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MICHAEL PARENTI

Rational Fascism
& the Overthrow
of Communism

**BLACKSHIRTS &
REEDS**

CITY LIGHTS BOOKS
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have announced "the end of history." With the overthrow of communism, the monumental struggle between alternative systems has ended, they say. Capitalism's victory is total. No great transformations are in the offing. The global free market is here to stay. What you see is what you are going to get, now and always. This time the class struggle is definitely over. So Hugo's question is answered: the future has indeed arrived, though not the one he had hoped for.

This intellectually anemic end-of-history theory was hailed as a brilliant exegesis and accorded a generous reception by commentators and reviewers of the corporate-controlled media. It served the official worldview perfectly well, saying what the higher circles had been telling us for generations: that the struggle between classes is not an everyday reality but an outdated notion, that an untrammelled capitalism is here to stay now and forever, that the future belongs to those who control the present.

But the question we really should be asking is, do we have a future at all? More than ever, with the planet itself at stake, it becomes necessary to impose a reality check on those who would plunder our limited ecological resources in the pursuit of limitless profits, those who would squander away our birthright and extinguish our liberties in their uncompromising pursuit of self-gain.

History teaches us that all ruling elites try to portray themselves as the natural and durable social order, even ones that are in serious crisis, that threaten to devour their environmental base in order to continually recreate their hierarchical structure of power and privilege. And all ruling elites are scornful and intolerant of alternative viewpoints.

Truth is an uncomfortable venue for those who pretend to serve our society while in fact serving only themselves—at our expense. I hope this effort will chip away at the Big Lie. The truth may not set us free, as the Bible claims, but it is an important first step in that direction.

—Michael Parenti

CHAPTER ONE

RATIONAL FASCISM

While walking through New York's Little Italy, I passed a novelty shop that displayed posters and T-shirts of Benito Mussolini giving the fascist salute. When I entered the shop and asked the clerk why such items were being offered, he replied, "Well, some people like them. And, you know, maybe we need someone like Mussolini in this country." His comment was a reminder that fascism survives as something more than a historical curiosity.

Worse than posters or T-shirts are the works by various writers bent on "explaining" Hitler, or "reevaluating" Franco, or in other ways sanitizing fascist history. In Italy, during the 1970s, there emerged a veritable cottage industry of books and articles claiming that Mussolini not only made the trains run on time but also made Italy work well. All these publications, along with many conventional academic studies, have one thing in common: They say little if anything about the class policies of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. How did these regimes deal with social services, taxes, business, and the conditions of labor? For whose benefit and at

whose expense? Most of the literature on fascism and Nazism does not tell us.¹

Plutocrats Choose Autocrats

Let us begin with a look at fascism's founder. Born in 1883, the son of a blacksmith, Benito Mussolini's early manhood was marked by street brawls, arrests, jailings, and violent radical political activities. Before World War I Mussolini was a socialist. A brilliant organizer, agitator, and gifted journalist, he became editor of the Socialist party's official newspaper. Yet many of his comrades suspected him of being less interested in advancing socialism than in advancing himself. Indeed, when the Italian upper class tempted him with recognition, financial support, and the promise of power, he did not hesitate to switch sides.

By the end of World War I, Mussolini, the socialist, who had organized strikes for workers and peasants had become Mussolini, the fascist, who broke strikes on behalf of financiers and landowners. Using the huge sums he received from wealthy interests, he projected himself onto the national scene as the acknowledged leader of *i fascisti combattimento*, a movement composed of black-shirted ex-army officers and sundry toughs who were guided by no clear political doctrine other than a militaristic patriotism and conservative dislike for anything associated with socialism and organized labor. The fascist Blackshirts spent their time attacking trade unionists, socialists, communists, and farm cooperatives.

¹ Among the thousands of titles that deal with fascism, there are a few worthwhile exceptions that do not evade questions of political economy and class power for instance: Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Ax of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969); Daniel Guerin, *Fascism and Big Business* (New York: Monad Press/Pahfinder Press, 1973); James Pool and Suzanne Pool, *Who Financed Hitler* (New York: Dial Press, 1978); Palmiro Togliatti, *Lectures on Fascism* (New York: International Publishers, 1976); Franz Neumann, *Behemoth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944); R. Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution* (New York: International Publisher, 1935).

After World War I, Italy had settled into a pattern of parliamentary democracy. The low pay scales were improving, and the trains were already running on time. But the capitalist economy was in a postwar recession. Investments stagnated, heavy industry operated far below capacity, and corporate profits and agribusiness exports were declining.

To maintain profit levels, the large landowners and industrialists would have to slash wages and raise prices. The state in turn would have to provide them with massive subsidies and tax exemptions. To finance this corporate welfareism, the populace would have to be taxed more heavily, and social services and welfare expenditures would have to be drastically cut—measures that might sound familiar to us today.

