

## Introduction: New Styles of Dictatorship and Leadership in Interwar Europe

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For many years after 1945, the interwar era in Europe was portrayed as the ‘age of dictators’, and more specifically as the ‘epoch of fascism’. However, in recent decades professional historians have tended to stress the diversity of these ‘fascist’ movements and regimes. Indeed, especially among the German academic community many have argued that Hitler’s National Socialist Party and especially the Nazi regime were *sui generis*, differing notably from Mussolini’s Italian Fascism. There is arguably an even larger body of contemporary academic writing which argues that what has often been portrayed as the third paradigmatic form of ‘fascism’, General Franco’s Spanish dictatorship, was at most a distant cousin.

Before commencing the main sections of this collection of essays it is, therefore, important to outline some of the debates that have raged over how to classify movements and dictatorships in inter-war Europe. More specifically, this introduction seeks to demonstrate that the use of the word ‘fascist’ in the title of this work does not simply stem from the desire to employ a catchy shorthand term, embracing other forms of movement and regime that might be better grouped under the generic term ‘authoritarian’. It also points to important ways in which fascism, strictly defined, both had similar roots to and influenced other forms of nationalist dictatorship – especially in the context of the charismatisation of leadership.

### In Search of ‘Fascism’

Academics who seek to delineate a clearly related family of ‘fascist’ movements and regimes face major problems. The term was coined by Mussolini when he founded the first self-styled fascist movement in 1919. The word derives from the Italian plural term ‘*fasci*’, meaning leagues or unions in a political context, and is linked etymologically to the ‘*fascēs*’, the axe-bound-with-rods symbol of authority in ancient Rome. Some later movements, such as Georges Valois’s French *Faisceau* or Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF), openly acknowledged their debt to the Italian model in their names. However, most interwar movements and regimes which have been portrayed by critics as ‘fascist’ did not recognise any form of family link in their names: thus we have ‘National Socialism’ in Germany and the ‘Iron Guard’ in Romania. The leader of the *Falange* in Spain,

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until his 'martyrdom' in 1936, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, even specifically denied that his party was 'fascist'.<sup>1</sup>

The term 'fascist' is, therefore, largely a construction of political opponents. Even academics have rarely shown any Rankean sense of professional empathy in the case of fascism. Indeed, the main 'classic' definitions of fascism have been based on the allegedly narrow and perverse nature of its *support* and/or the hidden *functions* it served. Thus arguably the four most influential definitions saw fascism as: i) the 'dictatorship of capital in crisis' (the 1930s' Comintern Marxist position, later supplanted by more sophisticated Bonapartist approaches which stress the 'autonomy' of the fascist state that worked in the interests of the bourgeoisie, but which was not directed by it);<sup>2</sup> ii) a movement whose typical supporters were 'authoritarian personalities', created by specific traditional types of social and family structures, and reinforced by the impact of war; iii) a 'movement of a pressured middle class', who were seeking a regime which would preserve it from, on the one hand, being engulfed by a rising capitalism and, on the other, by falling into the growing proletariat; and iv) a movement which attracted the 'atomised masses', who were suffering from anomie, caused by rapid social change, the impact of war, and a growing loss of religious faith.<sup>3</sup>

Those who have sought to counter these conventional wisdoms by adopting a more phenomenological approach to the problem of definition are faced with the fact that there were notable differences between the commonly cited paradigmatic examples of 'fascism'. Three of these will help to illustrate this point.

Firstly, many Nazis, not least Hitler, espoused a form of biological racism which was not present in mainstream Italian Fascism. The German nation was defined ultimately by 'blood' rather than culture. Thus a Jew could never be a true German, and Nazi policy from the outset was to make Germany 'Jew free' (although there were differences over timing and exactly what this entailed). In Italy, many Jews joined the Fascist Party before the adoption of exclusionary Nazi-style laws in 1938, though these were never applied as ruthlessly as in Germany and most Italian Jews survived the Holocaust. Indeed, Mussolini for a time had a Jewish mistress. In Italy, racism manifested itself more in terms of a radical foreign policy driven by Mussolini, who saw Africa as ripe for exploitation by an Italy which had been humiliated in earlier colonial wars and which now sought its rightful place in the sun.

