

Fascism and History

Fascism and History:

Chapters in Concept Formation

By

A. James Gregor

Including “Fascist Ideology:
A Scholar’s Bibliography”

By A. James Gregor and Antonio Messina

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This book is dedicated to a Japanese prisoner of war—whose name I never learned—who, at the end of the Second World War, first taught a young soldier something of the passion of revolutionary developmental nationalism.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This brief work is essentially a summary of about six decades of research, publication, lectures, conferences, debates, and interviews. It is intended to convey to both scholars and lay persons alike some of the understandings of which I have become convinced.

In order to allow for ease of communication, the text is not interrupted with standard documentation. Instead, at the end of each chapter there are recommended readings—sources which contain the requisite academic citations. As an addendum to the text, scholars are provided an extensive bibliography of the central subject matter.

As a research scholar, I have been singularly fortunate. I have been afforded opportunities by numerous granting agencies, including the Ford and Guggenheim foundations, that allowed me passage to research sites almost everywhere in the world. Their generosity allowed me to publish my research in something like thirty titles—by some of the foremost academic publishing houses in North America.

Almost immediately after the termination of the Second World War, I undertook my first research trip to Europe. I was moved by a soul-felt need to understand why my closest friend—then just eighteen years old—died on a beach in Normandy. I undertook to interview academics that had supported protagonists in the struggle that had destroyed Europe. I interviewed Werner Naumann who had succeeded Joseph Goebbels in the propaganda ministry of National Socialist Germany, as well as a general who had served as director of communications for the panzer forces that invaded the Soviet Union. In Vienna, I met Soviet troops for the first time. In Italy, I interviewed Giorgio Almirante, an official of Mussolini's government in Salò, and a major figure in the neofascist movement in post-war Italy. In Great Britain, I was fortunate to be able to spend some considerable time with A. Raven Thomson, the principal ideologue of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

Thomson was an accomplished scholar and our conversations were unencumbered by problems of language—while on the Continent my conversations in German and Italian left a great deal to be desired. Thomson's views confirmed the conviction upon which I had tentatively settled—that the German rationale for the recent war was vastly different from that of Fascist Italy. I urged Thomson to publish his judgment—having

no idea how gravely ill he was. He died but a short time later. He left me with a budget of questions that would occupy me for the remainder of my life.

In all my conversations with revolutionary intellectuals in Europe, Marxism seemed to somehow figure in their belief system. That compelled me to a long and intense study of the massive legacy left us by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For a time, I published in Marxist journals and served on their editorial boards. My most fundamental interests, however, were elsewhere.

Very early in my research career, I was given the opportunity to conduct research in the field. I worked in Central Australia and in South, and Southwest Africa. The latter activities allowed me to study something of the Afrikaner nation that, at the time, was attempting to secure its future. I could study the ideology of what was essentially a mass movement in defense of a nation in formation. While some of my colleagues were quick to identify it as a “fascist”¹ ideology—I was thoroughly unconvinced. My conclusions on the ideology of the Boer Nation became part of one of my earliest publications, *Contemporary Radical Ideologies*.

My research opportunities took me to the German Democratic Republic, where I could observe a remnant of Germany attempt to survive the devastation of the Second World War. The politics in such circumstances were distinctive—displaying not a memory of the doctrine of racial nationalism that had brought ruin upon both Germany and Europe. I found scant insight into the politics of developmental nationalism in the overt policies of Soviet occupied Europe. I was to learn a great deal more in the longitudinal study of Soviet politics, and its relationship with the revolutionary movements of the Far East.

In the early 1970s, I had the opportunity to spend considerable time in both the Philippines and Taiwan. The United States had serious security concerns in the region—and I was publishing analyses of the situation. In a relatively short period of time I found myself spending more and more of my research energy studying the developmental histories of the communities in the region.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, both Taiwan and the Philippines, indirectly or directly, had been inspired by ideologies of national economic growth and industrialization—but it was Taiwan, governed at the time by an authoritarian, single-party, charismatically led,

¹ When the term “fascism” or “fascist” appears in lower-case, it refers to *generic* “fascism” or “fascist.” When the term is capitalized, “Fascism” or “Fascist,” it refers to the historic phenomenon on the Italian peninsula.

political system, that captured my full attention. Over time, I had the privileged opportunity to study the character and application of policy. Over several years I witnessed the transformation of an agricultural economy into one of the more impressive industrial systems in post-war Asia. With my colleagues, I put together a monograph on all I had learned. Thereafter, all my research was riveted on considerations of revolutionary national development.

