

BIOLOGY OF FASCISM

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Fascism and Mussolini are two consubstantial and solidarity words. Mussolini is the animator, the leader, the ultimate duce of fascism. Fascism is Mussolini's platform, rostrum, and chariot. To explain a part of this episode of the European crisis, let us quickly go through the history of the fasci and their leader.

Mussolini, as is known, is a politician of socialist origin. He did not have a temperate or centrist position within socialism, but an extremist and incandescent position. He had a consonant role with his temperament. Because Mussolini is, spiritually and organically, an extremist. Their position is on the extreme left or the extreme right. From 1910 to 1911 he was one of the leaders of the socialist left. In 1912, he directed the expulsion from the socialist home of four deputies in favor of ministerial collaboration: Bonomi, Bissolati, Cabrini and Podrecca. And then he took over the leadership of the Avanti. 1914 and the War came. Italian socialism claimed the neutrality of Italy. Mussolini, invariably restless and belligerent, rebelled against the pacifism of his co-religionists. He advocated the intervention of Italy in the war. Initially, he gave his interventionism a revolutionary point of view. He argued that to extend and exasperate war was to hasten the European revolution. But, in his interventionism, his warrior psychology beat, which could not be agreed with a Tolstoyan and passive attitude of neutrality. In November 1914, Mussolini abandoned the leadership of the Avanti and founded Il Popolo d'Italia in Milan to advocate an attack on Austria. Italy joined the Entente. And Mussolini, propagandist for the intervention, was also a soldier for the intervention.

But those feelings of national disappointment and depression were conducive to a violent nationalist backlash. And they were the root of fascism. The middle class is peculiarly accessible to the most exalted patriotic myths. And the Italian middle class, moreover, felt distant and adversarial to the socialist proletarian class. They did not forgive the working-class neutralism. The middle-class did not forgive the for the high wages, the state subsidies, the social laws that during the war and after it the working-class had obtained from fear of revolution. The middle class ached and suffered that the proletariat, neutralist and even defeatist, would be the beneficiary of a war that it had not wanted. And whose results devalued, dwarfed, and despised. These bad moods of the middle class found a home in fascism. Mussolini thus attracted the middle class to his fasci di combattimento.

Victory, armistice, demobilization arrived. And with these things came a period of unemployment for the interventionists. D'Annunzio nostalgic of feat and epic, undertook the adventure of Fiume. Mussolini created the fasci di combattimento: bundles or bundles of combatants. But in Italy the moment was revolutionary and socialist. For Italy, the war had been a bad business. The Entente had assigned Italy a meager share in the loot. Forgetful of the contribution of Italian arms to victory, she had stubbornly haggled over Fiume's possession. In short, Italy had come out of the war with a feeling of discontent and disillusionment. Elections were held under this influence. And the socialists conquered 155 seats in parliament. Mussolini, candidate for Milan, was thundered by the socialist votes

. Some dissidents of socialism and unionism enlisted in the fasci, giving them their experience and skill in organizing and recruiting the masses. Fascism was not yet a programmatic and consciously reactionary and conservative sect. Rather, fascism believed itself to be revolutionary. Their propaganda had subversive and demagogic nuances. Fascism, for example, jibed against the new rich. Its principles - tendentially republican and anti-clerical - were steeped in the mental confusion of the middle class which, instinctively dissatisfied and disgusted by the bourgeoisie, is vaguely hostile to the proletariat. Italian socialists made the mistake of not using shrewd political weapons to change the spiritual attitude of the middle class. Even more. They accentuated the enmity between the proletariat and the Piccola borghesia, disdainfully treated and nicknamed by some hieratic theorists of revolutionary orthodoxy.

Italy entered a period of civil war. Frightened by the chances of revolution, the bourgeoisie armed, supplied, and stimulated fascism solicitously. And it pushed the fascists to the gruesome persecution of socialism, to the destruction of the revolutionary unions and cooperatives, to the breaking of strikes and insurrections. Fascism thus became a large and seasoned militia. It ended up being stronger than the State itself. And then they claimed power. Fascist brigades conquered Rome. Mussolini, in "black shirt", ascended to the government, forced most of parliament to obey him, inaugurated a fascist regime and era.

Much has been said on Mussolini the person, much novel and little history. Because of his political belligerence, an objective and sharp definition of his personality and figure is hardly possible. Some definitions are dithyrambic and courteous; other definitions are spiteful and pamphleteering. Mussolini is known, episodically, through anecdotes and snapshots. For example, Mussolini is said to be the architect of fascism. Mussolini is believed to have "done" fascism. Now Mussolini is a seasoned shaker, a skilled organizer, a dizzyingly active guy. His activity, his dynamism, his tension, greatly influenced the fascist phenomenon. Mussolini, during the fascist campaign, spoke the same day in three or four cities. He used the airplane to jump from Rome to Pisa, from Pisa to Bologna, from Bologna to Milan. Mussolini is a volitional, dynamic, verbose, Italian style, uniquely gifted to stir up masses and excite crowds. And it was the organizer, the animator, the condottiere of fascism. But it was not its creator, it was not its creator. He drew from a state of mind a political movement; but he did not model this movement in his image and likeness. Mussolini did not give fascism a spirit, a program. On the contrary, fascism gave its spirit to Mussolini. His consubstantiation, his ideological identification with the fascists, forced Mussolini to exonerate himself, to purge himself of his last socialist residues. Mussolini needed to assimilate, absorb antisocialism, the chauvinism of the middle class to fit and organize it in the ranks of the fasci di combattimento. And he had to define his policy as a reactionary, anti-socialist, anti-revolutionary policy. The case of Mussolini is distinguished in this from the case of Bonomi, Briand, and other ex-socialists.