Secondly, there were also important differences over the conception of the state. Italian Fascism was more clearly statist. This can be seen not simply in its elaboration of the 'Corporate State' and a more general commitment to an 'ethical state' which would overcome the egocentrism of liberal individualism. Italian Fascists even believed that the state could forge the nation, often portraying the key task to be the completion of the nineteenth century *Risorgimento*, thus accepting that a united Italian nation did not yet exist (though regime propaganda was increasingly to develop the cult of *Romanità*, celebrating the imperial glories of ancient Rome which allegedly provided the foundations upon which a revived Italian heartland was built). On the other hand, for most Nazis a formal state threatened to divide the *Führer* from his people and its almost primeval *Volksgeist* – although some opposition to the state was based more on the fact that, even after 1933, much of its key staff were conservatives from elite backgrounds rather than true Nazis.

Finally, if the focus turns to Spain, two notable differences are typically stressed. First, Franco came to power through military force rather than through a mass movement: the *Falange* had less than 1 per cent of the vote when the Spanish

Civil War began, whereas the Nazis had 37 per cent shortly before Hitler became Chancellor, almost twice the following of the next largest party. Secondly, and more importantly, the regime was essentially conservative, seeking to defend an existing order based on groups such as the army, the Catholic church and the landed classes, which retained notable powers within a form of limited elite pluralism. Although there remain some academics, especially on the left, who continue to hold that fascism was reactionary, there has been a growing tendency in liberal historical scholarship to see it as seeking a form of revolution, as an alternative form of modernity.

### **Authoritarian and Totalitarian Movements and Regimes**

Even most social scientists, who focus less than historians on context and specificity and more on typologies, stress that important differences existed among the interwar European dictatorships – and even more so when allegedly ‘fascist’ regimes outside Europe, such as Peronist Argentina, are brought into the equation. The most common distinction made by scholars such as Juan Linz has been between ‘authoritarian’ and ‘totalitarian’ regimes.<sup>4</sup>

On this approach, authoritarian regimes are seen as extensions of pre-First World War types of dictatorship, most typically forms of monarchical or military regime. An example of the former type of dictatorship would be Alexander I’s rule in Yugoslavia or Carol II’s rule in Romania, while the latter would include General Primo de Rivera’s Spain or Franco’s dictatorship. Crucial aspects of this form include: the acceptance of alternative power centres such as the church, large landowners and the emerging class of big businessman; the absence of any systematic ideology, especially one setting out utopian views; and low levels of political mobilisation, including the absence of a single state party unless its role was essentially to induct new elites and to engage in conservative propaganda and socialisation.

The word ‘totalitarianism’ was first coined in Italy by anti-fascists. But it was quickly adapted by Mussolini during the 1920s to refer to a regime capable of dedicating the total array of a nation’s resources to tasks such as rapid economic development and, influenced by the Fascist court philosopher Giovanni Gentile, the propagation of the ‘ethical’ base of a truly united people. Most Nazis, however, did not use the term. Although Hitler recognised a debt to Mussolini (and planned after the war to erect a massive statue of the *Duce* in an even grander St Peter’s Square in Berlin), Nazis tended to eschew the term ‘totalitarian’. In the Italian context, totalitarianism was typically seen as a form of relatively conservative statism, which did not conform to the Nazi self-image as a dynamic and radical movement.

The political science ‘totalitarian model’ was developed in the 1950s and compared the Nazi regime primarily with Stalinist Russia, rather than with other ‘fascist’ European dictatorships. Crucial characteristics which allegedly differed from other forms of dictatorship included: an openly articulated monist ideology, with pretensions to scientific truth; terroristic police control of a pseudo-mobilised society; monopoly control of the media; and a single party led by the charismatic ‘great’ leader. On this view, Fascist Italy was typically seen as a kind of half-way house between the authoritarian and totalitarian regime, possessing some of the stylistic features of the latter but lacking its more extreme features, such as mass terror.

