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CHAPTER 29

# FASCISM AND RACISM

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## INTRODUCTION

THE first self-styled fascist movement, the *Fasci di combattimento*, was founded in 1919 by Benito Mussolini and an eclectic group of radical nationalists, who sought to defeat the divisive left and liberals at home and win new empire for Italy abroad. The movement took its name from the word *fasci*, meaning 'union', and adopted as its symbol the imperial Roman *fasces*, denoting authority. By the early 1920s the movement had metamorphosed into the National Fascist Party (PNF), which quickly gathered mass support. By the late 1920s this was the only legal party in a self-proclaimed 'totalitarian' state, headed by Mussolini as 'Il Duce'.[1]

Whilst early historiographical debates raged about the relative importance of agency and structure in the origins and development of fascism, few questioned that interwar Europe witnessed the birth of a broad family of such movements, and to a lesser extent regimes. The most important of these was the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP), which came to power in 1933 with Adolf Hitler as its Führer. This quickly established a more pervasive and ultimately radical dictatorship than Mussolini was ever to lead.[2]

However, following an explosion of research on these and other putative fascisms (relatively few outside Italy termed themselves 'fascist'), many historians came to stress difference rather than genetic similarity. In particular, by the 1970s the Nazi regime came to be widely seen as 'without precedent or parallel' on account of its biological racism, which culminated in barbaric expansionism into Slavic states and the Holocaust.[3]

During the 1990s a 'cultural turn' in historiography portrayed 'generic fascism' as a distinctive form of revolutionary nationalist ideology, a conceptualization that allowed Nazism to be reinterred in the fascist Pantheon. This was commonly linked to the claim that fascism was a political religion, which helps to offer insights into its support and

especially its fanaticism.[4] However, this one-sided emphasis glosses over the major economic dimension to the Third Way (between capitalism and socialism) ideology and propaganda of fascism, as well as the role of economic motives in the Holocaust.[5]

Moreover, in the new millennium many historians continue to claim that Nazi racism made it *sui generis*.[6] Whilst it is important not to understate the specificities of fascism, more perceptively the growing transnational school of history has pointed to the genocidal similarities between modern colonialism more generally. Indeed, a much-neglected aspect of fascist thought is the impact of the expansion of other great powers.

In order to probe more deeply into the nature of generic fascism, and especially its relationship with racism, this chapter is divided into three main sections. The first two deal with the paradigmatic cases of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. The third section more briefly considers two other forms. In France, which had witnessed notable manifestations of political anti-Semitism prior to 1914, fascist groups like the Faisceau and Parti Populaire Français (PPF) tended to focus on socioeconomic radicalism, although they were far from immune to stereotyping Jews and accepted the right to rule over lesser colonial peoples. In Romania, anti-Semitic traditions ran even deeper and Jew-baiting was a central theme in by far the most important fascist group, the Iron Guard, though socioeconomic issues also featured in its campaigns.

Together, these case studies demonstrate that racism was central to all forms of fascism. However, there were different views among fascists about nation and the more elusive concept of race. Moreover, emphasizing their centrality to fascist ideology and practice does not necessarily mean that overt racism was always central to propaganda, let alone to understanding mass support.

## Italian Fascism

Mussolini was a prominent socialist and opponent of colonial expansion prior to 1914. But even before his conversion to the cause of Italy's entry into the First World War (May 1915) it is possible to discern crucial developments that led to apostasy. Although different roads led individuals to Fascism, including opportunism after it came to power, Mussolini's journey is especially instructive as he was its leader from its birth to final death throes.

Arguably the main constant in Mussolini's thinking was his conviction that violence was necessary to shape history. However, he was not the mindless activist implied by the stereotypical early Fascist slogan, 'I don't care a damn', which was borrowed from First World War elite shock troops (*arditi*). Although he came from a relatively poor background, Mussolini read widely, and was clearly influenced by both contemporary ideas and political developments.

Another enduring belief concerned the importance of dynamic leadership, organization, and propaganda. Well before 1914 Mussolini was aware of the writings of the

French crowd psychologist Gustave le Bon and the German elite theorist Robert Michels, who was also an early student of the power of charismatic leadership.[7] Mussolini was further greatly influenced by aspects of the growing socialist movement, especially its tendency towards hagiographical worship of leaders, and emotive public ceremonies and marches.

However, the repression of strike waves during 1912–14 led Mussolini to question whether the socialist movement could muster the force to seize power. Whilst similar considerations led some socialists to turn to reformism rather than revolution, they helped push Mussolini towards the belief that nationalism offered a better road to change. By 1919 he was developing a dual strategy to achieve power. This was based upon the formation of a disciplined movement to confront the growing left whilst simultaneously fighting elections, thereby opening up the prospect of an alliance of convenience with the weakly organized liberal Establishment parties and the forces of law and order.

Experience of fighting in the First World War led Mussolini to seek a paramilitary 'trenchocracy', a vanguard of young men who had served courageously in the trenches. This new Blackshirt elite was envisaged not simply as a paramilitary force, but also as the prototype of a 'new man', a priesthood actively committed to collective ideals rather than decadent and self-interested bourgeois ones. However, whilst Mussolini rejected the liberal view of 'economic man', he did not see Fascism as an emotional form of secular religion. Rather, at the heart of Fascism's strategy was a syncretism that sought to combine aspects of religious style with more concrete economic and strategic goals.[8]

Georges Sorel, the French philosopher and theorist, whom Mussolini acknowledged as a major influence, is typically portrayed in terms of his views about mobilizing myths. However, this prophet of the revolutionary general strike was unusual among socialists in his stress on productivism, which became a key element of Mussolini's thought following his conversion to nationalism. Similarly, several leading Fascist theorists, such as the former syndicalist Sergio Panunzio, sought to develop a Third Way between capitalism and socialism that would create prosperity and underpin social unity.

