

The Rise of
FASCISM

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the *Reichswehr* will be on our side, officers and men. . . . One day the hour will come when these wild troops will grow to battalions, the battalions to regiments, the regiments to divisions, when the old cockade will be lifted from the mire, when the old flags will wave in front of us. . . .'⁴³ He was not burning his bridges.

What seems somewhat strange in these events is how Hitler, in spite of his low social origin, his wild manners and his lack of any constructive programme, could influence and sway not just the crowds, but middle-aged and experienced men, such as the judge of the Bavarian high court, Theodor von der Pfordten who was killed at the Odeonsplatz, or the generals Ludendorff and von Lossow. It was in vain that Ludendorff's confidant, the former Colonel Bauer, wrote to him a few days before the *Putsch*: 'What is lacking are capable leaders and unity. . . . But even men such as Hitler, Graefe, Wulle have no clear programme and are in addition unteachable. . . .' Three months earlier Bauer had sent a long report to Ludendorff from Vienna about the Austrian National Socialists and their relations with Munich which sounded an equally warning note. Bauer had just come from a meeting of the Austrian National Socialists at Salzburg which had been attended by 'quite a lot of people, the large majority youths of seventeen to nineteen years. . . . What I missed altogether were older, more sensible people and politicians. Of the decisions taken one is of special importance, that they do not want to take part in the coming elections in Austria. . . . The second decision, which seems more questionable, is that the Austrians are to accept the military-dictatorial leadership of Hitler. I discussed this at length with Captain Göring, the leader of Hitler's *S.A.* The impression which I received is quite exceptionally bad. In the first place I doubt very much whether he and his subordinates are capable of creating a militarily useful organization. Secondly, these people completely overestimate the strength of their own movement, and in particular forget entirely that it is madness today to undertake something which could not be countenanced by France. . . . In my opinion it must be stated clearly that the Austrian National Socialists come under Austrian orders in all purely Austrian matters, and it would only be natural if they remained under my orders as hitherto. For *German* matters, they would, of course, be available. . . .'; but even for these Bauer refused to accept any orders from Hitler or

⁴³ Quoted by Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 167; Hofmann, *Der Hitlerputsch*, p. 255. Political offenders had to serve their sentences in a disused fortress where they enjoyed considerable privileges.

from Göring.⁴⁴ Yet Ludendorff refused to heed the warnings: it was only some years later that he finally broke with Hitler.

If Hitler could influence some very senior officers there is no doubt about the fascination which his appeal had for the young lieutenants and cadets, and for the soldiers of the world war. Their world had been the Hohenzollern Empire and the war, and that world had disappeared: as they believed, it had been destroyed by the November criminals. Hitler promised them vengeance, a national rebirth, a Germany strong and free, cleansed of all alien influence. In Italy this national appeal was powerful enough although Italy was one of the victorious powers: it was far stronger in a country that had been defeated and humiliated. Among Hitler's followers and supporters the number of soldiers and former soldiers was very large, and the Bavarian *Reichswehr* played a decisive part in his phenomenal rise. So did Bavarian particularism, the dislike of Berlin and of Marxism, the shock of the Munich Soviet Republic. But the pupil of political officers had outgrown his teachers. He was no longer content to be 'the drummer', the auxiliary of great generals and right-wing politicians; he was the leader of a mass party who could sway the crowds. The government which he proclaimed in the Bürgerbräu on 8 November 1923 was *his* government, in which Ludendorff was relegated to the post of minister of defence. The drummer had become the band-leader. At his trial in March 1924 Hitler proclaimed: 'Who is born to be a dictator is not pushed but he wills; he is not pressed forward, but pushes forward himself. . . . Who feels called upon to rule a nation has no right to say: If you want me or fetch me I work with you. It is his duty to do so. . . .'⁴⁵

Mein Kampf

The months which Hitler spent in the fortress of Landsberg on the Lech—he was released on parole at the end of 1924—he used to dictate the first volume of *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle'), a mixture of autobiography and history of the National Socialist movement with an exposition of his ideology and bitter attacks on his many enemies. The first volume was significantly called 'a reckoning'; the second followed two years later. The work, in spite of its turgid language, bad style and

⁴⁴ Colonel Max Bauer to Ludendorff, 20 August and 7 November 1923: Nachlass Bauer, no. 81, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

⁴⁵ Hofmann, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

many repetitions, became the bible of National Socialism, a bible such as Italy did not possess. As Hitler's basic ideas remained unchanged throughout his later career, some of them might be mentioned here.

