germany, 'fascism' came to represent divergent things to élite groups and radical disciples across the continent. But notwithstanding these discrepancies (and a general unwillingness to use the term to denote affinity with the 'typical fascism'⁹ of Mussolini's movement and regime in inter-war Europe), a clear distinction between 'fascist' and 'para-fascist' regimes remains complicated. This is given that even the two most developed regimes (in Italy and Germany) resulted from élite co-opting, initial co-habitation with conservative sponsors and consolidation from within the framework of the existing state (rather than a revolutionary break with the past, as fascist ideology would have demanded). This process involved concessions and reassessments on the part of both the fascist leaders and the élite groups that altered the initial physiognomy of fascism and allowed its *selective* appropriation after the events of 1922 in Italy. There was a common tendency amongst élite groups to resort to a controlled adoption of 'fascist' novelties without subscribing to fascism's overall ideological vision. However, this resulted in the *fascistization* of the regime as opposed to the establishment of a *fascist regime* proper. From that point onwards, the significance of specific indigenous conditions (i.e. whether this fascistization happened from above or involved the participation of a 'fascist' component; whether it was done in a voluntary, pre-emptive or last-ditch manner; whether the élite groups themselves maintained their cohesion; whether the fascist constituency was strong or powerless, unified or divided, pragmatic or dogmatic, etc.) determined to a large extent the dynamics, stability and prospects of the experiment. In this sense, the 'fascist' or 'para-fascist' nature of a regime ensued in the course of time from this common élite consensus on the benefits of controlled fascistization, their ability to control it and the willingness and capacity of the fascist components for intervening actively in it.

**Fascism: an Italian or Supra-national Phenomenon?
Some Early Distinctions**

Initially, the official Comintern analysis of 'fascism' dismissed the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF)'s ideological and social autonomy, concentrating instead on the political functionality of Mussolini's regime as a 'puppet' of monopoly finance capitalism, representing and carrying out the most reactionary designs of the 'big bourgeoisie' at the expense of legality and democratic appearance.¹⁰ By the late 1920s, however, more and more Marxist analysts came to accept a number of modified factors that explained the rise of fascism in Italy, and the relevance of this development to both previous events and future trends in Europe. The initial use and abuse of the term 'fascism' in orthodox Marxist analysis came under intensive scrutiny and criticism from within the Communist Left.

It was in this intellectual and political context that Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI, Partito Comunista Italiano) delivered his analysis of fascism in 1928, attempting to rectify the distortions that the term had suffered in early Marxist theorizing. Together with Antonio Gramsci, co-founder and celebrated thinker of the party¹¹, Togliatti came to the conclusion that the standard Comintern reading of 'fascism' — while theoretically sound in its analysis of capitalist crisis, and in its description of the measures that the regime put forward once in power — suffered from two fundamental misapprehensions. The first pertained to the specifically *Italian* conditions that facilitated the formation of such a movement and that enabled its political elevation to the status of a regime, at a time that the bulk of European states (even those with similar radical movements) were still capable of fending off this challenge or seemed extremely reluctant to endorse the 'fascist' solution. Togliatti did not deviate from the mainstream Marxist analysis of fascism in the sense that he did regard the fascist regime as an open possibility for any capitalist system; he subscribed to the notion that fascism itself was an international phenomenon. That said, Togliatti urged 'caution in generalizing from the Italian experience':

There is little likelihood of seeing a movement analogous to Italian fascism arising in an historical and social context that is quite different, especially in a

country where capitalism is strong. Certain aspects of the Italian phenomenon may reappear, and the general reactionary direction of the political transformation in bourgeois society may remain, but it will be difficult to find again the essential features characteristic of fascism. . . . A movement of the 'fascist' type, like the one in Italy, would have the greatest difficulty in conquering power elsewhere.¹²

The second misapprehension that Togliatti underlined was the arbitrary and misleading standard equation of 'fascism' with any form of anti-proletarian 'reaction' in crisis-ridden capitalist systems. In his view: 'Fascism is precisely different from all the reactionary regimes so far established in the modern capitalist world.' In arguing that fascism, while being reactionary, is not synonymous with reaction per se, Togliatti openly questioned the wisdom of conventional communist discourse's tendency to treat any form of bourgeois regime (and its political pillars) as 'fascist'. In his words, 'fascism is a particular, a specific type of reaction; and we must understand fully the precise nature of its peculiarity'. Thus, he was willing to depart from the blanket definition of any form of reactionary regime (including those of Horthy in Hungary, Piłsudski in Poland and Primo de Rivera in Spain) as outrightly 'fascist'.¹³

The significance of this kind of layered analysis of fascism cannot be exaggerated, even more so because it was crystallized in the late 1920s before the Great Depression, the appointment of Hitler, the formation of the Axis alliance and the mushrooming of 'fascist' movements and kindred regimes in 1930s Europe. Here we find perhaps the earliest accurate statement in favour of analysing fascism as a *generic* phenomenon without equating it with any form of dictatorship, autocracy or reaction, or identifying it with the Italian experience. Unlike most of his comrades (who saw 'fascism' even in social democracy — the ill-conceived notion of 'social-fascism'¹⁴), Togliatti discerned a general pattern of reactionary transformation across the continent of which fascism was only one version, with its unique internal logic, structure and dynamics that distinguished it from other, more conventional types of autocratic regimes (such as military dictatorship or conservative reaction).

More than seven decades later, the debate on the nature and physiognomy of fascism has taken heed of early warnings against confusing fascism with dictatorship and reaction; but it still seems unable to address such differences in an unequivocal

manner. When in 1934 Ignazio Silone stressed that fascism — as a type of regime — should not be confused with either military dictatorship or the ‘reactionary consolidation’ of the conservative-liberal state, he was introducing a crucial distinction between core ‘fascist’ cases and those systems that, albeit emulating fascist forms and themes, preserved the traditional structures of power, policy- and decision-making.¹⁵ As Gilbert Allardyce pointed out in 1979, in strict terms the word ‘fascism’ does not have any meaning beyond Italy.¹⁶ The extended usage of the term to describe movements and regimes beyond the ‘typical’ fascism of Mussolini has generated incessant controversy, not least because from October 1922 ‘fascism’ meant different things to different observers.

To put it simply, while fascism represented a radical form of oppositional ultra-nationalism with a mixture of revolutionary and anti-socialist/anti-liberal action rhetoric until the March on Rome, in the 1922–5 period it crystallized into a specific type of dictatorial regime broadly within the framework of the existing Italian state.¹⁷ As Togliatti and others had predicted, the success of fascism’s political consolidation in Italy would inevitably exercise significant influence on other countries. In 1934, Johann Mannhardt argued that

the significance of fascism may well be that in a specifically Italian form it transmits to the rest of the world the new intellectual climate which is emerging . . . At this point Fascism would acquire, apart from its Italian connotations, supranational meaning.¹⁸

From this point onwards, the establishment of Fascism in Italy could either be regarded as a peculiarly Italian response to the wider European need for a new political configuration — a response that had to be analysed by commentators in other countries and then adapted to indigenous traditions and tactics; a development that heralded the era of populist authoritarianism and organic national unity as an alternative to divisive democratic rule and class-based socialism. Or it could be seen as a form of political rule whose apparent ‘success’ (in terms of consolidation and repression of its opponents) elevated it in the eyes of potential disciples across the continent, and established it as a reservoir of novel solutions to common problems. Be that as it may, Mussolini’s regime — long before its founder decided to ‘export’ his product¹⁹ — opened up a new niche in the spectrum

of theories of state rule that had potentially supranational implications in a way that the Fascist movement in its oppositional stage did not. Even in social Darwinist terms (particularly fashionable in inter-war radical nationalist discourse) the triumph of Fascism in 1922 and its subsequent political resilience were indications that this particular phenomenon comprised winning formulas that many of its kindred predecessors or traditional dictatorial systems did not.

