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VARIETIES OF EUROPEAN FASCISM

A well-known specialist in the history of totalitarian regimes, Armin Heinen reanalyses in this study the controversial question of defining the notion "fascism". The bibliography in this field is extremely large, fact also illustrated by the consistent historiographical approach made by the author. Without attempting to thoroughly cover such a vast subject, Professor Heinen focuses his attention upon eight questions, considered as essential for the development of a "historical" theory of fascism.

One might get the impression that the term "fascism" has become outdated, a word not any longer proper for scientific discussion. While during the sixties and seventies "fascism" was on the foreground of historical debate, the wind has changed. The so-German "Historikerstreit"[1] and the discussion on the book of Daniel Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners, Ordinary

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[1] Christoph Cornelißen, *Der "Historikerstreit" über den Nationalsozialismus seit 1945*, in: Holger Afflerbach, Christoph Cornelißen (Ed.), *Sieger und Besiegte. Materielle und ideelle Neuorientierungen nach 1945*, Tübingen 1997, p. 335-363; Dan Diner (Ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, Frankfurt/M. 1989; Richard J. Evans, *Im Schatten Hitlers? Historikerstreit und Vergangenheitsbewältigung in der Bundesrepublik*, Frankfurt 1991; Bernd Faulenbach, Rainer Bölling, *Geschichtsbewußtsein und historisch-politische Bildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Beiträge zum "Historikerstreit"*, Düsseldorf 1988; Helmut Fleischer, *Zur Kritik des Historikerstreits*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 40-41, 1988, p. 3-14; Imanuel Geiss, *Die Habermas-Kontroverse. Ein deutscher Streit*, Berlin 1988; ders., *Der Hysterikerstreit. Ein unpolemischer Essay*, Bonn 1992; Eike Hennig, *Zum Historikerstreit. Was heißt und zu welchem Zweck studiert man Faschismus?*, Frankfurt 1988; Harold James, *Vom Historikerstreit zum Historikerschweigen*, Berlin 1993; Jürgen Kocka, *Deutsche Identität und historischer Vergleich*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B. 40-41, 1988, p. 15-28; Hartmut Lehmann (Ed.), *Historikerkontroversen*, Göttingen 2000; Charles Maier, *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Geschichte und die nationale Identität der Deutschen*, Frankfurt/M. 1992; Wolfgang Marienfeld, *Der Historikerstreit*, Hannover 1987; Ernst Nolte, *Das Vergehen der Vergangenheit. Antwort an meine Kritiker im sogenannten Historikerstreit*, Berlin, 2. Aufl. 1988; Ernst Nolte, *Streitpunkte – heutige und zukünftige Kontroversen um den Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin 1993; Wolfgang Schieder, *Der Nationalsozialismus im Fehlurteil philosophischer Geschichtsschreibung. Zur Methode von Ernst Noltes "Europäischer Bürgerkrieg"*, in GG, 15 (1989), p. 89-114; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Entsorgung der deutschen Vergangenheit? Ein polemischer Essay zum "Historikerstreit"*, München 1988. Zur italienischen Variante des "Historikerstreits": Wolfgang Schieder, *Faschismus als Vergangenheit. Streit der Historiker in Italien und Deutschland*, in: Walter Pehle (Ed.), *Der historische Ort des Nationalsozialismus. Annäherungen*, Frankfurt 1990, p. 135-154.

Germans and the Holocaust", point to the singularity of the national-socialist terror-regime[2].

While then the interests of research have changed, it must be noticed, that the research on international fascism has developed quite a clear-cut idea of its subject[3]. Thus general theories of fascism, which were discussed in the past, do not really help in explaining fascism (fascism as ideology, fascism as expression of reactionary class rule, fascism as revolt of the middle classes, theories of mass society, totalitarism, fascism as rebellion against moder-nity)[4]. Wolfang Schieder[5], Stanley G. Payne[6], Hans Mommsen[7], Martin Bros-zat[8], Ian Kershaw[9], Hans-Ulrich Thamer[10], Emilio Gentile[11] and others, refer

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[2] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust*, Berlin 1996. The debate: Volker Pesch, *Die künstlichen Wilden. Zu Daniel Goldhagens Methode und theoretischem Rahmen*, in: GG, 23 (1997), p. 152-162; Dieter Pohl, *Die Holocaust-Forschung und Goldhagens These*, in: VfZG, 45 (1997), p. 1-48; Julius H. Schoeps (Ed.), *Ein Volk von Mördern? Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust*, Hamburg 1996; Wolfgang Wippermann, *Wessen Schuld? Vom Historikerstreit zur Goldhagen-Kontroverse*, Berlin 1997.

[3] Bibliographies: Renzo DeFelice (Ed.), *Bibliografia orientativa del fascismo*, Rom 1991; Philip Rees, *Fascism and Pre-Fascism in Europe, 1890-1945. A bibliography of the extreme right*, Brighton 1984; Michael Ruck, *Bibliographie zum Nationalsozialismus*, 2 Vol., Darmstadt 2000. General serveys: Martin Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the right in Europe, 1919-1945*, Harlow 2000; Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Schulen des Hasses. Faschistische Systeme in Europa*, Frankfurt 1999; Roger Eatwell, *Fascism. A history*, 1996; Pierre Milza, *Les fascismes*, Paris 1985; Stanley G. Payne, *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*, Madison 1995; Philipp Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, London 2002; Marco Tarco (Ed.), *Fascisti. Le radici di un fenomeno europeo*, Florenz 1996; Wolfgang Wippermann, *Europäischer Faschismus im Vergleich, 1922-1982*, Frankfurt 1983; Hans Woller, *Rom, 28. Oktober 1922. Die faschistische Herausforderung*, München 1999.