Bonomi, Briand, have never been forced to explicitly break with their socialist origin. Rather, they have attributed a minimal socialism, a homeopathic socialism. Mussolini, on the other hand, has gone so far as to say that he blushes from his socialist past as a mature man blushes from his adolescent love letters. And it has leapt from the most extreme socialism to the most extreme conservatism. It has not attenuated; it has not reduced its socialism; it has completely abandoned it. Its economic directions, for example, are averse to a policy of interventionism, statehood, fiscalism. They do not accept the transactional type of capitalist and entrepreneurial state: they tend to restore the classic type of collecting and gendarme state. His views of today are diametrically opposed to his views of yesterday. Mussolini was convinced yesterday as he is

convinced today. What has been the mechanism or process of your conversion from one doctrine to another? It is not a brain phenomenon; it is an irrational phenomenon. The engine of this change in ideological attitude has not been the idea; has been the feeling. Mussolini has not got rid of his socialism, intellectually or conceptually. Socialism was not a concept in him but an emotion, just as fascism is not a concept in him either but also an emotion. Let us observe a psychological and physiognomic fact: Mussolini has never been a cerebral one, but rather a sentimental one. In politics, in the press, he has not been a theorist or a philosopher but a rhetorician and a conductor. His language has not been programmatic, principled, or scientific, but passionate, sentimental. Mussolini's weakest speeches have been those in which he has attempted to define filiation, the ideology of fascism. The fascism program is confusing, contradictory, heterogeneous: it contains, mixed Pêle-Mêle, liberal concepts and union concepts. Rather, Mussolini has not dictated to fascism a true program; He has dictated an action plan.

Mussolini has gone from socialism to fascism, from revolution to reaction, by a sentimental route, not by a conceptual route. All the historical apostasies have probably been a spiritual phenomenon. Mussolini, extremist of the revolution yesterday, extremist of the reaction today, reminds us of Julianio. Like this Emperor, a character of Ibsen and Mjerowskovsky, Mussolini is a restless, theatrical, hallucinated, superstitious and mysterious being who has felt chosen by Destiny to decree the persecution of the new god and to replace in his altarpiece the dying ancient gods.

D'Annunzio And Fascism

D'Annunzio is not a fascist. But fascism is d'annunziano. Fascism customarily uses d'annunzian rhetoric, technique, and posture. The fascist cry of "Eia, eia, alala!" it is a cry from D'Annunzio's epic. The spiritual origins of fascism are in D'Annunzio's literature and in D'Annunzio's life. D'Annunzio can, therefore, deny fascism. But fascism cannot deny D'Annunzio. D'Annunzio is one of the creators, one of the architects of the state of mind in which fascism has been incubated and embodied.

Even more: All the last chapters of Italian history are saturated with Annunzianism. Adriano Tilgher in a substantial essay on Tersi Italia defines the pre-war period from 1905 to 1915 as "the uncontested kingdom of the Annunzian mentality, nourished by memories of imperial Rome and the Italian communes of the Middle Ages, formed of pseudo-pagan naturalism, of aversion to Christian and humanitarian sentimentality, of cult of heroic violence, of contempt for the profane vulgar curved on servile work, of kilometer phage dilettantism with a vague delirium of great words and imposing gestures ". During that period, Tilgher notes, the Italian petty and middle bourgeoisie fed on the rhetoric of a press written by unsuccessful writers, totally impregnated with d'annunzianism and imperial nostalgia.

And in the war against Austria, fascism was generated, gesta d'annunziana as well. All the leaders and captains of fascism come from the faction that overwhelmed Giolitti's neutralist government and led Italy to war. Fascism brigades were initially called bundles of fighters. Fascism was an emanation from war. Fiume's adventure and the organization of the fasci were two twin phenomena, two synchronous and symphonic phenomena. Mussolini's fascists and D'Annunzio's ardites fraternized. They both attacked their companies to the cry of "Eia, eia, alala!" Fascism and fiumanism suckled on the same she-wolf as Romulus and Remus. But, new Romulus and Remus too, fate wanted one to kill the other. Fiumanism succumbed to Fiume

drowned in its rhetoric and poetry. And fascism developed, free from the concurrence of any similar movement, at the expense of that immolation and that blood.