Economic growth was also vital to underpin Fascist aspirations for Italy to become a Great Power. Although Mussolini was a bitter critic of the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911, there was already a national and geopolitical dimension to his thought. While living in the Trentino, northern Italy, he experienced what he saw as Germanic racial arrogance and contempt for Latins. However, Mussolini also came into contact there with Pan-Germanist thought, which reinforced his belief that all Italians should be united within one state. This included not only those in the Alto Adige (South Tyrol) under Austrian rule, but also Italians who were scattered along the eastern Adriatic in what was to become Yugoslavia after 1919.

Mussolini was further influenced by the radical wing of the Italian Nationalist Association (ANI), which held that the Italian nation still needed to be born. In this vein, the writer and later Fascist intellectual Giovanni Papini wrote in 1914: 'Italy of 1860 had been shit dragged kicking and screaming towards unification by a daring

minority, and shit it remains.' An important influence on these nationalists was the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, which led to a quest for the equivalent of the warrior *Bushido* ethic in order to produce a nation capable of fighting modern war by overcoming bourgeois 'decadence'. Just as Japanese nationalists believed they had a right to expansion in Southeast Asia, Italian nationalists looked mainly to North Africa as Italy's rightful 'place in the sun'.[9]

Mussolini wrote in the preamble to the 1921 Fascist programme that 'The nation is . . . the supreme synthesis of all the material and immaterial values of the racial stock'. Although at times there was notable slippage in Mussolini's usage of 'race' (*razza*) and 'nation' (*nazione*), he basically held that Italian stock (*stirpe*) was based on a mixture stemming from historic expansion rather than a single race. Indeed, in 1932 he specifically rejected the existence of 'biologically pure races'. However, Mussolini was also influenced by fashionable early twentieth-century eugenic views, which led to a quest to boost domestic birth rates as part of the preparation for war (though this Battle for Births was also influenced by a desire to keep women within the home).[10] Eugenicism further encouraged fears about miscegenation abroad, which were sharpened after the brutal Italian suppression of opposition in Libya (1931) and the conquest of Abyssinia (1935–6).

In 1912 Italy annexed Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, which was to become Libya, in a renewed effort to join the 'scramble for Africa' that had been started thirty years before by Britain, France, and Germany. Initially Italian forces controlled little more than a few beachheads and townships. After Fascism came to power a ruthless war was waged against those who resisted Italian rule, involving tactics such as poisoning wells and herding civilians into camps. By 1931, opposition had been broken, leaving large numbers dead. However, the governor general, Italo Balbo, subsequently promised equal rights for native peoples. There was new investment and medical facilities that helped the native peoples. Mussolini even adopted the title 'Protector of Islam' and in a typically flamboyant gesture arranged for a jewel-encrusted 'Sword of Islam' to be presented to him in the Libyan capital during 1937.

Nevertheless, what became known as Italy's 'Fourth Shore' was essentially run in the interest of Italians. 'Unproductive' land was seized from the nomadic Bedouin to give to new immigrants, who came largely from Italy's poorer regions, and extensive olive groves were planted for export. The vast majority of investment was spent on infrastructure to help these immigrants. Similarly, after the conquest of Abyssinia in 1935–6, which involved tactics such as the use of poison gas, there was an attempt to promote Islamic institutions. However, these policies were mainly motivated by a desire to court Muslim opinion and destabilize British and French interests in Africa and the Middle East, and were secondary to the attempt to exploit Abyssinia for Italian ends.

Just before achieving victory in Abyssinia there had been tensions between Italy and Germany, including fears about German plans to incorporate Austria into a Greater Reich and wider ambitions in the Balkans that conflicted with Italian aspirations to be the dominant power in this region. However, British and French opposition to the

Abyssinian war had the effect of pushing the two fascist states closer together. So too did joining the German-Japanese anti-Commintern Pact in 1937. Shortly before, Mussolini had made his first state visit to Germany. In 1938 Hitler was feted in Rome, following Italian acceptance of the *Anschluss* with Austria in March.

A new line on race that was adopted during 1938 has often been seen as proof of increasing Nazi influence over Fascism.[11] This included the publication of a *Manifesto of Racial Scientists*, a *Charter of Race*, and the launch of *La difesa della razza*. The first cover of this glossy journal contrasted the faces of a Roman with a Jew and black African (the former set apart by a descending sword blow). New laws banned Jews from many positions; marriages with true Italians were forbidden; Jewish property was liable to confiscation.[12]

The new policy was not the complete break with Mussolini's past that some have claimed. Although he had for many years enjoyed a Jewish mistress, even before 1914 Mussolini had been concerned about Jewish power, a fear heightened by his belief following the imposition of sanctions after the Abyssinian invasion that world Jewry was at the heart of 'anti-fascism' and conspiring against Italy as well as Germany. Nevertheless, whilst a small number of leading Fascists like Roberto Farinacci openly expressed strongly anti-Semitic views from the early days, most did not. Indeed, relatively large numbers of Italy's 40,000–50,000 Jews joined the Fascist Party.[13]

An important aspect of this shift in racial discourse is related to the wider development of the Fascist Party, not least the way in which in spite of the cult of 'Il Duce', Mussolini's role was in many ways more that of a power broker than charismatic visionary. As part of his quest to achieve, and then consolidate, power during the 1920s, he had sought to weaken radical elements in the party. The formal incorporation of the Nationalist Association into the PNF, together with the entry of opportunists, also strengthened conservative forces on the domestic front, especially as social Catholic ideas displaced syndicalist and other more left-wing forms of Third Way thinking.