But the government was not completely free to pursue this course. By 1921, many Italian workers and peasants were unionized and had their own political organizations. With demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, factory takeovers, and the forcible occupation of farmlands, they had won the right to organize, along with concessions in wages and work conditions.

To impose a full measure of austerity upon workers and peasants, the ruling economic interests would have to abolish the democratic rights that helped the masses defend their modest living standards. The solution was to smash their unions, political organizations, and civil liberties. Industrialists and big landowners wanted someone at the helm who could break the power of organized workers and farm laborers and impose a stern order on the masses. For this task Benito Mussolini, armed with his gangs of Blackshirts, seemed the likely candidate.²

² Between January and May 1921, "the fascists destroyed 120 labor headquarters, attacked 243 socialist centers and other buildings, killed 202 workers (in addition to 44 killed by the police and gendarmette), and wounded 1,144." During this time 2,240 workers were arrested and only 162 fascists. In the 1921-22 period up to Mussolini's seizure of state power, "500 labor halls and cooperative stores were burned, and 900 socialist municipalities were dissolved". Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution*, 124.

In 1922, the *Federazione Industriale*, composed of the leaders of industry, along with representatives from the banking and agribusiness associations, met with Mussolini to plan the "March on Rome," contributing 20 million lire to the undertaking. With the additional backing of Italy's top military officers and police chiefs, the fascist "revolution"—really a coup d'état—took place.

Within two years after seizing state power, Mussolini had shut down all opposition newspapers and crushed the Socialist, Liberal, Catholic, Democratic, and Republican parties, which together had commanded some 80 percent of the vote. Labor leaders, peasant leaders, parliamentary delegates, and others critical of the new regime were beaten, exiled, or murdered by fascist terror *squadristi*. The Italian Communist party endured the severest repression of all, yet managed to maintain a courageous underground resistance that eventually evolved into armed struggle against the Blackshirts and the German occupation force.

In Germany, a similar pattern of complicity between fascists and capitalists emerged. German workers and farm laborers had won the right to unionize, the eight-hour day, and unemployment insurance. But to revive profit levels, heavy industry and big finance wanted wage cuts for their workers and massive state subsidies and tax cuts for themselves.

During the 1920s, the Nazi *Sturmabteilung* or SA, the brown-shirted storm troopers, subsidized by business, were used mostly as an anti-labor paramilitary force whose function was to terrorize workers and farm laborers. By 1930, most of the tycoons had concluded that the Weimar Republic no longer served their needs and was too accommodating to the working class. They greatly increased their subsidies to Hitler, propelling the Nazi party onto the national stage. Business tycoons supplied the Nazis with generous funds for fleets of motor cars and loudspeakers to saturate the cities and villages of Germany, along with funds for Nazi party organizations, youth groups, and paramilitary forces. In the July

1932 campaign, Hitler had sufficient funds to fly to fifty cities in the last two weeks alone.

In that same campaign the Nazis received 37.3 percent of the vote, the highest they ever won in a democratic national election. They never had a majority of the people on their side. To the extent that they had any kind of reliable base, it generally was among the more affluent members of society. In addition, elements of the petty bourgeoisie and many lumpenproletariats served as strong-arm party thugs, organized into the SA storm troopers. But the great majority of the organized working class supported the Communists or Social Democrats to the very end.

In the December 1932 election, three candidates ran for president: the conservative incumbent Field Marshal von Hindenburg, the Nazi candidate Adolph Hitler, and the Communist party candidate Ernst Thaelmann. In his campaign, Thaelmann argued that a vote for Hindenburg amounted to a vote for Hitler and that Hitler would lead Germany into war. The bourgeois press, including the Social Democrats, denounced this view as "Moscow inspired." Hindenburg was re-elected while the Nazis dropped approximately two million votes in the Reichstag election as compared to their peak of over 13.7 million.

True to form, the Social Democrat leaders refused the Communist party's proposal to form an eleventh-hour coalition against Nazism. As in many other countries past and present, so in Germany, the Social Democrats would sooner ally themselves with the reactionary Right than make common cause with the Reds.³ Meanwhile a number of right-wing parties coalesced behind the Nazis and in January 1933, just weeks after the election, Hindenburg invited Hitler to become chancellor.

³ Earlier in 1924, Social Democratic officials in the Ministry of Interior used Reichswehr and Free Corps fascist paramilitary troops to attack left-wing demonstrators. They imprisoned seven thousand workers and suppressed Communist party newspapers. Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle* (New York: Henry Holt, 1986), 47.

Upon assuming state power, Hitler and his Nazis pursued a politico-economic agenda not unlike Mussolini's. They crushed organized labor and eradicated all elections, opposition parties, and independent publications. Hundreds of thousands of opponents were imprisoned, tortured, or murdered. In Germany as in Italy, the communists endured the severest political repression of all groups.