There is, in the first instance, Hitler's violent anti-Semitism which had meanwhile been reinforced by his reading of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the story of the alleged Jewish world conspiracy which was imported into Germany from Russia. 'How much the whole existence of this people rests on a continuous lie is demonstrated in an incomparable manner in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, hated so infinitely by the Jews. They are said to be based on a falsification, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* time and again moans into the world: the best proof that they are genuine. What many Jews may do subconsciously that is here demonstrated consciously. But this is the point. It is quite immaterial from which Jewish head these revelations come; what matters is that they uncover the essence and the activity of the Jewish people with an almost horrid certainty and expose them in their inner connexions as well as their ultimate aims. . . .'⁴⁶ The most dreadful example of the Jew's lust for world domination was 'Russia, where he killed or let starve about thirty million people in truly fanatical ferocity and in part by inhuman torture, so as to secure to a gang of Jewish literati and stock exchange robbers the rule over a great nation. . . .' It is the Jews, too, 'who bring the negro to the Rhine, always with the same crooked design and clear aim of destroying through the bastardization which must result from it the white race hated by them, to hurl it from its cultural and political heights and to make themselves its masters. . . .'⁴⁷ The Jew's 'ultimate goal is the denationalization, the promiscuous bastardization of other peoples, the lowering of the racial level of the highest peoples, and the domination of this racial mish-mash through the extirpation of the *völkisch* intelligentsia. . . . Hence the result of Jewish domination is always the ruin of all culture and finally the madness of the Jew himself. For he is a parasite of nations, and his victory signifies his own end as much as the death of his victims. . . .'⁴⁸ This was a truly apocalyptic vision, a theme of ruin and destruction as it occurred in the Germanic sagas and the Wagnerian operas which Hitler loved so much.

This view equally influenced Hitler's ideas in the field of foreign

⁴⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 97th ed., Munich, 1934, p. 337.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 357-8.

⁴⁸ *Hitler's Secret Book*, New York, 1961, p. 213. This book was written in 1928, and published for the first time in 1961.

policy. To him, 'France is and remains by far the most horrible enemy. This nation, which is increasingly subject to negroization, is tied to the aims of Jewish world domination and thus presents a lurking danger to the existence of the white race of Europe. For the adulteration by negro blood on the Rhine in the heart of Europe corresponds as much to the sadistic and perverted desire for vengeance of this chauvinistic hereditary enemy of our people, as to the icy-cold deliberation of the Jew to start thus the bastardization of the European continent at its centre and to deprive the white race of the basis for a superior existence by infecting it with a lower humanity. . . . For Germany, however, the French danger means the obligation . . . to stretch out the hand to those who, equally threatened as we, do not want to suffer and to countenance France's lust for domination. In Europe there will within the foreseeable future only be two allies for Germany: England and Italy. . . .'⁴⁹

The colonial and trade policy of the pre-war years should be abandoned in favour of a policy of territorial expansion, a policy as it had been pursued by the Teutonic Order and the German colonists of the Middle Ages. 'We start there where they stopped six centuries ago. We halt the eternal movement of the Germans to the south and west of Europe and direct our sight to the lands in the east. . . . But when we talk today about new land and soil in Europe we can think in the first place only of Russia and the states bordering upon it and subject to it. . . .', for Russia is 'ripe to collapse. . . . Germany will be a world power or she will cease to exist. . . .'⁵⁰ What was essential was the acquisition 'of sufficient living space for our people for the next hundred years', and this could be found 'only in the east'.⁵¹ Within hardly more than a decade this policy would be carried out in practice, not only against Russia, but also against Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The leading German political parties, the Centre and the Social Democrats, were considered traitors by Hitler. The leaders of the Centre 'were fonder of any Pole, any Alsatian traitor and Francophile than they were of the German who did not want to join such a criminal organization. Under the pretext of representing Catholic interests this party even in peacetime lent a helping hand to harm and ruin the major bulwark of a real Christian world view, Germany, in all possible ways. . . . The Social Democrats, too, 'betrayed and sold out Germanism

⁴⁹ *Mein Kampf*, pp. 704-5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 742.

