

ORIGINS OF FASCISM

by

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INTRODUCTION

When Mussolini founded the Fascist Party in 1919, he was a political parvenu who had to create his own ideological pedigree. For this purpose he drew upon numerous sources of the past and cleverly adapted them to the conditions actually existing in Italy during the postwar era. The aim of this paper is to trace the major roots of the ideology and to interpret some of the forces that brought about the Fascistic solution to the economic and political problems as they appeared on the Italian scene.

These problems, however, were not peculiar to Italy alone. Rather they were problems that cut across national lines, and yet they had to be solved within national boundaries. Consequently, the idea that Fascism is merely an extension of the past is not an adequate explanation for the coming of Fascism; nor is the idea that Fascism is a momentary episode in history a sufficient interpretation of the phenomenon.

As Fascism came into its own, it evolved a political philosophy, a technique of government, which in turn became an active force in its own right. And after securing control of the power of the Italian nation, Fascism, driven by its inner logic, became a prime mover in instigating a chain of events that precipitated the second World War.

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CHAPTER I

THE MOOD

To understand what actually took place on October 28, 1922 it is necessary to trace first of all some of the political, social, and economic conditions that prepared the way for the final coup d'etat under a man whose very temperament was a major factor in the assault.

Lack of efficient parliamentarism, dissatisfaction with war treaties, postwar economic difficulties, general social unrest due to disappointment and exasperation, the promising strength of the Fascist party were some of the underlying features that prepared the mood and the setting for the rise of Italian Fascism.

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The common aim, that of Italian national unity and independence, which had kept Italian parliaments functioning smoothly, had been achieved in 1876. However, parliamentary government, imposed from above, at a time when a large majority of the population was illiterate, never became thoroughly acclimated in Italy's political life. The deputies, representing local rather than national interests, were frequently out of touch with the masses of population. Thus political life in Italy became to a large extent a game between political leaders rather than political parties. When uniting ideas are absent, there must of necessity be a tissue-weaving person; consequently, government of personal ascendancy became the order of the day, bringing with it all the

intrigue, electoral corruption, and dishonest retreat from policy. Gino C. Speranza, Special Assistant to the American Embassy at Rome, prepared in September, 1918 a special report for the Department of State, in the conclusion of which he stated that "the real forces of the country are not strictly political or popular forces in the American or English sense, but are rather the power or influence of relatively few men, or groups, or classes of men, working on an unprepared and untrained mass of people."¹

Within parliament the policies of transforismo (unprincipled change of allegiance on the part of the Prime Minister in an effort to discover a new following without consulting the electorate) and rimpasto (a "rekneading" of parliament by resorting to a variety of means, legal and illegal, to get rid of unwelcome colleagues) were so prevalent that a government lasted on the average of eighteen months between 1876 and 1922, too short a time to convert policy into law, and to transform law into administration.²

Giolitti, as his record of office shows (1903-1905, 1906-1907, 1911-1914, and again at the end of 1920) was adept at maintaining himself in power by playing off interests against each other by "managing" elections, by catering to patrons and clients who were "influential", by murdering

¹ Archives of the Department of State, Washington, D.C., No. 865.00/71 quoted in Commonweal, January 18, 1946 by Joseph T. Durkin in his article "Note on Mussolini", 352.

² Benedetto Croce, A History of Italy 1871-1922. Consult also Cecil Sprigge, The Development of Modern Italy; Margot Hentze, PreFascist Italy: The Rise and Fall of the Parliamentary Regime.

if necessary, by granting offices to those prefects who could produce the votes, by allowing the Mafia and Camorra free rein so long as they supported the government, by subsidizing journalists and lawyers and rising industries. Giolitti's record of power shows further that a tactful withdrawal from office very often resulted in greater advances through a weaker person and made for still more brilliant rise to power.³

That such a condition existed was due not only to the cunning and ambition of the leaders but also to the lack of national political parties whose chief advantage in any country is that of publicity, propaganda, clarification of issues. The Socialist party organized in the 1890's was the closest to being national in scope, though it had its strength only in northern and central Italy. The rest of the parties were localized, scattered units rather than a network.

Furthermore, Italy had not succeeded in developing a ruling class; that is, a majority who were willing to set aside personal differences in favor of the welfare of the whole country. The main interest of the people as a whole was to eke out a living.

By 1914, nationalism, socialism, syndicalism, idealism all wanted more than Giolitti could give or wanted to give. All wanted to remake Italy by overturning existing institutions, at least so claim the pro-Fascists.⁴

³ Guiseppe Borgese, Goliath: The March of Fascism, 99.

⁴ Luigi Villari, Italy, Chapters VI, VII, IX, X. Major J. S. Barnes, Fascism. H. W. Schneider, Making the Fascist State.

On the other hand the anti-Fascists maintain that parliamentarism with all its defects was not a failure; illiteracy had been reduced considerably; participation in national elections was increasing; electoral corruption was no worse than in other countries; Italy after 1900 was making slow but steady progress toward democracy.⁵

Perhaps this youthful, inefficient yet struggling parliamentarism did not in itself produce Fascism; nevertheless it was a great factor in producing Mussolini. Mussolini's hatred of parliaments was the most consistent theme in his rise to power. He despised them as instruments of democratic rule which used deliberation, discussion, and argument as a means of achieving reform, whereas he believed in the violence of social revolution.⁶

Fundamentally parliamentarism was in complete discord with his own authoritarian and imperious temperament. "Within me I recognize no one superior to myself", he had said already in 1910.⁷ His description of Giolittian Italy was indicative of the wave of exasperation that prevailed on a large scale among the Nationalists, the Idealists, the Syndicalists; on a smaller scale among the Catholics, the Modernists (Heretics), and the Futurists:

The picture of Third Italy is complete. Giolitti stands in the midst of

5 Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, Fascist Dictatorship in Italy. Luigi Sturzo, Italy and Fascismo, Chapter I. Oden Por, Fascism. Guiseppe Borgese, Goliath: The March of Fascism.

6 Mussolini, As Revealed in His Speeches, 17.

7 Gaudens Megaro, Mussolini in the Making, 334.

the scene; behind him and flanking him comes the vast retinue of his bloc in which are seen the Freemason's triangle and the priest's shovel hat, Nathan the Jewish mayor of Rome, and Romolo Murri, a leader of the 'Modernist' movement. A great game with electoral and banking customers--that is Giolitti's parliamentarism: neither reaction nor revolution. This tight-rope walker, this hopelessly mediocre Piedmontese has conquered. The spirit of rebellion in Italy is extinguished. The official Socialists hug Madam Freemasonry in a sterile embrace under the approving eye of the Great Architect of the Universe. Past are the days of concentration camps, almost past are those of the prison house....Perhaps a healthful tempest is nigh to sweep away Giolitti, Giolittianism, and all this sickly social philosophy which is the ruin of genuine socialism. 8

2

At the outbreak of the World War the Italian government decided it was not bound by the Triple Alliance to an offensive war on the part of the Central Powers, and therefore it made a declaration of neutrality. Public opinion, however, was divided. The Nationalists demanded Italy's entrance into the war on either side as an opportunity to wipe the "Liberal pest" off the face of the globe and to crush Socialism. The Socialists opposed entrance into the war. After some hesitation Mussolini, an extreme Socialist and editor of the party organ Avanti, pronounced himself in favor of intervention on the side of the Allies:

If the Prussian reaction triumphs in Europe tomorrow, and the destruction of

Belgium and the intended annihilation of France cause the level of European civilization to sink, those who have not attempted to hinder the catastrophe will be traitors and apostates. 9

Mussolini attempted to explain his support of Italian intervention as the direct outcome of his Socialistic conscience, but he was not so ready to mention the sums of money he received from the French government agents in order to launch and maintain the Popolo D'Italia.¹⁰

When Italy finally entered the war in May, 1915, there was great hope that she would enjoy a new resorgimento and would at last obtain a place in the sun.

But her hopes were dealt a severe blow by the wave of war-weariness which swept over the country in 1919 and by the results of the Paris Peace Conference, which left Italy with a mutilated victory. The army, returning from the front to reap the reward of its sacrifices, found that the more profitable posts had been occupied meanwhile by those who had stayed safely at home. The cost of living had risen considerably, with no corresponding adjustment to salaries. The middle class seemed to be in a worse economic plight than the peasants and the industrial workers. The country was seething with disillusion and discontent and humiliation.

Humiliation was the direct result of the treatment Italy had received at the Peace Conference. According to the London Treaty, Italy was guaranteed the Brenner frontier,

9 Mussolini, Speeches, 6.

10 Gaetano Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, 25.

a part of the Dalmatian coast together with its neighboring islands, the city of Trieste and its surroundings. Two sections of the Montenegrin coast were to be neutralized; the port of Durazzo was to be assigned to the "independent Mohammedan state of Albania" of which Italy was to conduct the foreign relations. Furthermore, Italy was granted sovereignty over the Dodecanese Islands which were already in her possession; she was to be given an "equitable part" of the Mediterranean region of Adalia where she had already acquired interests approved by Great Britain, together with a goodly share in the eventual indemnities "in proportion to her efforts and sacrifices", plus an "equitable compensation" in her frontiers and existing colonies should France and Great Britain gain African colonies.¹¹ There were further compensations in Asia Minor promised by the later agreement of St.-Jean-de-Maurienne.

The collapse of Austria-Hungary brought up the question of Fiume, framed in another and vaster one, that of Yugoslavia, and this became the pivot of Italian nationalism before and during the Paris Conference. "The whole of Italy...was hypnotized by the Adriatic and Yugoslav question, instead of concentrating on Fiume, and was so carried away as not to see the dangers of such a policy."¹²

True that out of the Paris Conference Italy did get the northern frontier and the provinces of Trieste and Trent, the

11 Camillo Pellizzi, Italy, 39-41.

12 Luigi Sturzo, Italy and Fascismo, 44.

Istrian peninsula, and Pola. But the Dalmatian coast and the Adriatic lands mentioned in the London Treaty were now claimed by an Allied power, Yugoslavia. Wilson felt that it was his moral duty to secure Yugoslavia's aspirations at Italy's expense, and to this end he set forth his views to the Italian people over the heads of their accredited representatives. The Italian delegation left Paris at this discourtesy and upon its return ten days later found that the main European problems had been settled in their absence. All that was left was the presentation of the Peace Treaty to the German delegation.

The general attitude throughout Italy was one of disillusionment, pain, and anger over not being sufficiently appreciated for her contribution to the war, and above all over not being treated with the same regard as the other peoples of Europe. A rancor against those who had dragged Italy into the war spread among the masses and was directed chiefly against the government, which seemed merely to stand by. Officers and soldiers who dared to appear in public in uniform were attacked by the Socialists who were advocating revolution by violent means as the only solution to Italy's plight. In the election of 1919 they won an outstanding victory of 157 seats in Parliament.

3

In addition to the discontent over the setbacks of the Peace Treaty there existed in postwar Italy a great number of economic and financial difficulties with which the Italian government was too paralyzed or too static to cope.

Just how serious these economic difficulties were seems as yet too difficult to ascertain from the readings. Pro-Fascists emphasize them but at no time do they offer actual comparative statistics. Anti-Fascists do explain the economic upheaval that followed the war and claim that it was no worse than any other postwar era in any other European country. According to their statistics, Italy was on the mend^d by 1922 and the March on Rome was not needed to remedy the economic crisis, nor to destroy the threat of Communism.