Thus, from 1922 and especially from 1925 (when Italian Fascism aggressively abandoned its initial uneasy cohabitation with liberal and conservative elements of the Italian state), fascism-as-regime attracted the attention of both radical oppositional movements and conservative élites. It is interesting to note that most of them avoided the appropriation of the term 'fascist' in order to escape criticism that they were apeing Mussolini's regime uncritically and to dissociate themselves from an ongoing experiment whose choices they sometimes distrusted or rejected. Only a few movements studied Italian Fascism as an ideal type of movement/regime whose organization, style and practices constituted an unseverable part of its supranational relevance. These groups developed into enthusiastic imitators, directly associating themselves with the Italian experiment (and, later, the Nazi project as well), accepting that the regeneration of national life could take place as part of a wider European cultural and political transformation spearheaded by the Italian experience and paradigm.²⁰ But for the majority of sympathetic observers, Fascist Italy was a useful reservoir of novel solutions to the problem of strengthening the executive, promoting national unity and effectively crushing the socialist and communist Left. This is why the trajectory of Italian Fascism, from the early days of the movement to the stage of organized party and finally to the establishment and consolidation of Mussolini's regime, was infinitely more instrumental in signifying the term 'fascism' than its intellectual pre-history (if indeed there was one) or its ideological evolution in the fringes of French radical nationalism, as Sternhell suggested.²¹ Even if Nazism superseded Mussolini's regime in terms of political influence in the 1930s, the sequence of developments that catapulted Fascism from a fringe oppositional movement to power in Italy was infinitely more consequential in instructing fellow travellers of the radical nationalist camp and conservative élites alike.

The Significance of Mussolini's Appointment in October 1922

It is extremely doubtful that we would be theorizing about 'generic fascism' today had Mussolini not reconfigured his movement so dramatically between 1919 and 1921, had he not been successful in his bid to power and had his rule been terminated at an early stage — before 1925. The Fascist regime that developed after 1925 and caught the attention of so many contemporaries across Europe was not, as Sternhell argued, the result of a conscious effort to translate the initial ideological spirit of Fascism into political form. It rested on a series of compromises, transformations and choices that effectively extricated the 'fascist regime' from its initial intellectual origins. By the mid-1920s, 'fascism' meant Mussolini and his regime — not his *Fasci di Combattimento*, his San Sepolcro declarations²² or — much more — the revolutionary anti-materialist revolt of the *novecento* diverse movement. As already noted, only the socialist Left had bestowed Italian Fascism with wider, international implications through talk of 'anti-fascism'. The initially hesitant Mussolini decided to 'export' Fascism in 1929 as the only true 'conquering creed' of the twentieth century; but by that time the meaning of the word had changed beyond recognition, partly due to Mussolini's own experiments and decisions, partly as a result of the political circumstances in which his rule materialized and evolved.

It has to be remembered that the fascist leaders that were admitted to power were in fact co-opted by traditional conservative élites in the context of anti-liberal/anti-socialist regimes. Such a framework was a far cry from the kind of political vacuum that early fascist ideologues had desired for the pursuit of the fascist 'revolution'. The years 1922 and 1933 allegedly represented a 'revolution with consent', made possible only because both the élites and the fascist leaderships had abandoned their initial disdain of each other and recognized their mutual benefits from a short-term tactical alliance against common foes (the parliamentary system, socialism and the labour movement).²³ By 1922, two initially separate trends had eventually converged and fused into a new type of regime in Italy.

The first trend pertained to the growing willingness of conservative and, in many cases, liberal élites to trade parliamentarism for stability — an implicit recognition that the latter value

could not be sustained effectively by the way which divisive parliamentarism had come to operate just before, and especially after, the First World War. Stability and order came to be equated with a strong executive and a necessary correction to the increasingly disruptive power of the legislatures. While conservatives resented the burden of accountability altogether and yearned for a permanent return to more authoritarian modes of rule, liberals viewed such a prospect as a short-term solution. Given the growing consensus amongst élites that socialism was the main obstacle to stability and order (and unbridled liberalism had allowed it to grow and operate disruptively), fascism could be seen as an ally in this enterprise, even an unreliable and short term one.²⁴ However, the problem was that fascism of the movement stage possessed a true revolutionary, activist and uncompromising radical spirit which established élites not only disdained, but also feared.

Hence, the significance of the second trend, this time within fascism itself. In Italy, the amorphous maze of individuals and fighters that the initial Fascist movement had aggregated acquired a more concrete shape until 1921–2, through the gradual predominance of the Mussolinian leadership. The spontaneity of the movement was seriously curtailed through the creation of a hierarchical party structure (PNF); the leader-oriented physiognomy of the party was strengthened through the cultivation of a cult of leadership that appeared to operate above the 'street tactics' of the Fascist followers. That leadership qualified the initial fascism by discarding certain values, accentuating others and establishing an image of relative respectability and moderation that was carefully juxtaposed with the origins of the movement.²⁵ It is perhaps more accurate to talk of fascisms inherent in the early shapeless structures of the movement, drawn to each other more through their shared hostility to socialism and contempt for liberal-conservative politics than because of a positive consensus as to the goals of fascism itself. In this respect, Fascism in Italy performed the political function of an umbrella organization for the disparate radical nationalist forces that had become active in the intellectual atmosphere of the *novecento* anti-materialist revolt, coupling their ideological dissidence with the more populist and activist agenda of the *Fasci di combattimento* in a new synthesis capable of challenging old certainties in the social and political fields.²⁶ These currents converged on the Fascist move-

ment, engaging in an idiosyncratic battle of ideas for the soul of the emerging Fascist phenomenon. With the consolidation of Mussolini's leadership, its conceptualization on the basis of charismatic legitimacy and emotional allegiance, and the movement's tactical shift to an appearance of legality, Fascism acquired a more concrete shape at the expense of its initial intellectual pluralism and movement-like physiognomy. The mitigation of Fascism's initial radical or even revolutionary agenda, the introduction of the PNF to the logic of political respectability (through its inclusion to Giolitti's *listone* in 1921) and the ideological retrenchment of the Fascist discourse (dispensing with anti-monarchical, anti-capitalist and anti-system rhetoric), brought it closer to bourgeois perceptions of 'normality'.²⁷ It was auspicious timing for Mussolini and his party that this happened at a time when the majority of bourgeois forces in Italy had been convinced that the perpetuation of their political hegemony necessitated huge sacrifices and new, bolder strategies of defence — even at the expense of parliamentary orthodoxy and democratic rights.

These two parallel trends converged in the summer and autumn of 1922 in Italy, resulting in what we may call the start of fascism's *political commodification*. What Mussolini had come to represent (and carefully marketed as a respectable but highly efficient political product) was already a chosen Fascist commodity. It was strongly anti-parliamentarian and anti-socialist, but increasingly statist, influenced by the nationalism of the *novocento* discourse of the Italian Nationalist Association,²⁸ hierarchical, supportive of the main tenets of capitalism, respectful or tolerant of the monarchy and the Church, paying only lip service to social revolution, and willing to make significant compromises in order to curtail the vestiges of its movement stage (e.g. the suppression of the *milizia*, the party's paramilitary organization, at the behest of the military leadership). For their part, the élites that acquiesced to the appointment of Mussolini had already understood Fascism as a political commodity: by co-opting only Mussolini, they were introducing a crucial distinction between leadership and party/movement: the former, compatible with the short-term political aspiration to strengthen the executive and inject legitimacy to the state while orchestrating a violent suppression of socialism; the latter, unacceptable and — so they believed — marginalized.²⁹ With hindsight, this was a grave error

of judgement — but in 1922 the 'moderate' Fascism of the leadership appeared a relatively safe gamble, congruous with main élite political aspirations and definitions of 'stability', ostensibly contained within the existing institutional framework and capable of granting fresh legitimacy to the tried but archaic model of authoritarian rule.