The decision in 1929 to sign the Concordat and Lateran Pacts with the Vatican, which virtually made the Catholic Church a state religion, marked a further tension with an official discourse that sought to create a 'new man'. Although it is misleading to portray Italy in the 1930s as a traditional authoritarian dictatorship, it was certainly a long way short of the 'ethical' totalitarian state envisaged by the pre-eminent philosopher of Fascism, Giovanni Gentile.[14] Extensive propaganda and new organizations such as the *Dopolavoro* (the National Recreational Club) provided cultural and leisure activities for the masses, but the Fascist message had not penetrated deeply into large sections of Catholic and working-class culture. Whilst victory in Abyssinia appears to have been popular, the regime relied more on conformity and coercion than mass enthusiasm (although the Italian Fascist state killed far fewer domestic opponents during peacetime than the Nazi one, the threat of repression was an omnipresent reality).

Prompted by growing criticisms of both the Fascist Party and regime against a background of economic problems, Mussolini responded to this atrophy by seeking in the late 1930s to relaunch the Fascist revolution through 'three punches to the belly of

the bourgeoisie': namely, the anti-*Lei* campaign (*lei* was the formal second-person pronoun), the Nazi-inspired goose-step (disingenuously named the *passo romano*), and the 1938 racial measures. The last were particularly targeted at the Catholic Church. In spite of its important role historically in portraying Jews as Christ-killers (a charge also made by some Protestants), Catholicism was doctrinally opposed to biological racism.

The 1938 racial laws need to be further understood within the context of wider attitudes towards nation and race. There were undoubtedly some who well before 1938 held views similar to Nazism. For example, there were parallels between Fascists who celebrated a mystical relationship between the people and the land on which it lived (*strapaese*) and Nazi views about *Blut und Boden* ('Blood and Soil'). There were even stronger similarities between the geopolitical view that Italy had a right to find living space (*spazio vitale*) and the Nazi quest for *Lebensraum*. Among some scientists there were also clear affinities with Nazi biological racism, especially in eugenics-related fields such as breeding and health (concerns that widely permeated post-nineteenth-century European and American scientific thought).

However, the main school of Italian academic racial thought was influenced by cultural rather than biological thinking. This ridiculed the use of the term 'Aryan' in a racial context, and mocked Nordicists by contrasting the achievements of Ancient Rome with that of 'German' barbarians. In contrast to Nazi biological determinists, these Italianists generally supported a spiritual racism that emphasized the impact of environment or praised the Mediterranean race as the superior product of intermixing. Although Gentile celebrated the power of the 'totalitarian' state to create both a new man and order, he held that nationality was ultimately a moral choice. Gentile specifically rejected the view that biology could shape personal or national destiny as both epistemologically wrong and morally repugnant.[15]

There was also very strong opposition to the racial laws from some leading Fascists such as Balbo. He opposed adopting anti-Semitic laws in Libya partly because of the importance of Jews within the economy, but more generally because this Germanophobe objected on principle. Most Italians too seem to have opposed the 1938 racial measures and closer links with Germany. This helps explain why the vast majority of the Jews living in Italy escaped the fate that befell those who lived in Nazi-occupied Europe during 1939–45.

Nevertheless, it is important to challenge a long-held myth of the good Italian (*italiani brava gente*) who was innately humanitarian and resisted illegitimate laws.[16] Whilst anti-Semitism played no part in the rise of the Fascist movement, many Italians were clearly happy to concur with colonial expansion in Africa. Moreover, extensive anti-Semitic propaganda does seem to have had some effect on attitudes. This was especially the case during the death throes of Mussolini's Salò Republic after 1943, when the Duce tried to relaunch a more radical vision of Fascism amid the chaos of war. Whilst it was usually German troops who rounded up Jews for deportation, Fascists often participated and many Italians appeared indifferent to the fate of their fellow nationals.

## Nazism

Prior to the First World War, Hitler was not politically active, living as a marginal artist in Vienna until moving to Munich in 1913 and joining the Germany army in 1914. However, he read widely, including Arthur Schopenhauer, whose views about the 'will' influenced Friedrich Nietzsche, and the best-selling works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a British Germanophile (and son-in-law of Richard Wagner) who argued that 'Aryan' (a term borrowed from linguistics, primarily to refer to modern north European) civilization was threatened by alien influences and inferior races.[17]

It remains unclear whether Hitler's virulent anti-Semitism stemmed mainly from this period, as he claimed in *Mein Kampf* (1925–6), or more from the traumas of defeat in 1918 and its aftermath. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that whilst living in the Austrian capital he underwent a fertile political apprenticeship. He learned about the use of anti-Semitism by new parties, and more generally became familiar with the populist styles of Karl Lueger and Georg Ritter von Schönerer, who used a 'low' politics language to distance themselves from the established political elite.[18]

After the war, Hitler did not wish to see a return to the old elite-dominated *Kaiserreich* and possibly had sympathies for moderate social democrats who had supported the German cause in 1914. However, his fervent pan-Germanism and hostility to 'Jewish' Marxism induced his military superiors to retain him as an anti-'Bolshevik' propagandist in Munich. During September 1919 this led him to join the new German Workers' Party (DAP), which in 1920 changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party. A year later, Hitler's oratorical talents helped him to become party leader.

Initially, Hitler saw his mission as that of the drummer boy of nationalist revolution, not as a national saviour. The Nazis were a small party that mainly sought to appeal to ex-combattants across the class divide. Symbolic of this strategy was the adoption by the paramilitary brown-shirted *Sturmabteilung* (SA), and later the black-shirted *Schutzstaffel* (SS), of the death-head emblem (*Totenkopf*) that had been used by elite 'Stormtroops' who drew their members from all classes by the end of the First World War. It was, therefore, a symbol both of militarism and a new egalitarian-elitism that 'front experience' writers like Ernst Jünger celebrated as 'blood socialism'.

However, after the failure of the violent 1923 Munich *Putsch*, Hitler's views changed. During his trial and brief imprisonment he increasingly saw himself as the future *Führer*, and a growing Hitler cult developed within the party. Linked to this was a new electoral strategy. An important figure in this change was the First World War fighter ace, Hermann Göring, who after the Munich *Putsch* fled to Italy and came to appreciate the Fascists' dual strategy of violence against the left, accompanied by growing success at the polls, as a way of pressuring the Establishment and Janus-faced state without provoking it into repression.