However, this seems to have been the condition: the productive forces of the country were in part destroyed, in part turned, as a result of the war, into false channels. The lira fluctuated in value so drastically and suddenly that it wrought havoc particularly to the wage earners and salaried employees. During the war Italian currency had been kept up by English and American loans. With the peace, the Italian treasury had to fall back on its own resources. From July, 1918 to July, 1922, it was obliged to pay four billion gold dollars for the extraordinary war liabilities that were maturing.¹³ Since this amount could not be raised by taxation, the Treasury was obliged to inflate the currency. Prices soared in consequence. Workers demanded higher wages and when their demands were rejected or answered too slowly, they resorted to strikes.

On the other hand, industrialists and bankers rused headlong into irrational undertakings, making attempts at

¹³ Gaetano Salvemini, Fascist Dictatorship in Italy, 30-3.

trade with ruined countries, urging the government to increase the paper money in circulation, thus producing a fictitious economy. Even in agriculture there occurred a capitalistic speculation in land simultaneously with the peasant demand for land of their own as was promised to them for their participation in the war. Ownership of land was an immediate gain for the peasants in the light of the rapid rise in the cost of food. Furthermore, there was a drive to intensify the cultivation of corn on the ill-cultivated fields of south and central Italy so as to diminish importation from abroad. There resulted from all this economic complexity a confused state of mind aggravated by the activities of the parties with a mass following and by associations of ex-combatants.¹⁴

Movements for reform and revolution pointed in various directions. The Nationalists renewed their prewar attacks on Parliament and demanded authoritarian and aristocratic government and an imperialistic foreign policy.

The Socialists increased in number (50,000 prewar to 200,000 postwar) to such an extent as to hold 157 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 1919, chiefly because of the rapid industrialization for military purposes during the war and the general disappointment at the subsequent increase in misery. The extreme Socialists advocated revolution by violent means as the only solution to Italy's problems. Strikes and disorders inspired by them reached a climax in 1920 when the workers occupied the metallurgical factories of Lombardy and Piedmont. Neither the government nor the industrialists of-

14 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 51-8.

ferred any resistance, and the workers, finding they could not operate the factories without capital or technical experts, evacuated them after a few days. The revolutionary leaders suffered a loss of prestige simply because the party had not that trained leadership so essential for the political guidance and education of masses of people. The thousands of new adherents had been won over by ephemeral passion rather than by a clear understanding of the situation. Unless their faith could be augmented by reasonable conviction, these masses would and did follow, at the first opportunity, a leader that captured their fancy. George Seldes claims that the first responsibility for Fascism falls to Socialism. In 1921, there was a further weakening of the party by the secession of its Left Wing elements, which formed the Maximalists, taking their orders directly from Moscow.

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Meanwhile in 1919, there were two new groups that were attracting those who were opposed to the Socialist program: the Popular Party founded by Don Luigi Sturzo with a democratic program "inspired by Christian ethics" and the Fascio di Combattimento formed by Mussolini for the purpose of restoring public order and the suppression of Socialism. Fascism recruited its early adherents from the Nationalist

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15 George Seldes, Sawdust Caesar, 8.

16 Ivano Bonomi, From Socialism to Fascism, 58-105.

17 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 93.

18 New Constitution of the Fascist Party, edited by H. W. Schneider, 317.

Party, from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, and especially among World War veterans.

The years 1920-1921 were important in that Mussolini dropped the trimmings of syndicalism and gained for his movement the urban and rural classes, even the large landowners of the South and the industrialists of the North. The enrollment grew from 30,000 in May, 1920, to 100,000 in February, 1921, to 300,000 at the time of the March on Rome.¹⁹

The reasons for this rapid rise lay in the murderous ruthlessness with which the squadre (armed bands of Fascists) carried on a vigorous campaign against the Socialists and Communists. The propertied classes, landowners, and industrialists, irritated and alarmed by the constant disturbances of public order, gradually turned to Fascism for aid. Added to this was the connivance of the authorities, local and central; the propaganda of the Popolo D'Italia, the Fascist organ; the connivance of the Army which had received orders from the government to help the Fascists (October 20, 1920);²⁰ the irreconcilable divisions of Parliament.

Mussolini's success was due just as much to his careful avoidance of saddling his party with a formal program as to any of the above reasons. He made it clear over and over again that he did not rely on drawn-up programs, for Italy already had too many of them.²¹ His method was to solve a problem when it occurred by the means at hand. This flexi-

19 Herman Finer, Mussolini's Italy, 132.

20 Guiseppe Borgese, op. cit., 139-203.

21 Mussolini, Speeches, 151.

bility appealed strongly to the Italian temperament and added numerous followers on the basis of enthusiasm for a national idea, and antipathy to parliamentarism and socialism.

Because Mussolini had no definite program, he was able gradually to penetrate Italian administrative and political machinery and organize a "state within a state" and use its powers to dominate situations that even the government could no longer dominate.

Giolitti's sudden decision in April, 1921 to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections was an opportunity for Mussolini in that Giolitti asked the Fascists and the Nationalists to cooperate with the other middle class groups in forming a "constitutional bloc" to offer a united front to the menacing Socialist and Popular Parties. As a result, 35 Fascists found themselves in the Chamber of Deputies together with ten Nationalists and a still smaller group of National Liberals. One of the deputies was Mussolini.

The problems now confronting him were the relation of his group to other parliamentary groups, and the relation of his group to the Fascist deputies who represented as many shades of feeling as there were localities from which they came. He proceeded to dispose of the first problem by telling Giolitti that since liberalism was a dead cause, he (Giolitti) could not have the support of the masses; so he (Mussolini) could see no obligation to support an artificial cause.

As to the second, he followed Rossi's advice and an-

nounced the "republican" tendency of Fascism, through his newspaper and by an abstention from Parliament when the King came to read his address. Thus the difference between the Nationalists and the Fascists, which was practically unnoticeable in the elections, was sharply defined.

Mussolini was now unshackled and stepped out as the leader of the extreme Right. His program consisted of a strong foreign policy and an individualistic laissez faire economic policy together with a reassertion of the authority and the integrity of the state in those matters which fall into its proper sphere.²²

While building up this new Right, Mussolini proceeded to make peace with the Socialists and accomplished it by the Pact of Pacification signed on August 3, 1921.²³ On July 23, he had managed to trace a surprising similarity between his doctrines of Church-State and those of the Popular Party. Then on July 30, he had suggested that what the nation needed was a government of the coalition of the three parties that represented the masses. "It will be this coalition which will have the merit of leading Italy toward her higher destinies."²⁴

The result of the announcement of the republican trend was more violent than Mussolini had anticipated and it practically ruined his chances to achieve anything. He beat a

22 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 100-8.

23 H. W. Schneider, Making the Fascist State, 72.

24 Mussolini, Diuturna, 449-52.

hasty retreat, explaining that Fascism had no tendencies whatsoever, that it was neither monarchical nor republican, that the monarchy in fact had much for which to thank the Fascists, and that the movement would continue to be without political prejudices, adopting always whatever policies might make for the moral elevation of the country.²⁵

The Pacification Pact received little support outside the Milan fascio for the squadrists believed in finishing the fight against Socialism and not in allying themselves with a corpse.²⁶ Whereupon Mussolini attempted resignation from the Directorate of the movement but was refused, and the Pacification Pact went into effect. But the Pact was broken in November, 1921, when the Socialists declared a tramway and transportation strike on the occasion of the Fascist Congress in Rome.

This internal chaos in the Fascist ranks and the parliamentary situation led Mussolini to demand definite party organization for Fascism. At the Congress in 1921, three views were presented: Mussolini's, Dino Grandi's,²⁷ and Marsich's.

According to Mussolini, a right wing was necessary to counterbalance the Socialist and Popular Parties. Fascism was to continue the work of Cavour. It would accept the Treaty of Rapallo and carry on an imperialistic foreign policy. He warned against revolutionary tactics in the cur-

25 H. W. Schneider, op. cit., 75.

26 Mussolini, Diuturna, 344.

27 H. W. Schneider, op. cit., 72-3.

rent economic crisis and against paternalism. Fascism favored the organization of national economic councils of experts, but otherwise recommended individualistic economic policy. Both parasitic capitalists and class-conscious workers were to be subjected to the higher interests of the nation. Fascism was to take a constructive political form now that the violent and revolutionary era had passed.

The second view offered by Dino Grandi, a D'Annunzian nationalist, reminded Mussolini that Fascism was not a party but a movement, a movement of combattimento. Fascism was to be a "synthesis of the idealistic forces of modernism, syndicalism, and nationalism which were generated before the war....Fascism must be inspired by the nationalist philosophy of state as a positive organic spiritual whole in opposition to the negative individualistic philosophy of state typified by the liberalism of Cavour".²⁸

A third view by Pietro Marsich was that of the national-liberals opposing mere party, favoring syndical organization, individualistic economics and less fighting.

The commission which drafted the program after the speeches were over synthesized the viewpoints, but in main it was along Mussolinian lines though it was so bedecked with national verbiage that it could mean all things to all men. Consequently, no one took Fascism seriously, since it did not seem to know whether it was going to the right or to the left. Misuri summed up the situation:

28 Ibid., 76.

The tendency toward the left encouraged by the complicated and obscure activities of the most irresponsible and degenerate left-wing elements was merely an opportunistic and demagogic show. In reality Fascism tends neither to the right nor to the left; the government has pretended to go to the right; but in fact, both go zig-zag according to the dictates of the moment. 29

After the foundation of the party, Mussolini concentrated on an intensive study of foreign relations, on strengthening his grip on the party machine, and on disciplining the militia. The formation of the militia was but the military aspect of the formation of the party.

At this time also Fascism adopted not only the uniforms of the Arditi (name applied to D'Annunzio's followers) but also their songs, symbols, and organization. The Latinism and Romanism of D'Annunzio became characteristic. April 21, the legendary founding of Rome, became a Fascist holiday, celebrated by the famous "Roman March". The Roman salute, the lictor's rods were adopted as well as the terminology of Roman military organization of maniples, centuries, cohorts and legions. Mussolini was the Chief Honorary Corporal of the Legions. The whole militia was to be devoted exclusively to the national service; their chief duty in 1921 and 1922 was to break strikes.

By 1922, strikes had been reduced from 1,267,935 to 644,564 in industry; in agriculture, from 1,045,732 to 72,298.³⁰

29 A. Misuri, Rivolta Morale, 48.

30 Gaetano Salvemini, Fascist Dictatorship in Italy, 30-3.

There were rapid defections in the party for want of something to do, and it looked as though Fascism would go the way of all minorities.

The deadlock in Parliament came to Mussolini's rescue. The deadlock amounted to this: the Socialists of the North and the Popularists of the South could not agree because of regional separation and political views. The middle-class government could not carry on without the support of one or the other. It tried to carry on by playing the one against the other. But the Socialists, being the largest single group wanted to dominate and consequently would listen to no prime minister except a Socialist one. The middle-class did not want a Socialist Prime Minister. Cabinet after cabinet fell, until finally the King had exhausted the middle-class possibilities. He conceived the idea of getting a Socialist candidate, hoping that Mussolini would participate in such a ministry. But Mussolini made it known that only on condition that he was Prime Minister would he consent to a coalition of any kind. Meanwhile the press had completely discredited Parliament; throughout the country there was confusion. Mussolini spoke of a "fascist revolution" in September, 1922, and calmed the Monarch by saying that there was a change possible in the political regime without disturbing the House of Savoy. He spoke and wrote incessantly about the kind of government he hoped to establish for Italy. He presented his demands for the dissolving of the Chamber, electoral reform, and elections as the solution for the

deadlock.