Thus, by the time Mussolini branded his Fascism as an international commodity against liberalism and socialism towards the end of the 1920s, fascism had come to signify quite different things to its enemies, supporters and admirers, both inside and outside Italy. On the Left the Mussolinian regime looked suspiciously like a dress rehearsal for a wider pan-European anti-socialist onslaught, orchestrated by monopoly capitalism with the active support of the middle strata — in this respect, the Comintern interpretations attributed a high symbolic significance to the events in Italy (a Manichean struggle between fascism and anti-fascism) than the one that even Mussolini was prepared to concede until 1929. In fact, the communist Left (especially in its orthodox readings of the international situation through official Comintern theses) saw in the fascist regime the default system of bourgeois rule in times of intensifying capitalist crisis. On the Right, conservative commentators followed the development of the Mussolinian regime throughout the 1920s with great interest, praising its effectiveness in smashing socialism and in making a total break with parliamentarism, offering instead a holistic model of social organization and a powerful antidote to class struggle in the form of integral nationalism. However, most of these observers limited their recommendations to Fascism's function in the particular Italian context of chronic political instability and state deficiency; they were far more reluctant to acknowledge it any serious supra national relevance or the status of a generic alternative to liberal-conservative rule.³⁰ For radical nationalist fellow travellers, by contrast, the Fascist regenerating discourse, its anti-materialism and anti-rationalism, its movement dynamism and political success seemed to presage a revolutionary nationalist transformation that was of relevance to the bulk of European societies.

All these groups talked about 'fascism', but their understanding of what this novel phenomenon represented and aspired to was fundamentally divergent. For the conservative and authoritarian European Right the significance of Fascist rule in Italy

lay in setting the parameters for its successful fusion of radical models of social organization and political practice with the existing state framework and executive structures. The events of 1922 offered a mixed precedent to them. On the one hand, they signified the possibility of a successful commodification of fascism — of a statist, authoritarian (due to its reliance on the charismatic leader), system-maintaining and dynamic variant of fascism that had provided a much more effective model than a regression to conventional authoritarianism and anti-liberalism, one which professed a post-liberal, post-socialist order. On the other hand, with hindsight these events served as a caution — by 1925 Fascism had proved uncontrollable and far more dynamic than the élite sponsors who had aspired to exploit but contain it. When Mussolini (under pressure from his own party intransigents) took the bold step to declare dictatorship,³¹ the erstwhile élite patrons of the regime realized that their continued subordination to the Fascist state was the price that they had to pay for averting a renewed (and perhaps more grave) revolutionary challenge from the Left.

This was a significant message that was not lost on the conservative Right beyond Italy (with the notable exception of Germany, but in a rather different set of circumstances — see below). The precedent of the Mussolinian regime had produced a list of commodities (cult of leadership, structures of social engineering and controlled mobilization, populism, corporatism, the single mass party, para military organizations, the discourse of national regeneration through a non class-based but organic society, the powerful imagery of striking symbols and carefully choreographed public gatherings, the forced organization of sectors of society) that could now be appropriated on an ad hoc basis by the authoritarian Right without presupposing the existence of a ‘fascist’ movement monopolizing and actively sponsoring them. Since the Mussolinian regime could be interpreted as a successful separation of fascism from its revolutionary ideological origins and subversive movement features, many conservative politicians and élites were captivated by *certain* organizational and political features of the fascist phenomenon but only to the extent that these did not contradict their own political agenda or threaten their position of sociopolitical predominance.³² In this respect, the events of the 1920s in Italy offered a series of invaluable lessons: that fascism was useful and

effective but not always reliable or controllable; that many of its practices were perfectly congruous with authoritarian rule and conservative priorities; and, above all, that the task was to confiscate the 'fascist' commodities and harvest their benefits without granting fascism as a whole a dangerously large share of legitimacy or credit.

Preventive Fascistization Versus the 'Last Resort'

By the middle of the 1930s, there was further empirical evidence that developments in Italy held that kind of supra national significance that Togliatti and other Marxist analysts had talked about in the 1920s. The emergence of a host of new radical nationalist organizations across the continent, many of whom did not conceal their admiration for (or even imitation of) Fascist practices in Italy (or the example of the new rising star of European radical nationalism, the NSDAP in Germany), was coupled with a wide shift from democratic, liberal-parliamentary modes of rule to dictatorship and aggressive anti-socialism. While Spain returned in 1931 (at least technically) to democratic government, its Iberian neighbour, Portugal, witnessed the establishment of a dictatorial regime under Carmona and the consolidation of the corporatist *Estado Novo* (new state) under the leadership of Salazar.³³ In Poland, Marshall Piłsudski brought an unstable democratic regime to an end in 1928, without however tampering with the formal trappings of parliamentarism.³⁴ In 1932, Horthy's regime in Hungary took a decisive turn to the Right by appointing the leader of the self-proclaimed National Socialists, Gömbös, as prime minister, again without suspending elections or eliminating parliament.³⁵ In the same year, Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria, in close cooperation with *Heimwehr* (a nationalist organization heavily influenced by Italian Fascism), reacted to the perceived threat from both the socialists and the Austrian Nazis by dispensing with parliamentary rule, outlawing opposition parties and instituting the so-called 'Christian Social' state — a corporatist dictatorial system under the patronage of Fascist Italy.³⁶ Finally, in January 1933 the well documented rise of the NSDAP from the electoral obscurity of 1928 to the victory in the two 1932 elections culminated in the appointment of Hitler as chancellor, followed only a few months later by the suspension

of the last vestiges of parliamentarism that had survived in the 'presidential' cabinets of 1930–2.³⁷

The significance of these developments extended far beyond the mere empirical observation that an increasing number of élite groups, bourgeois parties and voters across the continent were willing to trade democratic rights and liberalism for a notion of societal security and political stability that came to be associated with strong executive, authoritarian rule and violent suppression of socialist organizations. The experience of Italian Fascism (by then a well-established and powerful regime) had shattered old certainties and forced a major reassessment of the techniques of rule. For many European countries experiencing political instability and socio-economic dislocation the conventional dilemma between liberalism, authoritarian dictatorship or socialism had been reduced to a mere choice between defence of the existing order at all costs or revolution. At the same time, however, the examples of Italy and, from 1933 onwards, Germany seemed to legitimize extreme practices of such a defence, elevating what had begun as an isolated revolt against conventional political wisdom to the status of a mainstream paradigm, on a par with 'western' liberalism.³⁸ In other words, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany came to be increasingly regarded as pools of inspiration and of new, effective recipes for the management of unstable and crisis-ridden political systems. But once again, each observer understood the benefits of learning from either of the two regimes in fundamentally different ways. For the bulk of new radical nationalist movements, the spectacular rise and success of fascism in Italy and Germany seemed to confirm the chances of their own assault on the liberal-conservative establishment and the political viability of their programme. For élite groups anxious to ensure the perpetuation of their power while injecting fresh legitimacy into the ailing political systems upon which they presided, the temptation to appropriate 'fascist' commodities without risking the kind of institutional interregnum that proved so unpredictable and eventually detrimental to élite interests in Italy and Germany proved increasingly overwhelming.