Fiumanism resisted descending from the astral and Olympic world of its utopia, to the contingent, precarious, and prosaic world of reality. He felt above the class struggle, above the conflict between the individualist idea and the socialist idea, above the economy and its problems. Isolated from the earth, lost in the ether, Fiumanism was condemned to evaporation and death. Fascism, on the other hand, took a position in the class struggle. And, exploiting the middle-class hatred against the proletariat, he framed it in its ranks and led it into the battle against the revolution and against socialism. All the reactionary elements, all the conservative elements, more anxious of a captain determined to fight against the revolution than of a politician inclined to agree with it, enrolled and concentrated in the ranks of fascism. Outwardly, fascism preserved its airs d'annunzianos; but internally its new social content, its new social structure, evicted and suffocated the gaseous ideology d'annunziana. Fascism has grown and won not as an Annunzian movement but as a reactionary movement; not as an interest superior to the class struggle but as an interest of one of the belligerent classes. Fiumanism was a literary phenomenon rather than a political phenomenon. Fascism, on the other hand, is an eminently political phenomenon. The condolieri of fascism had to be, therefore, a politician, a riot leader, plebiscitary, demagogic. And therefore, fascism found its duce, its animator in Benito Mussolini, and not in Gabriel D'Annunzio. Fascism needed a ready-to-use leader, against the socialist proletariat, the revolver, the staff, and the castor oil. And poetry and castor oil are two irreconcilable and dissimilar things.

D'Annunzio's personality is an arbitrary and versatile personality that does not fit within a party. D'Annunzio is a man without affiliation and without ideological discipline. He aspires to be a great actor in history. The role does not concern him but his greatness, its relief, its aesthetics. However, D'Annunzio has shown, wasted his elitism and his aristocratism, a frequent and instinctive tendency to the left and to the revolution. In D'Annunzio there is no theory, doctrine, concept. In D'Annunzio there is above all, a rhythm, a music, a form. But this rhythm, this music, this form, have had, at times, in some sonorous episodes of the great poet's history, a revolutionary nuance and sense. D'Annunzio loves the past; but love the present more. The past supplies it and supplies it with decorative elements, archaic enamels, rare colors, and mysterious hieroglyphs. But the present is life. And life is the source of fantasy and art. And, while the reaction is the instinct of self-preservation, the dying rattle of the past, the revolution is the painful gestation, the bloody delivery of the present.

When D'Annunzio entered the Italian Chamber in 1900, his lack of affiliation, his lack of ideology led him to a conservative seat. But one day of exciting controversy between the bourgeois and dynastic majority and the extreme socialist and revolutionary left, D'Annunzio, absent from the theoretical controversy, sensitive only to the throb and emotion of life, was magnetically attracted to the gravitational field of The minority. And he spoke thus to the extreme left: "In today's spectacle I have seen on the one hand many screaming dead, on the other few living and eloquent men. As a man of intellect, I march towards life." D'Annunzio did not march towards socialism; he did not march towards revolution. He knew and wanted nothing to know about theories or doctrines. He was simply marching towards life. The revolution exercised in him the same natural and organic attraction as the sea, the countryside, women, youth, and combat.

And, after the war, D'Annunzio approached the revolution several times again. When he occupied Fiume, he said that fiumanism was the cause of all the oppressed peoples, of all the unredeemed peoples. And he sent a telegram to Lenin. It seems that Lenin wanted to answer D'Annunzio. But Italian socialists opposed the Soviets taking the poet's gesture seriously. D'Annunzio invited all Fiume unions to collaborate with him in drawing up the fiumana constitution. Some men on the left wing of socialism, inspired by their revolutionary instincts, advocated an understanding with D'Annunzio. But the bureaucracy of socialism and the unions rejected and excommunicated this heretical proposition, declaring D'Annunzio a dilettante, an adventurer. The poet's heterodoxy and individualism disgusted his revolutionary sentiment. D'Annunzio, deprived of all doctrinal cooperation, gave Fiume a rhetorical constitution. An epic-toned constitution that is, without a doubt, one of the most curious documents in political literature of these times. These words are written on the cover of the Arengo del Carnaro Constitution: "Life is beautiful and worthy of being magnificently lived." And in its chapters and sections, the Constitution of Fiume assures the citizens of the Arengo del Carnaro, a provid, generous and infinite assistance for their body, for their soul, for their imagination and their muscle. In the Constitution of Fiume there are touches of communism. Not from the modern, scientific, and dialectical communism of Marx and Lenin, but from the utopian and archaic communism of the Republic of Plato, of the City of the Sun of Campanella and of the City of San Rafael by John Ruskin.

After Fiume's adventure was settled, D'Annunzio had a period of contact and negotiations with some leaders of the proletariat. At his villa in Gardone, D'Aragona and Baldesi, secretaries of the General Confederation of Labor, met with him. He also received a visit from Tchicherin, who was returning from Genoa to Russia. An agreement by D'Annunzio with the unions and with socialism seemed imminent at the time. Those were the days when the Italian Socialists, disassociated from the Communists, seemed close to ministerial collaboration. But the fascist dictatorship was underway. And, instead of D'Annunzio and the socialists, they conquered the Eternal City Mussolini and the "black shirts".

D'Annunzio lives in good relations with fascism. The dictatorship of the "black shirts" flirts with the Poet. D'Annunzio, since his retirement from Gardone, looks at her without rancor and without antipathy. But he remains elusive and sullen to all commonwealth with her. Mussolini has sponsored the sea pact drawn up by the Poet who is a kind of godfather of seafarers. Sea workers submit voluntarily. And to his empire. The poet of "La Nave" exercises a patriarchal and theocratic authority over them. Banned from legislating for the land, it is content to legislate for the sea. The sea understands it better than the land.