My visits to post-Maoist China simply confirmed what I had learned. Research visits to North Korea and post-Soviet Russia provided more insights and further confirmation. In all those places, to my dismay, colleagues and journalists insisted on the prevalence of fascism throughout. I could only attempt to point out the intricacies they chose to ignore. My work sought to demonstrate the complexity of the features of revolutionary national developmental systems—in all its variants. To speak of them simply as “fascist” obscures our vision and confuses our judgment. In the present intellectual environment, we are beset by such a volume of bias and prejudgment, that we see—to our grave disservice—fascists everywhere. The present text attempts a corrective.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be impossible to thank everyone who contributed in some measure to the making of this brief work. Over the years there have been so many that attempting to name them all would be otiose. Granted that, there are clearly some whose identification is required by an abiding sense of gratitude. H. Raven Thomson is among them. It was his insights that launched me on the research that has occupied my life. Professor Chang King-yuh, of the National Chengchi University in Taiwan, helped me understand the dynamics of a national developmental program. Curiously, Ferdinand Marcos, President of the Philippines, taught me something of how such a program can come to ruin.

I owe a great deal to Italian scholars, commencing with Renzo Di Felice, knowledgeable to a degree unmatched by others. He was both a help and an inspiration. Giuseppe Prezzolini and Giovanni Volpe confirmed my general understanding. The work of Ugo Spirito, and Ludovico Incisa di Camerana served as essential support. Hervé A. Cavallera, brought intellectual insight, and with his lovely wife, durable friendship. I am deeply indebted to all of them.

American scholars, led by notables such as Richard Pipes, Martin Malia, and Carl Linden, were essential in sustaining my efforts. German scholars, Karl-Gottfried Kindermann, Jürgen Domes, and Ernst Nolte, were models of scholarship performance. Japanese, Chinese, and Russian military officers were helpful in assisting me to understand the dynamics of security in an irredentist environment.

The University of California, Berkeley, provided an intellectual home for the greater part of my academic life. The company of committed scholars and bright students, in an institution that at that time was one of the best in the world, provided inspiration and a goad to productivity.

Finally, little would have been accomplished without the language skills, the intellectual insights, and computer wizardry of my wife, Maria Hsia Chang—an accomplished scholar in her own right. She contributed not only all of that—but Gabriel as well—a little boy who has made it all worthwhile.

A. James Gregor
Berkeley, California
November, 2018

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In empirical science, concepts categorize objects, events, or people that share discernible properties. Fashioning concepts is central to the general functioning of language—whether communication be ordinary or scientific. Assuming that concepts are correctly formulated, they reduce the complexity of reality and illuminate its obscurities. In contemporary social science, among the most frequently recurring concepts are “fascist” and “fascism.” Only their frequency in use distinguishes them. Other than their frequency—in principle—they are concepts formulated in standard fashion.

To say that concepts are formulated in standard fashion is not to tell us a great deal. What is standard in one science is not standard in another. Concept formation in both history and social science have features that are singular. To begin with—unlike the formal sciences—the concepts in the social sciences are generally considered and discussed in ordinary language. What that means is that they are the products of ordinary language employment. Unlike the formal concepts of the logico-mathematical sciences, the concepts of social science are rarely binary—either satisfying some criterial definition or not. Rather, they are more or less like one concept rather than another.

In Euclidean geometry, a triangle is a triangle and nothing else. Something identified as a triangle is not expected to shade off into any other geometric figure. The concepts of social science, on the other hand, most frequently are more or less one thing rather than another. Thus, the concept “democracy” can be meaningfully applied to a variety of political systems sharing a variable syndrome of properties—that may include voting for political representatives of preference in an environment allowing voluntary association, freedom of speech, and assembly. Clearly, there are cases where such freedoms are curtailed to one degree or another because of age or property restrictions, and declaring the system “democratic” involves a judgment. In such instances a credible definitive judgment may not be available. Unlike the triangles of Euclidean geometry, such a system is not simply a “democracy”; it may occupy

space along a continuum that stretches from “democracy” to “dictatorship.” It may be spoken of as a system that is not a “democracy,” but a qualified variant, shading off into one that was not. In such instances, a number of linguistic strategies may be used to plot the location of the subject system somewhere on the distribution between “democratic” and “nondemocratic.” In such instances, the process involves linguistic decision—a working definition of the concept, as well as empirical evidence of the subject system’s behaviors and its conformity to the proffered definition.

Once given the distinction between formal and informal science, there is nothing particularly unique about concept formation in the social sciences. Like children learning a language, social scientists and historians attempt to fit words to things—and in sorting through things, they shape both things and language. Analytically speaking, as children we are provided a “reality” that is simply a buzzing confusion of sensory inputs. As children, we are given words calculated to cover *classes* or *categories* of experience—intended to reduce the complexity and impenetrable confusion of experience. We are given functional categories that help identify things that promise helpful experience or, conversely, dangerous things that threaten injury. Such categories assist us in predicting futures and anticipating outcomes. As social scientists we follow remarkably similar procedures. We formulate conceptual language, based on our recognition of recurrent, observable properties that allow us to recognize the persistent features of our world and assist us in anticipating its future. Thus, the concept “democracy” is defined in terms of some recurrent properties that allow us to identify its presence. Having recognized its presence, we expect that its properties allow us to predict some of its future behaviors. Just as we learn to identify some persons as friendly or irascible by virtue of some observable properties—*recognitors*—we recognize the features of democracy or dictatorship and assume appropriate confirming conduct. All of this is problematic, and we are often wrong in our judgments. In such cases we fail, as social scientists, to effectively assess reality and predict outcomes.