Whether the radical movements that surfaced in the majority of the European states, especially after the 1929 world depression, were 'fascist' or not is a question that does not fall within the contours of this article. Some of them meticulously imitated Italian Fascism and/or Nazism, sometimes even using the adjec-

tive 'fascist' or 'national socialist' in their name.³⁹ Some — such as the Spanish Falange and the French Parti Populaire Français (PPF) — did display a significant degree of ideological affinity with the two core fascist movements, but hastened to claim a truly indigenous (and therefore not mimetic) character for their groups.⁴⁰ Others had to subject their intellectual attraction to Fascism or Nazism to the specific needs of their countries' national interest, which in some cases was incompatible with Mussolini's or Hitler's own designs for European domination. However, what is of particular interest is the physiognomy of the dictatorial regimes that were established in Europe — in other words, if and how it is possible to distinguish genuine 'fascist' *regimes* from authoritarian dictatorships of the old style, military *pronunziamentos* and royal coups. No 'fascist' movement or party seized power autonomously, either through parliamentary devices or a *putsch*. In this sense, there was a crucial common denominator in all the dictatorial regimes that were instituted in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe: they resulted from a conscious decision of élite sectors to strengthen their executive powers and legitimize the adoption of more aggressive strategies for the suppression of perceived internal foes. And it was perhaps a measure of the influence that the developments in Italy and, later, Germany had exerted upon élite attitudes to problem-solving that a simple regression to patrician authoritarian rule was in most cases dismissed in favour of more populist models of authoritarian rule and a selective appropriation of 'fascist' political commodities. This is eloquently demonstrated by the fact that the wider claim for an anti-socialist and anti-liberal, but decisively nationalist transformation of political rule that became a constant of inter-war discourse was saturated by the apparent successes of the fascist model in that direction, and eventually came to be more identified with various aspects of the fascist project in established regimes.

On the basis of this crucial similarity, the different élite strategies employed in order to achieve a viable and effective reconfiguration of their power acquire particular significance. Given that nowhere did fascism seize power in total opposition to powerful élite sectors, it is more accurate to describe the co-opting of 'fascist' groups, or the adoption of 'fascist' commodities, as *fascistization* of authoritarian rule — an inelegant term, but one that does describe better the process of importing fascism

(as ideology and/or political élite) into the rationale of an authoritarian transformation of the political system master-minded by certain sectors of disunited élites in inter-war European countries. Such a fascistization, as has already been mentioned, involved experimentation with either of the two main perceptions of 'fascism' in the inter-war period: that is, either the leadership of the movement (but not the movement itself, largely seen as unreliable, unruly and dangerous); or the set of political practices and organizational elements rehearsed in other established regimes, extracted from the specific political rationale of its pioneers and from the indigenous traditions that had nurtured them in the places of their conception. The Italian and German paradigms consisted in importing fascism through the participation of fascist leaderships in the new configuration of strengthened executive power. This trend was repeated in a number of other countries that had witnessed the emergence of a fascist-style movement, especially in the 1930s. In Austria, the conservative leadership of the Christian Catholic state co-opted the *Heimwehr* in the new structures of the corporatist authoritarian state.⁴¹ In Spain General Franco and the Spanish Falange masterminded a political alliance that formed the basis for a new synthesis of the whole Spanish Right (including the Carlists and the Catholic Church); in opposition not only to the left but also to the republican system.⁴² In Hungary, Admiral Horthy's authoritarian regime proved flexible enough to stomach the National Socialist movement of Gömbös by admitting its leader to its power structures and allowing him considerable leeway in emulating 'fascist' elements.⁴³ During the war the military dictatorship of General Antonescu in Romania experimented with a more populist basis for his regime through his tactical alliance with the radical Iron Guard (a short-lived alliance which, however, enabled the regime to acquire a more identifiable 'fascist' veneer in its discourse and practices).⁴⁴

By contrast, there were a host of other countries that pursued a certain degree of fascistization 'from above', namely by implementing 'fascist' practices without associating themselves with radical movements or attempting to renew their leadership reservoir. In the 1920s both countries of the Iberian peninsula experienced a pattern of authoritarian transformation which was carried out by the military, but was receptive to the developments in Fascist Italy and displayed a willingness to fuse some of them

into the conventional framework of dictatorship. For example, both Primo de Rivera's regime in Spain and that of Salazar in Portugal attempted to create a mass party for the regime from above; a party that would function as both the active popular defence of the regime and a means to strengthen its legitimacy.⁴⁵ The idea of one, all-embracing party was also taken up by the Austrian Christian Social state, producing a mass organization called Fatherland Front which occupied the political vacuum left by the regime's decision to ban the two main anti-system parties (socialists and Austrian NSDAP), and to re-configure the bourgeois political.⁴⁶ At the same time, corporatism (a doctrine initially derived from Catholic social thinking) became increasingly a byword for 'fascist' sympathies in various quarters of the European conservative Right, especially since Mussolini's regime paid significant lip-service to its capacity to re-organize social life in a holistic, productivist way.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Mussolini's and Hitler's experiments with mass organizations of social control (youth, women, leisure) were replicated in many other authoritarian regimes, including that of General Metaxas in Greece (1936–41)⁴⁸ and King Carol in Romania (1937–9). But, above all, the 'fascist' experience fascinated conservative disciples across the continent for its highly effective political *style* and symbolic imagery: uniforms, mass rallies, striking symbols, a trend towards militarization, and the cult of the leader became common identifiable traits of conservative flirtation with populist authoritarianism orchestrated from above and mechanisms for strengthening the impression of regime legitimacy.⁴⁹

Thus, we may speak of four different patterns of *fascistization* of the wider inter-war trend away from liberal democracy and towards a more authoritarian transformation of political rule:

(1) co-optation of fascist leaderships, with the implicit intended marginalization of the movement component, in the context of a 'dictatorship' — that is, a short-term regime of exception with extraordinary power and limited horizon, enabling a political fusion of conventional authoritarianism with specific novel fascist commodities (Italy, Germany, and Romania under Antonescu in 1939–40);

(2) long-term political alliance between the traditional conservative forces with 'fascist' component, on the basis of the acceptance on the latter's part that the primary functions of

decision-making would remain in the hands of the former. This formula clearly depended on the cooperative stance of the fascist component — especially on its willingness to sacrifice revolutionary aspirations in favour of continuity and stability under the auspices of traditional élite groups receptive to the significantly more populist ‘fascist’ recipes (Spain during the Civil War and under Francoism);⁵⁰

(3) co-optation of a less radical component of fascism (thus manipulating antagonisms inside the fascist constituency), under the tutelage of the conservative establishment (including the monarchy, the military, etc.) in defence of the existing order that appeared to be threatened by the aspirations of more extreme fascist agendas. This was a defensive formula, resting on a clear distinction between desirable and undesirable fascist commodities, the latter seen as a real threat to the existing order and the perpetuation of élite supremacy. But, similar to the first process described above, the goal was to usurp those fascist commodities that were regarded as beneficial while arresting the social dynamics of the fascist movements (Hungary, Austria);

(4) adoption of fascist commodities ‘from above’, either as a pre-emptive move designed to neutralize indigenous fascist movements, or in the absence of such elements. The adoption of specific fascist commodities by figures of the conservative establishment or traditional institutional pillars of the state (for example, the military in the Iberian and Balkan countries; the monarchy) amounted to what many commentators have described as ‘fascism without movement’, in the sense that there was either no such movement that was politically active (Greece; Spain in the 1920s) or it was marginalized and suppressed by the authoritarian apparatus of the state (for example, Preto’s National Syndicalists in Portugal targeted by Salazar; the Romanian Iron Guard suppressed initially by King Carol and later by Antonescu).⁵¹ In all these cases, ‘fascism’ was imported by traditional conservative élites either to strengthen an already instituted authoritarian, anti-liberal/socialist regime (the Carmona dictatorship in Portugal), or to legitimize the shift from a flawed liberal system to dictatorship (as happened in Greece in 1936) — without risking power sharing or the handing over of the leadership to outsiders (as happened in Germany and Italy).