However, whilst the political science totalitarian model has influenced many liberal scholars, critics have pointed, *inter alia*, to the ways in which the model did not conform to reality. For example, new research has controversially depicted a German people that, in general, was not coerced into political submission by the *Gestapo* (although many on the left, especially Communists, suffered notable persecution). The Nazis also never controlled the churches: indeed, Bishop von Galen could successfully preach openly from his wartime pulpit against the iniquities of the Nazis' 'euthanasia' policy. The fact that he did not preach against the treatment of Jews might indicate that there were limits to this power, though it can also be seen in terms of wider Catholic attitudes, including approval of the crusade against the 'Jewish' Soviet regime. These arguments clearly illustrate the dangers of not just equating Nazism with Soviet 'totalitarianism', but also with making too neat a line of division between Nazism and 'authoritarianism'.<sup>5</sup>

The last point has been developed in an important recent work on fascism.<sup>6</sup> Michael Mann notes that the Franco regime is typically seen as 'authoritarian', but it was hardly conservative in the sense that it killed large numbers of opponents in cold blood during and immediately after the Spanish Civil War which lasted from 1936-1939 (far more than Italian Fascism during both its rise and main regime phase, which ran from 1919-43). Mann goes on to suggest that the 'authoritarian' category needs sub-dividing into three. First, he identifies 'semi-authoritarian regimes', such as the pre-Italian Fascist regimes of Salandra and Sonnino, and the pre-Nazi ones of von Schleicher and von Papen. Secondly, he seeks to distinguish 'semi-reactionary authoritarian regimes', such as Salazar's Portugal, and General Primo de Rivera's Spain, which, in spite of the latter's leader, was hardly militaristic in any normal typological sense of the term. Finally, he cites a set of 'corporatist regimes', such as King Carol's 'monarcho-fascism' in Romania from 1938, followed by General Antonescu's 'military fascism' from 1940-44, as well as the French Vichy regime.

### The Fascist Matrix

Mann rightly highlights important differences between authoritarian regimes, but similar points could be made about fascist movements and regimes. As well as the differences between Nazism and Fascism which have already been noted, Stanley Payne highlights four other major variants of fascism: i) Austrian; ii) Spanish; iii) Romanian; and iv) Hungarian.<sup>7</sup> Austrian fascism shared many similarities with Nazism, though it operated in a more socially conservative environment and elements within the movement sought to reconcile Catholicism with Nazism. In Spain, José Antonio Primo de Rivera's *Falange* was in many ways a variant of Italian Fascism, but was again more traditionalist and lacked the major syndicalist wing of early Fascism. The Romanian Iron Guard mainly targeted its propaganda at peasants, and used a genuine Christian religiosity as part of this appeal, although it also had some appeal to the working class. Finally, the Hungarian Arrow Cross, led by Ferenc Szálasi, was more distinctive, especially its strong focus on radical policies to attract the urban working class (whilst the German and Italian variants were born in cities, they took off electorally in rural areas and small towns, although the Nazis in particular also attracted a notable section of the working class).

Nevertheless, Payne recognises that there are dangers in conceptual refinement which produces a myriad of sub-types, and he neatly seeks to put the fascist

Humpty Dumpty back together gain by suggesting that it has three dimensions.<sup>8</sup> First are what he terms the 'Negations' – what fascism was opposed to, such as liberalism, communism, and conservatism (though it was willing to undertake alliances with others, most typically of conservatives). Secondly, we need to consider 'Ideology and Goals' – including the creation of a new form of authoritarian nationalist state, based on an economic order which sought to ensure class harmony, as well as martial values (often linked to imperialist ambitions). Thirdly, we must not ignore 'Style and Organisation' – including an emphasis on aesthetics and symbolism, an attempted mass mobilisation around party militia, the celebration of youth and violence, a stress on male dominance, and worship of the 'great' leader.

Payne's approach to generic fascism has been one of the most influential in recent years, but it poses a number of problems. One concerns whether it is necessary for all the main aspects listed in his threefold typology to be present for a movement or regime to be defined as fascist. For example, Valois was hardly an archetypal 'charismatic' leader: certainly he cut neither a dashing figure, nor was he a good speaker. A second and more serious problem is that Payne creates a one-dimensional impression of the keywords: for example, 'martial'/'military' tend to conjure up images of jackboots and knuckle dusters, imperial expansion and wars. There was undoubtedly a very strong martial element in both fascist iconography and practice, but there was an element of fascist thought which might be summed up as 'blood socialism' – the community of the trenches, fighting for a national ideal rather than being driven by the bourgeois cult of money, and so on.