⁵¹ *Hitler's Secret Book*, p. 145.

in the old Austria in the most shameless way at every opportunity that offered itself. They always stood on the side of the enemies of our people. The most important Czech arrogance always found its defender in the so-called German Social Democracy. Every oppressive act against Germany had their approbation. . . .⁵² Needless to say, Jews were the 'leaders of Social Democracy'; 'starting with the editor, only Jews' wrote in the Socialist press. 'I took all the Social Democratic pamphlets I could lay my hands on and looked for the names of their authors: Jews. I remembered the names of almost all their leaders; they were for the largest part also members of the "chosen people". . . .'⁵³ It was indeed all very simple, so simple that even the slowest-witted German could be made to understand it. Complicated political or economic developments were reduced to a magic formula, to a conspiracy, to a devilish plan in which people could believe: they became a matter of faith.

There were—then and later—many other nationalist parties and organizations in Germany. They too were opposed to the Treaty of Versailles and to the system of parliamentary democracy; they too were—less violently than the National Socialists—anti-Semitic. Yet they would never have been able to accomplish what Hitler did. Their leaders were too bourgeois and too cautious, and so was their policy; they could not fascinate the masses. Their members and voters came from the middle and the lower middle classes, not from the working class. Their programme in the field of foreign policy was almost exclusively the undoing of the Treaty of Versailles, the restoration of the frontiers of 1914. Hitler was not only much more ambitious and much more extremist. His *Raumpolitik* was by its very nature quite different from the policy of the nationalists. He wanted to incorporate with Germany wide areas in eastern Europe which were not inhabited by Germans and to resettle them with Germans. He later did not hesitate to sacrifice the existence of certain German minorities in eastern Europe to his wider schemes and plans of power policy. His racial policy often disregarded German interests, and the German minorities were merely the convenient vehicles of this policy. Hitler did not only want to remould the Germans, but the whole of Europe, in the image of racial phantasies which knew no bounds.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 57, 62.

⁵³ *Mein Kampf*, pp. 64-5.

National Socialism: the Road to Power

Years of Reorganization

In the autumn of 1923 the German mark was stabilized; the inflation which had ruined Germany was at last brought under control. Stresemann, first as chancellor and later as foreign minister, rightly considered that the key to a recovery was the establishment of better relations with France, and he succeeded in bringing this about during the following years. In August 1924 the Dawes Plan was signed which for the first time regulated the vexed question of the German Reparations payments to France and other western powers. Soon the Ruhr and parts of the occupied Rhineland were evacuated by their armies. American loans began to flow into Germany, and her economic recovery was swift. The years 1925-28 were the heyday of the Weimar Republic; prosperity was restored and the parliamentary institutions seemed to be accepted by the majority of the electorate. Indeed, no observer of the political scene in 1928 could have prophesied that five years later Hitler would be in power and parliamentary democracy in ruins. While the *Völkische* and National Socialists still polled nearly two million votes or six and a half per cent of the total in May 1924, by December this was reduced to 900,000, and in May 1928 to 800,000 votes, a mere two and a half per cent of the votes cast in the country as a whole. The voting strength of the Communists equally declined, while that of the moderate parties increased.

While Hitler was imprisoned at Landsberg in 1924 the National Socialist movement went through a severe crisis, the aftermath of the defeat of November 1923. In many parts of Germany the National Socialist Party was dissolved by the authorities after the *Putsch*. General Ludendorff, advised by Hitler's former lieutenant Gregor

The Fascist movements which arose in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s were very different in character, and they mirrored the entirely different national backgrounds of the countries in which they developed. Some were more conservative, and others more radical in their demands and their actions. Some were violently anti-Semitic, and others were not. Some took revolutionary action and staged armed revolts against the government, while others insisted on the legal way as the only possibility of attaining power. Some acquired a strong following among the lower classes, while others remained almost entirely middle and lower middle class. With so much variety, it might be asked what they had in common, and with what justification we can speak of Fascism in the singular. The following pages are an attempt to discuss these common traits—the factors which distinguish Fascism from other contemporary movements, whether right-wing or left-wing.

The Fascist movements, as has been emphasized by other writers,¹ had much in common in their ideology—so much that they were able to borrow from each other. They were not only strongly nationalist and violently anti-Communist and anti-Marxist: that they had in common with other parties and groups of the extreme Right, such as the Nationalist parties of Italy and Germany. The Fascists not only hated Liberalism and democracy and the political parties, but they wanted to eliminate them and to replace them by a new authoritarian and corporative state. In this state, there would only be one party; its hierarchy would overlap with that of the state, and its machinery would take over functions of the state. Its members would be the only ones entitled to hold high state offices. Ideally, there would be an

¹ Especially by Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, London, 1965.

identity of party and state, although in practice much friction between them arose in Germany as well as in Italy. Again in theory—though not always in practice—the Fascist party was strongly élitist in character. Its early members considered themselves called upon to save and to lead their nation, and many Fascist parties did not aim at attracting a mass membership, or stipulated periods when no new members would be accepted. The Fascist parties were conceived as tightly organized semi-military machines with which state and society were to be conquered; in all of them, para-military associations or militias—clad in black, brown, green or blue shirts and uniforms—played a very important part. They contained the ‘activists’ who had to bear the brunt of the struggle for power. The seizure of total power was their aim.