It becomes evident that the motives for (and rationale behind)

either co-opting 'fascist' elements or adopting 'fascist' commodities by traditional élite groups in inter-war Europe differed greatly from country to country. These differences had already been picked up by some Marxist commentators in the 1920s and especially 1930s, producing analytical distinctions that the official Comintern theses, in their dogmatic inflexibility, could not fathom. August Thalheimer adapted the classic Marxist formula of *Bonapartism* to the specific inter-war conditions of authoritarian transformation and search for stronger executive power at the expense of democratic institutions and accountability. By associating the shift towards 'fascist' practices as an integral part of a Bonapartist élite strategy, he detected two different patterns of authoritarian regimes: *preventive Bonapartist* and *fascist Bonapartist*. The former was a broad category, encompassing a host of regimes that had broken with parliamentary legality and democratic control without actively collaborating with 'fascist' elements within their societies.⁵² Such a definition allowed Thalheimer to include not only systems that had displayed limited fascist tendencies, but also conservative regimes that had succumbed to the attraction of strengthening the executive even in opposition to fascist groups (e.g. the presidential cabinets of 1930–3 in Germany, or even the 'Giolittian' system in Italy prior to 1922). In fact, the element of 'prevention' indicated that the shift to authoritarian techniques of rule was part of a pre-emptive strategy against the threat of either revolution or capitulation of the regime to the designs of the fascists themselves. By contrast, the latter category incorporated an active 'fascist' political element, referring to the developments in Italy and Germany, where the co-opting of the fascist component took the regimes into the uncharted territory of power sharing and indeed conceding the formal positions of leadership to fascist outsiders.⁵³

The notion of Bonapartism has been widely criticized by both orthodox Marxist and liberal commentators. While for the former it smacked of dissidence (and, in fact, its extensive usage by the likes of Trotsky and Thalheimer — who had been expelled from their parties — subverted its validity in the eyes of many inter-war Marxists), non-Marxist critics generally dismissed its primary emphasis on élite strategies without sufficient attention to the ideological, social and political dynamics of fascism itself. Even postwar Marxist historians rejected the 'economism' (i.e. the Marxist emphasis on the primacy of economics) in the inter-

war Marxist analysis of fascism. Tim Mason attempted to correct this deficiency — in his opinion — of Marxist interpretations by emphasizing the ‘primacy of politics’ in understanding fascism.⁵⁴ Without doubt, the subsequent autonomization of the fascist element in Italy and Germany’s power structures alluded to the failure of their élite sponsors to control or even discard them when the fascist leaderships antagonized the élite grip on decision-making and succeeded in having their way, even by marginalizing traditional élite groups. In the short term, however, the basic assumption of Bonapartism is generally correct, in the sense that the objective of strengthening executive power was identified with what we have described above as a carefully orchestrated process of controlled *fascistization*. From an élite point of view, the political and institutional arrangements that promoted this fascistization had a distinctive short-term function and character — they responded to a perception of crisis of system legitimacy,⁵⁵ did not intend a reconfiguration of power structures, and aimed at a recasting of the old system in a more populist, yet at the same time more authoritarian direction. In this sense, they created an exceptional kind of regime, a transitional political configuration of executive power predicated on the basis of the alleged severity of the internal situation.

Fascistization did not of course signal the establishment of a *fascist regime*. This is true not only of those cases where ‘fascism’ was adopted from above but also in countries such as Italy and Germany, where fascistization of the regime was accompanied by the co-opting of the movement’s strong leadership and resulted in the establishment relinquishing the leadership to the fascist élite. Even in these cases, the initial co-habitation with traditional institutions and groups mitigated the ability of the fascist leaderships to shape events and define policies independently. Therefore, the transitional fascistized regimes were not meant to become — and indeed were not — *fascist* in the pure sense of the word. Which factors, then, help to explain why this arrangement proved resilient and stable in most cases (arresting the process of fascistization and ensuring the continued unassailable hegemony of the traditional élite groups or part thereof), and why it initiated an institutional and political crisis in others, with unforeseeable consequences? For a start, the absence of a strong fascist movement/party gave the conservative élites significantly larger leeway to experiment with political solutions without risking

unwanted complications or challenge from outside the traditional power bloc. This was the case in Greece, where General Metaxas could control the absorption of 'fascist' commodities without any pressure from a more radical political component. A further important factor that contributed to the stability of such arrangements was the relative cohesion of the traditional élite bloc. In most European countries, unity of purpose on the élite level ensured that the authoritarian transformation of the regime could be promoted from within, with the consensus (either positive or reluctant) of traditional powerful figures and institutions of power. This was the case in the Iberian and Balkan states, where royal, military and conservative interests could still use channels of institutional bargaining and thus reach an internal agreement without needing to seek recourse to 'outsiders' for legitimizing the strengthening of the executive and promoting the fascistization of the regime. By contrast, the disintegration of élite consensus in Italy and Germany in the inter-war period and the failure of intra-élite experiments (the 1920–2 cabinets in Italy; the 1930–3 presidential cabinets in Germany) to provide viable solutions to the crisis rendered a recourse to 'outside' popular solutions not only useful (as a weapon against other élite sectors), but also increasingly unavoidable. This was underlined by the abortive attempt of King Carol in Romania to uphold his own power in the face of intra-élite conflict through a fascistization of the regime from above, the parallel suppression of the active fascist component (Iron Guard) and the marginalization of alienated élite sectors (for example, the powerful military). In addition, the lack of unity in the fascist bloc, manifesting itself in the breakdown of the fascist constituency in various antagonistic groups and parties, helped traditional élite groups to exploit divisions and strengthen their political power by co-opting the less radical, more accommodating fascist components. This happened in Austria, where the Christian Social state allied itself with the more moderate *Heimwehr* against the increasingly disruptive activity of the Austrian NSDAP;⁵⁶ and in Hungary where Horthy co-opted smaller, more cooperative groups (such as the National Socialists) against the threat of uncontrolled fascistization represented by the radical Arrow Cross.⁵⁷ Finally, the political flexibility and accommodating attitude of certain fascist components once admitted to the power structures ensured a higher degree of regime stability and precluded subsequent con-

frontations with their élite sponsors. Again, the *Heimwehr* proved a trustworthy political ally of Chancellors Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in the 1930s, eager to invest in strengthening the regime's solidity against the socialists and the Austrian Nazis at the expense of its own initial, more radical goals that were not being addressed by the Christian Social state leadership. But perhaps the best example of 'fascist' pragmatism was provided by the Spanish Falange, whose leadership accepted the mitigation of its radical programme in favour of a stable political compromise with Francoism and its more conservative power bloc. It is crucial here to stress the difference between *genuine* and *tactical* moderation shown by the various fascist leaders prior to their admission to power. All of them adopted a more accommodating stance in order to create an impression of 'normalization' to their conservative interlocutors and thus facilitate their admission to the power structures in spite of initial élite distrust and fear. However, while in the overwhelming majority of cases this proved to be a tactical short-term concession that concealed, but did not limit, fascist anti-system intentions (e.g. Italy and Germany, and Romania during the period of the legionary state), in the case of the Falange and the *Heimwehr* 'normalization' was sincere and irreversible, contributing to the regime's stability.