Here were two peoples, the Italians and Germans, with different histories, cultures, and languages, and supposedly different temperaments, who ended up with the same repressive solutions because of the compelling similarities of economic power and class conflict that prevailed in their respective countries. In such diverse countries as Lithuania, Croatia, Rumania, Hungary, and Spain, a similar fascist pattern emerged to do its utmost to save big capital from the impositions of democracy.⁴

Whom Did the Fascists Support?

There is a vast literature on who supported the Nazis, but relatively little on whom the Nazis supported after they came to power. This is in keeping with the tendency of conventional scholarship to avoid the entire subject of capitalism whenever something unfavorable might be said about it. Whose interests did Mussolini and Hitler support?

In both Italy in the 1920s and Germany in the 1930s, old industrial evils, thought to have passed permanently into history, re-emerged as the conditions of labor deteriorated precipitously. In the name of saving society from the Red Menace, unions and strikes were outlawed. Union property and farm cooperatives were confiscated and handed over to rich private owners. Minimum-wage laws, overtime pay, and factory safety regulations were abolished.

⁴ This is not to gainsay that cultural differences can lead to important variations. Consider, for instance, the horrific role played by anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany as compared to fascist Italy.

Speedups became commonplace. Dismissals or imprisonment awaited those workers who complained about unsafe or inhumane work conditions. Workers toiled longer hours for less pay. The already modest wages were severely cut, in Germany by 25 to 40 percent, in Italy by 50 percent. In Italy, child labor was reintroduced.

To be sure, a few crumbs were thrown to the populace. There were free concerts and sporting events, some meager social programs, a dole for the unemployed financed mostly by contributions from working people, and showy public works projects designed to evoke civic pride.

Both Mussolini and Hitler showed their gratitude to their big business patrons by privatizing many perfectly solvent state-owned steel mills, power plants, banks, and steamship companies. Both regimes dipped heavily into the public treasury to refloat or subsidize heavy industry. Agribusiness farming was expanded and heavily subsidized. Both states guaranteed a return on the capital invested by giant corporations while assuming most of the risks and losses on investments. As is often the case with reactionary regimes, public capital was raided by private capital.

At the same time, taxes were increased for the general populace but lowered or eliminated for the rich and big business. Inheritance taxes on the wealthy were greatly reduced or abolished altogether.

The result of all this? In Italy during the 1930s the economy was gripped by recession, a staggering public debt, and widespread corruption. But industrial profits rose and the armaments factories busily rolled out weapons in preparation for the war to come. In Germany, unemployment was cut in half with the considerable expansion in armaments jobs, but overall poverty increased because of the drastic wage cuts. And from 1935 to 1943 industrial profits increased substantially while the net income of corporate leaders climbed 46 percent. During the radical 1930s, in the United States, Great Britain, and Scandinavia, upper-income groups experienced a

modest decline in their share of the national income; but in Germany the top 5 percent enjoyed a 15 percent gain.⁵

Despite this record, most writers have ignored fascism's close collaboration with big business. Some even argue that business was not a beneficiary but a victim of fascism. Angelo Codovilla, a Hoover Institute conservative scribe, blithely announced: "If fascism means anything, it means government ownership and control of business" (*Commentary*, 8/94). Thus fascism is misrepresented as a mutant form of socialism. In fact, if fascism means anything, it means all-out government support for business and severe repression of anti-business, pro-labor forces.⁶

Is fascism merely a dictatorial force in the service of capitalism? That may not be *all* it is, but that certainly is an important part of fascism's *raison d'être*; the function Hitler himself kept referring to when he talked about saving the industrialists and bankers from Bolshevism. It is a subject that deserves far more attention than it has received.

While the fascists might have believed they were saving the plutocrats from the Reds, in fact the revolutionary Left was never strong enough to take state power in either Italy or Germany. Popular forces, however, were strong enough to cut into profit rates and

⁵ Simon Kuznets, "Qualitative Aspects of the Economic Growth of Nations,"

Economic Development and Cultural Change, 5, no. 1, 1956, 5-94.

⁶ Ex-Leftist and reborn conservative Eugene Genovese (*New Republic*, 4/1/95)

eagerly leaped to the conclusion that it is a "nonsensical interpretation" to see "fascism as a creature of big capital." Genovese was applauding Eric Hobsbawm, who argued that the capitalist class was not the primary force behind fascism in Spain. In response, Vicente Navarro (*Monthly Review* 1/96 and 4/96) noted that the "major economic interests of international capital, did indeed finance Franco's fascist invasion and coup against the Spanish Republic. A crucial source, Navarro writes, was the financial empire of Joan March, founder of the Liberal Party and owner of a liberal newspaper. Considered a modernizer and an alternative to the oligarchic, land-based, reactionary sector of capital, March made common cause with these same oligarchs once he saw that working-class parties were gaining strength and his own economic interests were being affected by the reformist Republic.

interfere with the capital accumulation process. This frustrated capitalism's attempts to resolve its internal contradictions by shifting more and more of its costs onto the backs of the working populace. Revolution or no revolution, this democratic working-class resistance was troublesome to the moneyed interests.