Sophisticated or unsophisticated concept formation turns on our ability to recognize recognitors—recurrent and consistent observables that allow us to identify “things” in our complex environment. We navigate through the complexity of our world with conceptual categories that allow us to parse out of that physical or intellectual complexity the “things” that help us understand and control our circumstances. The process is certainly not simple nor does it always assure credible results. The history of social science has more than one instance of contrived concepts having no referents in reality.

“Orgone,” for example, a “life force” free flowing in the universe, was “discovered” by the psychoanalyst cum Marxist Wilhelm Reich. He used the concept to explain some of the central tenets of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. After the end of the Second World War, Reich began to construct “orgone accumulators”—lead lined receptacles designed to capture orgone and make it available to patients suffering any number of uncertain medical conditions—an activity that ultimately earned him a prison sentence for fraud. Interesting for our purposes is the fact that he was also responsible for contriving an equally useless conceptual characterization of fascism. In his book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich proposed a concept of fascism that was entirely devoid of merit. Equally interesting for our purposes is the fact that both his orgone accumulator and his book on fascism remain available for purchase.

The fact is that concepts in social science are relatively easy to coin and difficult to discredit. Such is the case with the concept “fascism.” There are perhaps as many concepts of fascism available as there are researchers—and each has its champions. Motivated by any number of considerations, passions or prejudices, each concept of fascism—no matter how unrealistic, bizarre or grotesque—has its advocates.

Since most social science efforts are informal, conducted in ordinary language, more qualitative than quantitative, one can only expect a significant lack of rigor, and a corresponding inability to confirm intersubjective claims. The social science concepts with which we are here concerned are basically historical and empirical in character. That is particularly important to appreciate in any assessment of a concept’s credibility. It means that any features we employ to identify fascism must have their source in actual history. If a concept is based on observable, stable, and recurrent features, it requires that the requisite features be found in history. As a consequence, responsible concept formation in social science shares the same difficulties faced by historians. The past is filled with such an abundance that the effort to correctly tell its story challenges the abilities of any scholar. If we were to attempt to recount one full day in one nation’s history we would exhaust all our resources. Historians must select among the available abundance of facts that have survived the winnowing of time in order to articulate a manageable and communicable narrative. For the social scientist, the effort to formulate an employable concept requires the selection of suitable recurrent features of some assumed constituent of a complex reality. As shall be argued; that is not an easy task.

The Requirements for Credible Concept Formation

Putting together a defensible concept of fascism minimally requires a significant knowledge of Fascism as an historical reality. Mussolini's Fascism ceased to exist as an extant regime after 1945. As a consequence, coming to know something of the historic reality requires immersing oneself in its surviving traces: government reports, newspaper accounts, published articles on doctrine and ideology by select intellectuals, preserved private correspondence, memoirs of important actors, together with whatever fragments of reality survive from a time that closed decades ago. It is not at all clear how many of the scholars that invoke and employ the concepts "fascist" and "fascism" have done very much of that. In many cases, it appears that concepts are simply borrowed from others in whom there is confidence for whatever reason. The borrowed concept may be popular at any given time. Why it is popular at that time is difficult to determine. It can be argued, for example, that during the first decade of the Fascist experience there were American intellectuals and commentators on political events who found something positive in Mussolini's regime. Again, it is difficult to determine why that was the case with any measure of confidence.

It could be argued, with some plausibility, that in the 1930s Fascist Italy embarked on conduct that provoked objections on the part of the established major powers. By that time, the regime had clearly established itself as a dictatorship, dominated by the leader of an exclusivist single party. That was followed by the invasion of Ethiopia, as well as the involvement in the civil war in Spain inextricably involving increasing rapprochement with Adolf Hitler's Germany. The decade concluded with Fascist Italy's forced annexation of Albania. To the foreign policy establishment in Great Britain and France, it seemed evident that Fascist Italy's intention was to gain increasing leverage in foreign policy at the cost of its democratic neighbors.

Control of Ethiopia and surrounding territories, for example, would give Fascist Italy access to the open waters outside the control of Great Britain at the Suez Canal. Alliance with Spain would allow Fascist Italy access to ports free of British control at Gibraltar. The control of Albania would afford Fascist Italy dominance over the entry into the Adriatic. All that, together with a military alliance with National Socialist Germany, and the construction of its own navy, would increase Fascist Italy's potential for destabilizing the entire Mediterranean basin. Together with evidence of the denial of civil and political rights to its own citizens, opposition increased among the educated publics of Great Britain, France,

as well as the United States. As the political environment became increasingly tense throughout the 1930s the concept “fascism” became increasingly affect laden. While the properties that together constituted the concept may have remained relatively constant, the negative affect that accompanied them increased dramatically.