[4] A survey of the classical interpretations of fascism is given by Wolfgang Wippermann, *Faschismustheorien*, Darmstadt[6] 1995.

[5] Wolfgang Schieder, *Diskussionsbeitrag*, in: *Kolloquien des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte. Der italienische Faschismus. Probleme und Forschungstendenzen*, München 1983, p. 60-67; idem, *Das Deutschland Hitlers und das Italien Mussolinis. Zum Problem faschistischer Regimebildung*, in: Gerhard Schulz (Ed.), *Die Große Krise der dreißiger Jahre. Vom Niedergang der Weltwirtschaft zum 2. Weltkrieg*, Göttingen 1985, p. 44-71; idem, *Faschismus*, in: Richard van Dülmen (Ed.), *Das Fischer Lexikon Geschichte*, Frankfurt 1990 p. 177-195.

[6] Roger G. Payne, *A history of fascism, 1914-1945*, Madison 1995.

[7] Hans Mommsen, *National Socialism. Continuity and change*, in: Walter Laqueur (Ed.), *Fascism. A reader' s guide. Analyses, interpretations, bibliography*, London 1976; idem, *Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Gesellschaft. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zum 60. Geburts-tag*, Reinbek 1991.

[8] Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, München[2] 1971; idem, *Nach Hitler. Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte*, München 1988.

in their attempt to explain fascism to elements of modernisation theory, to theories of social movements, to the theory of Bonapartist rule, to the interpretation of fascism as political religion, and last but not least, to theories of charismatic leadership. At the same time the term fascism has become a word to designate a concrete historical phenomenon, totally apart of the idea of "general fascism" as discussed by Roger Griffin[12].

This study will discuss eight central questions related to a "historical" theory of fascism.

1. Why is it so difficult to define fascism?

At first sight it seems very easy to describe fascism. Fascism is dictatorship or its aim is dictatorship. There is a mixture of extreme nationalistic attitudes, anticommunism, anticapitalism and critique of the old world. Fascists used to wear uniforms, they were inclined to violence and they believed that only a military-hierarchical organisation of society could have rescued it from the political disorder of those times.

1. However, such an enumeration – that is the first point I want to make – has the disadvantage of calling "fascist" a lot of political organisations, which we would not like to denote this way:[13]

a) The conservative-authoritarian right was nationalistic, anti-democratic, anti-communist and it promoted ideas of corporatism. It often used typically fascist symbols, like the shirts and paramilitary troops. In Romania cases in point are the Frontul Românesc of Vaida Voevod[14] or the Frontul Renașterii Naționale of King Carol[15]. Another instance of the conservative authoritarian type is the Falange under Franco.

b) The extreme right had developed elements of fascist style and thinking even before there existed fascism in itself. One may notice it if s/he

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[9] Ian Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos. Volksmeinung und Propaganda im Dritten Reich*, München 1980; idem, *Hitlers Macht. Das Profil der NS-Herrschaft*, München 1992; idem, *Le "mythe du Führer" et la dynamique de l'état nazi*, in: Annales, 43 (1988), p. 593-614; idem, *Hitler*, 2 Vol., Stuttgart 1998-2000.

[10] Hans-Ulrich Thamer, *Verführung und Gewalt. Deutschland, 1933-1945*, Berlin 1986.

[11] Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell' Italia fascista*, Rom 1993.

[12] Roger Griffin, *The nature of fascism*, London 1991.

[13] This argument has already been put forward by Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism. Comparison and definition*, Madison 1980, p. 14ff.

[14] Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, München 1986, p. 269.

[15] Ekkehard Völkl, *Rumänien*, Regensburg 1995, p. 119f.

considers such a circle of intellectuals as the Action Française[16] or the Associazione Nazionalista Italiana[17] in Italy. Along the same line one can find the LANC, the PNC in Romania[18] or the antiparliamentary, national-chauvinistic DNVP of Alfred Hugenberg. What distinguished them from fascism was their rational approach to politics, their elitism and their orientation towards the state and its politics instead of the "charismatic-leadership democracy" of the fascists.

c) The anti-communist leagues would be another example of organisations with many fascist traits. They were nationalistic and rowdyish. The experience of the World War I contributed to their appearance; they used to wear, they staged large militaristic demonstrations and they fought in the street. The Communist leagues I would like to mention here are Lapua-Movement in Finland[19], the French leagues[20], the Heimwehren of Austria[21], the League of the Liberty-Warriors in Estonia[22]. Those fighters against the left, however, stuck to the bourgeois order. They wanted to reduce the influence of the parties but they did not aim at abolishing the political order itself. Their movement lost momentum as soon as prominent personalities of the bourgeois order started to guide the fate of the country (for instance Konstantin Päts in Estonia[23], Pehr Evind Svinhufvud in Finland[24] or Gaston Doumergue in France).

d) In spite of its terrorism, The National Makedonian Revolutionary Organisation should not be labelled as fascist; it would be much more

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[16] Convincing even if arguing differently: Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, München[5] 1979, p. 61ff.; Pierre Milza, *Fascisme français, passé et présent*, Paris 1987; Jean-François Sirinelli (Ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*, 3 Vol., Paris 1992; Eugen Weber, *Action française*, Stanford 1962.

[17] Wilhelm Alff, *Die Associazione Nazionalista Italiana von 1910*, in: idem, *Der Begriff Faschismus und andere Aufsätze*, Frankfurt 1971, p. 51-90.

[18] Gheorghe T. Pop, *Caracterul antinaţional şi antipopular al activităţii Partidului Naţional Creştin*, Cluj-Napoca 1978.