Following disappointing election results in 1928, more emphasis was placed on broadening the Nazi Party's appeal. A key part of this strategy stressed economic issues

that acquired greater importance with the onset of the Depression in 1929. There had always been members of the party who had taken a strong interest in economics. Notable in the party's early days was Gottfried Feder, who had lectured to Hitler while an army propagandist. Feder stressed an old *völkisch* trope that distinguished between 'rapacious' and 'productive' capital, which appealed to Hitler, especially as the former could be associated with Jews in professions such as banking.

The new economic strategy involved targeting specific groups, such as farm workers who made up almost 30 per cent of the German labour force. The approach also focused on the local level, which involved the training of speakers, the dissemination of propaganda, and the infiltration of existing groups as well as the setting up of new Nazi ones. A key figure in planning the rural campaign was Walther Darré, who popularized the phrase *Blut und Boden* ('Blood and Soil') and advocated an almost medieval form of peasant corporatism. However, in the urban areas propaganda focused more on 'Work and Bread', and was targeted at the working class.

This was supported by a major national campaign focusing on Hitler, who travelled by aeroplane to make two or more major speeches in a day at times during 1932. Propaganda portrayed the Führer in almost God-like terms, as a man sent by providence to save Germany. Revealingly, by this time the Nazis were widely referred to as the 'Hitler Party', and there seems little doubt that Hitler appealed to a wide range of voters. This charismatic appeal, together with the local campaigns, was crucial to the Nazis gaining easily the largest vote in the 1932 Reichstag elections, reaching almost 40 per cent in July.

Behind the scenes, more respectable members of the Nazi leadership like Göring courted business and Establishment support for the Nazis' entry into government by stressing their anti-left credentials. Anti-Semitism was also played down in most campaigning, partly because it was not popular in some areas but also because rabble-rousing threatened the strategy of courting Establishment support. Eventually in early 1933 President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor in the hope that this would provide stability.

In his first broadcast as Chancellor, Hitler began by hailing fellow Germans with the revealing compound term 'national-comrade' (*Volksgenossen*). The Nazis promised a *Volksgemeinshaft*, a racially pure national community that would transcend divisions. However, it is important to note that there were notable differences within the Nazi Party concerning racism.

Among the rank and file, hostility to Jews does not appear to have been a major factor leading people to join the party, although paranoid anti-Semites were strongly represented among older members who held leading party offices by the 1930s.[19] Among the political leadership, there was a widespread tendency to Manichaeanism, but the key enemy was not always the Jews, as some focused more on the left and even the Establishment. For example, Gregor Strasser, who had played a key role in the party reorganization after 1928, and Joseph Goebbels, who became Propaganda Minister in 1933, saw the idea of National Socialism itself as more important than race. There were

also different forms of anti-Semitism within the Nazi leadership, and differences over the relative importance of race.

Hitler held that the Jews were responsible for Germany's defeat; he also believed that Jews were behind communist revolution and rapacious capitalism, both of which threatened the nation. He believed that there was a widespread Jewish conspiracy against the Aryan peoples of the type portrayed by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Tsarist forgery that enjoyed widespread sales in Germany after 1918 and reinforced the Manichaean fears. This claim figured prominently in the 1940 Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew*, which held that the Jews believed they were the master race!

Hitler's views about the Jewish nature of Bolshevism were reinforced by Alfred Rosenberg, who saw himself as the NSDAP's main theorist of race. However, whilst Rosenberg's book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* was the second most distributed Nazi book after *Mein Kampf*, Hitler does not appear to have read *Der Mythos* (nor do many other Germans!). Indeed, he rejected Rosenberg's spiritual rather than biological view of race. Hitler also opposed Rosenberg's quest for a 'new religion' of the blood, partly because he sought to avoid conflict with the Christian churches. During the Nazi rise to power, many in the Protestant churches had helped the cause, and after the Nazis achieved power some Catholic priests aligned traditional Christian anti-Semitism with National Socialism and especially supported the anti-Bolshevik crusade.[20]

Hitler's quest for an accommodation with these churches occasionally led to tensions with Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the elite corps known as the SS (abbreviation of *Schutzstaffel*) who sought to suppress Christian festivals such as Christmas and promote new forms of secular worship. When Himmler joined the Nazi Party in 1925 he was already a member of the Thule Society, which preached that the greatness of Germany reached back to the Teutonic tribes' defeat of the Romans. Himmler's views were further influenced by influential Nordicist academics such as H. F. K. Günther, who sought the preservation of the Aryan race under German leadership against the threat from Jews and inferior Slavs. This led to the development of a SS German-led Europeanism, which can be seen most clearly in the propaganda surrounding the wartime *Waffen* SS divisions recruited in occupied countries both to fight communism and for the preservation of the Aryan race. The idea of a post-war German-led new Aryan Europe can also be found among some economic planners and technocrats, though for most the primary concern was securing German prosperity.

There were differences too among the academics who supported Nazism. The friend-foe dichotomy of the eminent legal-political theorist, Carl Schmitt, led him to see Jews as an alien threat and his concept of *Grossraum* legitimated German expansion to the east. However, he saw the nation as an ethnic-cultural community based on history rather than biology and he was denounced by some Nazis as an opportunist Catholic. Among anthropologists and especially scientists there was a tendency to see race more in terms of biology, although there were differences over issues such as whether cross-breeding could be beneficial.[21] Such eugenicist thinking, which was strong long before the Nazis came to power, influenced the post-1933 sterilization programme of women who were deemed mentally infirm or disabled.[22] Other policies

to boost the healthy Aryan population and its martial qualities included improved welfare provision for 'German' mothers of young children (though as in Italy, this was also linked to views about the role of women).