Another recent historian whose writings on generic fascism have made a notable impact in recent years is Roger Griffin. The main initial thrust of Griffin's approach in his magnum opus, *The Nature of Fascism*, was to delineate a Weberian 'ideal typical' form of fascism. In particular, he sought to set out something which was lacking in Payne's initial formulation of the fascist trinity – namely a one sentence 'fascist minimum'. Griffin's much-cited formulation holds that: 'Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism'.<sup>9</sup>

Although this approach produces major insights, it is open to various criticisms. One concerns the fact that the definition is too broad: there have been many movements which sought nationalist rebirth but which are not normally seen as fascist. Another line of attack argues that Griffin's approach is essentially a reworking of the totalitarian model. Whilst this criticism is misleading in the sense that Griffin is little concerned with refining regime typology, his approach clearly has affinities with mass society theory, which emphasises the role of anomie in leading to a quest for a new community. Indeed, increasingly in recent years Griffin has stressed the palingenetic side of his approach, adopting Emilio Gentile's view that fascism is best seen as a form of 'political religion'.<sup>10</sup>

There is no doubt that fascism, especially in its Nazi and Italian regime forms, adopted a quasi-religious style which venerated leadership. For example, Hitler's language was replete with words like 'mission', 'salvation', and 'redemption'. Some fascists sought to replace existing religions and were conscious of the need for fascism to adopt both the epistemological and emotive functions of religion, which was in decline in some communities (for instance, parts of central and northern Italy), while in other cases it had failed to underpin a truly united nation (for instance, the division between Protestants and Catholics in Germany).

However, whilst fascist ideologues argued that there was a need to create a totally new political culture, arguably the majority of fascists thought that this was perfectly consistent with a reformed Christianity, which could be synthesised with fascism.<sup>11</sup>

Hitler and, to a lesser extent, Mussolini were undoubtedly seen by many leading followers as having special powers in terms of divining what course to follow. But this magnetic influence over an inner core does not prove that such leaders exerted a similar affective appeal over the masses. For example, support for Italian Fascism in the 1930s stemmed from many reasons, such as Mussolini's 1929 agreement with the Catholic Church, which appeased devout conservatives. Furthermore, it is important not to confuse lack of overt opposition to Fascism with a more fundamental consensus: the former owed much to various types of coercion which are often overlooked, as Fascism lacked the extreme ultimate terror of the Nazi concentration camp system.<sup>12</sup> Turning to Nazism, the Holocaust owes more to eugenic science and Hitler's charismatic appeal over an inner coterie of Nazis than to any deep-rooted historic-religious desire to destroy the 'Christ killers'. At the level of mass opinion, moreover, it is important to note that theft of assets from the Jews and their use as slave labour after 1940 meant that, initially, many Germans were largely protected from the economic realities of the war, retaining a high percentage of their pre-war earnings.

Nazi popularity after 1933 was undoubtedly underpinned by growing economic prosperity and benefits such as organised holidays. Although it has become commonplace to portray fascism as highly influenced by allegedly Sorelian conceptions of elite-manipulated myths of nation and race, it is usually forgotten that Sorel not only criticised turn of the twentieth century socialists for their emphasis on rational appeals, but also for their (re)distributionism. Sorel believed that a socialist regime which could not deliver high living standards would not be able to legitimise itself in a world in which the American dream was exerting a growing influence. Interpretations of fascism which focus on it being a political religion miss the fact that, as A.J. Gregor and Zeev Sternhell have stressed, it had a strong Third Way economic aspect to its programmes – an appeal which, whilst not necessarily deriving from, certainly mirrored Sorel's emphasis on productivism and widespread welfare.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, a crucial aspect of fascism was its various syntheses, including aspects of both irrationalist and rationalist thought. This syncretism makes it particularly difficult to fit fascism into any form of simple list-typology or Weberian 'ideal type'. For this reason, I have argued that, whilst we need a short definition to help identify fascism, we also need to think of it within a matrix.<sup>14</sup> The short definition I have proposed holds that fascism is:

An ideology that strives to forge social rebirth based on a *holistic-national radical Third Way*, though in practice fascism has tended to stress style, especially action and the charismatic leader, more than a detailed programme, and to engage in a Manichean demonisation of its enemies.