During October the Fascists made themselves the complete masters of northern and southern Italy by taking possession of prefectures and police headquarters, and by "guarding" railroads and telegraph offices.

October 24 there was a Congress at Naples and Mussolini announced that if there was no solution forthcoming from the government, there would be a March on Rome. And there was! For Facta let matters drift and the ministry resigned. The Fascist armies assembled at Civitavecchia, a little northwest of Rome. Mussolini went to Milan to await the outcome.

October 28, 50,000 Black Shirts began to pour into Rome. Facta declared a state of siege, but recalled it because the King refused to sign the document on the advice of the Duke of Ostia who said that the Army would not fight. When Salandra asked Mussolini if he would join his ministry, Mussolini refused. On October 29, the King telephoned Mussolini, asking him to form a ministry. Mussolini came to Rome saying, "Tomorrow Italy will not have a ministry but a government."³²

By October 30, the new ministry was formed and Mussolini ordered the 50,000 Black Shirts out of Rome within twenty-four hours. Fascism had become the government!

31 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 103.

32 Mussolini, Speeches, 175.

CHAPTER II

THE THOUGHT

Though many observers believed that when Mussolini marched on Rome October 28, 1922, a revolution had occurred, it was not so in reality. It was more of a bid for power by a militant minority which was efficiently organized, adequately financed (by the government and by industrialists), ably led and unscrupulously determined to impose its will on the nation.

As we have seen, its success was due chiefly to the social, economic, and political crises in which Italy found herself and from which she did not seem to have the power to extricate herself. In an hour of crisis people are always willing to rally about a leader of promise. And when this promise is vague and nebulous, surrounded by thunder and pledge of action, then even more are they content to risk a better future, hoping desperately that better conditions than those of the present will eventually be achieved.

Furthermore, Mussolini's very character and personality and ambition had much to do with the Fascistic bid for power. He had come from the region of the Romagna, where violence was the order of the day in the heated discussions of politics, where political ties were as strong as family ties, where every Italian movement had its arena for debate from Jacobinism, Carbonarism, Mazzinian Republicanism, insurrectionism, anarchism to revolutionary Socialism.

In addition to this early environmental inheritance,

Mussolini had an innate aptitude to "seize the moment, to profit by circumstances, to hold in check the most experienced and shrewd men, to come out of a tight corner with ease and elegance"¹.

Once installed in power, the first concern of the Fascist regime was to consolidate itself and maintain itself in power. A coalition government had to transform itself into Mussolini's government. To this end the political parties had to be broken up to make way for the one party in power, and Parliament was forced by Mussolini's demand for special powers and electoral reform to vote itself out of existence.

But as this business of destroying democratic Italy went forward, and the outlines of the new order became more definite, and as people in general began to be critical of some of Mussolini's high-handed methods, his legalization of violence for national ends, it became increasingly important to draw up a political theory that could be used for indoctrination purposes and for justifying his seizure and retention of power. From the writings and speeches of Mussolini and his party satellites it is possible to piece together a Fascistic ideology. Alfredo Rocco, once a professor of law at the University of Padua and later Minister of Justice under Mussolini, and Giovanni Gentile, a Hegelian philosopher of Italy and Minister of Education from 1922 to 1924, are the most noteworthy of Fascistic theorists. They did not create a whole philosophy afresh; rather they picked up congenial

1 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 17-8.

ideas from a number of sources and skillfully blended the ingredients into a philosophy that prided itself on inconsistency, progressiveness, and practicality. Mussolini said:

We do not believe in dogmatic programmes, in that kind of rigid frame which is supposed to sacrifice the changeable, changing, and complex reality....We permit ourselves the luxury of being aristocrats and democrats, conservatives and progressives, reactionaries and revolutionaries, legalitarians and illegalitarians, according to the circumstances of time, place, and environment--in a word, of the history in which we are constrained to live and act. 2

There are three streams of thought that run through Fascistic ideology simply because these were the three streams that were current in Italian thought at the time: nationalism, syndicalism, and idealism. Nationalism laid the foundation for the political state, idealism supplied the mystique, while syndicalism established the economic state and became the machine through which Fascism dominated the people as a whole.

1

Nationalistic doctrine had been developing ever since Mazzini, but in 1910 the Nationalistic Association was formed by a small group of intellectuals and their young disciples, and after 1911 their movement grew enormously. Corradini's paper, Idea Nazionale, became a popular and powerful organ of public opinion for the younger generation. In 1913, the Nationalist Association became a political party and sent six deputies to the Parliament. The more significant forms

2 Herman Finer, op. cit., 17-8.

as the starting point for all political organization. This could never be, since "the Patrie is a definite organism, a living coherent thing....Society could no more be broken up into the individuals that compose it than can a geometrical surface be broken up into straight lines"⁴. In addition to all this, democracy was based on party government; then authority became a matter of voting for those who were most clever at playing upon individual interests against the national interests. Still another complaint against democracy: "It has everywhere destroyed national government and handed over all real control to international finance."⁵ The result of a general election never bore any recognizable relation to popular government. The whole affair was planned and carried out by party machines which alone decided the issues upon which the elections were held, for they created the machines and financed their upkeep.

As a remedy for all these evils which democracy brought on France and on the world in general, Maurras insisted on the eternal and immortal character of hereditary government, whether republican or monarchic. He had no objection to an elective system of representation especially in local and provincial affairs, but the system must have a supreme center of authority superior to and independent of the mere expression of the popular will. To the liberal principles that are the basis of democracy he opposed the four principles of heredity, tradition, anti-parliamentarism, and decentraliza-

4 Ibid., 25.

5 Ibid., 32.

tion. He looked to a revolution that was to be directed against the democratic and elective form of the State but not against the State as State. The genesis of such an insurrection lay in the "coalition into an energetic and clear-sighted minority of all the forces of order against all the forces of anarchy".⁶

Maurras defined nationalism as

...the exclusive pursuit of national policies, the absolute maintenance of national integrity and the steady increase of national power, for a nation declines when it loses military might.⁷

This type of nationalism made the nation an end in itself. It became an instrument of jingoists, militarists, and imperialists. In domestic affairs it was highly illiberal and tyrannical because all citizens were obliged to conform to a common standard of manners and morals and to share the same unreasoning attitude of enthusiasm for it. They were obliged to subordinate all personal liberties to the nation's purpose and, if the common people murmured, democracy was abridged and gagged in the name of national interests.

Though Mussolini claimed that "in Fascism are to be found ideas which began with Sorel, Peguy, and Lagardelle",⁸ it seems that his nationalism was more of Maurras' type. Peguy had contacts with Maurras of the Action Francaise but there was a sharp contrast between the two as to how France was to be saved. Maurras: "France cannot be perfectly re-

6 Ibid., 40.

7 Feliks Gross, European Ideologies, 575.

8 Mussolini, Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions, 5.

stored but by the extirpation of disfigured France."⁹ Peguy preferred the slow healing, the silent ripening, the delicate pruning. There was never controversy between them but "each was busy in the way most suited to his peculiar gifts, preparing the French for imminent war; both were able to call the same ardor to life; neither wished to do the other down, and for a time parallel lines of influence were possible"¹⁰. Peguy's greatest gift was his ability to parry with keen, sharp thrusts:

Anarchy has a right. I mean this absolutely. But where there is no right and what we will not have is for anarchy to govern us vested with the authority of the State. 11

Thus his greatest contribution to the era was the arousing through his Cahiers of a nationalism that swept Europe.

Italian nationalists before 1914 gave to Italy a convincing explanation of the disparity between national potentialities and the prewar government of Italy. They taught the primary duty of disciplining the nation for the struggle with other nations. Foreign policy was to have first place and was to be frankly imperialistic. Italy was to expect international competition in normal times, and war in times of crisis. Devotion of the people to the people was to become a veritable myth in the Sorellian sense. "Nothing for the individual, all for Italy" was the motto.

After the World War, the Nationalists were the chief

9 Daniel Halevy, Peguy and Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine, 133.

10 Ibid., 135.

11 Ibid., 237.

exponents of the fallacy of democracy that a state can be built upon a mere aggregate of individuals. According to them, true government was based on an organic conception of society. This is found in the idea of the nation as a living ideal unity. It was this unity the Nationalists claimed to represent. The Nationalist Association regarded itself as being on an entirely different plane from parliamentary parties in that it represented no particular clientele nor class, and disbelieved in the whole democratic machinery. It stood for the unity of the nation and for the monarchy as the symbol of that unity. It stood for popular sovereignty, that is collective sovereignty, not individual nor group sovereignty. It stood for the government of the elite, since only those people could govern a nation, a unity, that could grasp and pursue the good of the whole. No elections or parties could produce a ruling group; if they could, why the recurrent demand for extraordinary powers in times of crisis? Furthermore, the Nationalists stood for the complete immolation of the citizen to the State, for the State is nothing more than the embodiment of the ideal unity of its members. In other words, nothing for the individual; everything for the State. This implied that the individual citizen should be able to find his own happiness and realization in and through the national State. If he failed, it would be because he was not really a part of the nation. Duty, discipline, and sacrifice must bind the citizen to the State. The State, not its individual citizens, must be free. The State must have rights and the citizen, duties. Hierarchy, the ordered system of

social functions, must replace democracy.

Knowing these tenets of nationalism, it is very easy to understand how it was possible for the Nationalists in 1922 to fuse with the Fascists, since the Fascists found in nationalism the political theory they lacked, and nationalism found in fascism the mass formation it had never been able to acquire.

Mussolini personally gave the idea of heirarchy a much more prominent role than it had among the Nationalists. He seems to have come by this through military channels. His earliest ideas of political reconstruction after the war were all modeled on army patterns. Interventionism had given a military turn to all of Mussolini's thinking. So many of his early followers were soldiers returned from the war. Gradually he gave to heirarchy a moralistic and an idealistic form:

The historic task that awaits us is to make this nation into a national state. This is a moral idea that finds embodiment in a system of responsible heirarchies, whose members from the highest to the lowest feel the pride and privilege of doing their particular duty....Our one aim must be the erection of this single, unified being, the nation-state, the sole bearer of the whole history, the whole future, and the whole power of the Italian people.¹³

In 1925, Professor Rocco, then Minister of Justice in Mussolini's cabinet, set forth the first authoritative theory of Fascism in a speech delivered at Perugia, and sanctioned

¹² Mussolini, Speeches, 149.

¹³ Ibid., 162.

wholeheartedly by Mussolini.