In spite of differences of opinion over race, anti-Semitism was a core driving principle of the Nazi regime. Initially, Jews were forced out of influential fields, such as the media and the universities. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws banned marriages and sexual liaisons between Germans and Jews. Revealing confusions about racial science, Jewishness was judged on religious affiliation going back to the grandparents rather than biology. These Laws also removed German citizenship from those who were not considered of German blood. Whilst specifically aimed at Jews, in practice these laws also encompassed Roma and Sinti who were declared to be of 'alien blood'. By 1939 fewer than 200,000 of the 500,000 Jews who had lived in pre-Hitler Germany remained. The vast majority had emigrated, usually having had their assets largely stolen by Nazi Party members and those who had competed with these Jews.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had argued that the state's highest task was 'the preservation and intensification of the race'.[23] This involved not merely making Germany 'Jew free', but territorial expansion to the east. In part this sought to rectify major losses imposed by the Versailles Treaty of 1919. However, expansion was also seen in geopolitical terms—a quest for colonial resources that would underpin Germany's destiny as a Great Power without bringing down the ire of the Western Great Powers, especially the British.

Hitler in many ways admired the British achievement in ruling over nearly a quarter of the world's land mass. Although Hitler's view of the USA was in general more hostile, he was impressed by the way in which the early settlers had tamed new lands by settling them with superior stock. Indeed, he sometimes talked of the Volga as Germany's Mississippi, with clear allusions to ethnic cleansing of Native Americans as well as economic dynamism. This parallel arguably had a far stronger influence on Hitler than that claimed for Soviet mass killings, though Hitler publicly referred in the early 1930s to mass starvations in the Ukraine and was aware of Stalin's later great purges.

In a speech in January 1939 Hitler had prophesied that if international Jewish bankers again plunged the nations into world war, the result would not be the triumph of Bolshevism but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe. However, at this time there was no specific policy of extermination. Prior to late 1939, concentration camps were used mainly for political prisoners and other targets such as homosexuals. Some Jews were even allowed to leave for Palestine. Indeed, unlike in the Soviet Union where millions had been directly or indirectly killed by the state, 'only' about 10,000 German Jews had died at the hands of the Nazis before war began against Poland.

The conquest of Poland in 1939, and especially the invasion of Russia in 1941, brought large numbers of Slavs, several million Jews, and a far smaller number of Roma, Sinta, and other inferior peoples under Nazi rule. Initially, there were several plans for the Jewish population, including deportation to Madagascar. However, with no serious hope of major forced emigration, planning quickly came to focus on the ghettoization

of Jews and the development of concentration camps within the new borders. This was seen as especially important for limiting Jewish access to scarce food and other supplies and in exploiting the Jews as forced labour, plans that were often initiated at a local level.[24]

The precise steps that led to the general decision to commit genocide remain contested. Some historians point to the way in which the 'euthanasia' programme developed after 1939 provided the core staff and means for mass killing by gassing. Others have stressed the importance of technocratic issues about public health in the ghettoes and camps, which escalated into plans for genocide through a process of 'cumulative radicalization'. However, there seems little doubt that Hitler exerted a charismatic authority over his inner circle who sought to implement his will. Genocide thus stemmed more from the top down, through a process of key figures like Himmler vying for favour by 'working towards the Führer' in a polyocracy where the formal executive structure of government had long since broken down, though the state retained a veneer of legality.[25]

Hitler's racism was further crucial in failing to exploit anti-communist sentiment as the Nazis swept forward in 1941. The Führer thought that only a minority of Slavs who had some link with earlier waves of expansion could be re-Germanized; the rest were to remain at best an underclass to serve their new masters. A few leading Nazis wanted to recruit Slavs to help the German cause, and some were deployed to help massacre Jews and to staff the concentration camps. Such help sometimes emerged spontaneously, given the traditions of anti-Semitism in these areas, though there is little doubt that the prospect of spoils added to the number of volunteers (among collaborationist elites the motivation was more geopolitical support of Germany against the Soviet Union).[26] This meant that genocide was locally aided and abetted in a way lacking in other forms of colonialism.

However, there was no serious attempt to turn this into a wider anti-Bolshevik crusade until it was too late to stem the advancing tide of the Red Army. As well as prejudice against Slavs, such collaboration ran counter to Himmler's policy of settling Germans in parts of conquered Eastern Europe. 'Blood Is Our Frontier', a common slogan among SS intellectuals, reveals that what was sought was not simply geopolitical 'space' in which to exploit inferior peoples and provide buffer zones. It was more an ethnically cleansed *Lebensraum*, requiring the forced removal of the Slavic population, which was often undertaken with great brutality towards these racial inferiors. Indeed, many died, most commonly through starvation. This encouraged the surviving population to support the Resistance, whose activities in turn were met by a spiral of violent reprisals.

These deportations, and the mass killings of Jews by shooting before the gassing programme was fully in operation in 1942, were often carried out by ordinary soldiers rather than special units (*Einsatzgruppen*). Again, this marks a notable difference from most forms of modern colonialism where territorial aggrandizement was achieved by limited armed forces using new technology such as the rifle and machine gun against

'natives' (a major exception was the bloody Japanese geopolitical-racist expansionism after 1930).[27]

The involvement of many 'ordinary Germans' in mass killings raises major questions about the attitudes and motivations of those involved.[28] Were most Germans imbued with a deep racist ideology, dating back to early Christian anti-Semitism, nineteenth-century nationalism, and the rise of racial science?[29] Or did conformity to orders among Germans stem more from what has been termed the 'banality of evil', the ability to engender compliance with 'legitimate' orders, especially among those not directly involved in killing?[30]

Certainly the evidence points to the fact that anti-Semitism was not a significant element contributing to the electoral triumph of the Nazis in 1933, although some Germans later appreciated the economic benefits that ensued thereafter as Jews were increasingly eliminated from economic life. Many Germans also endorsed a war against communism, which Nazi propaganda had closely linked with Jews. However, the main general impact of propaganda appears to have been more to inure Germans to the fate of Jews and racial inferiors, rather than creating a nation of fanatics who saw killing as part of a racial crusade.