The fascist matrix is made up of three main themes: i) 'new man'; ii) 'nation'; and iii) 'state'. Within each theme, it is possible to come to notably different syntheses. Thus the new man could solely refer to the revitalisation of elites, but it could also refer to a much wider reprogramming the mind of the masses in order to help divert it from Marxism or bourgeois decadence. The nation could be envisaged to

be based upon either biological race, as it was for many Nazis, or upon culture, which was more the basis of Italian Fascism (Europe could even be re-imagined as a nation, as it was for some intellectual fascists, and there was an element of this in the Waffen SS's recruitment of thousands of non-Germans from within many occupied states, such as the French Charlemagne division). The strong state could be justified as a means to initiate radical redistribution towards the poor (Nazi tax policy in the early part of the war hit the rich), or to defend a more conservative vision of income and wealth differentials (an interpretation which attracted some from the bourgeoisie). Often the specific syntheses produced owed much to opportunistic short-term concerns, because fascism – partly as it was a 'late-comer' to the political market place<sup>15</sup> – was especially concerned with propaganda to appeal to diverse groups.

It is also important to stress that such a matrix approach involves considering differing ways in which the three key themes and related ones were conceived among different groups. Thus the Italian Fascist 'new man' could appeal to young men who had fought in the trenches and sought to preserve a sense of 'trenchocracy', but it could also appeal to women who conceived fascism more in terms of valuing the traditional leading role for males and who saw no advantage in the 'new female' promised by some on the left. In Weimar Germany, anti-Marxism could invoke a philosophical hostility to materialism on the part of the far-from-rare intellectual who turned to Nazism even before 1933, but on the streets anti-Marxism appealed more to members of the working class who resented left-wing clientelism, while in the salons and boardrooms of the bourgeoisie the concern was more to defend privilege and property rights against the rising tide of the communism.

These differences within fascism at any one point are more significant than the five vaguely defined stages through which fascism passed according to Robert Paxton, namely: i) the creation of the movements; ii) their rooting in the political system; iii) the seizure of power; iv) the exercise of power; and v) a longer term regime choice between 'radicalisation or entropy'.<sup>16</sup> There are unquestionably insights to be gained from analysing movements and regimes in terms of phases: for example, the Franco regime was more fascist during 1939-45, whereas by the 1960s it had become a form of technocratic, modernising-capitalist dictatorship – a reflection of factors such as changing international models and pressures as well as internal economic development. Conversely, Nazism was more conservative during its initial phase – a reflection of its coming to power by quasi-legitimate means in 1933 and the initial need to share power with members of the traditional ruling class, like the aristocratic President von Hindenburg and the former banker turned Nazi Economics Minister, Hjalmar Schacht. However, trying to develop a general model based on stages misses both the crucial nature of the fascist matrix, and the dangers of making too neat a distinction between 'authoritarianism' and 'fascism' in interwar Europe.

### **New Conceptions of Leadership (and the Masses)**

The last point can be further considered by focusing on the central concern of this collection, namely leadership. There were undoubtedly crucial differences – ideological, personality-wise, and so on – between the various interwar European 'authoritarian' and 'fascist' leaders. But increasingly as the interwar period developed, leadership was characterised by various forms of what might be termed

'charismatisation'. Put another way, whilst leaders like Franco in Spain or Salazar in Portugal lacked characteristics such as great speaking ability, a magnetic personal presence, or a clear utopian vision, there developed around them a cult of the exemplary, missionary leader, destined to re-forged national unity and lead the people into a new era – although in the case of the more conservative leaders, newness was more than tinged with the quest for the partial restoration of a Golden Age.

In order to understand this point, it is helpful to briefly consider the European tradition of thinking about political leadership. The role of strong leaders was a central feature of Western political thought, dating back to disputes about Caesarism in Classical Rome, and even earlier about the merits of 'direct democracy' in Athens, especially in the context of Greece's ability to withstand more its barbarian and martial neighbours. Against the background of the rise of a new form of 'liberal democracy' during and after the eighteenth century – a form of government which many saw as internally even weaker than its small but holistic Classical forebear – these debates gathered renewed force.<sup>17</sup>

During the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle's romantic celebration of the heroic leader was a notable early example of the attack on Enlightenment social egalitarianism and democratic politics. Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy damned both Christian and liberal-capitalist culture while calling for a Superman who would help spawn a new elite, uncorrupted by Christian-liberal pacifism and bourgeois decadence. Gustav Le Bon's pioneering psychological work on crowds depicted the emergence of the 'masses', who would easily be swayed by a manipulative great leader (as General Boulanger had briefly done in late nineteenth century France). Many saw Georges Sorel's work on the power of myth of the general strike as a variation on this argument in the context of a rising group of working class leaders. At the same time, sociologists such as Roberto Michels, Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto, argued against both democrats and Marxists that elites necessarily emerged in all societies: the point was not to fight such inequality, but to ensure that those who governed were those most suited to rule.