Rocco incorporated the nationalistic theories of a strong state, a strong army, a minority ruling class, a foreign policy of conquest. He explained that fundamentally socialism was merely the logical outcome at its nethermost point of that liberalism which claimed that the aim of society is the welfare of the individual members.¹⁴

Fascism was the direct antithesis to such an idea. It rejected completely the theories derived from natural law and considered humanity as a biological and not a social conception. That meant that mankind in its generations, past, present, and future was subordinate to the society in which it happened to exist. The individual was the means, the society was the end. And to carry it still further:

For Fascism society has historical and immanent ends of preservation, expansion, improvement, quite distinct from those of the individuals which at a given moment compose it; so distinct, in fact, that they may be in opposition. Hence the necessity of sacrifice even up to the total immolation of individuals in behalf of society; hence the true explanation of war, eternal law of mankind, interpreted by liberal-democratic doctrines as degenerate absurdity or as a maddened monstrosity. 15

Thus he explained institutions and practises which liberalism condemned.

Fascism faced squarely the problem of right of the state and the duty of individuals. Individual rights were recognized only in so far as they were implied in the rights of

14 Alfredo Rocco, The Political Doctrine of Fascism, 395-9.

15 Ibid., 402.

the state. Fascism took into consideration the fact that an individual must develop freely, but not under a bill of rights; rather "the individual must be allowed to develop his personality in behalf of the state".¹⁶ But an immense and dishonest development of some individuals and groups of individuals might be injurious to the whole. "Freedom is therefore due to the citizens and to the classes on condition that they exercise it in the interests of society as a whole and within the limits set by social exigences, liberty being a concession of the state".¹⁷

Economic development is essentially a social interest, but Fascism considered that normally it was best to leave to individual enterprise the development of the economic phenomenon, both in the productive and distributive states, as there was no other way of obtaining maximum results except by individual effort. But liberalism regarded this freedom as existing for the benefit of the individual, whereas Fascism regarded it as existing for that of society.¹⁸

Fascism rejected the theory of popular sovereignty and set up in its place state sovereignty. It proclaimed that "the great mass of citizens is not a suitable advocate of social interests for the reason that the capacity to ignore individual private interests in favor of the higher demands of society and of history is a rare gift and the privilege of a chosen few. Natural intelligence and cultural prepa-

16 Ibid., 404.

17 Ibid., 404.

18 Ibid., 404.

ration are of great service in such tasks. Still more valuable is the intuitiveness of rare great minds, their traditionalism, and their inherited qualities." ¹⁹ This did not mean that the mass must be excluded from the life of the state. Every individual has something to offer and to contribute and it would be "as wise to afford this instinct the means of declaring itself as it is judicious to entrust the normal control of the commonwealth to the elite". ²⁰

Fascism recognized the right of private property not because of its individual bearing but because of its social utility. Socialism made an error in the collective organization of production, since it removed in that setup the incentive of individual interest, the fundamental spring of human activities.

Even though Fascism permitted private property, it eliminated class self-defense in the way of strikes, lockouts, and substituted for it state justice, "the realization of justice among the classes by and through the state". To facilitate this change Fascism created its own syndicalism, whereby the syndicate became "an instrument of legal defense ²¹ of the classes both within and without the law courts".

In the second part of this speech, Rocco quoted the origins of Fascism and outlined the development of the authoritative state in Italy by citing the contributions of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Machiavelli, Vico, and

19 Ibid., 405.

20 Ibid., 406.

21 Ibid., 407.

Cuoco to Italian thought. This long list of elaborate names is evidence of a technique Fascism used frequently, that of reinterpretation and distortion of phrases or ideas to enhance the popularity of its particular kind of thought. For example, Dante did emphasize a strong empire with separation of Church and State as a means of achieving universal peace. Fascists contended that his advocacy of separation of Church and State pointed to a belief in the authoritarian state which alone would be able to create a world empire, through war. Where Dante wanted peace, Fascists wanted war.

As far as Fascism is concerned, Rocco was correct in saying that "Machiavelli was not only a great political authority; he taught the mastery of energy and will. Fascism learns from him not only its doctrines but its action as well".²²

And what did Fascism learn? That the end justifies the means; that the end of the state is power, unrelated to morals; that hypocrisy, deceit, religion are tools to further the power of the state; that practical, effective methods for expanding the power of the state are increase of population, formation of fortunate alliances, the maintenance of a national army rather than mercenary troops, regulation of economic activity, the use of dictatorial authority, dash,²³ boldness.

Rocco gave credit to Vico for "the criticism of democracies, the affirmation of their brief existence, the condem-

²² Ibid., 412.

²³ Consult Nicolo Machiavelli's The Prince and Discourses, Books I, II, III.

nation of pacifism, the assertion that right is actualized²⁴ by bodily force, and without force right is of no avail". Vico conceived of civil liberty as subjection to law, as just subordination of the private to the public interests under the sway of the state. Vico sketched modern society as a world of nations each one guarding its own imperium,²⁵ fighting just and not inhuman wars.

According to Rocco, Vichian doctrine was expounded and popularized by Cuoco, who in turn influenced Mazzini, "whose interpretation of the function of the citizen as duty and mission is to be connected with Vico's doctrine rather than with the philosophic and political doctrines of the French²⁶ Revolution".

In Mazzini's conception of the citizen as an instrument for the attainment of the nation's ends and therefore submissive to a higher mission, to the duty of supreme sacrifice, we see the anticipation of one of the fundamental points of Fascist doctrine. 27

Thus the Fascistic myth is summed up as a "powerful, innovating movement, issuing from the war and of which Fascism is the purest expression...to restore Italian thought in the sphere of political doctrine to its own traditions²⁸ which are the traditions of Rome".

2

Though idealists and nationalists come to much the

24 Rocco, op. cit., 413.

25 Giambattista Vico, Autobiography, 46-75.

26 Rocco, op. cit., 414.

27 Ibid., 415.

28 Ibid., 415.

same conclusions, they are historically quite distinct theories, especially in Italy. The nationalists have no use for the "German philosophy" and Hegelian dialectic in which the idealists are steeped.

Idealism in Italy began with Francesco De Sanctis and Silvio Spaventa, who attempted to give secular politics and culture a spiritual meaning. De Sanctis is significant primarily because he introduced Hegel into Italy and thus laid the foundations for the modern idealistic school. As a political prisoner in the old castle at Naples he translated Hegel's Logic, and then during his exile he led the revival of literary criticism on the basis of idealistic aesthetics. During the sixties he took an active part in the politics of the new Italian State. He was one of the first to raise his voice of protest against the cliques of politicians and the maneuvers of special interests which had made their appearance in Parliament. In the interests of more dignified and idealistic politics he joined the struggling Left against the sordid Right. But finding the Left no better, he centered his strength on forming a nucleus of new-Right wing idealistic patriots, who refused to yield to demagoguery and corruption and who continued to uphold the romantic political idealism of the Resorgimento.

Spaventa continued this tradition and upheld the ideal of a strong omniscient state in the face of both liberals and clericals. His "adoration of the state" became a central theme of debate and the rallying cry for this and that force

whose aim was to strengthen the young Italian national government. It was this "noble Right" which is supposed to have passed on the idealism of the Resorgimento to the Fascists and it was this tradition that the Fascist Right of the Chamber of Deputies tried to revive. ²⁹ When the Fascists sent their first deputies to Parliament in 1920, Mussolini being one of them, they even occupied this same extreme right position in the Chamber from where they thundered forth their demands and criticisms.

Croce, the greatest exponent of Italian idealism in the prewar era, stated that the modern state is largely preoccupied with economic and material affairs; consequently, order and authority are good and even necessary. However, in the realm of the spirit, in science, art, religion, there should be complete freedom. A state cannot regulate these items.

Giovanni Gentile broke away from Croce on the point of complete freedom in the realm of culture and attempted to reconcile an economic and cultural state into one reality or idea. He would not admit of a plurality of personalities, only one Transcendental Ego as the world's self-consciousness. ³⁰ Reacting against individualistic liberalism, he revived the Hegelian conception of State, "the ethical state". But he was careful to make it appear as a strictly Italian doctrine, erecting Gioberti and Mazzini into idealists, when fundamentally they were nationalists. He emphasized especially the

29 Mussolini, Speeches, 183.

30 Angelo Crespi, Contemporary Thought of Italy, 195.

religious unity of the people and the close connection between thought and action during the Resorgimento. This doctrine was labeled "new liberalism" until Fascism came along. Unable to reconcile the two, Gentile was obliged to proclaim himself a straight Fascist after the Aventine Secession.³¹

From then on, he and his disciples became the most distinguished group of Fascist "thinkers" and succeeded in giving the impression very widely that their particular brand of idealistic philosophy was also the official philosophy of Fascism. Though this was not true, the idealists were certainly predominant and far above any other philosophical group both in numbers and erudition.³²

Gentile contributed an article to Foreign Affairs, January, 1928, entitled "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism". He stated that Fascism is "totalitarian in scope in that it concerns itself not only with political organization and political tendency but with the whole will, thought, and feeling of the nation".³³ Furthermore, Fascism is idealistic--Thought and Action are coincident--no thought has value which is not already expressed in action. The real views of the Duce are those which he formulates and executes at one and the same time.³⁴

Fascism is anti-intellectual in that there is no divorce of thought from action, of theory from practise. Fascism is

31 Luigi Sturzo, op. cit., 115.

32 William M. McGovern, From Luther to Hitler, 553.

33 Giovanni Gentile, "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism", Foreign Affairs, VI, January, 1928, 290-304.

34 Ibid., 299.

hostile to all utopian systems which are destined never to face the test of reality. It is hostile to all science and philosophy which remain matters of mere fancy and intelligence. Fascism holds in scorn a man who is above the conflict when his country or its important interests are at stake.

He continued his explanation by stating that "Fascism is not a political system but has its center of gravity in politics. It came into being to meet the serious problems of politics in postwar Italy."³⁵

The politics of Fascism revolves wholly around the concept of the national State. State and individual are one and the same thing; they are inseparable terms of a necessary synthesis. The Fascist State is always in the making by the consciousness and the will of the citizen. This means that the State is a wholly spiritual creation. The people who comprise the State are always creating the nation with their acts. Therefore, State and Nation are one and the same thing.

The Fascist State is a people's State and as such, the democratic state, par excellence. The relationship between State and citizen (not this or that citizen, but all citizens) is accordingly so intimate that the State exists only as, and in so far as the citizen causes it to exist. Its formation, therefore, is the formation of a consciousness of it in individuals, in the masses. Hence the need of the party and of all the instruments of propaganda and education which Fascism uses to make the thought and will of the Duce the thought and

35 Ibid., 302.

will of the masses.

On the popular character of the Fascist State likewise depends its greatest social and Constitutional reform--the foundation of the Corporation of Syndicates. In this reform Fascism takes over from syndicalism the notion of the moral and educational function of the syndicate. The Corporation of Syndicates is necessary in order to reduce the syndicates to State discipline and make them an expression of the State's organism from within. The Corporation of Syndicates is a device through which the Fascist State goes looking for the individual in order to create itself through the individual's will. This individual exists as a specialized productive force who, by the fact of his specialization, is brought to unite with other individuals of his same category and comes to belong with them to the one great economic unit which is none other than the nation.

The foregoing summary of Gentilian doctrine or interpretation of Fascism is considered by some historians to be "actual idealism transferred to politics". Both Gentilianism and Fascism reduce reality that counts and has value to a spiritual unity so that the individual is swallowed up either in the mind as Gentile would have it, or in the State as Fascism would have it.