Along with serving the capitalists, fascist leaders served themselves, getting in on the money at every opportunity. Their personal greed and their class loyalties were two sides of the same coin. Mussolini and his cohorts lived lavishly, cavorting within the higher circles of wealth and aristocracy. Nazi officials and SS commanders amassed personal fortunes by plundering conquered territories and stealing from concentration camp inmates and other political victims. Huge amounts were made from secretly owned, well-connected businesses, and from contracting out camp slave labor to industrial firms like I.G. Farben and Krupp.

Hitler is usually portrayed as an ideological fanatic, uninterested in crass material things. In fact, he accumulated an immense fortune, much of it in questionable ways. He expropriated art works from the public domain. He stole enormous sums from Nazi party coffers. He invented a new concept, the "personality right," that enabled him to charge a small fee for every postage stamp with his picture on it, a venture that made him hundreds of millions of marks.⁷

The greatest source of Hitler's wealth was a secret slush fund to which leading German industrialists regularly donated. Hitler "knew that as long as German industry was making money, his private money sources would be inexhaustible. Thus, he'd see to it that German industry was never better off than under his rule—by launching, for one thing, gigantic armament projects,"⁸ or what we today would call fat defense contracts.

⁷ There already was a stamp of von Hindenburg to honor his presidency. Old Hindenburg, who had no love for Hitler, sarcastically said he would make Hitler his postal minister, because "then he can lick my backside."

⁸ Wulf Schwarzwealler, *The Unknown Hitler* (Bethesda, Md.: National Press Books, 1989), 197.

Far from being the ascetic, Hitler lived self-indulgently. During his entire tenure in office he got special rulings from the German tax office that allowed him to avoid paying income or property taxes. He had a motor pool of limousines, private apartments, country homes, a vast staff of servants, and a majestic estate in the Alps. His happiest times were spent entertaining European royalty, including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, who numbered among his enthusiastic admirers.

Kudos for Adolph and Benito

Italian fascism and German Nazism had their admirers within the U.S. business community and the corporate-owned press. Bankers, publishers, and industrialists, including the likes of Henry Ford, traveled to Rome and Berlin to pay homage, receive medals, and strike profitable deals. Many did their utmost to advance the Nazi war effort, sharing military-industrial secrets and engaging in secret transactions with the Nazi government, even after the United States entered the war.⁹ During the 1920s and early 1930s, major publications like *Fortune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Christian Science Monitor* hailed Mussolini as the man who rescued Italy from anarchy and radicalism. They spun rhapsodic fantasies of a resurrected Italy where poverty and exploitation had suddenly disappeared, where Reds had been vanquished, harmony reigned, and Blackshirts protected a "new democracy."

The Italian-language press in the United States eagerly joined the chorus. The two most influential newspapers, *L'Italia* of San Francisco, financed largely by A.P. Giannini's Bank of America, and *Il Progresso* of New York, owned by multimillionaire Generoso Pope, looked favorably on the fascist regime and suggested that the United States could benefit from a similar social order.

⁹ Charles Higham, *Trading with the Enemy* (New York: Dell, 1983).

Some dissenters refused to join the "We Adore Benito" chorus. The *Nation* reminded its readers that Mussolini was not *saving* democracy but *destroying* it. Progressives of all stripes and various labor leaders denounced fascism. But their critical sentiments received little exposure in the U.S. corporate media.

As with Mussolini, so with Hitler. The press did not look too unkindly upon *der Fuehrer's* Nazi dictatorship. There was a strong "Give Adolph A Chance" contingent, some of it greased by Nazi money. In exchange for more positive coverage in the Hearst newspapers, for instance, the Nazis paid almost ten times the standard subscription rate for Hearst's INS wire service. In return, William Randolph Hearst instructed his correspondents in Germany to file friendly reports about Hitler's regime. Those who refused were transferred or fired. Hearst newspapers even opened their pages to occasional guest columns by prominent Nazi leaders like Alfred Rosenberg and Hermann Goering.

By the mid to late 1930s, Italy and Germany, allied with Japan, another industrial latecomer, were aggressively seeking a share of the world's markets and colonial booty, an expansionism that brought them increasingly into conflict with more established Western capitalist nations like Great Britain, France, and the United States. As the clouds of war gathered, U.S. press opinion about the Axis powers took on a decisively critical tone.

The Rational Use of Irrational Ideology

Some writers stress the "irrational" features of fascism. By doing so, they overlook the rational politico-economic functions that fascism performed. Much of politics is the rational manipulation of irrational symbols. Certainly, this is true of fascist ideology, whose emotive appeals have served a class-control function.