[19] Lauri Karvonen, *From white to blue-and-black. Finnish fascism in the Inter-War Era*, Helsinki 1988.

[20] P. Milza, *Fascisme français*; J. Sirinelli (Ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*; Robert O. Paxton, *Le temps des chemises vertes. Révoltes paysannes et fascisme rural, 1929-1939*, Paris 1996; Jean-Christian Petitfils, *L'extrême droite en France*, Paris 1983; Dieter Wolf, *Die Doriot-Bewegung. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des französischen Faschismus*, Stuttgart 1967.

[21] Walter Wiltschegg, *Die Heimwehr. Eine unwiderstehliche Volksbewegung?*, Wien 1985.

[22] Andres Kasekampf, *Das Päts-Regime in Estland, 1934-1940*, in: Erwin Oberländer u.a. (Ed.), *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmitteleuropa, 1919-1944*, Mainz 1995, p. 95-102.

[23] Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two World Wars*, Seattle 1974, p. 172f.

[24] L. Karvonen, *From white to blue-and-black*, p. 24f.

appropriate to subsume it to the type of Balkan extreme violent secret societies[25].

2. The enumeration of organisations with fascist traits shows how difficult it is to provide a clear definition of fascism. What makes it even more complicated is the absence of a clear-cut personal or organisational division between fascist and non-fascist political right. Out of the Lapua-Movement there developed the Patriotic Peoples-Movement with much more fascist characteristics, the steierische Heimwehren which further developed into Austrian NSDAP, and the Romanian Iron Guard which grew up from the LANC.

3. If we aim at setting up a prototypical type of fascism, we must notice that during its movement stages fascism had different organisational forms. Fascism was national-socialism in its proper sense, it was squadrism, it was electoral party and terrorist cadre organisation. Where it was allowed to share power, we find totally different forms of regime. I will elaborate on this point in the subsequent paragraph. Anyway, the change fascism underwent is one of the main reasons which accounts for the difficulty in defining fascism.

Then how could we define fascism and distinguish it from other efforts of rightist politics? Firstly, a definition of fascism must not start with the description of the state structure – this is dependent on the distribution of power – but it must start with the movement. Secondly, fascism was no classical "ism", it had no intellectual doctrine lying at its basis, fascism was social practice.

Wolfgang Schieder[26], Robert Paxton[27], Hans-Ulrich Thamer[28], Emilio Gentile[29] have described this social practice. At its basis there was the military style of action, the self-coining as social movement, the going for the masses and the clientilistic structure of its followers. Fascism originally meant "setting up a fighting-bond", *fascio di combattimento*. Everything else stands for its consequences: its nationalism, the belief in the capacity of will to make/organise the world, the pseudo-religious pretensions, the aesthetisation of politics, the opposition against conservatism, socialism and

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[25] Stefan Troebst, *Mussolini, Makedonien und die Mächte, 1922-1930*, 1987, p. 103ff.; J. Rothschild, *East Central Europe*, p. 323ff.
[26] Compare footnote 5.
[27] Robert O. Paxton, *Les fascismes. Essai d'histoire comparée*, in: *Vingtième Siècle*, H. 45, 1995, p. 3-13.
[28] Hans-Ulrich Thamer, *Faschismus. Nationalsozialismus. Autoritäre Regime*, in: Erwin Oberländer u.a. (Ed.), *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmitteleuropa, 1919-1944*, Mainz 1995, p. 6-16.
[29] Compare footnote 11.

liberalism, the revolutionary impetus, the cult of the youth. Fascist orga-
nisations have not been ordinary parties of the classical type. Their function
was not to structure the process of inner discussions. They were fighting
instruments. They resembled an order, well aware of its role as a spiritual-
political elite, held together by ceremonies and vows. By bewitching the
secularised-rational world-order it was to become a political religion[30],
certainly a religion in which soldierly virtues were turned into an end in
itself. Readiness to make sacrifices, faithfulness, subjection and willingness
to fulfil a duty must have been a guarantee to set up a new, a more beautiful,
a healthier country of which the concrete shape rested undefined. This was
the reason why religious attitude was more important **than any ideology**[31]**.**

One distinction that can be made at this point is between fascist
organisations which were (a) mere imitations and had never been relevant
(for instance the Francisme of Marcel Bucard or the Partidul Național-
Socialist of Ștefan Tătărescu) and (b) organisations that had some roots in
their own country at least (the British Union of Fascists, The Rexists in
Belgium or the Patriotic Peoples Movement in Finland). But the more they
emulated the fascist ideal, the more they became isolated from their societal
surrounding. Thus there were fascist or fascism emulating groups in many
countries of Europe, but there were only some of them which may be labelled
as of real importance.

Let me summarize this paragraph briefly: It is not a good idea to
define fascism by its outer attributes because this will not lead to a clear
distinction between its various forms. Instead one should define fascism by
its inner structure. Its apparent similarity to the political right and its change
of form explain why it is so difficult to give a clear-cut definition of fascism.

2. Why can fascist groups be found in almost every European country between 1918 and 1945? What made fascism attractive to conservatives as well?

Fascism – this must be stated with Ernst Nolte – was a phenomenon
of its epoch[32]. It arose during the crisis of bourgeois belief in progress, which
all over Europe at the beginning of the 20th century was replaced by fearful
defence against seemingly narrow rational order and the feeling of being at

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[30] Philippe Burrin, *Die politischen Religionen. Das Mythologisch-Symbolische in einer säkularisierten Welt*, in: Michael Ley, Julius H. Schoeps (Ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion*, Bodenheim 1997, p. 168-185.
[31] Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole*, Vierow 1996, p. 185.
[32] E. Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*.

the mercy of fate to anonymous masses. Fascism was no intellectual reaction, but it enjoyed appreciation and respectability from the fundamental critique of modernity since the end of the 19th century. The October-Revolution hit the self-consciousness of bourgeois and conservative elites and provoked irrational reactions, even where there was no real danger of communism.