Therefore, the common trend towards fascistization originated from different conditions of crisis and élite calculations in each case.

Voluntary fascistization characterized the general tendency of conservative political élites to adopt selective 'fascist' commodities from above, either in the absence of a (strong) indigenous fascist challenge or in an attempt to defuse it within the context of a conventional authoritarian transformation of the political system. This was the situation in Hungary until the rise of the Arrow Cross, in Spain during the 1920s (Primo de Rivera's regime) and again in the 1930s (Franco's cooperation with the Falange), and in a host of other countries in the Balkans (Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania) and Eastern Europe (e.g. Poland). This type of fascistization resulted in a regime that had many of the trappings of a proper 'fascist' system, but whose political apparatus remained largely unchanged in the absence of any form of power-sharing with a fascist component.

Preventive fascistization occurred in those countries where an indigenous strong 'fascist' group challenged the foundations of

the political system and was perceived as a real threat to the perpetuation of the élites' position. This happened in Austria against the NSDAP; in Romania under both King Carol and later Antonescu against the Iron Guard (in the latter case, after a short period of co-opting that proved threatening to the stability of the authoritarian regime); in Portugal against Preto's radical National Syndicalists;⁵⁸ and in Hungary after the mid-1930s as a reaction to the strength of the Arrow Cross.

Finally, *fascistization as the last resort* resulted from the failure of all other viable élite strategies and had a decidedly uneasy short-term character. It involved considerable power sharing, or even granting the leadership to a popular figure from the fascist camp, and constituted a last-ditch attempt to combat the main social threat (socialist agitation and labour mobilization) through a tactical alliance with the 'lesser evil' — in this case, the fascist élites. A fundamental part of the latter's attraction originated from their ability to command the loyalties of large sectors of the population, their usually charismatic personality and, crucially, the impression of 'normalization' described above. Only a socially strong and politically influential fascist movement/party could force the élite groups to consider it as an inevitable part of a systemic solution to crisis once all other alternatives had been tried unsuccessfully. This was the case primarily in Germany, when the NSDAP emerged as the largest parliamentary party in the Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932;⁵⁹ and in Italy where the PNF succeeded in turning its meagre electoral performance of 1919 into modest success in 1921 (with the decisive help of the liberal establishment itself) and disproportionately high political influence in 1921–2. But in both these cases the fact that the élite groups had eventually to turn to powerful extraneous, largely unpredictable and ideologically radical groups for overcoming the deadlock testified to the disintegration of élite consensus and their proceeding inability to formulate viable strategies of their own in dealing with the regime's crisis — a factor that again has been discussed above.

In hindsight, each of these three models of fascistization had its own strengths and weaknesses. Voluntary fascistization, based on the appropriation of selective fascist commodities from above and within, ensured a higher degree of continuity and stability with minimal risk of any shift of power away from the traditional centres of power; yet the new veneer could not mask the un-

interrupted continuities with the past, flawed political system. Preventive fascistization proved quite effective in defusing a more radical 'fascist' threat to the political, while strengthening the repressive apparatus of the state in its primary struggle against the labour movement; but it proved counterproductive or even unstable in cases where a particularly strong fascist movement continued to challenge the legitimacy of the existing state (as happened with the NSDAP in Austria), or where the regime did not rest on broad élite consensus (as was the case in Romania during the last stage of King Carol's reign). Finally, fascistization as a last resort was predicated on the basis of broadening the regime's social basis (hence the inclusion of the fascist groups in the power bloc) and appeal (through the populist 'charisma' of the fascist leaders themselves⁶⁰), while promising to 'tame' fascist radicalism through granting the fascist élites a significant institutional role in the decision-making process; but with hindsight the admission of the fascist leaderships into the power structures of the regime established them as a significant force in the subsequent shaping of events. This was not properly acknowledged by the élite groups, themselves under the impression that their political prestige would suffice to control radical fascist designs and arrest their dynamism. By the time the traditional élite sponsors of the fascist solution awoke to the painful realization that they were ill-equipped to control fascist consolidation, they were either institutionally powerless to react or coerced by their fear that the collapse of the regime would signal a fiercer revolutionary assault by the socialists.⁶¹ In this case, the fascist leaderships exploited the 'last resort' attitude of the élite groups to embark upon an aggressive strategy of consolidation and emancipation that gradually minimized the latter's ability to shape political developments.

Conclusions

So, is a categorical distinction between fascism and para-fascist authoritarianism possible in inter-war Europe? In intellectual terms, there were significant differences between the 'fascist' movements and the conservative élites' more pragmatic, calculated adoption of 'fascist' commodities or the co-opting of the fascist leaderships. But the more the analysis moves from ideo-

logical substance and proclamations to political practices in the exercise of power (in other words, from movement to regime), the distinction becomes increasingly blurred and problematical. What remains crucially common in all regimes that adopted 'fascist' organizational, ideological or formal characteristics were a template of élite experiments with selective aspects of the 'fascist' experience, as epitomized in Italy and later Germany. Political instability, crisis of state legitimacy and fear of revolutionary overthrow by the Left and the apparent 'success' that the regimes in Italy and Germany had in the direction of stabilizing the domestic situation (by employing novel techniques of social control and an aggressive strategy of repression against their opponents), convinced conservative élites that the 'fascist' recipe had undoubted advantages over traditional models of authoritarian dictatorial rule. This matrix of élite co-opting of fascism (either from above or through a short-term alliance with fascist leaderships) generated a wider tendency towards fascistization of the existing system, but in no way a capitulation to fascism itself. Whether this fascistization was authorized voluntarily, preventively or literally as a last resort (as happened in Italy and Germany), it had the character of a controlled, limited fusion of 'fascist' ideas and practices (what we called 'commodities') into a more conventional framework of authoritarian rule. This was the common political mould that later produced both the commonly regarded as 'fascist' regimes of Italy and Germany, and a series of 'para-fascist' systems, from Spain and Portugal to Greece and Romania. For its own part, the initial fascism had undergone fundamental ideological-political revisions by the time that it came to be considered by the élites as a possible (desirable or unavoidable) candidate for co-optation. Having shed its initial socially revolutionary spirit, its anti-capitalism, anti-clericalism and egalitarian structure, as well as its essentially *putschist* character, it had become a leader-oriented, more hierarchical and seemingly 'moderate', more statist and vehemently anti-communist project. It was this self-transformation (from inside) that facilitated its co-optation by conservative/authoritarian élites in the context of a formula to strengthen executive power at the expense of parliament and to crush socialism.

The 1922 experiment in Italy provided a fusion between two (previously thought of as) incompatible phenomena within the existing social and executive structure. Subsequent developments

in Italy were both reassuring and alarming. On the one hand, they meant that fascism had lost its ideological autonomy and had come to be regarded as a set of extremely efficient commodities that could be appropriated by conservative élite groups without relinquishing overall political authority. On the other hand, Mussolini and his fascist élite proved increasingly impossible to control or dispense with even when they capitalized on their increasing self-confidence to antagonize their conservative sponsors.

The experiment with fascistization proved equally unpredictable in other countries in inter-war Europe. Factors such as the degree of élite cohesion, the strength and strategy of the fascist components, the number of fascist groups in the country and their relations, the rationale behind the élite decision to co-opt fascism, all played a crucial role in defining the dynamics of fascistization. Answers as to why, in some cases, the trend was arrested without jeopardizing élite control over the system while in other cases it followed a more radical path of fascist consolidation and marginalization of élite influence on decision-making can be found in the particular interaction of the above factors in each country.