But history has as its setting the land and not the sea. And its central issue is politics and not poetry. The policy that demands constant and methodical contact from its actors with reality, with science, with the economy, with all those things that the megalomania of the poets ignores and disdains. In a normal and still period of history, D'Annunzio would not have been a protagonist in politics. Because in normal and quiet times, politics is an administrative and bureaucratic business. But in this epoch of neo-romanticism, in this epoch of the rebirth of the Hero, the Myth and the Action, politics ceases to be a systematic office of bureaucracy and science. D'Annunzio, therefore, has a place in contemporary politics. Only that D'Annunzio, undulating and arbitrary, cannot be immobilized within a sect or enroll on one side. It is not capable of marching either with reaction or with revolution. Still less is it capable of joining the eclectic and shrewd buffer zone of democracy and reform.

And so, without D'Annunzio being consciously and specifically reactionary, the reaction is paradoxical and emphatically d'annunziana. The reaction in Italy has taken from Annunzianism the gesture, the pose, and the accent. In other countries the reaction is more sober, more brutal, more naked. In Italy, a country of eloquence and rhetoric, the reaction needs to be erected on a plinth sumptuously decorated by the friezes, bas-reliefs and scrolls of d'annunziana literature.

INTELLIGENCE AND CASTOR OIL

Fascism conquered, at the same time as the government and the Eternal City, most of the Italian intellectuals. Some unreservedly joined fascisms car and its fortune; others gave it a passive consensus; others, the more prudent, granted him a benevolent neutrality. Intelligence likes to be possessed by the Force. Especially when the force is, as in the case of fascism, young, daring, martial and adventurous.

In addition, in this adherence of intellectuals and artists to fascism, there were specifically Italian causes. All the last chapters of the history of Italy appear saturated with d'annunzianism. "The spiritual origins of fascism are in D'Annunzio's literature." Futurism - which was a face, an episode of the Anununian phenomenon - is another of the psychological ingredients of fascism. The Futurists hailed the Tripoli War as the inauguration of a new era for Italy. D'Annunzio was later the spiritual condottiere of Italy's intervention in the world war. Futurists and d'annunzianos created in Italy a megalomaniac, anti-Christian, romantic and rhetorical humor. They preached to the new generations - as Adriano Tilgher and Antonio Labriola have remarked - the cult of the hero, of violence and of war. In a town like the Italian, warm, southern, and prolific, poorly contained and fed by its meager territory, there was a latent tendency to expansion. These ideas therefore found a favorable atmosphere. Demographic and economic factors coincided with literary suggestions. The middle class was easy prey to the Annunzian spirit. (The proletariat, led and controlled by socialism, was less permeable to such influence.) The idealistic philosophy of Gentile and Croce and all the imports and transformations of tudesco thought collaborated with this literature.

But this happened in the times that were still or seemed at the height of the fascist exploit. Since fascism began to decline, intellectuals began to rectify their attitude. Those who remained silent before the march to Rome today feel the need to prosecute and condemn it. Fascism has lost a large part of its clientele and its intellectual entourage. The consequences of Matteotti's murder have hastened defections.

Presently this anti-fascist current is affirmed among the intellectuals. Roberto Bracco is one of the leaders of the democratic opposition. Benedetto Croce also declares himself anti-fascist, despite sharing with Giovanni Gentile the responsibility and the laurels of idealistic philosophy. D'Annunzio, who is sullen and grumpy, has announced that he is withdrawing from public life and that he is again the same "lonely and proud artist" as before. Finally, Sem Benelli, with some dissidents from fascism and philofascism, has founded the League. Italic to provoke a moral revolt against the methods of the "black shirts".

Fascism has recently been endorsed by Pirandello. But Pirandello is a humorist. On the other hand, Pirandello is a small bourgeois, provincial and arachnoid, with a lot of literary genius and truly little political sensitivity. Your attitude can never be the symptom of a situation. Damn Pirandello, it is evident that Italian intellectuals are disgusted with fascism. The idyll between intelligence and castor oil is over.

How has this rupture been generated? It is convenient to immediately eliminate a hypothesis: that of the intellectuals distancing themselves from Mussolini because he has not estimated or made more use of their collaboration. Fascism is often decked out in imperialist rhetoric and disguising its lack of principles under some literary platitudes; but it loves men of action more than artisans of the word. Mussolini is a man too sharp and sly to surround himself with writers and teachers. It is best served by a staff of demagogues and guerrillas, experts in attack, riot, and turmoil. Between the club and the rhetoric, choose without hesitation the club. Roberto Farinacci, one of the current leaders of fascism, the main actor of his last national assembly, is not only a huge enemy of freedom and democracy but also of grammar. But these things are not enough to devastate the intellectuals. Indeed, neither intellectuals ever expected Mussolini to turn his government into a Byzantine academy, nor was fascist prose more grammatical than it is now. Nor does it happen that the writers, philosophers and artists, the Autocracy as Marinetti calls it, are too horrified by the truculence and brutality of the "black shirts" exploit. For three years they have suffered without complaint and without rejection.