By the time of the coming of the Second World War, Fascism was perceived as entirely devoid of positive qualities. Its security relationship with National Socialist Germany made matters worse. Shortly after the commencement of hostilities, it was somehow decided to identify all members of the anti-Anglo-French alliance (the Axis) as “fascists,” and the war itself as “the war against fascism.” Thereafter, any political community that allied itself with Germany and Italy was termed “fascist.” Membership in the alliance was definitive. Thus, by the time the war had reached its zenith, Vichy France, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, and even Japan, were identified as “fascist” powers. Similarly, Franco Spain—monarchical and conservative though it was—was listed as a “fascist power” because of its association with Germany and Italy. The concept “fascist” had dilated to the point where it no longer referred to a specific set of observable properties, but to a relationship with the principal Axis powers.

With so many candidates as “fascist,” requirements for entry into the class could not be very demanding. Ultimately, they were reduced to *nationalism*, *dictatorship*, and perhaps *anti-Semitism*. While that satisfied the minimum logical requirements for using the concept “fascism,” it seriously diminished its cognitive utility. Many researchers, including Renzo Di Felice, deplored the absence of rigor that followed the hollowing out of the concept.

The net result of that kind of politically motivated concept reformulation was to leave post-World War Two researchers with a free-floating, negative concept identified as “fascist.” It could be applied anywhere where *nationalism*, *dictatorship*, or *anti-Semitism* might be found. Ultimately, the concept could be applied to any political system displaying nationalistic enthusiasm, together with any sort of ethnic discrimination, or civil or human rights violations. As the number of properties required for a system to be identified as “fascist” diminished, the number of candidate “fascisms” grew exponentially. “Fascisms” could be found virtually every-, and anywhere.

In that privative conceptual environment, Ralph Lentz could enquire whether or not Jesus Christ was a “fascist.” After all, Jesus was an authoritarian—insisting that things could only be accomplished through him and in obedience to his enjoinders. And there was the suggestion of

anti-Semitism in his intimation that Satan might be father to the Jews. The insistence on the part of Jesus that his followers render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's seems to provide the political community with a kind of authority one might not have otherwise expected. Jesus' explicit assertion that he had not come to bring peace, but a sword` seems more than a casual call to violence.

As a consequence of such considerations, the Atheist Forum, in all seriousness, could query whether Christianity, in fact, was a "fascist religion." After all, believing Christians discriminate against those who do not believe, condemning them to perdition. Christians believe that all homosexuals, lesbians, and those making the transition from one gender to another, are sinners—to be condemned. Chris Hedges warns that "Christian fascists" might well threaten American democracy—and Thomas Di Lorenzo has found fascism in the works of Pope Francis and Mother Theresa.

Of course, it does not stop there. Many academics have found fascism in the activities of the American Founding Fathers. Were they not tainted with the racial sentiments associated with "White privilege?" Did they not enslave people of color? Did they not deny various and sundry ethnicities their civil and human rights? Did they not keep Black Americans enslaved through force and violence? Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton... all fascists.

The current concept "fascism" is so loosely jointed and so lacking in discriminative power, that it has produced curiosities of a most arresting sort. In one recent instance, Dinesh D'Souza, a serious and competent scholar, discovers fascism virtually everywhere in American history—and its prime agent has been the Democratic Party. In his volume, *The Big Lie*, he documents the role of the Democratic Party in supporting the "ethnic cleansing" of indigenous Americans, maintaining racial segregation in every civilian and military institution, as well as legislating discriminatory policies well into the 1960s.

The fact is that many scholars have discovered that there is fascism not only among those on the Right. They have discovered a fascism on the Left. Hugh Thomas, Marc Falcoff, Hermino Portel-Vila, and Jim Guirard, for example, see more "fascism" in Castro's Cuba than anything else—and Castro was only one of an ill-defined class of "Left fascists."

Given all this, what is one to make of the anti-White enmity that finds expression among Black nationalists both in Africa and the United States? Was African Socialism really socialism?—and what of nationalistic, authoritarian, and anti-Semitic Arab Socialism? There were, and are, many who saw "fascism" in the political regimes of Gamal Abdel Nasser,

Muammar Gaddafi, and Bashar Assad. Over the years and at various times, scholars have unearthed fascism in China, Japan, North Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Austria, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo, and Argentina. Selection was governed entirely by how one defined the concept “fascism.”

It seems clear that there is reason to be dissatisfied with the current porous concept of “fascism.” As remedy, some have recently suggested that the concept “fascism” be more correctly understood to cover only those movements and regimes that are *ultra-nationalistic* and *palingenetic*—animated by fevered national sentiment and seeking the nation’s rehabilitative rebirth. Other than that, we are urged to conceive generic fascism as somehow possessed of the “protean faculty to generate myriad permutations”—to “radically change its ideological expressions and its organizational forms.” We are informed that contemporary fascism “self-consciously” avoids adumbrating Fascist or National Socialist themes. According to this notion, fascism is like “slime mold”—it can radically alter its appearance—and yet somehow remain what it is.