It is often pointed out that aspects of the thought of these writers do not conform to fascism. Nietzsche, for instance, had no interest in promoting the virtues of the German race, while Sorel was more interested in the rise of working class consciousness and the sense of its own power than elite-fed myths. However, their ideas influenced others – for instance, the academic philosopher Alfred Bäumler, who synthesised Nietzsche with Nazism, or the Sorelain syndicalists who turned to early Fascism in Italy after the war, believing they had found in nationalism the great mobilising myth. Moreover, it is worth noting that Pareto briefly supported the early Italian Fascist regime before his death in 1923 (though it is not clear he would have supported the dictatorship which emerged after 1925). Michels even went on to be a professor of politics at the University of Perugia where, until his death in 1936, he developed a view of charismatic leadership which he saw as potentially more representative than the party-based regimes of liberal democracy.

These trends in pre-1914 political thought about leadership were reinforced by the experience of war. For many on the right, the central issue was to create a strong regime initially capable of fighting total war – although later defending the Establishment against Red Revolution also became a central task of the state. However, there were other dimensions to this quest for leadership. One stemmed

directly from the experience of war, from the belief that the military leadership had been locked in an old mindset, both in terms of tactics and class relationships. The reality of war was in many ways one of brutal hierarchy, but there was also a sense of blood socialism, which encompassed elements of egalitarianism and common purpose during the war that evaporated with the coming of democratic peace.

This was partly linked to a growing realisation that the increasing extension of the franchise meant that a new form of relationship was required between the political system and the 'masses'. By 1919 most West European countries had universal male franchise, often (as in Italy and Germany) based on proportional representation, which proliferated the number of parties and did nothing to make coalition formation easier. A body of thought was thus emerging which sought a strong leader, but which realised that such leadership needed both to legitimise itself as the embodiment of the will of the people and to offer poorer people in particular economic security and welfare.

Although there are dangers in using one thinker to epitomise these developments, not least as the First World War did not deeply affect some states, Valois can nevertheless be considered seminal, for he provides an excellent example of the emerging complex relationship between 'authoritarianism' and 'fascism'. Prior to the war, he had been a key theorist of the reactionary-monarchist *Action Française* though links with syndicalists like Sorel and the influence of social Darwinism meant that, even before 1914, his views were beginning to turn toward a form of proto-fascism.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after the war ended, Valois wrote about his experiences in the trenches:

In some ways we returned to a state a nature ... We saw how a society organised itself, created its leaders ... In my company, I only saw a single reversal of social hierarchy [a large landowner who was employed in menial task] ... Conclusion: hierarchy in our societies is much less artificial than many think'<sup>19</sup>

Valois became especially interested in the power of leadership. He noted that at Verdun, where the French suffered crippling losses in a battle which lasted for years, when word reached the troops that General Pétain has taken command: 'A leader, a resolve, a will appeared in the flame ... the resolve understood, the will spread.' However, Valois was no longer seeking to restore an old conception of leadership, seeking more a synthesis of old and new. Indeed, by the early 1920s he was openly proclaiming the need to make a 'revolution'.<sup>20</sup> The war may have underlined the importance of natural hierarchies, but it also highlighted the importance of community among the 'people': Valois specifically wrote about how various ranks tended to address each other by the familiar 'tu' rather than 'vous'. More philosophically, he argued after the war that: 'It's not the case, as Marx believed, that the mode of production determines moral, political and intellectual life: rather, it is the intellectual, moral and political life which determines economic formations'.<sup>21</sup> Although Valois celebrated Pétain's role at Verdun, he called for a new elite to emerge which would forge a new social order and tie the masses to the nation-state through organic bonds. He argued that this was a task which individualistic liberalism could never achieve (a theme which echoed Maurice Barrès' famous epitaph for bourgeois man in the aftermath of France's humiliating defeat in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war: 'born a man, died a grocer').

This emphasis on leadership is all the more remarkable, given that Valois himself was a relatively poor speaker and hardly an archetypal 'charismatic' leader.