Fundamentally, idealism means that man can know nothing but his own thought. Descartes and Berkeley were the original idealists. With Kant came transcendental idealism, teach-

ing that external reality is not known to man as it is in itself, but only as it appears in the mind. Following Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel advanced to absolute idealism, holding that beyond the representations of the thinking subject nothing exists. Gentile reached the terminus when he reduced the thinking subject to one, identified the object with the subject, and made of this identity "not a being or a substance but a constructive process of development".³⁷

As we analyze Fascism closely, it is clear that the Fascist State does not conform to the Gentilian notion that reduces all reality to thought. Besides thought, the Fascist State postulates a multitude to be unified by thought; Fascism is the expression of a people through the conscience and will of the few, if not indeed that of the single man. The multitude making up the State is as real in the Fascist regime as in any democracy, for Fascism defines itself as "an organized, centralized, authoritarian democracy".³⁸ The Fascist State is not the Transcendental Ego of Gentile. On the contrary, Gentile has forsaken his philosophy which admits of "nothing real outside of thought" in order to be the eloquent spokesman of a regime that has no philosophy of any kind, but which needs one under which to take cover. So Gentile, to be a Fascist, ceased to be a Gentilian and went outside of thought to embrace the Fascist state as the concrete, positive form of the Gentilian spirit.³⁹ It is then

37 Giovanni Gentile, Theory of Mind as Pure Act, 37, 241.

38 Mussolini, Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism, 33.

39 Giovanni Gentile, "Philosophical Basis of Fascism", 303.

incorrect to consider Fascism as actual idealism transferred to politics; rather Gentile has forsaken actual idealism that he might be a Fascist.

Furthermore, Fascism is not Gentilian in its unity. Gentile reduces multiplicity to spiritual unity; the multitude is absorbed into the unity of the transcendental "we". Fascism stands for the moral unity of a well-organized society. Both Fascism and Gentilianism are anti-individual, but in essentially different ways. Gentile destroys individuals; Fascism unites them. It is quite one thing to say that individuals do not exist at all, and another, that individuals are to be recognized insofar as their interests coincide with those of the state. Fascism does not crush the individual and claims to give the individual such rights as it sees fit. Gentilian philosophy, on the contrary does away completely with the individual, resolving all things into an "unmultipliable and infinite unity". All persons must be absorbed into the transcendental self which is the only true self, so that what is other than "we" is not so other as not to be ourself. It is clear then that the unity of Fascism which unites multiplicity into a moral oneness is not the unity of Gentilian philosophy which destroys multiplicity.

Though Gentile himself realized that to be a Fascist he was obliged to forsake his monistic idealism, he nevertheless endeavored in a clever way to make the Fascistic State appear to be his transcendental "we". Consequently, we can say that the Hegelian school paved the way for the acceptance and the triumph of Fascism by providing a vocabulary, a terminology,

or a mantle for presenting Fascist doctrine in such a way as to appeal to a large section of the people who would be repelled by the brutal cold calculation of Machiavellianism and the confusion of irrationalism.

Mussolini was willing to use any help that would further his cause. The Neo-Hegelians were strong and eloquent supporters of the subordination of the individual to the state, and of authoritarianism. Since Gentile was one of the leaders of Italian intellectual thought, it is not at all surprising that Mussolini used him to promote the Fascistic theory of state and allowed him to use whatever arguments he chose in the process, so long as Fascism was glorified. On the same principle, Barnes received the approval of the Duce for his Universal Aspects of Fascism based on Neo-Scholasticism.

When Gentile became Minister of Education, editor of the Italian Encyclopedia, and director of the National Fascist Institute of Culture (the official propaganda organization of the regime), he always gave a Neo-Hegelian veneer to Fascist principles. Eventually we detect even pragmatic Mussolini and nationalistic Rocco using many terms and arguments and phrases invented by the Hegelian school, simply because these terms had popular appeal and were able to sway the masses.

When Mussolini discovered that Hegel and Neo-Hegelianism could be so easily reinterpreted to make them defend nationalism, he used them freely. An example of this type of mask is the Fascistic emphasis on man's primary duty to serve his

community and nation at the expense of life, liberty, and happiness. But the duty of the state is to increase in power and in territory even at the cost of war. Thus self-sacrifice that is good for the individual is bad for the state.

Another example is the word liberty. At first Fascism admitted being opposed to liberty for the individual because it led to a weak state. But from the idealists Mussolini discovered it was possible to take away liberty in practise and yet to pay lip service to it in theory. And so Rocco: "Our concept of liberty is that the individual must be allowed to develop his personality in behalf of the State."⁴⁰

Though there are many features of Italian Fascism that are not Hegelian in origin, there is no doubt that Fascism has incorporated within its doctrines a number of political ideas first clearly enunciated in modern times by Hegel. In Fascism there is the same emphasis on nationalism and authoritarianism which were such characteristic features of Hegel's philosophy of state. Fascist Italy was the only state to develop to any degree of promise the idea of corporatism as advocated by Hegel and to use it for the purpose intended: the erection of the totalitarian state.

3

The third movement that was prevalent in Italy was syndicalism. The name comes from the French word meaning trade

40 Rocco, op. cit., 404.

unionism. Its principal theory is that in modern society the wage earners are pitted against the property owners in a class struggle which must end in a social revolution and in the establishment of a collectivist society. Georges Sorel and Hubert Lagardelle were the outstanding writers of the group and it was chiefly Sorel who elaborated most of the philosophical and sociological ideas of the school. He attempted a synthesis between Marxian proletarianism, Proudhon's associationism, and Bergson's voluntarism. He expounded as fundamental the idea that it was chiefly up to the worker to hasten his day of delivery and the downfall of capitalism by his own efforts. Therefore, direct action, including violence and the use of the strike as a weapon are essential to achieve this liberation.

Syndicalism grew rapidly in France between 1906 and 1910, and spread to Italy because of the proximity of the country, and similarity in economic conditions, political history, and social and cultural traditions.

In 1912, Labriola, a disillusioned Italian socialist, separated (with his followers whom he had organized into syndicates) from the Socialist Party and set up a committee for direct action, which in 1914 became known as the Italian Syndicalist Union.

With the World War, syndicalism in Italy took on a highly nationalistic tinge, advocating war and imperialism:

...we are fighting against the intrigues, the threats, the snares, the monies and the arms of plutocratic Europe which will not allow the lesser nations to hazard a

single deed or a single word that might jeopardize its iron hegemony. 41

By 1915, Rossoni had come back from America, where he had been organizing the IWW to preach patriotic nationalism and revolution.

In 1919, Rossoni's labor union came in contact with Mussolini's first Fascio which was being formed at Milan. The two attempted to make a deal, but failed because at the time Fascism was a liability to any labor union.

After the collapse of the so-called Red Revolution (General Strike) in 1920, the industrial laborers were left in a bad state of disorganization. This gave a fresh impetus to patriotic syndicates and they grew rapidly. Revolutionaries, laborers, employers, peasants, all flocked into them. Some of them were the direct result of the work of the Fasci.

While these developments were taking place in the labor field, D'Annunzio had captured Fiume and had outlined a system of ten "corporations" into which all the citizens of the state were to be organized as follows:

- 1) laborers (industrial and rural), artisans, and small farmers
- 2) technicians and administrators
- 3) merchants
- 4) employers
- 5) public employees
- 6) the intellectual flower of the people
- 7) professional men

41 H. W. Schneider, op. cit., 141.

- 8) the Cooperative Society
- 9) mariners
- 10) mystic servants of the civic sanctuary

In their hands was to be the regulation of the whole economic life of the city, of several philanthropic functions, and of public ceremonies.

The effect of this document on Italian syndicalism was tremendous, resulting in the union of nationalism and syndicalism into corporatism. The outstanding nationalist leaders mentioned before--Corradini, Alfredo Rocco, Dino Grandi--all were converted to national syndicalism. Under Mussolini they were to become conspicuous Fascist leaders.

On January 24, 1922, at the Syndicalist Convention in Bologna, all the syndicates whose programs and activities were similar to the program and platform of the National Fascist Party were united into the Confederation of the Fascist Syndicalist Corporation with Rossoni as the Secretary General. After the March on Rome, the Confederation became an integral part of the Fascist regime, for Fascism needed labor support and syndicalism needed political weapons.

After the March on Rome, syndicalism, now corporatism, became the very life and soul of Fascist bureaucracy, being positivistic in general outlines, and a mixture of the idealistic theory of state and Sorellian theory of class organization (a group of individuals among whom there exists an unusually close interdependence because they exercise the same function in the division of social labor).

CHAPTER III

THE MAN

Besides a blending of the three ingredients of nationalism, idealism, and syndicalism, there is a generous portion of Mussolini himself in Fascism, a development and a shifting of a number of ideas and principles that happened to touch him along the way of his career. He lived at a time when the whole world was writing and thinking things that fitted rather well into his character as an anarchist and revolutionary and individualist. The fundamental ideas of Nietzsche, Blanqui, Sorel, William James, Bergson, Pareto, Schopenhauer had been vulgarized and were ready for translation into action; and Mussolini was primarily a man of action.

Researches on the philosophical forerunners of Fascism are still very active and the teachers that are supposed to have influenced Mussolini to date are Machiavelli, Mazzini, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Stirner, William James, Georges Sorel, Blanqui, Pareto, Oriani. This list of names means that Mussolini admired philosophies of revolt and that he regarded Fascism as the bursting into action of an intellectual ferment of long standing.¹

It is very difficult to determine authentically just who influenced Mussolini and how much, for there is no verifying record. True it is that we have Mussolini's speeches and writings in abundance and even an autobiography, but these are relatively unreliable. His own words, perhaps his more than someone else's, have to be considered minutely,

1 H. W. Schneider, op. cit., 231.

for Mussolini was so vacillating and opportunistic. Principles, ideas, thoughts, plans that would be true for him one day were discarded as easily as an old coat, and new ones were substituted without any qualms of conscience or wounding of integrity.²

The autobiography was never written by Mussolini but by a Mr. Childs, and in English first, for the gullible English readers. Other biographies of Mussolini have as their prime purpose either to build up the man and make out of him a Superman or a Roman god, or to tear him to pieces and prove that he is nothing more than a "sawdust emperor". If biographies choose the first course, they align him with all the great patriots of Italy and make him a follower of the philosophers. If they choose the second aim, they accuse him of never having read any of the sociological treatises extant, "for throughout his life he never read anything but newspaper articles".³ A biography by Megaro contends that Fascism is chiefly the product of Mussolini's temperament and the influence of his father, and one does not need to go any farther than that to seek the origins of Fascism. On the other hand, the biography by Sarfatti has for its purpose the glorification of Mussolini and expands colorfully many of the legends current about the man.

However, we cannot deny that he was highly conversant with the social and political theories rampant in his day,

² Guiseppe Borgese, op. cit., 189.

³ Count Carlo Sforza, Contemporary Italy, 300.

for he was a Socialist journalist and propagandist from his very early days when at nineteen years of age he went to Switzerland and lived for two years in an area that was the crossroad for every wind of thought from Germany, France, and Italy.

1

Born of peasant stock at Predappio near Forlì in Romagna, Mussolini grew up amid poverty, rioting, and persecution. His father, a local blacksmith, was the head of an anarcho-socialist group or fascio (Italian word for group) of the Bakunin school and adherents of the First International set up by Andrea Costa in 1874.