The new orientation of Italian intelligence is a sign, an indication of a deeper phenomenon. For fascism it is not a serious fact, but as part of a greater fact. The loss or acquisition of some poets, such as Sem Benelli, is irrelevant to both the Reaction and the Revolution. Intelligence, artistry, have not reacted against fascism before the social categories, within which they are embedded, but after them. It is not the intellectuals who change their attitude towards fascism. It is the bourgeoisie, the banks, the press, etc., etc., the same people and the same institutions whose consensus allowed the march to Rome three years ago. Intelligence is essentially opportunistic. The role of intellectuals in history is, in fact, very modest. Neither art nor literature, despite its megalomania, directs politics; they depend on it, like so many less exquisite and less illustrious activities. Intellectuals form the clientele of order, tradition, power, force, etc., and, if necessary, of blackjack and castor oil. Some higher spirits, some creative mindsets escape this rule; but they are exceptional spirits and mentalities. Middle-class people, artists, and writers generally have neither aptitude nor revolutionaries. Those who currently dare to revolt against fascism are completely harmless. The Sem Benelli Italica League, for example, does not want to be a party, nor does it almost pretend to be political. It defines itself as "a sacred bond to unfold its sacred program: for the Good and the Law of the Italic Nation: for the Good and the Law of the Italic man". This program can be very sacred, as Sem Benelli says; but it is also very lazy, very gaseous, very candid. Sem Benelli, with that nostalgia of the past and that taste of archaic phrases, so typical of the mediocre poets of today, goes down the roads of Italy saying like a great poet of yesterday: Pace, pace, pace! His helpless advice comes with a long delay.

Theory of Fascism

The crisis of the fascist regime, precipitated by the Matteotti process, has clarified, and clarified the appearance and content of fascism.

The fascist party, before the march to Rome, was a nebulous report. For a long time, it did not want to classify itself or function as a party. Fascism, according to many "black shirts" of the first hour, was not a faction but a movement. It was intended to be, more than a political phenomenon, a spiritual phenomenon and to signify, above all, a reaction of the victorious Italy of Vittorio Veneto against the devaluation policy of that victory and its consequences. The composition, the structure of the fasci, explained their ideological confusion. The fasci recruited their followers in the most diverse social categories. In their rank: students, officers, writers,

employees, nobles, peasants, and even workers were mixed. The main staff of fascism could not be more polychrome. They were composed by dissidents of socialism such as Mussolini and Farinacci; ex-combatants, laden with medals, such as Iglori and De Vecchi; exuberant and bizarre futurist writers like Filippo Marinetti and Emilio Settimelli; recently converted ex-anarchists like Massimo Rocca; unionists such as Cessare Rossi and Michele Bianchi; Mazzinian republicans like Casalini; fiumanistas like Giunta and Giuriati; and orthodox monarchists of the nobility addicted to the Savoya dynasty. Republican, anticlerical, iconoclastic, in its origins, fascism declared itself agnostic before the regime and the church when it became a party.

The flag of the homeland covered all smuggling and all doctrinal and programmatic misunderstandings. The fascists claimed exclusive representation of Italianisms. They coveted a monopoly on patriotism. They were fighting to hoard for their faction the combatants and mutilated of the war. The demagoguery and opportunism of Mussolini and his lieutenants benefited, widely, in this respect, from the cursed policy of the Socialists, whom an insane and untimely antimilitarist vociferation had antagonized with most of the combatants.

The conquest of Rome and power aggravated the fascist mistake. The fascists found themselves flanked by liberal, democratic, Catholic elements, who exerted an unnerving daily influence on their mentality and spirit. In addition, many people were seduced into the ranks of fascism, seduced solely by success. The composition of fascism became spiritually and socially more heterogeneous. Mussolini could not therefore fully carry out the coup. He came to power insurrectionally; but he immediately sought the support of the parliamentary majority. It inaugurated a commitment and transaction policy. He tried to legalize his dictatorship. It oscillated between the dictatorial method and the parliamentary method. He declared that fascism should enter legality as soon as possible. But this fluctuating policy could not cancel the contradictions that undermined fascist unity. It was not long before two souls and two antithetical mentalities manifested in fascism. An extremist or ultraist faction advocated the integral insertion of the fascist revolution in the Statute of the Kingdom of Italy. The demo-liberal state should, in his opinion, be replaced by the fascist state. A revisionist faction, meanwhile, demanded an extensive rectification of party policy. He condemned the arbitrary violence of the provinces. The Ras, as the regional leaders or condottieri of the fascist party are designated, exercised over the provinces a medieval and despotic authority. Against racism, against squadrons, the revisionist fascists insurgents. The most categorical and authoritative revisionist leader, Massimo Rocca, had heated controversy with the extremist leaders. This controversy had vast projections. They wanted to fix and define, on both sides, the function and ideology of fascism. Fascism, which until then had been careful only to be an action, began to feel the need to also be a theory. Curzio Suckert assigned fascism a Catholic, medieval, anti-liberal, anti-Renaissance spirit. The spirit of the Renaissance, Protestantism, liberalism, was described as a dissolving, nihilistic spirit, contrary to the spiritual interests of Italianisms. The fascists did not notice that, since their first adventures, they had been described, above all, as asserters of the idea of the nation, an idea of clear Renaissance origins. The contradiction didn't seem to make them too pregnant. For their part, Mario Pantaleoni and Michele Bianchi spoke of the projected fascist state as a union state. And the revisionists, on their side, appeared tinged with a vague liberalism. Massimo Rocca's theses elicited protest from all extremists. And Massimo Rocca was officially ex-confessed by the fascist sect as a dangerous heretic. Mussolini did not mix in these debates. Absent from controversy, he occupied virtually a centrist position in fascism. Questioned, he was careful not to commit to an overly precise answer. "After all,

what does the theoretical content of a party matter? What gives it strength and life is its tonality, it is its will, it is the soul of those who constitute it."