First there was the cult of the leader, in Italy: *il Duce*, in Germany: *der Fuehrerprinzip*. With leader-worship there came the idolatry of

the state. As Mussolini wrote, "The Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only insofar as his interests coincide with those of the State." Fascism preaches the authoritarian rule of an all-encompassing state and a supreme leader. It extols the harsher human impulses of conquest and domination, while rejecting egalitarianism, democracy, collectivism, and pacifism as doctrines of weakness and decadence.

A dedication to peace, Mussolini wrote, "is hostile to fascism." Perpetual peace, he claimed in 1934, is a "depressing" doctrine. Only in "cruel struggle" and "conquest" do men or nations achieve their highest realization. "Though words are beautiful things," he asserted, "rifles, machine guns, planes, and cannons are still more beautiful." And on another occasion he wrote: "War alone . . . puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it." Ironically, most Italian army conscripts had no stomach for Mussolini's wars, tending to remove themselves from battle once they discovered that the other side was using live ammunition.

Fascist doctrine stresses monistic values: *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* (one people, one rule, one leader). The people are no longer to be concerned with class divisions but must see themselves as part of a harmonious whole, rich and poor as one, a view that supports the economic status quo by cloaking the ongoing system of class exploitation. This is in contrast to a left agenda that advocates the articulation of popular demands and a sharpened awareness of social injustice and class struggle.

This monism is buttressed by atavistic appeals to the mythical roots of the people. For Mussolini, it was the grandeur that was Rome; for Hitler, the ancient Volk. A play written by a pro-Nazi, Hans Jorst, entitled *Schlageter* and performed widely throughout Germany soon after the Nazis seized power (Hitler attended the opening night in Berlin) pits Volk mysticism against class politics. The enthusiastic August is talking to his father, Schneider:

August: You won't believe it, Papa but . . . the young people don't pay much attention to these old slogans anymore . . . the class struggle is dying out.

Schneider: So, and what do you have then?

August: The Volk community.

Schneider: And that's a slogan?

August: No, it's an experience!

Schneider: My God, our class struggle, our strikes, they weren't an experience, eh? Socialism, the International, were they fantasies maybe?

August: They were necessary, but . . . they are historical experiences.

Schneider: So, and the future therefore will have your Volk community. Tell me how do you actually envision it? Poor, rich, healthy, upper, lower, all this ceases with you, eh? . . .

August: Look, Papa, upper, lower, poor, rich, that always exists. It is only the importance one places on that question that's decisive. To us life is not chopped up into working hours and furnished with price charts. Rather, we believe in human existence as a whole. None of us regards making money as the most important thing; we want to serve. The individual is a corpse in the bloodstream of his people.¹⁰

The son's comments are revealing: "the class struggle is dying out." Papa's concern about the abuses of class power and class injustice is facetiously dismissed as just a frame of mind with no objective reality. It is even falsely equated with a crass concern for money. ("None of us regard making money as important.") Presumably matters of wealth are to be left to those who have it. We have something better, August is saying: a totalistic, monistic experience as a people, all of us, rich and poor, working together for some greater glory. Conveniently overlooked is how the "glorious sacrifices" are borne by the poor for the benefit of the rich.

The position enunciated in that play and in other Nazi propaganda does not reveal an indifference to class; quite the contrary, it represents a keen awareness of class interests, a well-engineered

¹⁰ George Mosse (ed.), *Nazi Culture* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), 116-118.

effort to mask and mute the strong class consciousness that existed among workers in Germany. In the crafty denial, we often find the hidden admission.

Patriarchy and Pseudo-Revolution

Fascism's national chauvinism, racism, sexism, and patriarchal values also served a conservative class interest. Fascist doctrine, especially the Nazi variety, makes an explicit commitment to racial supremacy. Human attributes, including class status, are said to be inherited through blood; one's position in the social structure is taken as a measure of one's innate nature. Genetics and biology are marshalled to justify the existing class structure, not unlike what academic racists today are doing with their "bell curve" theories and warned-over eugenics claptrap.

Along with race and class inequality, fascism supports homophobia and sexual inequality. Among Nazism's earliest victims were a group of Nazi homosexuals, leaders of the SA storm troopers. When complaints about the openly homosexual behavior of SA leader Ernst Roehm and some of his brown-shirted storm troopers continued to reach Hitler after he seized power, he issued an official statement conceding that the issue belonged "purely to the private domain" and that an SA officer's "private life cannot be an object of scrutiny unless it conflicts with basic principles of National Socialist ideology."

The paramilitary SA had been used to win the battle of the streets against trade unionists and Reds. The storm troopers acted as a pseudo-revolutionary force that appealed to mass grievances with a rhetorical condemnation of finance capital. When SA membership skyrocketed to three million in 1933, this was too discomfiting to the industrial barons and military patricians. SA street brawlers who denounced bourgeois decadence and called for sharing the wealth and completing the "Nazi revolution" would have to be dealt with. Having used the SA to take state power, Hitler then used the state

to neutralize the SA. Now suddenly Roehm's homosexuality did conflict with National Socialist ideology. In truth, the SA had to be decapitated not because its leaders were homosexual—though that was the reason given—but because it threatened to turn into a serious problem. Roehm and about 300 other SA members were executed, not all of whom were gay. Among the victims was veteran Nazi propagandist Gregor Strasser, who was suspected of leftist leanings.