Mussolini's father was very active and enthusiastic about socialism as the solution for the poverty and the economic ills of the country. In 1891, in answer to the question, "What is socialism?" he wrote in the local paper, "Socialism is open, violent, moral rebellion against the inhuman order of things as now constituted."⁴

According to the records, Mussolini's father was frequently imprisoned for his violent doctrines and demonstrations, and for that reason died relatively early (in 1910). Mussolini claimed that his father did not leave much to him in the way of material wealth, but he did leave him an Idea.⁵

Mussolini's education consisted of attendance at his mother's elementary school, followed by some secondary edu-

4 Gaudens Megaro, op. cit., 27.

5 Ibid., 35.

cation and an year at a Training School with the intention of becoming a teacher.

Always he was restless, pugnacious, combative, domineering, isolationist, preferring his own company. Borgese, who is no friend of Mussolini's, claims that Mussolini took "from parentage and Romagna a trend toward violence in words and occasionally in deeds, and a self-enjoyment in intellectual rambling". He continues:

...He breathed from the atmosphere the elements that were suitable to his personality. Later on it proved that the quality of his personality was in harmony with the atmosphere of his age. The positive substance of his personality was energy and desire, not indeed in Napoleonic proportions but far above the average. The negative feature was lack of continuity of purpose, with a readiness to discouragement and a distaste for steady directions. 6

John Bond, whose purpose is to reveal Mussolini in his true proportions, makes the observation that as a youth of fifteen Mussolini read all the books in the professorial library at the Training School in Forlimpopulo. A catalogue of them presents a mixture that must have caused severe fits of mental indigestion. There was the ancient philosophy in a few of its representatives, especially the obscure Heraclitus. There were extracts from Plato, bits of modern and ancient history, flashes of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and the complete works of Machiavelli. The young Mussolini

delved into this motley library at his own will, undirected, but with an enthusiasm and a persistence far beyond

6 Guiseppe Borgese, op. cit., 179.

his years. His early reading left a permanent impression on his mind and traces of it occur in varying proportions throughout all his career as a writer or agitator. 7

For a year Mussolini taught school, and in 1902, he went to Switzerland, where he stayed until 1904, his chief activity being that of labor organizer, Socialist propagandist and journalist.

Some writers make much of this period, claiming that it was here that Mussolini came under the influence of the great Pareto, then teaching at Lausanne University. True, Mussolini did register at the University for Pareto's and Milloud's lectures, but according to the dates, he could have attended them for nine weeks at the most.⁸ Whether he did so or not, and with what industry, no one knows, for there were no examinations, and no certificate was granted him. Finer states that there have been several small studies of the influence of Pareto on Fascism, but they are rather unsatisfactory in that they show an affinity between the ideas of Pareto and Mussolini in their political creeds rather than a cause and effect.⁹ However, Mussolini did respect Pareto by nominating him as a Senator of Italy in 1923, and Pareto published several articles favorable to Fascism between 1919¹⁰ and 1923.

The features of Pareto's work declared to have been in-

7 John Bond, The Wild Man of Europe, 78.

8 Gaudens Megaro, op. cit., 112.

9 Herman Finer, op. cit., 28.

10 William McGovern, op. cit., 434.

fluent in forming the Fascist government are the importance of myths in government, the theory of the elite governing class, the relationship between force and consent, and the relativism of government policies (non-adherence to policies, even though previously promised, as soon as circumstances require a different line of action).

It is much more probable that during the years 1902-1904, Mussolini's work as a propagandist and journalist had a greater influence on him, for he built up for himself a record as a revolutionist and anarchist, though he stoutly denied the latter both on his expulsion from the canton of Bern, where he advocated a parade of protest by the workers (carpenter strike of 1903), and from the canton of Geneva for using a falsified passport.

In the records of Odier, head of Police and Justice Departments of the Geneva canton, we read:

He is a former school teacher who is at present engaged in revolutionary socialist propaganda. He was arrested for vagrancy in July, 1902; at Bern, in 1903, for a political offense, kept in prison until July 19, and expelled from the canton of Bern. He was pointed out to us as an anarchist, in a circular of July 31, 1903, issued by federal authorities. I believe that Mussolini protests against this description of him as an anarchist and that he is content with that of revolutionary socialist. It is, in fact, in this capacity that Mussolini has acted among us. Even before he appeared at the bureau of residence-permits to regularize his status, he was already playing a part in the sessions of the Italian revolutionary socialist club of Geneva....It is not simply a question of an unfortunate foreigner, but a question of a man whose presence here is dangerous because of the

ideas which he professes, and above all, because of the means which he preaches and of the activity which he tries to arouse among his Italian co-religionists and compatriots. 11

While he was in Switzerland, Mussolini also mastered German and French to such a degree that he was able to translate works from those languages for Italian Socialist propaganda. Nietzsche and Sorel and Blanqui interested him.

Mussolini's "Essay on the Philosophy of Force", written at this time, occupied itself almost exclusively with Nietzsche's Will to Power. It is practically a summary of the work. Nietzsche repudiated Christianity, equality, pacifism, kindness, and democracy as virtues of the weak. He believed that a "will to power" dominated every human being; that there were two classes of individuals: those who have the will to seize power and to wield it (the leaders), and those who are led. If the individuals succeed in seizing power, they are entitled to still more, thus bringing about the reign of the Superman. Since courage and the will to power are the characteristics of the superior man, it follows that war is necessary and justifiable to strengthen still further the will to power and to provide scope for the development of the superior man's qualities. Consequently, the aggressive warrior and the aggressive state.

Mussolini's whole life was a turbulent and violent movement to power. The will to climb was innermost in his nature. To Emil Ludwig he confided, "In all that I did and

11 Gaudens Megaro, op. cit., 70-1.

still more in all that I suffered I had a definite fore-
 boding that I was being trained for a more important posi-
 tion."¹² If Nietzsche gave to Mussolini nothing more than
 this all-consuming will to power, his influence on him was
 tremendous enough, for there was no stopping until ambition
 and power were realized. Followers of Nietzsche in Germany
 were wont to point to Mussolini as the perfect example of
 the superior man.¹³

When we follow the growth of Fascism we find that the
 essence of the movement lay not in its programs, which
 changed without notice, nor in its ideas, which expediently
 followed shifting fortunes, but in its growing power. This
 power was not only a display of violence and physical force
 but an ability to exercise control in a series of exigencies.
 The Fascists were a kind of emergency service in the nation
 and naturally pounced on everything that happened to be weak.
 Their appetite for power grew with their capacity to use it,
 and the power was a surprise even to themselves. Of this
 power Mussolini was the leader, the Duce.

From being a duce of a local Italian Socialist club in
 Geneva (here it was that a conservative journal used this
 title in regard to him for the first time), Mussolini be-
 came the duce of the Forli Socialists, then the duce of the
 Italian Socialist Party, then the duce of the revolutionary
 Fasci favoring Italy's entrance into the great war, then the
 duce of the postwar Fasci, and finally the Duce of the Fas-

¹² Emil Ludwig, Talks With Mussolini, 54.

¹³ Gaudens Megaro, op. cit., 18.

cist State.

Like Nietzsche, Mussolini constantly adjured his countrymen to be hard, to live dangerously, to adopt a tragic optimism as the mood befitting strong men. "Weakness is a crime not only against oneself but against one's country"; and "I have chosen the words 'Live dangerously' as the slogan of my life."¹⁵

Readers of Nietzsche find the word "discipline" very frequently. "Discipline" was Mussolini's favorite word after his accession to power:

...My program is work, discipline, unity; action, not talk, nor theory. 16

...Men are perhaps tired of liberty. They have had enough of it....Other watchwords exercise a much greater fascination on the youth of today--order, heirarchy, discipline.17

Nietzsche critically examined the concept of Freiheit and asked, "Freedom from what? And for what?" So too, Mussolini refused to think of civic liberty as an end in itself: "The people do not want liberty. They want rail-¹⁸ways, bridges, drains, houses, roads, water, light."

2

While in Switzerland, Mussolini elaborated his beliefs on a number of questions: violence, religion, militarism, and the monarchy. His views in regard to the last three underwent a considerable change as time passed by, but in re-

14 Ibid., 150.

15 Mussolini, Speeches, 141-9.

16 Ibid., 215.

17 Ibid., 358.

18 Ibid., 151.

gard to violence they remained the same. He had absolute faith in the necessity of violence as an instrument of social change. Throughout his entire career he was more concerned with action than with words. His temperament needed action, violent action, and as a Romagnole he learned more about the efficacy of violence from home environment than Nietzsche or Sorel could teach him.

From 1903 to 1914, a Blanquistic outlook on violence characterized Mussolini's writing. The essential belief of the Blanquists was "that a small, resolute, and well-prepared revolutionary minority of armed men should be ready at the opportune moment to overthrow the dominance of the bourgeoisie, seize political power and maintain it by dictatorial force in the interest of the proletariat".¹⁹ Once dictatorship was established, steps should be taken to organize society along communistic lines. The necessity of action, insurrection, coups d'etat, minority zeal, and authoritarian rule were integral parts of the Blanquist credo.

Mussolini's transition to syndicalism was made about the year 1910. He was inclined to socialism of direct action because of his disgust with the sloth and cowardice of the old line socialist leaders and the influence of the writings of Georges Sorel. "Mussolini owes him (Sorel) a debt which is only equalled, if it is equalled at all, by one due to Machiavelli."²⁰ In 1932 Mussolini himself admitted that "in

¹⁹ Francis W. Coker, Recent Political Thought, 470.

²⁰ William K. Stewart, "The Mentors of Mussolini", American Political Science Review, XXII, 1928, 853.

Fascism are to be found ideas that began with Sorel, Peguy, and Lagardelle in the Mouvement Socialiste and with the Italian trades-union movement." ²¹

Sorel capitalized on the idea of a myth as a forceful influence in achieving an aim. A myth is a product of the imagination; it is half-idea, half-image. "The myth must be judged as a means of acting on the present; any attempt to discuss how far it can be taken literally as future history is devoid of sense," Sorel stated. ²²

Mussolini, who was persuaded that men live by imagination, assiduously cultivated the myth of a greater Italy which was to renew the grandeur of Rome. "Italy! that is the name, the sacred name in which all Fascists ought to find their true selves!" ²³

...Fascists regard themselves as crusaders whose ideal is summed up in two conceptions, God and their native land. They are called upon by a mystical duty to sacrifice themselves to the national cause. ²⁴

Sorel said of Mussolini in 1912:

Our Mussolini is not an ordinary Socialist. Believe me, you will one day see him at the head of a sacred battalion with his sword, saluting the Italian flag....Perhaps it is not yet known, but he is the only energetic man capable of repairing the government's weakness. ²⁵

Peguy regarded Sorel as a "master" and Sorel recognized

21 Mussolini, Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism, 5.
 22 Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, 135-6.
 23 Mussolini, Speeches, 229.
 24 Ibid., 288.
 25 M. Jean Variot, Eclair, September 11, 1922.

in Peguy "a militant after his own heart".²⁶ Every Thursday, Sorel (in his early sixties) met his group of young admirers in Peguy's workshop, concerning which habit the Sorbonne authorities commented, "M. Sorel cannot be taken seriously; he spends all his time with young people."