We are assured that all this will help us identify fascism wherever and whenever it makes its appearance. In order to illustrate its utility, fascism was discovered in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. It was found, as well, in the renderings of “proletarian rock” music and in the politics of numberless political groupuscules. It is found in the history of almost all nations and thrives in a plethora of places in the contemporary world. All that seems to be required in order to find fascism is evidence of “ultranationalism,” racism, and an expressed desire for national “rebirth” or rehabilitation. Neither nationalism, hypernationalism, nor racism are given operational or lexical definition. How one might measure any of these properties is not clear. Nor is it made explicit how much “racism,” however defined, must be in evidence to qualify the system as fascist. When the crowds at rallies in Castro’s Cuba shout “the fatherland or death!” is that evidence of ultranationalism? Or when the communist Cambodian Khmer Rouge spoke of restoring the lost empire of the Khmers, was that palingenetic? That the use of this sort of conceptualization allows one to discover fascism almost anywhere is not a recommendation.

The fact is that the contemporary use of the concept “fascism” leaves a great deal to be desired. Rather than as a research concept, its most frequent use is as a very effective general term of abuse. Its very lack of specificity in definition, and its ability to immediately arouse intense negative emotion, qualify the concept as a powerful tool in public debate.

That will probably remain true long after the very name of Benito Mussolini is forgotten.

There are concepts of fascism—rooted in the post-modernist psychology of the Second World War—that have evolved into variants that make no distinction between Fascism and National Socialism, or between Fascism and “Right-wing” political convictions. Within that welter there are conceptions that conform to the methodological procedures recommended by standard, empirical social science. Works in this latter tradition are notable in that they invariably distinguish Mussolini’s Fascism from Hitler’s National Socialism. Moreover, the defining properties of the concept are numerous, sharply reducing the possible number of referents. Given the number of defining traits in connected combination, one rarely finds the concept applied to works of art or individual persons. The scope of application is reduced by virtue of the logic of the procedures chosen to form the concept. An attempt will be made here to follow the formation of a concept of “fascism,” historically grounded, employed by some specialists. Once so characterized, an effort will be made to determine its cognitive uses in more general applicability.

Fascism

Fascism, as a specific historic regime, was born through the efforts of Benito Mussolini, and ceased to exist with his passing. Thereafter fascism has existed only as a product of the research reflections of modern scholars. However far removed in time and circumstances today’s conception of fascism may be, its foundation in reality is nonetheless and necessarily found in the history of the original regime. After about a century of research, we can be reasonably confident that we know its essentials

We know, for example, that the original Fascism was not simply the *ad hoc* product of circumstance. It was preceded by years of reflection by those who were to assume the responsibilities of leadership. Mussolini, and many who were to provide leadership for the movement, had been active Marxists for years before the Fascist revolution. Mussolini, himself, had been an acknowledged Marxist intellectual and Socialist Party leader for years before the events that brought him to power.

The role played by theoretical Marxism in the rise of Fascism is often neglected in any discussion of its rise. More often than not Fascism, and those who led it, are portrayed as atheoretical, thoughtless, and opportunistic. Less than true, such notions conceal much of the intrinsic logic of the system. The truth is that Mussolini, and most of those with

whom he collaborated, most intimately addressed the problems of Italy through the lens of theoretical Marxism. For most of Mussolini's young manhood he interacted with the intellectuals of the revolutionary syndicalist movement. Convinced Marxists, influenced by the thought of Georges Sorel, they delivered themselves of theoretical literature that was both learned and searching. They were radicals who advocated an intensified class war—a specialized *group conflict*. Because class warfare was the critical center of their revolutionary obligations, they were, by entailment, opponents of the political state—and renounced the military as paid janissaries of their class enemies. For them, national enthusiasm was an irrational sentiment evoked by the possessing class for its own purposes. In the years before the Great War of 1914-1918, Mussolini, as a young Marxist radical, shared all such opinions. There was one opinion he did not share.

Some of the intellectual leaders of revolutionary syndicalism called attention to a critical part of Marxist theory. They reminded the revolutionaries of the peninsula that if Italy aspired to be the site of a Marxist revolution, it would have to be *economically developed*. The founders of Marxism had consistently taught that socialism could not come to a community that was economically underdeveloped. Innocent of a productive capability to satisfy all the needs of a population, revolution in an economically impoverished environment would simply replace one set of oppressors for another. Limited production would necessarily result in the selective satisfaction of needs—the satisfaction of some at the expense of others. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had consistently argued that the promised liberation of socialism could only come when revolution took place in a fully developed industrial economy.

When the Great War broke over Europe in the fall of 1914, some of the most important syndicalists argued that the war might force Italians to develop their basically agricultural economy into one that was industrial—suitable for socialism. Because of their understanding of Marxist theory, they became advocates for war—group conflict involving *nations* as protagonists—and as a consequence modified their theoretical position with respect to the state, the military, class warfare, and nationalism. With the change in the nature of the group conflict they anticipated, they became advocates of a national syndicalism—with the *nation* serving as the vehicle of *rapid industrialization*—with the *state* as its guarantor. In such circumstances they saw class warfare as dysfunctional.

Mussolini was only gradually won over to syndicalist convictions. When he sided with the interventionists, he was expelled from the Socialist Party and removed as editor of the Party journal. Even though

every socialist party in Europe had opted to stand with its respective nation in the war, the Italian Socialist Party chose to consider supporting the war an actionable betrayal of socialism.