When the work of defining fascism had reached this point, the Matteotti assassination ensued. At first Mussolini announced the intention to purge the fascist ranks. He outlined, in a speech in the Senate, under the pressure of the storm triggered by crime, a normalizing policy plan. Mussolini was urgent at that moment to satisfy the liberal elements that supported his government. But all his efforts to tame public opinion failed. Fascism began to lose its sympathizers and its allies. The defections of the liberal and democratic elements which, at first, out of fear of the socialist revolution, had flanked and sustained him, gradually isolated the non-fascist opinion of the Mussolini government. This isolation pushed fascism into an increasingly belligerent position. The extremist mentality prevailed in the game. Mussolini still used to sometimes use conciliatory language, hoping to break or weaken the combative spirit of the opposition; but fascism returned to a warrior tactic. In the following national assembly, of the fascist party, the most extreme tendency in Farinacci was dominated by its most typical condottiere. The revisionists, led by Bottai, capitulated across the line. Mussolini then appointed a commission to reform the Italian Statute. In the fascist press, the thesis reappeared that the demo-liberal state should yield to the fascist-unitary state. This state of mind of the fascist party had its most emphatic and aggressive manifestation in the rejection of the resignation of Deputy Giunta from the position of Vice President of the Chamber. Giunta resigned for having demanded the King's Attorney authorization to prosecute him as responsible for the attack on the dissident fascist Cesare Forni.

And the fascist majority wanted to protect it with a thunderous and explicit declaration of solidarity. Such an attitude could not be maintained. The fascist majority, in a subsequent vote, reluctantly rectified it, constrained by a storm of protests. Mussolini needed to use all his authority to compel the fascist deputies to withdraw. However, he failed in preventing Michele Bianchi and Farinacci from declaring their dissatisfaction with this opportunistic maneuver, inspired by considerations of parliamentary tactics.

Super-fascism, ultra-fascism, or whatever you want to call it, does not have a single nuance. It goes from Farinacci's rasista or squad fascism to the integralist fascism of Michele Bianchi and Curzio Suckert. Farinacci embodies the spirit of the black-shirted squads who, after gruesome training in punitive raids against socialist unions and cooperatives, marched on Rome to inaugurate the fascist dictatorship. Farinacci is a tempestuous and incandescent man who is not interested in theory but in action. It is the most genuine type of fascist rash. He has a grip on the province of Cremona, where he runs a Cremona Nuova newspaper that customarily threatens opposition groups and politicians with a second fascist "wave". The first "surge" was the one that led to the conquest of Rome. The second "surge", according to Farinacci's staunch lexicon, would sweep all the adversaries of the fascist regime in one night of San Bartolomé. Ex-railroad, ex-socialist, Farinacci has an agitator and condottiere psychology. In his articles and in his speeches, he goes around with his grammar. The opposition press frequently highlights this feature of his prose. Farinacci confuses democracy, grammar, and socialism in the same ferocious hatred. It wants to be, always, a genuine black shirt. More intellectual, but no less apocalyptic than Farinacci, are the fascists of the L'Impero newspaper in Rome. This newspaper is run by two writers from Futurism, Mario Carli, and Emilio Settimelli, who invite fascism to definitively liquidate the parliamentary regime. L'Impero is deliriously imperialist. Armed with the lictor's ax, fascist Italy has, according to L'Impero, an extremely high mission in the current chapter of world history. L'Impero also advocates the second fascist wave. Michele Bianchi and

Curzio Suckert are the theorists of integral fascism. Bianchi outlines the technique of the fascist state that he conceives almost as a vertical trust of unions or corporations. Suckert, director of *La Conquista dello Stato*, runs philosophically.

With this trend coexists, in the fascist party, a moderate, conservative trend, that does not deny liberalism or the Renaissance, that works for the normalization of fascism and that struggles to put the Mussolini government on a bureaucratic legality. They form the nucleus of the moderate tendency the former nationalists of *L'Idea Nazionale* absorbed by fascism in a row followed by the coup d'état. The ideology of these nationalists is the same as that of the old liberal right. Fearful monarchists, they oppose the fascist coup d'état compromising in the least the bases of the monarchy and the Statute. Federzoni, Paolucci, represent this temperate zone of fascism.

But, by their mentality, by their temperament and by their antecedents, the fascists of the Federzoni and Paolucci type are the ones who least embody true fascism. It is, in his case, prudent and measured conservatives. No exorbitant romanticism, no desperate nostalgia for the Middle Ages, drives them mad. They have no condottieri psychology. Farinacci, on the other hand, is a true example of a fascist. He is the man from the club, provincial, fanatic, catastrophic, warrior, in whom fascism is not a concept, not a theory, but only a passion, an impulse, a cry, an "alala".

THE NEW ASPECTS OF THE FASCIST BATTLE

Fascism is the reaction, as almost everyone knows it or almost everyone thinks they know it. But the complex reality of the fascist phenomenon cannot be fully grasped in a simplistic and schematic definition. The Directory is also the reaction. And yet, you cannot study the reaction in the Directory as in fascism. Not only out of disdain for the boastful and decorated stupidity of Primo de Rivera and his henchmen. Not only because of the conviction that these mediocrity tartarines are too insignificant and trivial to influence the course of history. But above all, because the reactionary phenomenon must be considered and analyzed there where it manifests itself in all its power, there where it signals the decline of a previously vigorous democracy, there where it constitutes the antithesis and effect of a long and profound revolutionary phenomenon.