Of course, many Nazis were virulently homophobic. One of the most powerful of all, SS leader Heinrich Himmler, saw homosexuals as a threat to German manhood and the moral fiber of Teutonic peoples, for a "homosexual sissy" would not procreate or make a good soldier. Himmler's homophobia and sexism came together when he announced: "If a man just looks at a girl in America, he can be forced to marry her or pay damages . . . therefore men protect themselves in the USA by turning to homosexuals. Women in the USA are like battle-axes—they hack away at males."¹¹ Thus spoke one of the great minds of Nazism. In time, Himmler succeeded in extending the oppression of gays beyond the SA leadership. Thousands of gay civilians perished in SS concentration camps.

In societies throughout the ages, if able to find the opportunity, women have attempted to limit the number of children they bear. This poses a potential problem for a fascist patriarchy that needs vast numbers of soldiers and armaments workers. Women are less able to assert their procreative rights if kept subservient and dependent. So fascist ideology extolled patriarchal authority. Every man must be a husband, a father, and a soldier, il Duce said. Woman's greatest calling was to cultivate her domestic virtues, devotedly tending to the needs of her family while bearing as many offspring for the state as she could.

Patriarchal ideology was linked to a conservative class ideology that saw all forms of social equality as a threat to hierarchical control

¹¹ Richard Plant, *The Pink Triangle*, 91.

and privilege. The patriarchy buttressed the plutocracy: If women get out of line, what will happen to the family? And if the family goes, the entire social structure is threatened. What then will happen to the state and to the dominant class's authority, privileges, and wealth? The fascists were big on what today is called "family values"—though most of the top Nazi leaders could hardly be described as devoted family men.

In Nazi Germany, racism and anti-Semitism served to misdirect legitimate grievances toward convenient scapegoats. Anti-Semitic propaganda was cleverly tailored to appeal to different audiences. Superpatriots were told that the Jew was an alien internationalist. Unemployed workers were told that their nemesis was the Jewish capitalist and Jewish banker. For debtor farmers, it was the Jewish usurer. For the middle class, it was the Jewish union leader and Jewish communist. Here again we have a consciously rational use of irrational images. The Nazis might have been crazy but they were not stupid.

What distinguishes fascism from ordinary right-wing patriarchal autocracies is the way it attempts to cultivate a revolutionary aura. Fascism offers a beguiling mix of revolutionary-sounding mass appeals and reactionary class politics. The Nazi party's full name was the National Socialist German Workers Party, a left-sounding name. As already noted, the SA storm troopers had a militant share-the-wealth strain in their ranks that was suppressed by Hitler after he took state power.

Both the Italian fascists and the Nazis made a conscious effort to steal the Left's thunder. There were mass mobilizations, youth organizations, work brigades, rallies, parades, banners, symbols, and slogans. There was much talk about a "Nazi revolution" that would revitalize society, sweeping away the old order and building the new.

For this reason, mainstream writers feel free to treat fascism and communism as totalitarian twins. It is a case of reducing essence to form. The similarity in form is taken as reason enough to blur the vast difference in actual class content. Writers like A. James Gregor

and William Ebenstein, countless Western political leaders, and others who supposedly are on the democratic Left, regularly lump fascism with communism. Thus, Noam Chomsky claims, "The rise of corporations was in fact a manifestation of the same phenomena that led to fascism and Bolshevism, which sprang out of the same totalitarian soil."¹² But in the Italy and Germany of that day, most workers and peasants made a firm distinction between fascism and communism, as did industrialists and bankers who supported fascism out of fear and hatred of communism, a judgment based largely on class realities.

Years ago, I used to say that fascism never succeeded in solving the irrational contradictions of capitalism. Today I am of the opinion that it did accomplish that goal—but only for the capitalists, not for the populace. Fascism never intended to offer a social solution that would serve the general populace, only a reactionary one, forcing all the burdens and losses onto the working public. Divested of its ideological and organizational paraphernalia, fascism is nothing more than a final solution to the class struggle; the totalistic submergence and exploitation of democratic forces for the benefit and profit of higher financial circles.

Fascism is a false revolution. It cultivates the appearance of popular politics and a revolutionary aura without offering a genuine revolutionary class content. It propagates a "New Order" while serving the same old moneyed interests. Its leaders are not guilty of confusion but of deception. That they work hard to mislead the public does not mean they themselves are misled.

Friendly to Fascism

One of the things conveniently overlooked by mainstream writers is the way Western capitalist states have cooperated with fascism. In his collaborationist efforts, British Prime Minister Neville

¹² Chomsky interviewed by Husayn Al-Kurdi, *Perception*, March/April 1996.