## French and Romanian Fascism

France's first fascist party was the *Faisceau*, founded in 1925 by Georges Valois. Born into the working class, Valois had been a leading theorist of the pre-war authoritarian-nationalist and overtly Catholic *Action Française* (AF), founded at the time of the Dreyfus Affair (1894–early 1900s), which had bitterly divided France over the false imprisonment of a Jewish army officer.

Immediately prior to the First World War, Valois had come together with Sorel and other syndicalists to form the *Cercle Proudhon*, which has been portrayed as setting out the first fully fledged fascist ideology.[31] However, whilst this was a notable harbinger of attempts to synthesize socialism, nationalism, and religion, it was Valois's experience of fighting in the First World War that provided the final push in his conversion to clearly fascist views. This led him to place great emphasis on the need for new young leadership, which would create a technocratic-modernizing state, and drive forward the economic regeneration needed to divert the working class from communism and finance the armed forces necessary to withstand a future resurgent Germany.

In spite of his earlier anti-Semitic views, Valois declared after 1918 that Jews had an 'incontestable creative fever'. He was also affected by the sacrifices of the many Jews who fought for France during 1914–18. However, the old paranoia and rhetoric about Jewish plots and power never completely disappeared from Faisceau propaganda. Indeed, this slant grew as internally the party became plagued by divisions over policy, not least between its Catholic corporatists and more radical exponents of a Third Way.

Although there were only about 200,000 Jews in France, some leading members of the Faisceau argued for their expulsion claiming that they held excessive influence in the corridors of economic and political power. Nevertheless, for at least a decade after the First World War anti-Semitism proved a less powerful rallying cry among a notable section of the French people than it had been a generation earlier. Lacking the charisma to exert a wider appeal, or to unite the Faisceau's burgeoning factions, Valois wound the movement up in 1928 and began a journey to the left. (He later joined the Resistance and died in a German concentration camp.)

It is commonly argued that neither the economic nor political conditions were present in France to spawn a mass-based fascist movement.[32] The trajectory of the *Parti Populaire Français*, founded in 1936 by the former young communist leader Jacques Doriot, illustrates these problems well. The PPF's programme initially was based on Third Way economics and attacks on the growing Communist Party, but propaganda about 'Judeo-bolshevik' and other Jewish conspiracies quickly became more prominent. Some hoped that this would boost the PPF's fortunes, though other factors behind this development included hostility to the Popular Front's Jewish prime minister, Léon Blum, and financial support from anti-Semitic business interests.

As was the case with the Faisceau, association with 'capitalists' added to the difficulties of appealing to left-wing constituencies, whilst France's *notable*-dominated conservative parties were rooted in strong, locally based patron-client ties. Moreover, unlike in Italy and Germany, there was little sympathy for the radical right within key groups such as the police and judiciary, which helped prevent street confrontations escalating into a spiral of abuse and violence, simultaneously heightening the fear that the mainstream parties and liberal democratic state could not withstand the new challengers.

Whilst the numbers were not large, the PPF attracted some major intellectuals, though they were attracted to fascism via different routes. One was the novelist Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who saw himself as a member of a race rather than a nation, holding that the French had at least three identities: Nordic, Celtic, and Mediterranean. He thus preached a form of ethno-regionalism within a federal Europe, which he further saw as vital to the defence against both the American and Soviet menaces. Drieu's novels associated Jews with decadence, weak parliamentary government, and crass materialism—though like Doriot, his most extreme statements came after becoming a Nazi collaborator following the fall of France in 1940.

Another writer who, having begun his political life in the anti-German *Action Française*, was to end it as a Nazi collaborator, was Robert Brasillach. Brasillach broke with the small *Action Française*, led by the ageing Charles Maurras, in a quest for more youthful leadership and Third Way socioeconomic polices. He regarded himself as only a 'moderate' anti-Semite, but this 'moderation' encompassed advocating laws to exclude Jews from the national community, including French-born Jews as well as recent arrivals, who were the focus of growing anti-Semitism in the 1930s. Brasillach also blamed the Jews for the onset of war!

The defeat of France was accompanied by the establishment of a regime based in the town of Vichy in unoccupied France and headed by Marshall Pétain, the feted 'saviour of Verdun' in the First World War. Members of this regime came from eclectic political backgrounds, though there were notable links with the *Action Française* and increasingly after 1940 with those who had been active in fascist politics during the 1930s. The policies of the Vichy regime were a mixture of reactionary attempts to roll back liberalization and secularization with more technocratic planning for a 'New Order'. This complex and dynamic mix helps explain why there have been major debates about whether it should be seen as a form of authoritarian rather than fascist regime, with most commentators tending towards the former categorization.[33]

There have also been notable debates about the Vichy regime's racial policy. It quickly introduced laws debarring Jews from many offices and professions, though war veterans were an initial exception. During 1942 French police helped round up foreign Jews for deportation to the concentration camps in eastern Europe, though later attempts to round up French nationals ran into notably more opposition. Some have defended the Vichy regime's policies, arguing that it acted as a shield against more radical German policies and/or was ultimately forced into compliance. However, it is now more correctly held that Vichy was in many ways the culmination of a deep racist strand in French politics that had first become clear during the late nineteenth century (and which was not confined entirely to the right). Certainly in the Italian-occupied part of France, Jews stood a much greater chance of survival, as in general the occupiers refused to hand them over to the Germans.

There has also been notable debate about how to classify the Romanian Iron Guard, which many have argued was populist or clerico-fascist rather than truly fascist.[34] Certainly politics were in many ways different in a country that was largely rural and where levels of illiteracy were higher than in Germany and even Italy. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify forms of fascism in Romania, of which what is commonly termed the Iron Guard movement was by far the most prominent.