Most important was World War I, which had provided the example of a nation united in battle and a new political style, which was of such importance for fascism. World War I originated in was at the beginning of unsolved social problems, among others the reintegration of once highly esteemed soldiers and officers, but now looked at with some suspicion and without clear orientation. World War I had drawn the masses out of their apathy. There was hope for a better future, for social reforms and for democratic renewal.

But if World War I is to be seen as the beginning of a new democratic Europe, it also was the cause of the breakdown of the new order. Instead of three great states (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia) now there were 11 states, revisionist some of them, **fearful staving** off the others. They saw themselves confronted with the difficult integration of newly acquired provinces, the integration of refugees and the necessity to live with striking ethnic minorities. Well-established economic connections were suddenly disrupted. There was no consensus regarding the political order, no expe-rience with democratic practices and the disability to settle conflict was obvious. The parliamentarism of notables under the entirely new circum-stances of party-democracy complicated the setting up of permanent govern-ments. The first signs of economic crises finally broke up the weak political consensus.

The time of dictatorship and authoritarian regimes already started in the twenties. Along with the world economic crises we see a second wave of dictatorial and authoritarian change. Poland, Yugoslavia and Lithuania may by regarded as belonging to the first phase. These dictatorships were not involved in the process of fascisation. The change was meant to give a solution to the crises of parliamentarism and regional clashes.

The dictatorships of the second phase often adopted fascist symbols and took over some of the political elements of fascism, thereby trying to canalise the pressure from the right in home policy and to find diplomatic allies in foreign policy. Examples of these new dictatorships would be Hungary in the 1930s, Austria under Dollfuß, the royal dictatorship of King Carol, the reign of Franco in Spain or the dictatorship of Metaxas in Greece. The mobilisation of the masses could not be cancelled. Even dictatorships needed some form of plebiscitarian approval. Carol in Romania and Metaxas in Greece did not want a **stand still** as the dictatorships of the first wave, but

stately initiated renewal[33]. Italian Fascism and the German National-Socialism served as a model that seemingly showed a way to integrate the masses actively and to find a way out of the crises of capitalism without changing too much.

To conclude this section I believe that fascism was a phenomenon of its epoch; its causes were the crises of the liberal system between 1918 and 1939. Especially in the middle of Europe we recognize weak democracies, vulgarised nationalism, anti-capitalism and anti-communism. The First World War promoted the development of democracies – and of dictatorships. We have distinguished between authoritarian systems in the classical sense like in Poland and the Baltic states, dictatorships with fascist symbols copying the Middle-European model in order to canalise mass mobilization and the genuine fascist dictatorships.

3. Why can strong autonomous fascist movements be found only in Italy, Germany and Romania?

If we use as an indicator the number of party memberships and success in election voting there are only few fascist organisations that deserve to be looked at more closely: Italy, Germany, Romania, Austria and Hungary. Even Spain would drop out because the Falange was of no importance up to outbreak of the civil war 1936, an observation not really unexpected because Spain had not taken part in the upheavals of the First World War.

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[33] For Greece see: David Close, *Conservatism, authoritarianism and fascism in Greece, 1914-45*, in: Martin Blinkhorn (Ed.), *Fascists and conservatives. The radical right and the establishment in twentieth-century Europe*, London 1960, p. 200-217; Kostas Loulos, *Genese and Charakter der Metaxas-Diktatur in Griechenland*, in: E. Oberländer (Ed..), *Autoritäre Regime*, p. 215-229.

In Austria[34] and Hungary[35] as well, there were important fascist organisations, resulting from the structural distortions of both societies respectively and the situation of Austria and Hungary in the world order after 1918. Nevertheless, international power relations fostered the ascendance of strong fascist movements in both countries. And it was the ever-growing importance of the Third Reich which weakened the strength of defence by the authoritarian regimes. Till then they could easily control the populistic right, but requirements of foreign policy now hindered the use of security measures that had been so effective in the past. More moderate political forces felt attracted towards the new fascist world order and lent NSDAP and the Arrow Cross Movement respectability.

The ascendance of strong autonomous fascist movements was the outcome of extraordinary circumstances. The crises of liberal order are only one part of the explanation. If we accept the proposition of Wolfgang Schieder, strong fascist movements are the result of three parallel modernization processes: the crises of nation building, the crises of industrialisation and the crises of democratisation. Only in countries experiencing all these crises at the same time can we find a strong anti-parliamentarism, a strong anti-capitalism and a strong nationalism. Accepted traditions of political culture were missing, there were only loose party-affiliations in these countries and traditional milieus were vanishing. The absence of democratisation favoured not only antiparliamentarian watchwords followed by the masses, but also the action taken by the political-social elite[36].