What Sorel and Mussolini admired in Peguy was his interpretation of the life of nations as the unfolding of forces based on two poles: the one, positive (mystique); the other, negative (politique). "Tout commence en mystique et tout finit en politique" (spirit at the rise, policy at the close of all things).²⁷ Only fervor and ardor counted.

Then there was Peguy's patriotism which was a "militant love of a land, a source, a flame, and all that supports and feeds and finds growth". The function of the homeland was not to complete a man but to shape and shelter him for a higher destiny.

Peguy's critical views of the Republic were typical of the period:

The Republic was a restoration until about 1881, when the intrusion of intellectual tyranny and primary-school mentality began its chaos....At this date the Republic began to be discontinued. It went from republicanism to Caesarism, where the multi-Cesarism of committees and the anonymity of ministries manipulate the masses. 28

Peguy wanted leaders; on occasion, one leader, a master and a stiff one: "I don't like a kind man in power."

26 Daniel Halevey, op. cit., 74.

27 Peguy quoted in ibid., 139.

28 Ibid., 147.

Nothing is so dangerous for the underdog as a good-natured man at the top." ²⁹ Such ideas appealed to Mussolini.

Two women had a definite influence on Mussolini. The one was a Russian-Jewish emigree who tried to infuse in him the conviction that the future belonged to the socialist revolution and wanted him to be for Italy what Lenin was for Russia. The other was an Italian-Jewish authoress who introduced Mussolini, the blacksmith's son, to the white-collar society, and with her acquaintance with French syndicalism and neo-monarchism helped him mix the socialist-nationalist cocktail by which later he was to intoxicate his nation.

Borgese claims that in the period 1909 to 1914 four elements of Italian and European culture touched tangentially the surface of Mussolini's personality without affecting its permanent core, anarchism.

First of all, there was Pareto's theory of history which contained a pessimistic view, a sarcasm, a sneer, a restlessness that fitted Mussolini's temperament. Its moral indifference to any kind of political doctrine and practise left ample room for individual arbitrariness and a species of aristocratic anarchism. Secondly, there were D'Annunzio's writings, from which he extracted some quintessences of violence and revolt. From Croce's philosophy Mussolini got the idea of the individual's mind and will making the whole world, and that the world in itself has no existence at all. In the fourth place, the Futurists and Marinetti left their impres-

29 Ibid., 149

sion through their doctrine of complete destruction of the present in order that the future might be a utopia.³⁰

It is true that Pareto believed in the use of force as indispensable to society; that when the higher classes were averse to the use of force, it became necessary, if society was to subsist and prosper, that the governing class be replaced by another which was willing and able to use force. "And it may happen that our society will one day be saved from decadence by the heirs of the syndicalists and the anarchists of our day."³¹

Despite these influences, Mussolini contributed nothing constructive to the socialism of the period. He clung rather to the tenets of social revolution, as he had learned them in his youth, for he felt that in that way lay his rise to power. He chastised the soft-boiled socialism of the official party and hated the compromise, Freemasonry, and half-bourgeois methods of Socialist politics. He coveted direct subversive action, and tried it in 1911 by engineering a strike upon the proclamation of the Libyan War, and again in 1914 by attempting to spread riot and revolution throughout Central Italy in the famous "Red Week".

3

On the eve of the Great War Mussolini was obliged to make his great decision concerning intervention. As a Socialist he was opposed to it, but as Mussolini, violent and

30 Guiseppe Borgese, *op. cit.*, 196-200.

31 Vilfredo Pareto, *Mind and Society*, III, 1292-3.

active, he wanted it, hoping it would be the answer to Italian decay and confusion. But primarily he wanted to fight to advance himself. And for this he was expelled from the party.

The pitilessness of his future antagonism to official Socialism has been recorded:

...You have not seen the last of me....Do not think that by taking away my membership card you will be taking away my faith in the cause, or that you will prevent my still working for Socialism and revolution. 32

Here is where Fascism was born. This was the beginning of an agitation which set the people against Parliament, which showed that determined little groups full of revolutionary élan could stir and command a people and dominate a government.

Now it was merely a matter of time to find the proper ideas that would justify his actions, typically Mussolinian conduct. Through his own paper, Il Popolo d'Italia, he made it clear that it would be more profitable for Italy to will the war, since she would come into it anyway. Italy must fight, must make sacrifices, if she expects to gain from the war. The Italian proletariat should fight. "It is blood that gives motion to the wheels of history." ³³ "Today it is war, tomorrow it is revolution." ³⁴ "There will never be an international order until the people have reached their na-

32 Mussolini, Discorsi, 17.

33 Mussolini, Speech at Parma, Dec., 1914, Discorsi, 30.

34 Mussolini, Il Popolo d'Italia, January 24, 1915.

35
tional boundaries."

Though pro-Fascists glory in Mussolini's conversion to nationalism, there was no real conversion fundamentally. His heart had not changed. He saw that nationalism was a horse to ride, a brutal force that could be brutally mastered. He chose to ride the horse.

...Psychological determinism and external circumstances wove, to be sure, a web in which his will was enmeshed and his choice became almost necessary. Necessity alone would not have been enough to shape his destiny....Voluntarily he made the choice taking the risks of egoistic greatness against those of mediocrity in collaboration, and killing whatever was left of his soul for the hope of a resurrection in sheer power. 36

That there was no conversion, no real conversion, Mussolini is his own witness when on April 6, 1920 he said:

I start from the individual and strike at the state. Down with the state in all its forms and incarnations. The state of yesterday, of today, and of tomorrow. The bourgeois state and the socialist state. In the gloom of today and the darkness of tomorrow the only faith which remains to us individualists...is the absurd but ever-consoling religion of anarchy. 37

It seems that there never had been socialism nor nationalism in Mussolini, but consistently the anarchist. Finally he realized that no anarchist can triumph over the state unless he captures it and himself becomes the state.

That Mussolini was such a dyed-in-the-wool anarchist has been attributed to Max Stirner's gospel of anarchism,

35 Mussolini, Discorsi, 28.

36 Guiseppe Borgese, op. cit., 222.

37 Mussolini, Speeches, 160.

The Ego and His Own. Volpe mentions this as one of the books Mussolini had read in his youth.³⁸

Max Stirner was known as an individualistic anarchist because of his advocacy of external freedom and inner autonomy of personality. He loved liberty for himself and he loved to see any and all men taking liberty. "Nothing is more to me than myself."³⁹

His book, published in 1845, met with sensational success but passed into oblivion until 1895 when the superficially similar philosophy of Nietzsche began to be widely read. The Ego and His Own is a work written in excellent aphoristic style, and seems to be an anarchistic attack on all human society, on cooperation and institutions of every kind, on the human race itself. Obedience to any kind of authority is derided and respect for past tradition, scorned. The Ego is the supreme law; external obligations and submissions to tradition are spooks with which the world is infested. Laugh at them and they will melt away.

Knowing the revolutionary character of Mussolini and his attraction for anarchistic and radical doctrines, one can easily understand that the book, The Ego and His Own, would be eagerly read as a directive to greatness and power, and interpreted in the light of the confused socialistic doctrines rampant in his youth. Some of Mussolini's speeches are peppered with short, pithy proverbial utterances similar

38 Gioachimo Volpe, History of the Fascist Movement, 50.
 39 Max Stirner, The Ego and His Own, 6.

to those of Stirner. It seems, however, that it would be more correct to say that Nietzsche and Machiavelli influenced his way of thinking and acting and concentrating of all power within himself.

4

We have seen in Chapter II that Rocco, the official formulator and spokesman of Fascistic doctrine, pointed out Machiavelli as the most important of the forerunners of Fascism. "Machiavelli is the greatest of our countrymen in full possession of an Italian consciousness."⁴⁰

Mussolini was an ardent admirer of Machiavelli. His pattern for statesmanship was drafted by Machiavelli. In a thesis entitled "Comment of the Year 1924 on The Prince of Machiavelli" Mussolini called The Prince "the handbook of every statesman". He began his thesis (published in Gerarchia) by quoting Machiavelli's dictum: States are not maintained by words. He continued:

...The nature of man, in individuals and peoples, does not change and warrants a profound pessimism....Regimes have never and can never rest solely on consent because the egoistic nature of man forbids it. So-called democracies are deceptions, since the vital issues, those of peace and war, they do not submit to this 'people' that is never defined. Machiavelli identifies Prince and State. People and State must never be put into antithesis, for the State alone is able to control that egoistic atomism of the members which a Liberalism, essentially anarchic, releases. 41

40 Alfredo Rocco, op. cit., 413.

41 Mussolini, "Preludio Al 'Principe'" in Opere de Benito Mussolini, XII, 133-143.

According to the Machiavellian code of ethics, such things as coercion, intimidation, bribery, and the plainest violations of the decalogue, including murder, are not only permissible, but may in the enlightened practise of statecraft become highly commendable and meritorious actions. Machiavelli called the deception and the subsequent assassination of his captains "il bellissimo ingano" (the most beautiful deceit).⁴²

Mussolini wrote, "I want to preserve the direct contact between Machiavelli's doctrine and my life as I have lived it, between his thoughts and my thoughts on men and affairs, between his and my practise of governing."⁴³ For that reason he offered no bibliography for his thesis.

For both Machiavelli and Mussolini, force was the foundation of government. In an essay, "Force and Consent", which was a kind of apology for the Fascist revolution and a reply to its liberal-democratic critics, Mussolini posited his problem:

How are you going to prevent discontent from spreading...? You will prevent it by force, by the inexorable use of that force when necessary.... To speak of a sovereign people is to utter a jest. 44

45

Machiavelli called for a native militia. Mussolini organized a Fascist militia, first to seize power for him-

42 Machiavelli, The Prince, 31.

43 Mussolini, "Preludio Al 'Principe'" in Opere de Benito Mussolini, XII, 142.

44 Mussolini, "Force and Consent" in Making the Fascist State, ed. by H. W. Schneider, 340-2.

45 Machiavelli, The Prince, 53.

self and then to reenforce the regular army to maintain his power. Machiavelli in Discorsi advised that the principal foundation of all states be good laws and the proper military force to support them.⁴⁶ "It is much safer to be feared than loved...fear is maintained by a dread of punishment which never fails"⁴⁷ was a bit of advice that Mussolini followed closely.

There are other lines in The Prince that Mussolini seemed to have followed to the letter, such as, "a prince must be a fox and a lion";⁴⁸ "a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist."⁴⁹ "Nothing causes a prince to be so much esteemed as great enterprises and giving proof of prowess."⁵⁰ "He ought to keep the people occupied with festivals and shows."⁵¹ "Only those defenses are good, certain, and durable, which depend on yourself alone and your own ability."⁵² "Religion is a formidable force which must be respected and defended."⁵³

Mussolini embodied those very qualities which Machiavelli postulated for his prince. A man of spirit he was, of proven courage, of indomitable will, of steadfast purpose, as unwilling to spare himself as others; a man, moreover,

46 Machiavelli, Discourses, I, 226.

47 Machiavelli, The Prince, 61.

48 Ibid., 64.

49 Ibid., 65.

50 Ibid., 81.

51 Ibid., 85.

52 Ibid., 90.

53 Ibid., 98.

with a passion for facts and with an almost uncanny intuition of the popular mind, sensing in advance the turn of events and thus forestalling fickle Fortune. Ardent and imperious by nature, Mussolini naturally preferred the role of lion to that of the fox, recalling that it was generally better to proceed boldly rather than cautiously, since Fortune favored the young and daring. "Good strategy is calculation and audacity" formed a kind of motto for him.