Part of the movements’ ideology was a powerful myth, a myth of the nation and the race. It usually took the form of territorial expansion as the goal, a Greater Germany, a Greater Finland, Imperial conquest in Africa, a Great Netherlands state, an Empire. The movements also glorified and venerated the past: the Roman Empire of antiquity, the Spain of the Catholic Kings, the Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands, the Germanic or the Turanian glories of earlier centuries. This myth was the religion of the twentieth century, fervently believed in however slim its connexion with reality. To the historical myth belonged the movements’ flags and emblems: the swastika as a symbol of Aryanism, the *fasces* of the Roman Republic, the yoke and arrows, the Flemish lion, the crossed scythes or arrows. Above all, there was the myth of the ‘Leader’ who was venerated like a Saint by the faithful, who could do no wrong and must not be criticized, who was God-given, and to whom superhuman qualities were attributed. He possessed a personal dynamism and magnetism which could arouse vast crowds to frenzy and ecstasy. Whoever has attended a Hitler meeting in Germany will remember the passions which he was able to arouse, the atmosphere of religious frenzy and devotion. His magnetism later made battle-hardened generals tremble in his presence. The magnetism exercised by some of the other Fascist leaders—Codreanu, Primo de Rivera, Van Severen, Degrelle—seems to have been equally powerful,² and less artificial than in the case of Hitler, who carefully cultivated

² That the same applied at the local level has recently been shown by an interesting study of the Dutch National Socialist movement in the small town of Winterswijk: G. A. Kooy, *Het échee van een ‘volkse’ beweging—Nazificatie en Denazificatie in Nederland 1931–1945*, Assen, 1964. There the local N.S.B. leader was a very popular vet.

his mystique. There were other cults which characterized the Fascist movements, notably a cult of violence and 'action'. In Germany and elsewhere the myth of the street battles and battles won in meeting halls remained very much alive, as did the memory of the movement's 'martyrs' who 'march in spirit with us in our ranks'.³ In Rumania and Germany this cult reached religious proportions. In no other party did the myth play such a vital part. To it also belonged—in the cases of Hitler and Codreanu—the myth of the devilish propensities of the Jewish race and its dreams of world power. Both love and hatred were cultivated by the Fascist movements.

Unlike many middle-class or working-class parties, the Fascists appealed to all social groups, from the top to the bottom of the social scale. Excluded were only those who were their favourite objects of attack: the profiteers, the parasites, the financial gangsters, the ruling cliques, the rapacious capitalists, the reactionary landowners. But even there exceptions were made if it suited the Leader's book. There is no doubt, however, that certain social groups responded much more strongly to the Fascist appeal than others. This is particularly true of those who were uprooted and threatened by social and economic change, whose position in society was being undermined, who had lost their traditional place, and were frightened of the future. These were, above all, the lower middle classes—or rather certain groups within them: the artisans and independent tradesmen, the small farmers, the lower grade government employees and white-collar workers. Perhaps even more important in the early stages were the former officers and non-commissioned officers of the first world war for whom no jobs were waiting, who had got accustomed to the use of violence, and felt themselves deprived of their 'legitimate' rewards. In Italy, in Germany, and elsewhere the 'front' generation played a leading part in the rise of Fascism. For its members fighting was a way of life which they transferred to the domestic scene. They loved battles for their own sake.⁴ It is no accident that the most important Fascist movements had their origin in the year 1919, the year of the Hungarian and Munich Soviet republics, of civil war which aroused fear and hatred in many hearts. Those who had been badly frightened did not

³ In the words of the 'Horst Wessel Song' which became the German national anthem. Horst Wessel was one of the early 'martyrs' who was shot by Communists in Berlin.

⁴ Thus Codreanu in a revealing passage of his autobiography: *Eiserne Garde*, Berlin, 1939, p. 11.

easily forget. The occupation of the factories in northern Italy in the following year had the same effect.