Neither the strong nation states with parliamentary traditions of the West had given fascism a chance, nor did the traditional states of south and Eastern Europe. Fascism had no chance where rigid political regimes

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[34] Francis L. Carsten, *Faschismus in Österreich. Von Schönerer zu Hitler*, München 1977; Walter Goldinger, Dieter A. Binder, *Geschichte der Republik Österreich, 1918-1938*, Wien 1992; Ernst Hanisch, *Österreichische Geschichte, 1890-1990. Die Langen Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1994, p. 279ff.; Barbara Jelavich, *Modern Austria. Empire and Republic, 1815-1986*, Cambridge 1987, p. 170ff.; Bruce F. Pauley, *Hitler and the forgotten Nazis. A history of Austrian National Socialism*, Chapel Hill 1981; Rolf Steininger, Michael Gehler (Ed.), *Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert. Ein Studienbuch in zwei Bänden*, Wien 1997, Vol. 1; Emmerich Tálos, *Zum Herrschaftssystem des Austrofaschismus. Österreich 1934-1938*, in: E. Oberländer (Ed.), *Autoritäre Regime*, p. 36-52.
[35] Jörg K. Hoensch, *A history of modern Hungary, 1867-1986*, London 1988, p. 115ff.; Micklós Lackó, *Arrow-Cross men, national socialists, 1935-1944*, Budapest 1969; Margit Szöllösi-Janze, *Die Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung in Ungarn. Historischer Kontext, Entwicklung und Herrschaft*, München 1989; Denis Silagi, *Ungarn seit 1918. Vom Ende des 1. Weltkrieges bis zur Ära Kádár*, in: Theodor Schieder (Ed.), *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, Vol. 7: *Europa im Zeitalter der Weltmächte*, Stuttgart 1979, p. 883ff.
[36] Compare footnote 5.

hindered the development of new aggressive political movements. Only in Italy and in Germany there were favourable circumstances for fascism – and in Romania as well. This certainly needs further clarification. The structural distortions in Romania were more striking than in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. At the same time Romanian election law of 1926 passed after the Italian Legge Acerbo stabilized the parliamentarian order[37]. Thus it required the world economic crises and the interference of the newly crowned King Carol to destabilise the parliamentary order of Romania. The parallel existence of parliamentarism and authoritarian offensive had the same result as in Italy and in Germany: the demolition of democracy. The provoked deprivation of the party regime led to a power void, but not to the participation of the fascist right in governing, as in Romania an authoritarian solution to the crises was always feasible. No strong political left frightened the political leading circles like in Italy and Germany; the only centre of unrest was the Legion of the Archangel Michael. The monarchical dictatorship of February 1938 reduced the liberty of action for the Iron Guard movement to none.

To summarize briefly, only in Italy, Germany and Romania can we find the prerequisites for the development of a strong, autonomous fascist movement: industrialisation, democratisation and nation building as parallel processes, a democracy challenged by authoritarian elites but nevertheless functioning.

4. How did fascism come into power?

The process of parliamentary disintegration can be described more precisely[38]:

a) *The fasci di combattimento* of Mussolin, the *NSDAP*, the *Legion of the Archangel Michael* have gained their first momentum in a time of economic crises when broad social strata suddenly got the impression of not being able to cope with the challenge and of being left alone.

b) Those groups of the political elite aiming at nothing else than cancelling the process of democratisation now felt themselves strengthened.

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[37] The fascist "legge Acerbo" of November 8th 1923 provided the strongest party having won at least 25% of the votes with two thirds of the parliamentary seats. The comparable regulation of Romania (March 27th 1926) equipped the majority-party having at least 40% of the votes with a bonus of half of the parliamentary seats, the rest being split proportionally. Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien, 1930-1940. Demokratie im autoritären Umfeld*, München 1997, p. 49ff.

[38] Cf. Juan J. Linz, *Crisis, breakdown, and reequilibration, (The breakdown of democratic regimes*, Vol. 1), Baltimore[2] 1984; W. Schieder, *Das Deutschland Hitlers*.

c) The longer the crises lasted the more the political initiative concentrated round a small group backing the head of the state, but without the result hoped for of consolidating the political situation.

d) At the peak of the crises there seemed to be no alternative for a change of regime. Basically two alternatives were feasible:

- A conservative dictatorship.
- A conservative-fascist reconfiguration.

The first alternative was the one chosen by King Carol, the second alternative was chosen by the political elites around the head of the state in Italy and Germany. The conservative circles of Berlin and Rome were too weak to set up an authoritarian regime against the fascist right and the communist left. They needed the assistance of a mass movement. In October 1922 and January 1933 it seemed inevitable to make the PNF and the NSDAP participate into government. The only question to be asked was that of the price. But as the decision had already been made, Mussolini and Hitler had the better trumps. They were in possession of paramilitary troops, and they argued, that there would be no calm, if they would not be themselves head of the government. Should one indeed negotiate for long if at the same time the principle decision had already been made?

Which groups helped Mussolini and Hitler to come to power? Industry was not of central importance. It would have preferred von Papen or Schleicher in Germany[39] and Giolitti in Italy[40]. This is not to say, that industry was not responsible for the breakdown of democracy. By refusing the principles of modern mass democracy industry played its own part in destabilizing parliamentarism[41].

More of importance for bringing Hitler and Mussolini into play were the agrarians, the army and – at least in Italy – parts of the functionary. And of course liberal and conservative parties agreed to play their part in framing fascism.

What were the common matters of concern for the conservatives and PNF and NSDAP? Wolfgang Schieder has worked out three motives[42]:

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[39] Reinhard Neebe, *Großindustrie, Staat und NSDAP, 1930-1933. Paul Silverberg und der Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie in der Krise der Weimarer Republik*, Göttingen 1981. Idem, *Die Großindustrie und die Machtergreifung*, in: Wolfgang Michalka (Ed.), *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung*, Paderborn 1984, p. 111-123.

[40] Cf. Adrian Lyttelton, *The seizure of power. Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929*, London 1973, p. 208ff.

[41] Eberhard Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik*, München und Wien 1984, p. 215.