It was founded in 1927 by Corneliu Codreanu, a law graduate who heard Hitler speak while a student in Germany, where he also learned of the 'March on Rome' in October 1922 by Mussolini's Fascists. Codreanu claimed his movement was not a copy of either. Certainly a key difference compared to early Italian Fascism was the Iron Guard's strident anti-Semitism. However, Codreanu claimed that Mussolini would have been anti-Semitic if he had lived in a country where Jewish elites exercised immense power, and ordinary Jews separated themselves through dress and language! Moreover, the Guard developed a cult of modern-day Romanians as direct descendants of the Dacians, establishing a link with the glories of Ancient Rome in the same manner as the Italian Fascists.

A major difference compared to both Fascism and Nazism was that the Iron Guard was overtly Orthodox Christian.[35] Initially known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael, the Guard was organized like a religious order, and its style was in many ways irrational and mystical. Its young members, known as Legionnaires, were officially asked 'to embrace death'. Given that Romania had gained significant new

territory after the First World War, this was not part of an attempt to create a militaristic culture in order to expand, though force was seen as necessary to keep ethnic minorities in check and especially to defend the expanded frontiers. Rather, this was a mixture of cult and political tactic, in which Legionaries embraced a willingness to assassinate their enemies, risk their own lives, and even the salvation of their own souls.

However, it is important not to see the Guard as simply a millenarian movement led by a charismatic individual, or a movement largely exploiting anti-Semitic traditions that ran deep in Orthodox culture. The Guard attracted several notable intellectuals, including two who later achieved major international reputations, Mircea Eliade and E. M Cioran. The latter was symptomatic of many who turned to fascism, focusing on the alleged degeneracy of contemporary culture, which he saw as requiring a radical new regime to reverse. Another intellectual supporter of the Iron Guard was the corporatist economist Mihail Manoilescu, who sought to develop a 'national-Christian socialism'. This encompassed policies to prevent the workers turning to communism, including the creation of national syndicates and public works.[36]

Corporatism was a notable aspect of the Guard's attempt to appeal to workers at a time of economic instability. There was also an economic dimension in its appeal to the parochial peasantry, who appear to have been less attracted to nationalist arguments than the urban middle class and more concerned with parochial issues. For example, Codreanu promised a cow to some, a patch of land to others, and even told some peasants before the 1937 elections that they would be given free merchandise.

By the time of these elections, the Guard had proportionally more members than the PNF before the March on Rome, or the NSDAP before Hitler became Chancellor. Running under the name 'Totul pentru Țară' ('Everything for the Country'), it officially won 16 per cent of the vote, though its true support was much higher as the elections were partly rigged.[37]

During 1938, King Carol decided to suspend the democratic Constitution, using rising violence between groups as the pretext (even some liberals saw this as preferable to an Iron Guard-led government). Codreanu and several other fascist leaders were arrested, accused of being in the pay of Germany, and killed 'while trying to escape'. Although authoritarian, Carol had no sympathy for the Guard, which in turn bitterly attacked the monarch on account of his Jewish mistress and clique of friends. Moreover, Carol had learned from the Italian and especially the German experience that seeking to tame fascism for Establishment purposes was playing with fire.

By 1940, the Axis victories made the Romanian political situation more favourable to the remaining Guard leadership and Codreanu's successor, Horia Sima, was invited to become the first Legionary minister. Shortly afterwards the Legion allied with General Ion Antonescu to create a National Legionary State, which forced the abdication of Carol. However, in early 1941 Antonescu suppressed a Legion coup, following growing lawlessness. Although Sima was forced to flee to Germany, the anti-Jewish campaign continued to gather pace under the authoritarian-nationalist Antonescu regime. What had started in the late 1930s with Nuremberg-style laws, followed by persecution and

even killings, escalated into mass killings after Romania joined the invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) in June 1941, often through localized pogroms of Roma as well as Jews.

The vast majority of these killings took place in territories acquired after the break up of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires following the First World War, or within the new multi-ethnic Soviet Empire during Operation Barbarossa. Although Jews in the rump of Romania suffered badly, some appear to have been protected by a sense of residual citizenship, though others effectively purchased their survival.

None of these policies were initiated at the request of the Nazi Germans. And whilst members of the Iron Guard played a prominent part in the murders, unduly focusing on their role glosses over the far wider set of historical and social forces that led to genocide in Romania.

## Conclusion

One leading student of nationalism has argued that Nazism cannot be considered a member of part of the nationalist family on account of its pursuit of a racial 'Aryan' order, which far transcended Germany's pre-1914 borders and even the Germanic parts of the Austrian Empire.[38]

However, as the above case studies show, the lines between nationalism and racism are complex and fluid. Hitler was both a nationalist and racist, holding that Germany was in the vanguard of the defence of a wider Aryan people, which meant geopolitical expansion and war with Soviet communism in order to ensure German-led prosperity. Mussolini did not believe that an Italian nation had yet been formed, and later turned on the Jews partly in an attempt to create a Fascist 'new man' who would ensure Italian hegemony over a new empire, which would similarly underpin Great Power status.

Maurice Bardèche, Brasillach's brother-in-law and a rare intellectual who after 1945 accepted the label 'fascist', has written that: 'There is not the slightest logical, necessary, automatic link between fascism and racism.'[39] Bardèche was seeking to rehabilitate a movement based on its early Italian form, rightly pointing to the fact that there was no necessary connection between fascism and hostility to Jews. However, written out of Bardèche's history was the tendency of fascisms to turn to anti-Semitism at critical junctures. Moreover, whilst there were forms of fascism that did not advocate military expansion, all accepted that war between nations and races was a driving force of history—that some peoples were more fit to rule than others.