Chamberlain was positively cozy with the Nazis. He and many of his class saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism in Germany, and Nazi Germany as a bulwark against communism in Europe.

After World War II, the Western capitalist allies did little to eradicate fascism from Italy or Germany, except for putting some of the top leaders on trial at Nuremberg. By 1947, German conservatives began to depict the Nuremberg prosecutors as dupes of the Jews and communists. In Italy, the strong partisan movement that had waged armed struggle against fascism was soon treated as suspect and unpatriotic. Within a year after the war, almost all Italian fascists were released from prison while hundreds of communists and other leftist partisans who had been fighting the Nazi occupation were jailed. History was turned on its head, transforming the Blackshirts into victims and the Reds into criminals. Allied authorities assisted in these measures.¹³

Under the protection of U.S. occupation authorities, the police, courts, military, security agencies, and bureaucracy remained largely staffed by those who had served the former fascist regimes or by their ideological recruits—as is true to this day. The perpetrators of the Holocaust murdered six million Jews, half a million Gypsies, thousands of homosexuals, several million Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and others, and got away with it—in good part because the very people who were supposed to investigate these crimes were themselves complicit.

¹³ Roy Palmer Domenico, *Italian Fascists on Trial, 1943-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), passim. So in France, very few of the Vichy collaborators were purged. "No one of any rank was seriously punished for his or her role in the roundup and deportation of Jews to Nazi camps"; Herbert Lottman, *The Purge* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 290. Much the same can be said about Germany; see Ingo Müller, *Hitler's Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), part 3, "The Aftermath." U.S. military authorities restored fascist collaborators to power in various Far East nations. In South Korea, for instance, Koreans collaborators and the Japanese-trained police were used to suppress left democratic forces. The South Korean Army was commanded by officers who had served in the Imperial Japanese Army "and were proud of it." Numbers of them had been guilty of war crimes in the Philippines and China. Hugh Deane, "Korea, China and the United States: A Look Back," *Monthly Review*, Feb. 1995, 20 and 23.

In comparison, when the Communists took over in East Germany, they removed some 80 percent of the judges, teachers, and officials for their Nazi collaboration; they imprisoned thousands, and they executed six hundred Nazi party leaders for war crimes. They would have shot more of the war criminals had not so many fled to the protective embrace of the West.

What happened to the U.S. businesses that collaborated with fascism? The Rockefeller family's Chase National Bank used its Paris office in Vichy France to help launder German money to facilitate Nazi international trade during the war, and did so with complete impunity.¹⁴ Corporations like DuPont, Ford, General Motors, and ITT owned factories in enemy countries that produced fuel, tanks, and planes that wreaked havoc on Allied forces. After the war, instead of being prosecuted for treason, ITT collected \$27 million from the U.S. government for war damages inflicted on its German plants by Allied bombings. General Motors collected over \$33 million. Pilots were given instructions not to hit factories in Germany that were owned by U.S. firms. Thus Cologne was almost leveled by Allied bombing but its Ford plant, providing military equipment for the Nazi army, was untouched; indeed, German civilians began using the plant as an air raid shelter.¹⁵

For decades, U.S. leaders have done their part in keeping Italian fascism alive. From 1945 to 1975, U.S. government agencies gave an estimated \$75 million to right-wing organizations in Italy, including some with close ties to the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). In 1975, then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger met with

¹⁴ After the war, Hermann Abs, head of the Deutsche Bank and in effect "Hitler's paymaster," was hailed by David Rockefeller as "the most important banker of our time." According to his *New York Times* obituary, Abs "played a dominant role in West Germany's reconstruction after World War II." Neither the *Times* nor Rockefeller said a word about Abs' Nazi connections, his bank's predatory incursions across Nazi occupied Europe, and his participation, as a board member of I.G. Farben, in the use of slave labor at Auschwitz. Robert Carl Miller, *Portland Free Press*, Sept/Oct 1994.

¹⁵ Charles Higham, *Training with the Enemy*.

MSI leader Giorgio Almirante in Washington to discuss what "alternatives" might be considered should the Italian Communists win the elections and take control of the government.

Hundreds of Nazi war criminals found a haven in the United States, either living in comfortable anonymity or actively employed by U.S. intelligence agencies during the cold war and otherwise enjoying the protection of high-placed individuals. Some of them found their way onto the Republican presidential campaign committees of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush.¹⁶

In Italy, from 1969 to 1974, high-ranking elements in Italian military intelligence and civilian intelligence agencies; members of P2, a secret lodge of upper-class reactionaries, pro-fascist Vatican officials, and top military brass; and GLADIO, a NATO-inspired anticommunist mercenary force, embarked upon a concerted campaign of terror and sabotage known as the "strategy of tension." Other participants included a secret neofascist group called the Ordine Nuovo, NATO officials, members of the carabinieri, mafia bosses, thirty generals, eight admirals, and influential Freemasons like Licio Gelli (a fascist war criminal recruited by U.S. intelligence in 1944). The terrorism was aided and abetted by the "international security apparatus," including the CIA. In 1995, the CIA refused to cooperate with an Italian parliamentary commission investigating the strategy of tension (*Corriere della Sera*, 4/12/95, 5/29/95).