[42] W. Schieder, *Das Deutschland Hitlers*, p. 52.

a) Firstly, both partners called into question the international order of 1919 and wanted to strengthen the standing of their country in the international power system.

b) Secondly, both partners were willing to cancel the process of democratisation, and

c) thirdly, there was the conviction that the state should intervene into the economy in order to enhance production. Instead of freely agreed wage agreements there should be regulations controlled by the state. Strikes and other wage conflicts were to be avoided.

The conservative elites – with the help of NSDAP and PNF – tried to return to the situation before the war. Italian Fascism and NSDAP aimed – of course – at far more reaching goals. They strove for an expansionary foreign policy and a new kind of dictatorship and for them intervention into the economy was feasible only under political viewpoints.

The making of the cabinet was the result of a compromise, which was not without danger for the conservative elites, and they knew it. But they believed that there was no alternative to it. Cooperation with fascism was their last refuge from "left danger", whatever that meant. They were to blame that government action always met less approval. Now they lost control of the political process.

A comparison with Romania proves that fascism came into power only under very special circumstances.

a) Codreanu, the leader of the Iron Guard, did not have any trump to creep upon the hearts of the conservative elites. It was only the Iron Guard that disturbed the political order. It was the Iron Guard that broke through the consensus in foreign policy matters.

b) Up to 1933 the "normal fascism"[43] of Mussolini was the reason of underestimation of fascism. Even democratic politicians looked at fascist Italy 1929-1933 with some sympathy. After 1933 the Zeitgeist changed. While in countries like Hungary and Austria the ascendance of the Third Reich weakened the oppositional forces, in most other parts of Europe the terrorist conquest of total power by the Nazis made even the conservatives aware of the fascist danger.

To sum up this chapter, we have seen that the advancement of fascism was the result of an economic-social requirement, resulting into a political crisis. Responsible for this was the political establishment, which wanted to exploit the critical situation in order to put an end to the process of democratisation and to establish a political constellation comparable to the one before the war.

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[43] The term was coined by Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, p. 48.

For those not involved in the inner circle of political debate the political crisis seemed to be a crisis of parliamentarism. And as the parliament was less and less able to determine political events, the decision making process concentrated round a little group connected to the head of the state. It was this small clique that directed the change into an authoritarian dictatorship and into a fascist-authoritarian dictatorship respectively. There was no problem in Romania to opt for an authoritarian solution, but this was not possible for Italy and Germany. There the conservative elites co-opted the fascist mass movement expecting to exploit it for its own interests.

5. *A model of the development of fascist movements and fascist regimes*

Now I want to develop the central argument of my hypothesis. I am going to differentiate between four types of fascist movements and five phases of fascist regime building. This then gives an idea of the varieties of fascism and it helps to explain the difference between the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany.

1. Types of fascist organisations

a) Only a short time after the war new political organisations were entering the political scene in Germany, Italy and Romania. These organisations were reflections of the social unrest of their time. We see small groups aiming at "reconciliation between workers and the nation", fostering a curious reform-program, and criticizing the bourgeois politicians but not directly arguing against democracy. Of real importance was to become the new political style, they developed, copying the street demonstrations of the political left and at the time reflecting the experience of war. This observation is true for the Arditi in Milan, the DAP in München and it is true for the Garda Conştiinţei Naţionale from Iaşi. These national-socialist groupings, to give them a name, were situated in cities. We find craftsmen, workers, former soldiers and some intellectuals giving these new political groupings their special flavour. Neither Hitler nor Codreanu had to play a leading role at this time of fascist organisational development.

b) Fascism as mass movement was born in autumn of 1920 when the former national-socialist fascism changed to become the spearhead in the terrorist offensive against the agrarian trade unions. The more successful fascism fought its battle the more it became fissured. It was only Mussolini who tied the different groupings together. Not all the time could he win recognition of his ideas. None the less, even the leaders of agrarian fascism had to recognize that without the political protection, Mussolini was aiming at, the movement would collapse in few months.

As you surely know, the leader of the fascist gangs arrived at the Italian capital on October 30th 1922 in a sleeping car, quite a time before his troops, tired by the heavy rain, were entering Rome[44]. What has been nothing but a great bluff was imitated by "little Mussolinis" of other countries. Hitler did it 1923 and Codreanu 1930.

Of course they were not successful, and indeed Mussolini's success was the result of unique circumstances. Without the friendly help of the Italian army and police the squadres would have split up in all directions.

c) While in Italy there had always been civil political violence helping the squadrons to spread their terror regime, the NSDAP and the Legion of the Archangel Michael had to change their tactics. There was no alternative to formal legality. All energies of the fascist organisations were concentrated on winning elections. There were no mechanisms of inner-party forming of opinion. Only propaganda and the cult of the leader prevented the party to fall to pieces. Hitler seemed to be apart of the inner conflicts; it was him whom the masses adored. He promised a new secular order beyond everyday experience. Nobody was able to dispute his position in the party. On the other side he did not have the means nor did he aim to have the means to rationalize his party and to give it a clear-cut structure. The chaos of administrative bodies and the "Kompetenzwirrwarr" of the Third Reich thus finds its equivalent in the Nazi movement[45].

The avowal to politics of legality let to an enlargement of the social Basis of the NSDAP and the Legion of Archangel Michael. The NSDAP has been characterized as the first people's party (Volkspartei) but in my opinion it would be more precise to label it negative integration party or a party of general protest.

d) The politics of legality presupposes that there is a real chance to come into power by elections. What happens if this is not the case? Under the monarchical dictatorship of King Carol the Iron Guard changed from a mass party to a terrorist cadre organisation. New, radical forces, which up to then had been in a minority position and which had been tamed by their engagement in electoral propaganda now gained influence and determined the appearance of the Iron Guard. If we want to enumerate another example of fascist terrorist cadre organisation we might mention the Croatian Ustasha.