This does not mean, however, that the lower middle classes acted on their own—in a revulsion from liberalism and parliamentarianism—or in their own interests to bring about Fascism. In a recent work on a Marxist topic it was stated that the lower middle classes adopted a policy to 'use that power [of the state], even increase it, for their own ends till they reached the superstates of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy'.⁵ This is a gross oversimplification of a very complex process by which members of the lower middle classes were recruited by Fascist parties in many different countries; but they did not take any initiative as a social group; nor did they intend to use the power of the state for their own ends'. An earlier sociological analysis, based on the Italian example, suggested that a development towards Fascism was possible in Italy because there the bourgeoisie was weak and the proletariat strong and particularly well organized, having achieved a dominating position in certain parts of the country.⁶ While this was true of Italy, it was much less true of Germany—where the proletarian revolution had been decisively defeated in 1919—and not at all true of certain underdeveloped countries, such as Hungary and Rumania. From what has been said in the preceding pages it emerges that Fascist movements could develop in countries with a very strong left-wing movement—such as Italy or Spain—but equally in countries where the opposite was the case. It does not seem that the relative strength of the bourgeoisie and the working class had much to do with the rise of Fascism. There is more truth in the assertion that this rise was due to a malaise, a maladjustment of capitalist society, the victims of which were the lower middle classes more than any other social group.

Apart from the groups already mentioned, there were the youngsters at school and university who became ardent believers in Fascism at an early stage. They were fed up with the existing society, bored with their daily duties, and strongly attracted by a movement which promised a radical change, which they could invest with a romantic halo. These youths came from middle-class or lower middle-class families. They could not easily find the way into the Communist camp. But they found the weak and changing governments of the post-war period

⁵ J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London and New York, 1966, vol. ii, p. 554.

⁶ Franz Borkenau, 'Zur Soziologie des Faschismus', *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, vol. lxxviii, 1933, p. 521. It is somewhat ironical that this was published a few weeks after Hitler had come into power.

utterly unattractive. In the Weimar Republic, in the post-war Italian kingdom, in the corrupt governments of Rumania, in the powerless governments of Spain, there was nothing to fire the enthusiasm of youth: they were dreary and pedestrian, the offices filled with mediocrities and time-servers. It was this, rather than any economic threat, that led so many idealist students into the Fascist camp. Similarly, many young officers and soldiers of the post-war generation were attracted by visions of national greatness and the promise of a revision of the peace treaties. A perusal of the autobiographical notes⁷ compiled by men who joined the National Socialist Party in its early years shows that pride of place belongs to a strong nationalism, the desire to see Germany strong and united again, freed from the 'chains of Versailles', and also from the faction fights and the 'horse-trading' of the political parties. This often went together with hatred of the Communists and Socialists, and with anti-Semitism. Those who joined the Party were usually very young; they loved the frequent fights and battles in which they got involved together with their comrades, as well as the uniforms and the propaganda marches.

For the success of Fascism other factors, too, were essential. In the first place, there was the devastating economic crisis which made millions unemployed and threatened the economic existence of many more millions. If it had not been for the vast inflation of the German currency which undermined the very foundations of society, followed by the slump of the early 1930s, Hitler would not have been successful in Germany. Nor would Mussolini have been in Italy if it had not been for the post-war economic crisis and the fears which it aroused in the middle classes. Many other Fascist movements owed their growth to the slump of the early 1930s, a slump that found all governments helpless and passive. Essential, too, was the help rendered by sections of the ruling groups and governments, or the support of the army and high-ranking officers. Without this, there would have been no march on Rome and no Mussolini government. Without the support rendered by the Bavarian government and army the National Socialists would not have become a mass party in Munich in the early 1920s. Later, the ambiguous role of the *Reichswehr* leaders and their deep contempt of the Republic proved of inestimable value to Hitler, as did the financial contributions which he received from certain industrialists. The Iron Guard would not have become a mass movement if it had

⁷ There are many hundreds of these autobiographical notes in the *Hauptarchiv der NSDAP*, now in the Bundesarchiv at Koblenz.

not been supported for a time by King Carol and industrialist circles. In Spain the revolt of the generals thrust the *Falange* into prominence. In Finland and in Hungary the army provided invaluable help for the Fascists. This factor must not be overestimated in its importance, but neither must it be overlooked.