Another leader who did not correspond to the charismatic stereotype was the authoritarian conservative Franz von Papen, who was briefly Chancellor of Germany shortly before Hitler became to power. In a speech which he gave to Bavarian businessmen on 12 October 1932, he stated that when he had established his administration, which had followed an increasingly unstable phase of Weimar government combined with growing disorder in the streets: 'I proclaimed the principle of an entirely new state leadership', which would more faithfully reflect the 'will of the nation [*volk*] than what Weimar was capable of bringing about'.<sup>22</sup> Von Papen added that 'conservative state-politics are politics out of faith', but went on to make clear that what he sought was a new form of conservatism based both on the will of the people and on traditional faith. He specifically contrasted this with Nazism, which he saw as a political religion based on a faith in politics, and especially in the will of the *Führer*. His speech serves as an excellent example of the way in which authoritarian conservatives were both clearly aware of the need to tie the masses to the nation and of the techniques which fascists were increasingly deploying as part of their recruiting repertoire.<sup>23</sup>

Von Papen's speech further raises the issue of fascism as a form of political religion, led by a charismatic leader. Earlier in this essay I argued that, whilst there was clearly a religious dimension to fascist propaganda and true fascists certainly sought to create a new political culture, there are major dangers in over-stating this case. Charisma does not simply have to be understood in the context of a religious mission. For example, another important dimension concerns the more stereotypical, defining point of the personal magnetism of certain leaders. Schacht told his Nuremberg trial investigators that it was during January 1931 when he met Hitler for the first time and that 'he felt at once his "dynamic force"', adding that he found Hermann Göring 'not too impressive'.<sup>24</sup> These comments, made in 1945, are interesting as Schacht might well have sought to portray his links with the Nazis as stemming from links with leaders like Göring, who were seen at the time as less extreme. Moreover, the genial Göring's class background was more in keeping with Schacht's than that of the socially-gauche 'Austrian corporal', as President von Hindenburg termed Hitler after their first meeting in 1931. The same point about Hitler's magnetism was made by Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg, who sought to explain army support for Hitler after 1933 by claiming that: 'the fascination exercised by Hitler to an unusual degree had something to do with' his personal aura, adding: 'Even I was influenced by this fascination'.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, more now needs to be said specifically about the concept and theory of charisma, a theme which I shall develop in the next essay.

## Notes

1. Clearly since 1945 there has been good reason for any movement seeking widespread support to deny fascist paternity.
2. Though this definition is ultimately still misleading, as most non-Marxist studies of business show that fascism could act in ways counter to the desires of big business. See, for instance, P. Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
3. Later evidence showed that typical fascist supporters were relatively normal and often came from all classes in close communities: see especially M. Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

4. J. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (New York: Reinner, 2000). See also A. Costa Pinto, *Salazar's Dictatorship and European Fascism: Problems of Interpretation* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs 1995) and S.U. Larsen, 'Was there Fascism outside Europe?', in S. U. Larsen (ed.), *Fascism Outside Europe* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2001).
5. Though it should be added that the totalitarian model has, if anything, made a comeback since the 1980s, as some scholars have come to accept that it does point to important features not present in more conservative authoritarian regimes. See G. Sartori, "Totalitarianism, Model Mania and Learning from Error", *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 5/1 (1992).
6. Mann (note 3), pp.43 ff.
7. S.G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p.245ff.
8. S. G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p.6 ff.
9. R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), p.26. The term 'palingenesis' appears to have been first used in this context in E. Gentile, *Le Origini dell'Ideologia Fascista (1918-25)* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1975), p.205.
10. E. Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) and. R. Griffin, "The Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Interwar Europe", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 3/3 (2002).
11. R. Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion", *Totalitarian Movements and Politics Religions* 4/3 (2003), and R. Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
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18. For the argument that *Action Française* itself was one of the three seminal 'faces' of fascism, see E. Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York, NY: New American Library, 1969) – a much-cited but remarkably unimportant early work on 'generic' fascism.
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20. G. Valois, *La révolution nationale* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1924).
21. G. Valois, *L'économie nouvelle* (Paris, Nouvelle Librairie, 1919), pp.15-16.
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23. To a lesser extent, there was interest in the techniques of Soviet propaganda too, though it is important to note that in the early 1930s the cult of Stalin was only just emerging, while the celebration of Lenin was in some ways more akin to the older cult of dead leaders, such as Napoleon.
24. Typescript copy of "State Department Special Interrogation Mission", interview, 23 September 1945, p.2.
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