Are there any common properties in behalf of the social structure of the fascist organisations? Generally young people without political experience make them up. Women do not play any central role in a community

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[44] Cf. Angelo Tasca, *Glauben, gehorchen, kämpfen. Aufstieg des Faschismus*, Wien 1969, p. 27.
[45] Cf. Hans Mommsen, *National Socialism*.

that has as its ideal the male hero. World-view and political style of leading circles of PNF, NSDAP and Legion of the Archangel Michael were determined by the experience of war.

2. Five steps of fascist regime-building

Comparing the Fascist state in Italy with Hitler's Third Reich will give an impression of fundamental differences. But if we direct our view on the development of both regimes they are certainly comparable. Wolfgang Schieder has characterised the first stage as "fascist dictatorship of mediation" (faschistische Vermittlungsdiktatur). In Germany this lasted only some weeks but in Italy, two years. The forcing into line of the parties and societal organisations was the next step followed by the stopping of the party revolution. The fourth episode may be described as conservative power consolidation that ended in the radicalisation of the regime.

a) The conservative elites had opted for cooperation with a mass movement as they were too weak to govern themselves. They thought, they "had engaged" Mussolini or Hitler for their own purposes. In two months they would have huddled Hitler into a corner[46]. Actually it was Mussolini and Hitler who consolidated their power as they alone were able to mediate between the party and the old politicians.

b) It was too late when the conservative elites noticed that they were permanently losing ground. Authoritarian change from above, elections to legitimate the new government, revolutionary pressure from below caused the strengthening of the position of Hitler and Mussolini. There was no prefabricated concept of enforcing the dominance of the fascist party. What the fascists had learned during the "time of battle" they now practised after they had participated in the government.

c) In both countries the claims of the paramilitary organisations, which had developed their own ideas and concepts, had to be "tamed". In Italy, the enforcement of discipline to the party was carried out by bureaucratic means. It was only since then (1925/26-1931) that Mussolini was the undisputed charismatic leader[47]. In Germany the conflict was much deeper and ended with the murder of Röhm in 1934, legitimated by the law of the Führer.

d) The annihilation of the party revolution was followed by a phase of conservative consolidation. For Italy one might think of the years 1929-1934, for Germany it would be the years 1934-1937. Of course consolidation did not exclude change. Hitler and Mussolini could only keep their position as

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[46] *Papens "Zähmungspolitik", Januar 1933*, in: Wolfgang Michalka (Ed.), *Das Dritte Reich*, Vol. 1, München 1985, p. 15.

[47] Martin Blinkhorn, *Mussolini und das faschistische Italien*, Mainz 1994, p. 37f.

charismatic leaders by initiating new changes, new successes. Charismatic leaderships needs continuous probation. But still it was possible to achieve attention without endangering the structure of the regime.

Power position and influence of the old conservative groups prevented fascism from unleashing uncontrolled energies from the very beginning. Slowly the balance shifted. In Italy the world economic crises, and the war against Ethiopia weakened the bargaining position of the industry. The "seizure of power" by Hitler strengthened the position of Mussolini in international affairs, and at the same time confronted him with a fascist rival. Looking at the development in Germany it is quite clear that in the beginning of 1938 the last conservative bastions in army and government were destroyed.

e) The radicalisation of the fascist political systems was the necessary result of the leadership-dictatorships. Fascism had always defined its goals negatively. It had named its enemies and it had preached aggressive nationalism. As all system adequate aims were attained – most of them also negative goals – there were left only two possibilities: either to give up the idea of charismatic leadership and to turn the regime towards conservative-authoritarian direction (Versachlichung – Max Weber) or to lead all constraints beside and to engage in expansive foreign adventures.

In this part of my lecture I have tried to give an explicit historical description of fascism challenging thus the idea of generic fascism. I have characterised fascism by its typical devolution (Verlaufstypus). We have seen that there are four types of fascist organisations (national-socialism, squadrism, election party, terrorist cadre organisation) and five steps of fascist regime building (dictatorship of mediation, forcing into line, suppression of the party revolution, conservative power consolidation, radicalisation).

6. Is it really legitimate to compare Mussolini's Italy to Nazi Germany? Which were the differences?

Even if one would like to underline the similarities between Italian Fascism and German Nazism it must be stressed that Italian Fascism always remained an unfinished totalitarianism[48]. The explanation of this fact can only be given in my opinion by two different arguments. The first would be

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[48] Alberto Aquarone, L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario, Vol. 1, Turin 1965 (Reprint 1978), p. 291: "Lo Stato fascista si proclamò costantemente, e con grande esuberanza di toni, Stato totalitario: ma rimase fino all'ultimo anche Stato dinastico e cattolico, quindi non totalitario in senso fascista".

that there is a direct relationship between the moment of accession to power and the organisational structure of the fascist movement. The second argument would point to the economic and political circumstances that were influential in the totalitarian change.

a) Mussolini could never intrude into the partially autonomous spheres of power of his conservative partners. The end of the war changed political and social circumstances less than in Germany. If fascism could only access to power with the help of conservative elites then the victory of fascism was only total where the position of the old conservative elites were totally endangered.

b) The political class of Italy not only accepted Mussolini because he was the leader of a mass movement they did not have; they opted for Mussolini because they hoped for his mediation between them. No other political personality of the political class was able to do this. They needed Mussolini as an outsider. The position of mediator thus for Mussolini implied being mediator between traditional institutions and elite groups, while Hitler got his exceptional standing since 1938 by mediating between rival national-socialist cliques.

c) The position of Mussolini in 1922 as the leader of his party was much weaker than the position of Hitler in 1933, as fascism accessed power in the phase of squadrism and not as election party. It is quite significant that the Duce entrusted the direction of the political police better to a functionary than to the party follower E. Guli[49].

d) Of course we must also have in mind the different societal circumstances in Italy and Germany. Mussolini did not achieve totalitarian transfiguration because of strength of the traditional structures. This especially is true for South Italy where fascism was only to gain foothold by cooperating with the clientele system.

e) National-socialism was the only totalitarian fascism. Only in Germany can we find this state tradition allowing absolute control. Only in Germany there existed a thick, dense net of intermediate structures as precondition of enforcement into line. Italy cold not think of provoking an European war; it did not have the economic means and the necessary number of people. No less biological racism is a reflection of modern thinking. Thus national-socialism was more than fascism. It was the expression of the destructive power of contemporary society.