In Italy, the reaction offers us its maximum experiment and its maximum spectacle. Italian fascism fully represents the anti-revolution or, as you prefer to call it, the counter-revolution. The fascist offensive is explained, and carried out, in Italy, because of a revolutionary withdrawal or defeat. The fascist regime has not hatched in a casino. It has taken shape within a generation and has been nourished by the passions and blood of a thick social layer. He has had, as an entertainer, as a leader, a man of the people, intuitive, sharp, vibrant, exercised in the domain and command and seduction of the crowd, born for controversy and combat and who, excluded from the socialist ranks, he has wanted to be the spiteful and implacable condottiere of anti-socialism and has marched at the head of the anti-revolution with the same warrior exaltation with which he would have liked to march at the head of the revolution. The fascist regime, finally, has replaced, in Italy, a parliamentary and democratic regime much more evolved and effective, than the embryonic and fictitious asaz liquidated, or simply interrupted, in Spain, by General Primo de Rivera. In the history of fascism, in short, one feels the active, compact, and belligerent beating of all the premises and of the historical and romantic, material, and spiritual factors of an anti-revolution. Fascism was formed in an environment of revolutionary imminence - an

environment of turmoil, violence, demagoguery, and delirium - physically and morally created by war, fueled by the post-war crisis, excited by the Russian revolution. In this tempestuous environment, charged with electricity and tragedy, his nerves and his canes were tempered, and from this environment he received strength, exaltation, and spirit. Fascism, by the combination of these various elements, is a movement, a current, a proselytizing.

The fascist experiment, whatever its duration, whatever its development, appears inevitably destined to exasperate the contemporary crisis, to undermine the foundations of bourgeois society, to maintain post-war unease. Democracy uses the weapons of its criticism, its rationalism, its skepticism against the proletarian revolution. Against the revolution, mobilize Intelligence and invoke Culture. On the other hand, fascism opposes a revolutionary and nationalistic mysticism to revolutionary mysticism. While liberal critics of the Russian revolution condemn in the name of civilization the cult of violence, the captains of fascism proclaim it and preach it as their own cult. Theorists of fascism deny and detract from the historicist and evolutionary conceptions that have, before the war, rocked the prosperity and digestion of the bourgeoisie and that, after the war, have tried to be reborn reincarnated in Democracy and in the New Freedom of Wilson and in other less Puritan Gospels.

Reactionary and nationalistic mysticism, once installed in power, cannot be content with the modest office of preserving the capitalist order. The capitalist order is demo-liberal, it is parliamentary, it is reformist or transformative. It is, in the economic or financial field, internationalist. It is, above all, an inherent order with the old policy. And what reactionary or nationalistic mysticism is not kneaded with a little hatred or retraction of the old parliamentary and democratic policy, accused of abdication or weakness in the face of "socialist demagoguery" and "communist danger"? Is not this, perhaps, one of the most monotonous ritornelles of the French rights, of the German rights, of all the rights? Consequently, the reaction, arrived at the power, is not satisfied with conserving; intends to redo. Since it denies the present, it cannot preserve or continue it: it must try to remake the past. The past that is condensed in these norms: principle of authority, government of a hierarchy, state religion, etc. In other words, the norms that the bourgeois and liberal revolution tore and destroyed because they entered the development of the capitalist economy. And it happens, therefore, that while the reaction is limited to decreeing the ostracism of Liberty and repressing the Revolution, the bourgeoisie claps; But then, when the reaction begins to attack the foundations of its power and wealth, the bourgeoisie feels the urgent need to license its bizarre defenders.

The Italian experience is extremely instructive in this regard. In Italy, the bourgeoisie greeted fascism as a savior. La Terza Italia changed the garibaldina red shirt for the mussoliniana black shirt. Industrial and agrarian capital financed and armed the fascist brigades. The fascist coup d'état obtained the consensus of most of the House. Liberalism bowed to the principle of authority. Few liberals, few Democrats, refused to enroll in the Duce's entourage. Among the parliamentarians, Nitti, Amendola, Albertini. Among the writers, Guglielmo Ferrero, Mario Missiroli, some others. The classic leaders of liberalism, —Salandra, Orlando, Giolitti — with intensity, gave their confidence to the dictatorship. Temporarily, the adherence or trust of these people was embarrassing for fascism; it imposed a work of absorption on them, superior to their strength, superior to their possibilities. The fascist spirit could not act freely if it did not previously digest and absorb the liberal spirit. In the impossibility of developing its own ideology, fascism ran the risk of adopting, attenuated, the liberal ideology that surrounded it.

The political storm triggered by the Matteotti assassination provided a solution to this problem. Liberalism separated from fascism. Giolitti, Orlando, Salandra, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, etc., assumed an attitude of opposition. They did not follow the opposition bloc to their withdrawal from Aventino. They remained in the Chamber. Organic MPs could do nothing else. Fascism was isolated. On its flanks only a few liberal-nationals and some Catholic-nationals continue, that is, the most nationalist and conservative elements of the old parties.