In the absence of consensus as to what this novel political phenomenon represented and consisted of, not one but at least three models of what we now call 'fascism' coexisted in the hazy political landscape of inter-war Europe. One was based on the radical essence of early fascist ideology, its violent activism, movement-like organization and uncompromising revolutionary outlook. Another was based on the experience of authoritarian-fascist fusion, as epitomized by the 1922 events in Italy and 1933 in Germany, less radical in orientation, steering an awkward course between normalization and the remnants of the initial radical spirit of the movement period. The third model, based on the successful experience of fascistization 'from above', had veered decisively to the Right, reducing fascism to a set of organization, symbolic and political novelties divorced from their early radical social goals and implications.⁶² From the viewpoint of a purist intellectual history of fascism only the first model constituted an accurate articulation of its genuine early spirit. The other two had resulted from a series of fundamental revisions — either from within (the Mussolinian and Hitlerian renditions of fascism) or from above — of the nucleus of fascist ideology in a more or less

authoritarian direction. But any theory of the regime model of fascism cannot reduce the difference between these last two models to a distinction between fascism and para-fascism, implying that the latter constituted a limited or abortive rendition of the allegedly sacrosanct Italian and German regime models — and for that reason was not 'fascist' proper. What is conventionally termed as 'fascist regime' originated from the same matrix of élite experiments with fascistization in conditions that eventually favoured the disintegration of the existing system and the preservation of a radical, anti-system alternative — and even then it did not appear from a sudden leap towards the abyss of political extremism. When the cliché tendency to judge everything against the ideal type of Fascism or Nazism has finally abated, it will be easier to discern how both models constituted at the same time fundamental distortions of fascist ideology, and equally conscious attempts to interpret and implement it according to specific needs and circumstances present in each society.

Notes

1. S. Ben-Ami, *Fascism From Above. The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930* (Oxford 1983).
2. C. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe* (Princeton, NJ 1975).
3. See the various excerpts from the works of inter-war Marxist commentators in D. Beetham, *Marxists in Face of Fascism* (Manchester 1983) and the interesting discussion of Marxist interpretations in the Introduction, 1–62.
4. For example, G.M. Trevelyan, *The Historical Causes of the Present State of Affairs in Italy* (Oxford 1923). See also the general discussion of such views in R. J. B. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Mussolini and Fascism* (London and New York 1998), Ch. 3.
5. P. Togliatti, 'On the Question of Fascism', translated and reprinted in D. Beetham, *Marxists* 136–48.
6. See, for example, R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London 1993), Chs. 1–2; and his 'The Primacy of Culture: The Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 37 (2002), 21–44. For an attempt to incorporate the experience of fascist 'rule' into a general theory of fascism see R.O. Paxton, 'The Five Stages of Fascism', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70 (1998), 1–23; and A.J. De Grand, *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The 'Fascist' Style of Rule* (London and New York 1996).
7. A. Kallis, 'The Regime-Model of Fascism: A Typology', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (2000), 77–104.
8. For example, B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans/Vol. 2, The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1983).
9. I borrow the term from P. Togliatti, 'Question of Fascism', 136–48.

10. See J. Degras, ed., *The Communist International 1919–1943* (Oxford 1965); R. Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford 1996), 260–3; Beetham, *Marxists*, various excerpts in Section II.

11. Amongst a variety of works by Antonio Gramsci, see A. Gramsci, *Socialismo e Fascismo. L'Ordine Nuovo 1921* — (Turin 1966); A. Gramsci, *Selections From Prison* (London 1971); and the interesting analyses of Gramsci's political thinking by M. Clark, *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution That Failed* (New Haven, CT 1977); and W.L. Adamson, 'Gramsci's Interpretation of Fascism', *Journal of History of Ideas*, Vol. 41 (1980), 615–33.

12. Togliatti, 'Question of Fascism', 145.

13. *Ibid.*, 143.

14. On 'social-fascism' see the analysis in Beetham, *Marxists*, 17–39; and an interesting anthology of excerpts in Section II.

15. I. Silone, *Der Faschismus. Seine Entstehung und seine Entwicklung* (Zurich 1934), 469ff, an excerpt of which is translated and featured in Beetham, *Marxists*, 236–44.

16. G. Allardyce, 'What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept', *American Historical Review* Vol. 84 (1979): 367–88.

17. For the features of the Italian regime, see A. Aquarone, *L'Organizzazione Dello Stato Totalitario* (Turin 1965); D. Thompson, *State Control in Fascist Italy. Culture and Conformity, 1925–43* (Manchester and New York 1991).

18. J. Mannhardt, *Der Faschismus* (Munich 1925), an excerpt from which is translated in R. Griffin, ed., *Fascism*, 253–4.

19. On the 'export' of fascism see A. Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansion in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (London 2000), Ch. 5.

20. For an overview of the various fascist movements that emerged in inter-war Europe, see P.H. Merkl, 'Comparing Fascist Movements', in *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, S.U. Larsen, B. Hagtvet, and J.P. Myklebust (Bergen 1980).

21. See Z. Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, (Princeton, NJ 1994); and his controversial *Neither Right nor Left. Fascist Ideology in France* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles 1986).

22. For a translated excerpt of the San Sepolcro declarations, see E. Susmel and D. Susmel, eds, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, Vol. XII, (Florence 1951–1962), 321ff.

23. On this see Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, Ch. 3; and, in general on the relations between conservatives and fascists, see the various contributions in M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives. The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe* (London 1990).

24. See the masterly analysis of M. Blinkhorn, 'Introduction' in M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe* (London, 1990).

25. On the ideological and organizational evolution of the PNF in Italy, see E. Gentile, *Il Partito Nazionale Fascista* (Rome 1989), and his 'The Problem of the Party in Italian Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 19 (1984), 51–74. Also see D.L. Germino, *The Italian Fascist Party in Power. A Study in Totalitarian Rule* (Minneapolis, 1959).

26. For the *novecento* intellectual revolt, see W.L. Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA 1993); A. Hamilton, *The*

Appeal of Fascism. A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism 1919–1945 (London 1971), 1–31. For the fusion of these dissident trends into Fascism see Sternhell, *Birth of Fascist Ideology*, and his 'Fascist Ideology' in W. Laqueur, *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Harmondsworth 1979), 325–406.

27. A. Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power, 1919–1929* (London 1979); P. Morgan, *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945* (Basingstoke 1995).

28. On the Italian Nationalist Association, see A. De Grand, *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy* (Lincoln, NE 1978), *passim*; F. Perfetti, *Il nazionalismo italiano dalle origini alla fusione col fascismo* (Bologna 1977); and P. Alatri, *Le Origini Del Fascismo* (Rome 1963).

29. On the problems of the PNF after the seizure of power in 1922, see Gentile, 'Problem of the Party', 51–74; E. Gentile, *La via italiana al totalitarismo. Il partito e lo stato nel regime fascista* (Rome 2001); and P. Brooker, *The Faces of Fraternalism: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan* (Oxford 1991), Chs. 9–11.

30. Cf. E. Von Beckerath, 'The Italian Experiment', in Griffin, ed., *Fascism*, 254–5.

31. Cf. The role of individual Fascist leaders during the course of the Matteotti crisis of 1924, in G.B. Guerri, *Italo Balbo: A Fascist Life* (Berkeley, CA 1987).

32. On the way that fascism was used by élite groups in order to boost the state's legitimacy without effecting any real change in the power structures, see J. Caplan, 'Theories of Fascism: Nicos Poulantzas as Historian', *History Workshop Journal* Vol. 3 (1977), 83–100.