Let us approach the end with this part of my argument: The differences between Italian normal fascism and German radical fascism are

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[49] A. Lyttelton, *The seizure of power*, p. 297.

based on two main reasons: first, the level of modernization in Italy and Germany and second, the date of Mussolini's and Hitler's access to power.

7. Why did the fascist rebuilding of the state fail in Spain and Romania though fascist groups had participated in the government?

During the last parts of my lecture I have given an insight into successful annexation of power by fascist organisations as is true for Germany and Italy. But there have also been cases where the fascist reconfiguration of the state failed. This for instance is true for Spain in 1936/37 and Romania in 1940/41. In both cases circumstances of international relations led to a coalition-government of a strong military wing and a weak fascist organisation. But while the Legion of the Archangel Michael was expelled from power after half a year, the Spanish Falange continued to function as the single state-party up to the end of the Franco-regime.

In 1937, during the civil war, the conservative Spanish military accepted the Falange as a fellow combatant. Its revolutionary claim collided with its meaninglessness before July 1936. Then this made it suitable to set up the grounds for the new regime. The Falange corresponded with the "Zeitgeist", but it had not importance of its own, and it was in need of an authoritarian leadership, as José Antonio Primo de Rivera, its "leader", had been executed on November 20th 1936. Only as a result of the civil war the Falange was able to find a larger membership. This is why it was the party of the Generalissimo even before Franco took over the formal lead. The opposition of the old Falangists to this development lacked the more real foundation as the organisation of José Antonio had stood out by its opportunism[50].

In the spring of 1940, the Iron Guard represented nothing more than the Falange four years before. It had survived the repressive measures of the monarchical dictatorship as a terrorist cadre organisation. It had lost any importance of its own. No necessities of inner power balance were responsible for its re-ascent. When the Iron Guard once again came on the political scene, this pointed to the military expansion of the Third Reich and the coercion to suit the political system to the new circumstances.

The "National-legionary State" of September 14th 1940 bound together entirely different forces than in Spain. The conservatives built all their hopes on General Antonescu, whom they thought to domesticate the fascist forces. Deliberately they hold the Iron Guard at bay. Thus the Guard was to become the reservoir of young extremists, older careerists and social

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[50] W. Bernecker, *Spaniens "verspäteter" Faschismus*.

outsiders. While in Spain the Falange was of little importance in fighting the civil war and it could not claim to be responsible for the victory of the right forces, the legionary circles believed they had the right to demand the whole power. Of course the rebellion of September 3rd had only made manifest the crises of the monarchical dictatorship. Even without the dilettante putsch Carol would have had to resign, as his policies were responsible for the loss of Bassarabia, the north of Transylvania and the south of Dobrogea.

Neither General Antonescu, the Prime Minister, nor Horia Sima, the new leader of the legionaries, were able to make compromises. Antonescu was the exponent of a self-confident bourgeoisie, and Horia Sima was dependent on the radical forces of his party. He was nothing but the successor of Codreanu, without his charisma, and he was not undisputed. His position as Vice-Premier did not give him any real power to control the state forces. Antonescu was in control of the state affairs wherever the Legion of the Archangel had not been able to infiltrate. However, if compared to Spain, the Iron Guard's position was much stronger and thus the army had to intervene to shake the aspirations of the Legionaries during the rebellion of January 21st - 23rd.

The disciplining of the Legion failed, and thus Antonescu ruled Romania since February 1941 as an ordinary military dictator. In contrast Franco was able to convert the Spanish Falange to a traditionalistic state party giving his authoritarian regime the flavour of "Spanish fascism". However, in both cases the conservative forces succeeded to make their own way against the fascist organisations.

8. What can we learn from an analysis of satellite fascism with reference to a theory of fascism?

After the experience with the legionaries in Romania with all its effects on the economy and the army Hitler did not cooperate with fascist organisations outside of Italy any longer, but opted for the cooperation with conservative elites. Only where there were no alternatives the German government used fascist organisations for its own purposes.

The Croation Ustasha and the Hungarian Arrow Cross Movement only came into power by German help. Not bureaucratic planning of genocide was typical for their reign but the unleashed devastating furiousness of their members. In Mostar hundreds of Serbs were guided to the Neretva, put together with wires and shot down[51]. In Budapest the gangs of the arrow

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[51] Ladislaus Hory, Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat, 1941-1945*, Stuttgart 1964.

cross movement rioted against the Jews. 50.000 of them were struck dead, burnt or murdered in other way. The state vanished under the strokes of the violent gangs.

We may conclude that without the parallel existence of "Normenstaat" and "Maßnahmestaat" (state of legal norms and state of arbitrary intervention), without a phase of fascist mediationary dictatorship, without suppression of the party revolution and without a phase of bureaucratic power consolidation, the fascist regime breaks down immediately as a result of its own terror.

Aachen