The oppositions thus hoped to force fascism to leave power. They thought that with the void around them, fascism would automatically fall. The communists fought this illusion. They proposed to the Aventine opposition their constitution as a people's parliament. In front of the parliament, the fascist of Montecitorio had to function the anti-fascist parliament of the Aventine. The boycott of the House had to be carried to its latest political and historical consequences. But this was, frank and clear, the way of revolution. And the Aventine bloc is not revolutionary. It is felt and proclaimed normalizing. The communist invitation could not, therefore, be accepted. The Aventine bloc was content to raise the famous moral issue. The Aventinian opposition refused to return to the House while exercising power, covered by the majority vote, the men on whom the responsibility for the murder, Matteotti's, weighed heavily. fascist government, justice was coerced to clarify and examine.

Mussolini responded to this statement of intransigence with political maneuver. He sent the House an electoral bill. In Italian parliamentary practice this procedure precedes and announces the call for political elections. Would the Aventine parties also abstain from attending the elections? The block was ratified in its intransigence. He insisted on the moral fault. The opposition press published a memorial by Cesare Rossi, written by him before his arrest, in which the alleged ruler of Matteotti's murder accuses Mussolini. The strikethrough was documented. But the dialectic of the opposition rested in a mistake. The moral question could not dominate the political question. Rather, the opposite had to happen. The moral question was powerless to decide fascism to leave the government.

Mussolini reminded the opposition in his pungent January 3 speech in the House. The preamble to his speech was the reading of Article 47 of the Italian Statute, which gives the Chamber of Deputies the right to accuse the King's Ministers and to send them to the High Court of Justice. "I formally ask," he said, "if there is someone in this House or outside of here who wants to make use of Article 47." And then, with dramatic intonation, he claimed for himself all the responsibilities of fascism. "If fascism," he declared, "was nothing more than castor oil and bludgeon, and not a superb passion of the best Italian youth, to blame me! If fascism has been an association to commit crimes, well, I am the head and the person in charge of this association to commit crimes! If all the violence has been the result of a certain historical, political, and moral climate, well, to me the responsibility, because this historical, political, and moral climate was created by me! " And he immediately announced that in forty-eight hours the situation would be clarified. How have you kept your word? In a way as simple as it is notorious. Almost completely suffocating press freedom. The opposition, almost deprived of the press rostrum, is peremptory and rudely invited to return to the parliament rostrum. Aventino is already preparing to return to the Chamber.

In a recent article in the magazine *Gerarchia*, entitled "In Praise of the Gregarious", Mussolini martially reviews the adventures of the battle. Controversy with the opposition. And he exalts the discipline of his troops. "The discipline of fascism," he writes, "really has aspects of religion." In

this discipline he recognizes "the spirit of the people who in the trenches have learned to conjugate, in all modes and times, the sacred verb of all religions: obey" and "the sign of the new Italy that is once stripped by all of the old anarchoid mentality with the intuition that only in the silent coordination of all forces, at the command of toria ".

Isolated, blocked, boycotted, fascism becomes more belligerent, more combative, more intransigent. The liberal and democratic opposition has returned it to its origins. The reactionary test, free of the ballast that previously entered and unnerved it internally, can now be fulfilled in its entirety. This explains the interest that the fascist battle has for its contemporaries as a historical experience.

Fascism, which had been in Noulens for two years. The council of war agreed that it was almost content to represent in power the role of gendarme of capitalism, and today it intends to substantially reform the Statute of Italy. It intends, according to its leaders and its press, to create the fascist state. Insert the fascist revolution in the Italian Constitution. A commission of eighteen fascist legislators, chaired by the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, prepares this constitutional reform. Farinacci, leader of fascist extremism, called in this emergency to the party's general secretary, declares that fascism "has lost two and a half years in power." Now freed from the heavy alliance of the liberals, purged from the residue of the old politics, he sets out to make up for lost time. All the captains of fascism speak a language more exalted and mystical than ever. Fascism wants to be a religion. Giovanni Gentile, in an essay on the "religious characters of the present political struggle", observes that "today, in Italy, because of fascism, those who seemed until yesterday to be the strongest personal ties of friendship and family are broken". And from this war, the philosopher of idealism does not hurt. The philosopher of idealism has, for some time, been the philosopher of violence. Remember, in your essay, the words of Jesus Christ: Non veni pacem mitters, sed gladium. Ignem veni mittere in terrain [I came to send a sword, not peace, on this land]. And he points out, regarding the moral question, that "this religious hue of fascist psychology has generated the same hue in anti-fascist psychology

Giovanni Gentile, possessed of his faction's fever, certainly exaggerates. In the Aventine, the religious flame has not yet lit. Still less has it turned on, nor can it turn on, in Giolitti. Giolitti and Aventino represent the demo-liberal spirit and culture with all their skepticism, with all their rationalism, with all their criticism. The present struggle will give back to the liberal spirit a little of its old fighting force. But it will not succeed in rebirth as faith, as passion, as religion. Aventino and Giolitti's program is standardization. And because of its mediocrity, this program cannot shake the masses, it cannot exalt them, it cannot lead them against the fascist regime. Only in the revolutionary mysticism of the communists are the religious characters that Gentile discovers in the reactionary mysticism of the fascists. The final battle will not be fought, therefore, between fascism and democracy.