Having forfeit his leadership position in the Party, Mussolini went on to found his own newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*—which, in the course of time, he ceased to identify as a “socialist journal.” More in conformity with his altered convictions, he chose to refer to it as a “Soldiers’ and Producers’” publication. He went on to serve seventeen months in combat, to return home gravely wounded by the explosion of a mortar during a training exercise.

Back in Milan, Mussolini carefully followed events. He denounced the activities of Lenin, primarily because Lenin chose to withdraw Russia from the war. With the November revolution Russia effectively capitulated to German arms. The Bolsheviks fostered desertion and disobedience in the ranks of the badly mauled Imperial armies. The fact that the Russian economy further collapsed following the revolution and the civil war that ensued, convinced Mussolini to totally repudiate Bolshevism. Lenin had not only betrayed the anti-German coalition, he had attempted to make revolution in an environment totally devoid of the prerequisites that Marx and Engels had insisted were non-substitutable. Russia had none of the economic properties that Marx and Engels had insisted were necessary for socialism. For Mussolini, Lenin was neither a Marxist nor was his revolution defensible. Mussolini was confident in his judgment. He was contemplating his own revolution.

In March 1919, Mussolini called together all those who had evinced interest in the notions that had filled the columns of *Il Popolo d'Italia*. Gathered in the Piazza San Sepolcro were prominent national syndicalists, representatives of veteran groups, Futurists—the lyricists of industrialization—and members of the developmental nationalist community. They were all held together by convictions that had matured out of the revolutionary reflections of the antecedent years. Those convictions found expression in two *myths* that Mussolini was convinced gave expression to their collective beliefs: the myth of the *nation*, and that of *production*. It was the first summary statement of Fascism’s *revolutionary developmental nationalism*.

The audience at the founding meeting of Fascism understood the meaning and the role of myths in the mobilization for revolution. They were all familiar with the works of Georges Sorel. In those works, a myth was understood to be a conception of an anticipated future for which human beings are prepared to labor and sacrifice. It is not an exclusively cognitive product, neither an empirical truth nor a prediction. It is more a

sentiment that engages the passions and the will. For syndicalists, the myth was a mobilizing instrument. Gustave Le Bon had spoken of something like that in his study of crowd psychology, *Psychologie des foules*. Several syndicalists had written their own studies of group psychology—so most of Mussolini's audience understood perfectly well what he intended to communicate.

In the years that followed, Mussolini used those select themes in his speeches and writings. The theme of the nation appealed to the hundreds of thousands of veterans who had fought and witnessed the death of comrades who had made the final sacrifice for the fatherland. Those same veterans saw the possibility of a better life in the promised industrialization of their country. The owners of land and the proprietors of businesses and productive plant also anticipated benefits in the myths of Fascism.

At the same time organized socialism in Italy sought to thwart the goals Fascism had chosen. They chose to harass and insult returning veterans. On occasion, there were assaults. The authorities, in the effort to quell the growing violence, advised veterans not to wear their uniforms or their military medals in public. Soldiers in uniform were denied the use of public transportation by socialist transportation workers. Group conflict had taken on special properties.

Socialist organizers were mobilizing agricultural day workers in the north to agitate for land redistribution. Peasants, who had recently purchased land as an opportunity result of the high prices paid during the war for farm produce, suddenly found themselves the targets of socialist agitation. They began to search for collateral support. The large land owners were equally threatened—making common cause with those new owners threatened by organized socialists.

Both Fascists and independent veteran groups seized the occasion. Veterans spontaneously came together in self-defense—opposing socialist harassment. The agricultural community recognized the opportunity for mutual defense. To defend the security of their homes and crops they offered financial support to the emerging veteran “squads.” The Fascists, aligned with the veteran community, chose to represent the nation in an active defense against Bolshevism. In principle, Fascists had acknowledged the *role of group violence* in politics. Following the rationale of Georges Sorel, they conceived violence calling forth the noblest qualities among humans. To face violence, one must be secure in conviction, willingly obedient, and prepared for personal sacrifice.

For Fascists, circumstances dictated the proper targets of their violence. To defend the nation, socialism had to be suppressed. In the name of the nation, fascists assumed the obligation of organizing the anti-

socialist resistance—providing leadership, communication, and security assessments. The national security forces, systematically denounced by the socialists as lackeys of the possessing class, extended assistance to the growing, and increasingly militant, anti-socialist paramilitary squads. In-service troops, nationalist in sentiment, and proud of their performance in the recent war, were equally prepared to extend support to the anti-socialist reaction.

In the subsequent civil strife, the Fascist forces enjoyed every advantage. They were combat trained, increasingly well financed, and protected by the established security forces. While the savage violence cost each side about an equal number of casualties, the Fascists managed to totally destroy the socialist organizational and communications infrastructure. The local municipalities and productive plants, occupied by the “Red Guards” of the radical “Bolshevik” faction of Italian socialism, were retaken. Three years after its founding, there was no force remaining on the Italian peninsula that could offer any resistance to Fascism. By the fall of 1922 Mussolini was prepared to demand political control of the nation. In October, 1922, King Victor Emmanuel invited the leader of Fascism to form a government.