33. For the Salazar regime, see the excellent study of Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above*; T. Gallagher, 'Conservatism, Dictatorship and Fascism in Portugal' in M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives* (London 1990), 157–75; R.A.H. Robinson, 'Portugal: The "New State" and After', *European History Quarterly* Vol. 24 (1994), 395–402; and P.C. Schmitter, 'The Social Origins, Economic Bases and Political Imperatives of Authoritarian Rule in Portugal', in Larsen, et al., eds, *Who Were the Fascists?*, 436–66.

34. See H. Wereszycki, 'Fascism in Poland', in P. F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945* (Santa Barbara, CA 1971), 85–91; J. Rothschild, *Pilsudski's Coup d'Etat* (New York 1966).

35. I. Deák, 'Hungary', in H. Rogger and E. Weber, eds, *The European Right. A Historical Profile* (London 1965), 364–407; T. L. Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback Miklós Horthy, 1918–1944* (Boulder, CO and New York 1994); J. Erős, 'Hungary', in S.J. Woolf ed., *Fascism in Europe* (London 1968).

36. See, amongst others, J. Lewis, 'Conservatives and Fascists in Austria, 1918–34', in M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives* (London 1990), 103–14.

37. The bibliography on the rise of National Socialism is vast. For the background to the electoral successes of the NSDAP in the 1930–32 period, see W.S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: the Experience of a Single German Town 1922–1945* (New York and London 1984); I. Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London 1998).

38. E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism. Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (London 1965), 3–10.

39. For an exhaustive analysis of these movements, see S. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1919–1945* (London 1997). See also the taxonomy provided by Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*.

40. See S.M. Ellwood, 'Falange Española, 1933–9: From Fascism to

Francoism', in M. Blinkhorn, ed., *Spain in Conflict 1931–1939: Democracy and Its Enemies* (London 1986), 206–23; S.M. Ellwood, 'Falange Espanola and the Creation of the Francoist "New State"', *European History Quarterly* Vol. 20 (1990): 209–25; R.J. Soucy, 'The Nature of Fascism in France', in G.L. Mosse, ed., *International Fascism. New Thoughts and New Approaches* (London 1979) 243–72; Z. Sternhell, 'Strands of French Fascism', in Larsen et al., eds, *Who Were the Fascists?*, 479–500.

41. Lewis, *Conservatives*; M. Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism* (London and Montreal 1980); F.L. Carsten, *Fascist Movements in Austria From Schönerer to Hitler* (London 1977).

42. Amongst others, see Ellwood, 'Falange'; S.G. Payne, *The Franco Regime, 1936–1975* (Madison, WI 1987); S.G. Payne, *Falange* (Stanford, CA 1961).

43. I. Deák, 'Hungary', 364–401; Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*, 126–7.

44. Z. Barbu, 'Romania', in Woolf, ed., *Fascism in Europe*, 151–70; S. Fischer-Galati, 'Fascism in Romania', in Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism*, 112–21; V. Tismaneanu, 'Romania's Mystical Revolutionaries: The Generation of Angst and Adventure Revisited', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 8 (1994) 402–38; D. Chirot, 'Who Influenced Whom? Xenophobic Nationalism in Germany and Romania', in R. Schonfeld, ed., *Germany and Southeastern Europe — Aspects of Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Munich 1997), 37–57. For an excellent background to the period, see I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY 1995).

45. Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism*, Ch. 8; Lewis, *Conservatives*.

46. Ben-Ami, *Fascism From Above* (Oxford 1983); A. Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism. Problems of Interpretation* (Boulder, CO 1995); S. L. Lee, *The European Dictatorships 1919–45* (London and New York 2000), 235ff.

47. On corporatism, see R. Eatwell, 'Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 2 (1992), 161–94; N. O'Sullivan, *Fascism* (London 1983), 131–8.

48. For the Metaxas regime in Greece, see P. Linardatos, *I Tetarti Augoustou/The 4th of August*, 2nd edn, (Athens 1975); Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*; Payne, *History of Fascism*, 317–20; D. Close, 'Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–45', in Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives*, 200–17; Y. Andricopoulos, 'The Power Base of Greek Authoritarianism', in Larsen et al., eds, *Who Were the Fascists?*, 568–84.

49. For the significance of 'style' in the definition of fascism, see O'Sullivan, *Fascism* Ch. 2; S.G. Payne, 'The Concept Of Fascism', in Larsen et al., eds, *Who Were the Fascists?*, 14–25; J.J. Linz, 'Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in a Sociological Historical Perspective', Laquer, ed., in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* 29–39; R. De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA 1977), 11ff.

50. Kallis, 'The Regime-Model of Fascism', 84–9.

51. For an interesting discussion of the definitional problems of 'para-fascism', see Costa Pinto, op. cit., 1–41

52. See A. Thalheimer, 'On Fascism', an excerpt of which is translated in Beetham, *Marxists* 187–95; M. Kitchen, 'August Thalheimer's Theory of Fascism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 34 (1973), 67–78.

53. Kitchen, *Fascism*, 69ff.

54. T. Mason, 'The Primacy of Politics — Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany', in Woolf, ed., *Nature of Fascism*, 165–95.

55. Cf. Geoff Eley's notion of 'dual crisis' in his 'What Produces Fascism: Pre-Industrial Traditions or a Crisis of the Capitalist State?', in G. Eley, *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (London and New York 1992), 254–82.

56. For the ideology and political goals of the Austrian NSDAP, see B.F. Pauley, *Hitler and the Forgotten Nazis* (Chapel Hill, NC 1981); and Kitchen, *The Coming of Austrian Fascism*, esp. Ch. 3.

57. Kallis, 'Regime-Model of Fascism', 80ff.

58. For Preto's Syndicalists, see P.C. Schmitter, 'The Social Origins, Economic Bases and Political Imperatives of Authoritarian Rule in Portugal', in Larsen et al, eds. *Who Were the Fascists?*, 436–66; F. Rosas, 'O Estado Novo (1926–1974)', in J. Matosso, ed., *Historia de Portugal*, Vol. VII, Part 1: *Circulo de Leitores* (Lisbon 1994), and his 'Portugal e o Estado Novo (1930–1960)', in J. Serrao and A.H. Marques de Oliveira, eds, *Nova Historia de Portugal*, Vol. XII (Lisbon 1992).

59. T. Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC 1983); J.W. Falter, *Hitlers Wähler* (Munich 1991); and his 'The Social Bases of Political Cleavages in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933', in L. Jones and J. Retallack, eds, *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives* (Cambridge 1992); D. Mühlberger, *Hitler's Followers: Studies in the Sociology of the Nazi Movement* (London 1991).

60. On the importance of 'charismatic leadership' in inter-war fascism, see O'Sullivan, *Fascism*, Ch.5; I. Kershaw, *The Hitler-Myth. Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York 1989); P. Melograni, 'The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini's Italy', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 11 (1976), 221–37.

61. See, for example, the failure of the German conservative opposition in K.-J. Muller, 'The Structure and Nature of the National Conservative Opposition in Germany up to 1940', in H.W. Koch, ed., *Aspects of the Third Reich* (New York 1985); and the inertia of the royalist establishment in Italy in Lyttelton, *Seizure of Power*; D. Mack Smith, *Italy and its Monarchy* (New Haven, CT 1992).

62. Cf. Sternhell's similar analysis in the Introduction to the second edition of his *Ni droite ni gauche. Morphologie et historiographie du fascisme en France* (Paris 2000).

Aristotle Kallis is Lecturer in European Studies at the University of Lancaster. He is the author of *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany 1919–1945* (Routledge 2000) and editor of *The Fascist Reader* (Routledge 2003).