In this sense fascism and racism are intimately intertwined. Nevertheless, there are dangers in overstressing the link in terms of explaining why fascism arose and gathered support because, in the paradigmatic cases of Italy and Germany, overt racism, especially anti-Semitism, was not crucial to gaining either elite or mass support.[40]

## Notes

1. Following Anglophone common practice, this chapter uses 'F' to refer to the specifically Italian variant and 'f' to refer to 'generic' fascism.
2. For a more general treatment of these nationalist movements, see Chapter 21 by Oliver Zimmer.
3. M. Burleigh and W. Wipperman (1992) *The Racial State: Germany 1933–45*, Cambridge, 306.
4. See especially R. Griffin (ed.) (2005) *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, London.
5. R. Eatwell (2009) 'On Defining Generic Fascism: The "Fascist Minimum" and the "Fascist Matrix"', in C. Iordachi (ed.) *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Approaches*, Abingdon.
6. For example, R. Bessel (2005) *Nazism and War*, London, esp. 3.
7. R. Eatwell (2009) 'Propaganda, Violence and the Rise of Fascism', in A. Costa-Pinto (ed.) *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism*, Basingstoke.
8. B. Mussolini (1935) *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions*, Rome, 59.
9. On Japanese nationalism, see Chapter 14 by Rana Mitter and on its broader ideological influence, see Chapter 34 by Cemil Aydin.
10. V. de Grazia (1992) *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–45*, Berkeley, CA.
11. M. Michaelis (1978) *Mussolini and the Jews: German-Italian Relations and the Jewish Question in Italy, 1922–1945*, Oxford.
12. J. D. Zimmerman (2005) *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922–1945*, Cambridge.
13. A. Gillette (2002) *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, London, 44.
14. D. Roberts (2006) *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe*, London; cf. R. Bosworth (1998) *The Italian Dictatorship*, London.
15. A. J. Gregor (2005) *Mussolini's Intellectuals*, Princeton, NJ.
16. M. Sarfatti (2006) *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, Madison, WI.
17. For links between Nietzsche and earlier nationalist ideas, see Chapter 3 by Erica Benner.
18. B. Hamann (1999) *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship*, New York.
19. P. H. Merkl (1975) *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis*, Princeton, NJ.
20. K. P. Spicer (2008) *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*, DeKalb, IL.
21. C. M. Hutton (2005) *Race and the Third Reich*, Cambridge.
22. P. Weindling (1989) *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945*, Cambridge.
23. A. Hitler (1925–6, 1969) *Mein Kampf*, London, 355.
24. C. Browning (2004) *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy September 1939–March 1942*, London; and A. Kallis (2008) *Fascism and Genocide in Inter-War Europe*, London.
25. I. Kershaw (1997) *Hitler, 1896–1936: Hubris*, London.
26. D. Stone (2010) *Histories of the Holocaust*, Oxford.
27. Cf. its portrayal in the nationalist Yasukuni Museum in Tokyo, where expansion is portrayed as liberation from racist Europeans.
28. C. Browning (2001) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, London.
29. D. Goldhagen (1996) *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, London.
30. H. Arendt (1994) *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London.

31. Z. Sternhell et al. (1992) *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Princeton, NJ.
32. B. Jenkins (ed.) (2007) *France in the Era of Fascism*, Oxford.
33. On this simple and at times misleading heuristic distinction, see J. Linz (2000) *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, London.
34. For a good survey of different types of fascism, see S. G. Payne (1995) *A History of Fascism, 1914–45*, Madison, WI.
35. C. Iordachi (2004) *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in Inter-War Romania*, Trondheim.
36. L. Volovici (1991) *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Oxford.
37. For more on fascist electoral support in Italy, Germany, and Romania, see M. Mann (2002) *Fascists*, Cambridge.
38. A. D. Smith (1979) *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, New York.
39. M. Bardèche (1961) *Qu'est-ce-que le fascisme?*, Paris, 53.
40. I am grateful to John Breuilly, Aristotle Kallis, and James Eatwell for comments on earlier drafts.

## Suggested Further Reading

Browning, C. R. (2004) *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy September 1939–March 1942*, Lincoln. A detailed historical account of the origins of the Final Solution, which whilst recognizing the role of lower orders and technocrats, takes on board the recent focus on more ideological and Hitler-centric accounts.

Burleigh, M. and Wippermann, W. (1991) *The Racial State: Germany 1933–45*, Cambridge. A powerful statement of the uniqueness of Nazism, especially on account of its racism and ultimate policy of genocide.

Gillette, A. (2002) *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, London. This shows the different strands in Italian racism, including a Mediterranean one that is contrasted to Nazi Nordicism.

Gregor, A. J. (2005) *Mussolini's Intellectuals*, Princeton, NJ. This attempts to show that none of the key intellectuals within Italian Fascism was racist, but glosses over issues such as Italian racial science and imperial practice.

Hutton, C. M. (2005) *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk*, Cambridge. This focuses on academic racial anthropology, human biology, and linguistics, showing that many race theorists rejected the idea of an Aryan race.

Kallis, A. (2008) *Genocide and Fascism: The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe*, London. An excellent general survey, though it overstresses the role of Fascism's utopian emphasis on national/racial rebirth in the realm of concrete events.

Kershaw, I. (1997) *Hitler, 1896–1936: Hubris*, London, and (2000) *Hitler, 1936–45: Nemesis*, London. The best biography of Hitler, by a German specialist who accepts that Nazism was fascist (whilst challenging how useful the concept of 'generic fascism' is theoretically).

Sarfatti, M. (2006) *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: From Equality to Persecution*, Madison, WI. An important general study and corrective to the belief that the vast majority of Italians were repulsed by anti-Semitism and the myth of the good Italian (*brava gente*).

Stone, D. (2010) *Histories of the Holocaust*, Oxford. This highlights the importance of economic gain as well as anti-Semitic ideology for many perpetrators; also stresses the impact of global imperialism on wider racial thought and genocide.

Zimmerman, J. D. (ed.) (2005) *Jews in Italy under Fascist and Nazi Rule 1922–1945*, Cambridge. A good collection of essays covering Mussolini, the impact of the racial laws, the post-1943 German occupation, the Vatican, et cetera.