Fascism came to power with an anti-socialist coalition. While Fascism had its own economic theoreticians, the first phase of its rule was undertaken by traditionalists. Systematic efforts were made to reduce the national debt, strikes and employer lock-outs were proscribed, whatever Fascists considered obstructive of production and commerce were dismantled, and public order essentially restored. Control, however, was not complete—and around the time Fascism had been in power three years—Fascist thugs killed a prominent anti-Fascist parliamentarian.

The immediate consequence was an unravelling of the coalition with which Fascism had ruled. It appeared that the government would be forced to resign. Mussolini, however, decided otherwise, and in the beginning of 1925 announced that Fascism, eschewing all compromise, would assume all power. Fascism gave full expression to its long-standing revolutionary intent.

Italy became Fascist Italy. Political elections were to be controlled. Opposition was to be significantly curtailed until Italy became essentially *a one party state*. Fascist ideologues were to argue that Italy could hardly afford the cost of elections at a time when the nation faced critical responsibilities of growth and development. The argument was made that the nation need not suffer such expensive political theater. It was held, with increasing insistence, that the *Leader (Duce)* of Fascism, was a *charismatic* figure of preternatural abilities. He was understood to render

judgments that were invariably correct (“Mussolini ha sempre ragione”). In such circumstances, political elections were superfluous. Ultimately, Fascist doctrinaires saw in the Party all the qualities of a *church*—an *ecclesia*—and churches hardly required public elections. Fascism was acknowledged to be a *political religion*.

None of this was either arbitrary or accidental. One of Fascism’s principal imperatives was rapid economic growth and industrial development. Given the nation’s lack of finances, human capital, and resources, such growth and development would require masses that were faithful, dedicated, obedient, and sacrificial—prepared to labor for spiritual rather than material satisfaction. The system was typified by gratifying symbolic behaviors. There were collective rituals celebrating the sacrifice and death of heroes. There were uniforms—everywhere there were uniforms—and there were medals, salutes, marches, and songs—cost efficient activities calculated to generate enthusiasm and dedication to service.

By the first years of the 1930s, Fascism provided a fully articulated ideology. *The Doctrine of Fascism* was published over Mussolini’s signature. Actually, the philosophic portion was written by Giovanni Gentile—and approved by Mussolini. Mussolini penned the portion devoted to social and political doctrine, tracing the various influences that had shaped Fascist convictions.

It was in the mid-1930s that Fascism began to systematically pursue its foreign policy goals. By that time, the regime had laid the foundations of technologically advanced industry. Industrial development had proceeded at an impressive pace. Angus Maddison’s comparative study of *Economic Growth in the West* recognizes Fascist productive performance during the 1920s and early 1930s as among the most robust in Europe. The air force was modernized and expanded. Long distance flights had been undertaken that impressed the world. Combat vessels for the navy had been launched and commissioned. Service divisions of the military had been expanded and more fully equipped. It was a time when Fascist Italy had begun to move aggressively in Africa and in Spain.

In retrospect, it seems clear that Mussolini did not expect the colonial powers to object to his war in Ethiopia. At the time, the imperial nations controlled virtually the entire globe. Ethiopia was about the only region of Africa not divided among the imperialist powers. Mussolini believed that as a late-comer to imperialism he would be allowed to secure Ethiopia, a region considered rich in industrial resources.

Fascist Italy lacked the resources necessary for protracted self-sustained growth. The Fascists spoke of a “vital space (*spazio vitale*)”

necessary to sustain the rapid increments of production that were central to their revolutionary program. It was held that Ethiopia would supply the required resources and would serve as the nation's "vital space." More than that, Ethiopia would provide potential access to the waters outside the control of Great Britain.

The conquest of Ethiopia was swift and decisive. What was unexpected was the wrath of the League of Nations—which sanctioned Fascist Italy for aggression. The new political regime in Germany—Hitler's National Socialism—supported Mussolini. Mussolini averred that he would remain forever grateful.

Hitler clearly perceived Fascist Italy as a potential ally in his plans for Europe. He saw the democratic powers as enemies and Fascist Italy as an off-set. Fascist Italy, rebuffed and sanctioned by the major colonialist powers, became increasingly susceptible to Hitler's blandishments. The collaboration in the civil war in Spain offered yet another occasion for rapprochement.

Until this period Mussolini had very grave reservations concerning Hitler. He mocked racism as a singular piece of political foolishness. In fact, he had sought to work with Britain and France to stabilize Europe when it appeared that Germany might seek redress for real or fancied past grievances. By the middle years of the 1930s that notion was abandoned—and National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy proceeded to draw closer together. In 1936, Germany and Japan concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact, an anti-Soviet agreement that committed the signatories to assist each other in the event of a conflict with Moscow. Italy entered into the agreement in 1937.