His shrewd sense of timing induced in him some rather remarkable veerings of opinion: neutralist to interventionist in 1914; republican to monarchist in 1922.

Papini in 1906 popularized William James in Il Crepuscolo dei Filosofi. Pragmatism as such is implied or avowed in Machiavelli, Sorel, Pareto, and even in Nietzsche. Thus Mussolini in giving William James his allegiance was not so much submitting to a new control as having his ideas clarified and focused. Pragmatism was always native to Mussolini. That which worked was true; that which did not, was false. Consequences counted; results were important. Consequently, there was no absolutism in thinking. Mussolini's public utterances were full of this sense of relativity. Referring to his own essay on "Force and Consent", he said, "The opinions expressed in this article must not be considered as dogmas, but as expressions of the needs of today, which may tomorrow become relative....Every program should be carried only to the right point."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Mussolini, "Force and Consent" in Making the Fascist State, ed. by H. W. Schneider, 341.

Assimilating all his teachings, readings, and influences, Mussolini in 1932 formulated his own summary of Fascistic doctrine in an article originally published in the Encyclopedia Italiana. The following are some of the key thoughts that indicate a conglomeration of origins:

"Fascism is practise and theory" (Machiavellian opportunism). "It has a form correlative to the contingencies of place and time (Peguy's politique), but it has also an ideal content which raises it to a formula of truth in the higher level of the history of thought" (Peguy's mystique).

"There is no conception of state that is not fundamentally a conception of life" (Hegelian absolutism).

"The Fascist man is an individual who is at once nation and country, the moral law which binds together individuals and generations in a tradition and a mission which suppresses the instinct of life closed inside the brief cycle of pleasure and established in duty a life superior to and free of the limits of time and space: a life in which the individual by means of abnegation of himself, the sacrifice of his interests, even by his death, realizes the entirely spiritual existence in which resides his value as a man" (Nietzschean, Sorellian attitude to life; Gentile's version of idealism; Peguy's mysticism).

"Fascism was born of a need for action" (Sorel; Hegelian idealism).

"Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor utility of perpetual peace." "War alone brings up to its highest

tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon peoples who meet it." "Life is a duty, a struggle, a conquest." (Nietzsche)

"Fascism denies class war. Therefore the State must control economies." (Sorel; French syndicalism).

"Fascism denies that a majority can direct human society" (Maurras).

"A doctrine then must be no mere exercise in words but a living act (Gentile's idealism) and thus the value of Fascism lies in the fact that it is veined with pragmatism (William James; Pareto) but at the same time it has a will to exist (Schopenhauer) and a will to power (Nietzsche), a firm front in the face of the reality of violence" (Blanqui).

"Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute." "The Fascist State is itself conscious and has itself a will and personality" (Hegel).

"The Fascist State is a unique and original creation. It is revolutionary in that it anticipates the solution of the universal political problems that are settled in the political field by rivalry parties (Maurras), in that it meets the problems of the economic field by a system of syndicalism (Sorel), and enforces order, discipline, and obedience to that which is the determined moral code of the country" (Nietzsche).

"Fascism desires the State to be strong and organic body, at the same time reposing on broad and popular support.... The Fascist State has drawn into itself even the economic activities of the nation and through the corporative, social,

and educational institutions created by it, its influence reaches every aspect of national life and includes, framed in their respective organizations all the political, economic, and spiritual forces of the nation" (Totalitarian nationalism of Maurras; Lagardelle's revolutionary syndicalism; D'Annunzio's fanatic patriotism).

"The Fascist State organizes the nation but leaves a sufficient margin of liberty to the individual; the latter is deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual but the State alone" (Machiavelli).

"The Fascist State professes no theology, but a morality, and in the Fascist State, religion is considered as one of the deepest manifestations of the spirit of man; thus it is not only respected but defended" (Machiavelli; Mussolinian opportunism).

"The Fascist State is an embodied will to power and government. Roman tradition is here an ideal of force in action" (Nietzsche; Sorellian myth as a source of activity).

"For Fascism the growth of empire, that is, the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality" (Machiavelli).

"But empire demands discipline, the coordination of all the forces and a deeply felt sense of duty and sacrifice" (Mazzini; Nietzsche; Machiavelli).

Only by taking such a summary apart does one become

aware of the multiplicity of influences and the similarity of expressions that had become a part of Mussolini in his rise to power.

CONCLUSION

Though one cannot feel that October 28, 1922 was inevitable, yet in view of Italian political life as it had been carried on in Italy since her unification, it was a perfectly logical consequence, understandable and natural. The self-abdication of Parliament was a clear indication of how the members of that body considered this to be the case, although it would need not to have been. Had the Socialists been courageous enough to take over the inglorious and unrewarding task of assuming the responsibilities of government and rehabilitation of the nation, the crisis might have passed and the Parliamentary system might have come to some solution. The Socialists had the opportunity but missed it by obstructionism in Parliament; obstructionism is not government. The fact that Giolitti failed to understand the stress of the situation and that it could not be remedied by smooth pre-1914 methods merely added fuel to the fire.

In times of stress a high premium is placed on reckless individuals who are willing to capitalize on confusion. Mussolini, precisely such a person, with vague promises for a better Italy but no definite program, appealed to the most widespread elements. It was not at all surprising that more and more people were attracted by the kind of thing which D'Annunzio had represented in Fiume and which Fascism adopted.

However, neither the political nor economic upset in Italy, nor the power and prestige secured by Mussolini were sufficient to produce Fascism. There was in the country a

widespread and deep-rooted feeling that liberal institutions were essentially pernicious. This in turn came out of a political tradition and political philosophy that had been crystallizing throughout the nineteenth century. True, without Mussolini there would have been perhaps no rise of Fascism; but if there had not been an undercurrent of belief that dictatorship was the best form of government, Mussolini would not have been able to seize power. Consequently, Mussolini was not so much the creator of a new political theory as he was the popularizer of doctrines that had been in existence and had been used under various forms of government to a greater or less degree. All Mussolini did was to put them together into a new body or combination, adapted to circumstances, because he needed an ideology to justify his seizure of power, to retain his power, and to indoctrinate the people.

That ideology, as we have seen, had a diverse background. From Rome Fascism received its dream of an empire, its symbol, its salute, uniforms, holiday, all the external show which appealed to emotion and nationalistic pride, and salved the wounds of a mutilated victory. The fact that the Mediterranean belonged to England made little difference in the fanfare of enthusiasm.

Machiavelli laid the basis for the method and functioning of statecraft by advocating opportunism; by proclaiming that the end of the State is power unrelated to morals; that expansion of power is most effectively brought about by an increase in population, "fortunate" alliances, maintenance

of an army, regulation of economic activity.

Sorel provided the justification of violence and the force of the myth, which in Italy's case was the creation of a Roman empire through discipline, obedience, combat.

The direction of the State by the elite was a legacy from Pareto. Hegel contributed the divine origin of the State as such, the organic nature of social institutions culminating in the State, the substitution of the sovereignty of the people by the sovereignty of the State, and the idea of a corporative state on a totalitarian absolutist basis.

William James, Bergson, Nietzsche became convenient pegs on which to hang Fascistic ideology in their stress on flexibility, relativity, intuition, the will to power, and the glory of war.

Finally, D'Annunzio's escapade served as the rallying focus for the forces and ideas that went into the making of Fascist ideology. It was a kind of dress rehearsal for Mussolini's Italy. Count Sforza considers this episode alone the real cause of Fascism.

As we have said before, no ideology will take root unless there be proper soil for the seed. Fascism was the attempt to solve current Italian problems that no one wanted to attack. And the fact is that similar conditions exist elsewhere and likewise need solution. Corporatism under a vigorous state is being strongly considered as a possible solution. Therein lies the potential threat of what was once Fascism.

Assessed in terms of actual achievement, Fascism claims the economic betterment of Italy. True, there were many external sights like roads, bridges, trains running on time, housing projects for laborers, that impressed the casual observer as well ordered economy; but in the main it was merely a highly advertised superficial economy. Statistics as supplied by Salvemini, Under the Axe of Fascism, show a steady progress during the years 1922-1926, when the economic and financial improvement was at its peak in Italy. This recovery, according to Giorgio Mortara,¹ the most dependable chronicler of Italian economic history, had little to do with Fascism which was fortunate enough to come into power during a period of universal prosperity. When the slump came, Fascism was not only unable to protect Italy from its effects, but even intensified them. Actually the depression started in Italy in 1927 as a result of the stabilization of the lira at too high a level of exchange. There was continual decline in all phases of Italian economy between 1926 and 1936: in balance of trade, tourist trade, shipping, Italian industry and agriculture. Only in war equipment was there any notable increase. Though Fascism won the battle of the wheat in that it reduced Italy's wheat imports 75%, it likewise cut down wheat consumption by 21%. So in the long run, Mussolini won the "battle" but the Italians lost the wheat, as Ebenstein cleverly puts it.

¹ Giorgio Mortara, Prospettive economiche, 15 ff. quoted by William Ebenstein, Fascist Italy, 189.

This much for domestic policy. In colonial and imperialistic efforts the results were of a similar nature, war and poverty going hand in hand. "War may perhaps be justified by necessities of national honor and vital rights. Economically, it always constitutes waste and destruction."² Italy went into her wars for economic reasons, chiefly for colonies, raw materials, and independence in time of war.

The conclusion of the Lateran treaty redounds to the credit of Fascism even though one may question the opportunistic motives involved on the part of Mussolini who was anxious to secure at home and abroad the sanction of respectability for his ideology. It succeeded in building up an association in the minds of many that the Church was sanctioning Fascism. Furthermore, Mussolini's interpretation of the treaty did not correspond to the Vatican's point of view. As time went on into the 1930's, Catholic Action societies were dissolved, and in 1936, at the formation of the Axis, the Church realized that the degree of reverence for the Holy See on the part of the Fascist State depended wholly on the political "necessities" of the moment.

Intellectuals and so-called patriotic Italians prefer to draw a veil over the whole Fascistic era, but the common people of the day feel that Mussolini's regime was an era of advancement for Italy, when she actually came into her own among the family of nations. They point to the permanence of the Lateran Treaty, despite motives; to the lasting suc-

² William Ebenstein, op. cit., 300.

cess of the vast public works program which included new schoolhouses and hospitals, beauty of cities, restoration of devastated areas, restoration of the art and beauty of Rome, road building, improvement of communications and harbor facilities. In the vast land reclamation project, including the draining of the Pontine Marshes, Mussolini recovered for Italy twelve to thirteen billion acres of land, one hundred times as much as his predecessors had reclaimed between 1860 and 1922. He was not successful, however, in breaking up the landed estates. All of this meant for the Italian common man a somewhat easier life from the economic point of view (work for him and food for the bambini); consequently, Mussolini remains the hero in their esteem.

"But not by bread alone doth man live"; and so today Italy, troubled but confident, is attempting to revive and reconstruct her political and economic life, after the collapse in World War II, through a Parliamentary system with De Gasperi's Christian Democrats as a majority, opposed by Communists, "left-wing" Socialists, and Neo-Fascists.

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