It has recently been stated that 'the German crisis was *sui generis*'. 'Though Fascism had spread throughout Europe, the German variety came to be unique. It was unique not only in the way it managed to displace the revolutionary impetus, but also in the primacy of the ideology of the Volk, nature and race. . . .'⁸ As far as the *völkisch* ideology was concerned it was not unique, but it had its close counterparts in the racial theories propounded in Finland and in Hungary—two countries inhabited by non-Indo-European peoples. The 'Roman' ideology of the Italian Fascists and the theory of the common 'Dietsch' origin of the people of the Netherlands belong into the same category. Moreover, the Italian Fascists were considerably more successful in destroying 'the revolutionary impetus' than were the National Socialists. The former's punitive expeditions killed the revolutionary movement in Italy; but in Germany this was accomplished by the Free Corps before the National Socialist Party came into being. This is not to deny that its growth was very much facilitated by the existence of *völkisch* and anti-Semitic beliefs in certain circles, but this was only one of the factors which aided its rise. The others were the lost war, the sense of humiliation and the fierce nationalism resulting from the Treaty of Versailles, the occupation of the Ruhr and the reparations' issue, the weakness and unpopularity of the Weimar Republic, the inflation and the economic crisis, the fears and the insecurity of the middle and lower middle classes. All these combined to make the rise of Hitler possible, and all were paralleled by similar developments in other European countries. Even Hitler's ferocious anti-Semitism was matched by the same tendency in Hungary and in Rumania.

Were the Fascist movements revolutionary? No doubt many of them demanded radical social changes and reforms, especially in Eastern Europe and in Spain where these were bitterly necessary. But in the more stable and conservative atmosphere of north-western Europe these movements were much less radical. The Italian Fascists and the German National Socialists were radical in their original demands, but both shed most of this radicalism fairly soon. If many

⁸ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of the German Ideology*, New York, 1964, p. 315.

Fascist leaders insisted that they must come into power in a legal way, this does not prove that their movements were not revolutionary. Even if this insistence was not just useful propaganda, the Fascist movements did aim at a fundamental change of the political structure—the abolition of parliamentary government and democracy—and the replacement of the ruling groups by a new *élite*. Once in power, they naturally had to use many of the old experts, civil servants and generals, but these were no longer in command. They received their 'marching orders' from the new leaders who often came from entirely different social groups, far below the level of the old ruling classes. The Fascist 'revolution' was not fought out in the streets and on the barricades, but in the ministries and government buildings. In this sense there was a 'seizure of power'. Power was handed over by the old ruling groups to the new leaders, and they used this power for their own ends.

Between the aims of the new and those of the old rulers there was a superficial similarity—the expansion of Germany or colonial conquest in Africa—but in reality there was a vast difference. What Hitler aimed at was not German expansion, and not even a Greater Germany, but world conquest. He did not care for the fate of the Sudeten Germans, the South Tyrolese or of any other German minority, but was willing to sacrifice them on the altar of his ambition. Mussolini's methods of conquest were often quite irrational, subject to his vision of a 'Roman Empire'. No one could seriously maintain that the two dictators acted in the interests of their countries. There is much truth in the assertion of Hermann Rauschning that the Fascists carried through a 'revolution of nihilism'. The Hitler Youth used to sing a song which prophesied that Europe would be aflame when the *Germanen* went down; Europe was in flames, but she has recovered. Fascism was the product of a deep social and economic crisis, a crisis of European society.

The Second World War ended with the downfall of the Fascist regimes, first in Italy, and then in Germany; they were discredited by the collapse of their policies of conquest and expansion, by the ruthless suppression of all opposition, and by the inhuman treatment meted out to their enemies. In both countries, democratic parties and trade unions slowly resumed their political activities, under the watchful eyes of the Allied forces of occupation. Yet all over Europe many thousands of convinced Fascists and National Socialists survived the war, often embittered by arrest, trial and exclusion from public office. It was only a question of time before they would try to organize themselves, to take up the struggle once more against liberalism and democracy, against undesirable aliens and alleged Communist subversion. Indeed, as the war brought with it the advance of Soviet power into the heart of central Europe and the forced conversion of most of eastern and central Europe to Communism, the fears which had been such a powerful promoter of the Fascist movements received a strong confirmation in fact. And there were millions who were uprooted and driven from their homes, who fled from the advancing Red Army or were expelled from Poland and Czechoslovakia, many resentful and eager for revenge. When things became more settled in postwar Europe new dangers threatened alleged racial purity, foreign workers migrating to the more affluent countries, or immigrants from the former colonial empires of the victor states. Although prosperity returned to Europe much more quickly than after the First World War, there were once more severe economic crises, high unemployment and rapid inflation which fifty years earlier had driven masses of the discontented into the arms of the Fascists. Thus a Fascist revival in one country or the other could almost be expected.

Yet thirty-five years after the end of the war there is no Fascist mass movement anywhere in Europe, but only a plethora of small groups