In that same year Mussolini made a state visit to National Socialist Germany. Hitler orchestrated his military forces in a demonstration of force that overwhelmed his visitor. Mussolini came away from his state visit convinced that Hitler's Germany was destined to be the arbiter of Europe's future. Against the judgment of many of his colleagues, Mussolini was prepared to commit Italy's future to that of the Third Reich. He resigned himself to Germany's occupation of Austria—bringing Germany to Italy's doorstep in the Alps.

In 1939, entering into the Pact of Steele, Mussolini consigned Italy's future to that of Hitler's Reich. Italy had committed itself to soldier with the troops of the Third Reich. On the first day of September of that year German troops crossed the border into Poland precipitating what would be the most destructive war in human history. Hitler had not given Mussolini any warning. Italy learned of the invasion at the same time as London and Paris.

Mussolini quickly informed Hitler that Italy could not immediately honor its treaty commitments. Although the nation had made substantial gains in industrial development and sophistication, it still did not have logistical or communication capabilities, armor or artillery, suitable or sufficient to engage in a modern conflict. Its aircraft were underpowered and under-gunned. Its troops lacked automatic weapons and transport. Its naval vessels, although modern and efficient, lacked air cover in combat, allowing them but scant survival capabilities. Mussolini spoke of years before Fascist Italy would be prepared to enter into a major war with an industrialized opponent.

Hitler advised Mussolini to simply keep Italy neutral. The very presence of Fascist Italy would tie down British and French forces in the Mediterranean—leaving German forces free to neutralize Poland. Mussolini did what Hitler suggested, and Hitler did what he intended. The victory over Poland was quick and certain. Germany had attacked from the West and the Soviet Union had invaded from the East. In order to protect his flanks, Hitler had unexpectedly entered in a non-aggression pact with Stalin's Soviet Union—the Anti-Comintern pact notwithstanding. The British and French, having declared war on Germany, were helpless to intervene in any effective fashion.

Thereafter, Hitler moved his forces West, to the Franco-German border. In May 1940, German troops crossed the frontier into France and engaged the French military and the English expeditionary force. Under the German armored assault, the allied forces were forced back. In June, Fascist Italy declared war against the allied powers. With that, Fascist Italy entered into its final catastrophic descent.

Together with military defeat, its alliance with National Socialist Germany was to corrupt its political rationale.

In a long interview with Emil Ludwig in 1932, Mussolini confidently asserted that the notion that biological race was a determinative factor in history was entirely unpersuasive. In the *Colloqui con Mussolini*, he had reported that he had held that view all his political life. As a socialist organizer in Trentino, he had written extensively on the claim that race was a determinant in human history. In preparing his work he had reviewed the claims of all the principal “racial scientists” of the period—ranging from Arthur de Gobineau to Ludwig Woltmann and H. S. Chamberlain—and found their works entirely unsupported by empirical evidence. Continuing with his review of his personal convictions, Mussolini told Ludwig that anti-Semitism played no role in Fascism—and was convinced that it never would. He referred to Italian history and claimed that anti-Semitism had never been part of Italian life. He pointed

to the fact that contemporary Italian Jews discharged responsibilities in the Fascist Party, in its armed forces, in its judiciary, and throughout the educational establishment.

As Fascism and National Socialism began to draw closer together during the mid-1930s, in terms of their security concerns, all of that was to change. The various meetings between Fascist and National Socialist authorities were complicated by the presence of Jews who were serving in the most responsible positions in the Fascist organizations. The Germans were reluctant to discuss sensitive material in the presence of persons they did not trust. The alternatives were clear. If the Fascists sought to sustain and augment their security and political relations with Hitler's Germany they would have to address the "Jewish question." And that was what Mussolini chose to do. Fascist Italy's first anti-Semitic legislation followed.

By 1938, Fascism was prepared to treat Italian Jews as "enemy aliens"—citing the "declaration of war" issued by international Jewish organizations. The discrimination was justified by security interests—not by appeals to "biology" as was the case in National Socialist Germany. The rationale for the legislation suggested that the discrimination would cease with the end of hostilities. Jews who had served in the nation's armed services, or who had distinguished themselves in public service, were not made subject to the new legislation—but, in general, Jews lost their positions as educators, doctors, and in the financial industries. They were allowed to teach only Jews and serve only Jews. The consequences for the entire Jewish community were devastating.

The rationale for the new orientation appeared in a document entitled *The Manifesto of Fascist Racism*. It was a confusing document in that it appealed to a long history of Fascist pronouncements on an ill-defined notion of "race"—with the term *razza* (race) treated as the equivalent of *stirpe* (stock or descent), sometimes of *popolo* (people), and even *nazione* (nation). While the document spoke of "major" and "minor" races—the distinction referred to the numbers involved and the area of distribution. It was specifically denied that there were "superior" and/or "inferior" races. Italians were spoken of as "Aryans," as they had been since the first anthropological texts appeared at the beginning of the century. The term had linguistic reference—identifying "Aryans" as speakers of an Indoeuropean language—giving the document, it was argued, a "European orientation."

However the *Manifesto* was interpreted, it became the basis of anti-Semitic policies. Those policies did not include genocidal intent. Fascists did not call for the execution of Jews simply for being Jews. In fact,