The terrorist conspirators carried out a series of kidnappings,

¹⁶ One of them, Boleslaw Malinkowski, a Latvian police chief who fled to West Germany to escape Soviet war crimes investigations and then to the United States, was heavily implicated in the Nazi slaughter of over two hundred Latvian villagers. He served for a time on a Republican party subcommittee to re-elect President Nixon, then fled back to Germany to avoid a belated U.S. war crimes investigation, dying at the ripe old age of 92 (*New York Times*, 5/8/96). Nazi war criminals have been aided by Western intelligence agencies, business interests, the military, and even the Vatican. In October 1944, German paratroop commander Major Walter Reder slaughtered 1,836 defenseless civilians in a village near Bologna, Italy as a reprisal against Partisan activities. He was released from prison in 1985, after Pope John Paul II, among others, made an appeal on his behalf—over the strenuous protests of relatives of the victims.

assassinations, and bombing massacres (*i stragi*), including the explosion that killed eighty-five people and injured some two hundred, many seriously, in the Bologna train station in August 1980. As subsequent judicial investigations concluded, the strategy of tension was not a simple product of neofascism but the consequence of a larger campaign conducted by state security forces against the growing popularity of the democratic parliamentary Left. The objective was to "combat by any means necessary the electoral gains of the Italian Communist party" and create enough fear and terror in the population so as to undermine the multiparty social democracy and replace it with an authoritarian "presidential republic," or in any case "a stronger and more stable executive." (*La Repubblica*, 4/9/95; *Corriere della Sera*, 3/27/95, 3/28/95, 5/29/95).

In the 1980s, scores of people were murdered in Germany, Belgium and elsewhere in Western Europe by extreme rightists in the service of state security agencies (*Z Magazine*, March 1990). These acts of terrorism went mostly unreported in the U.S. corporate-owned media. As with the earlier strategy of tension in Italy, the attacks were designed to create enough popular fear and uncertainty so as to undermine the existing social democracies.

Authorities in these Western European countries and the United States have done little to expose neo-Nazi networks. As the whiffs of fascism develop into an undeniable stench, we are reminded that Hitler's progeny are still with us and that they have dangerous links with each other and within the security agencies of various Western capitalist nations.

In Italy, in 1994, the national elections were won by the National Alliance, a broadened version of the neofascist MSI, in coalition with a league of Northern separatists, and Forza Italia, a quasi-fascist movement headed by industrialist and media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. The National Alliance played on resentments regarding unemployment, taxes, and immigration. It called for a single tax rate for rich and poor alike, school vouchers, a stripping away of the

social benefits, and the privatization of most services.

The Italian neofascists were learning from the U.S. reactionaries how to achieve fascism's class goals within the confines of quasi-democratic forms: use an upbeat, Reaganesque optimism; replace the jackbooted militarists with media-hyped crowd pleasers; convince people that government is the enemy—especially its social service sector—while strengthening the repressive capacities of the state; instigate racist hostility and antagonisms between the resident population and immigrants; preach the mythical virtues of the free market; and pursue tax and spending measures that redistribute income upward.

Conservatives in the Western nations utilize diluted forms of the fascist mass appeal. In the USA, they propagate populist-sounding appeals to the “ordinary Middle American” while quietly pressing for measures that serve the interests of the wealthiest individuals and corporations. In 1996, right-wing Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, while proffering a new rollback agenda that supposedly would revitalize all of society, announced “I am a genuine revolutionary.” Whether in Italy, Germany, the United States, or any other country, when the Right offers a “new revolution” or a “new order,” it is in the service of the same old moneyed interests, leading down that well-trodden road of reaction and repression that so many Third World countries have been forced to take, the road those at the top want us all to travel.

CHAPTER 2

LET US NOW PRAISE REVOlUTION

For most of this century U.S. foreign policy has been devoted to the suppression of revolutionary governments and radical movements around the world. The turn of the twentieth century found the McKinley administration in a war of attrition against the people of the Philippines lasting from 1898 to 1902 (with pockets of resistance continuing for years afterward). In that conflict, U.S. forces slaughtered some 200,000 Filipino women, men, and children.¹ At about that same time, in conjunction with various European colonial powers, the United States invaded China to help suppress the Boxer Rebellion at substantial loss of life to the Chinese rebels. U.S. forces took over Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam and in the following decades invaded Mexico, Soviet Russia, Nicaragua, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and other countries, actions that usually inflicted serious losses upon the populations of these countries.

¹ Leon Wolf, *Little Brown Brother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).