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What Produces Fascism: Preindustrial Traditions or a Crisis of a Capitalist State

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THE aim of this essay is to explore some of the emerging emphases in current discussions of fascism. In some ways that discussion has entered the doldrums. There was a certain high point in the late sixties, when the subject was first properly opened up and when the generalizing ambitions of social scientists and historians briefly converged. Ernst Nolte's *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* was translated with exceptional speed as *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Francaise, Italian Fascism, National Socialism.* General surveys appeared by Eugen Weber, Francis L. Carsten, and John Weiss. Eugen Weber and Hans Rogger edited an anthology on the European right. The thematic first issue of a new periodical, the *Journal of Contemporary History* appeared. Barrington Moore, Jr., published his vastly influential *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy.* The *Das Argument* discussions of the German New Left took place. And three international conferences were held in Seattle (1966), Reading (1967), and Prague (1969). All these imparted an excitement and vitality to work on the subject.[1] But in

1. Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (Munich: Piper-Verlag, 1963) and *Three faces of Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965); Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1964); Francis L. Carsten, *The Rise*

retrospect there is an air of innocence to this activity, whose intense preoccupation with comparison, generalization, and theory has tended not to survive the subsequent growth of empirical research. These days, people are far more cautious, because the accumulated weight of historical scholarship has compromised the explanatory potential of the old theorizations.

So what is left once certain old certainties (like totalitarianism or the orthodox Marxist approaches) have been abandoned? The answer, if we consult the most recent publications, is not very much. We know far better which theories *don't* work (totalitarianism, the 1935 Dimitrov formula, the authoritarian personality, the mass-society thesis, monopoly-group theory, and so on) than which do.[2] There have been certain major interventions—the work of Nicos Poulantzas and the controversy surrounding Renzo De Felice are two that come to mind—but on the whole they haven't sparked much widespread debate.[3] Most

of Fascism (London: Batsford, 1967); John Weiss, *The Fascist Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967); Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965); "International Fascism, 1920-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1966). The *Journal of Contemporary History* published a second special issue ten years later called "Theories of Fascism," vol. 11, no. 4 (October 1976). Selections from both issues have been published as George L. Mosse, ed., *International Fascism: New Thoughts and New Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 1979). The three international conferences produced the following volumes of proceedings: Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-1945* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971); Stuart J. Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* and *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968); Institute of History, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, ed., *Fascism and Europe* (Prague: Czechslovakian Academy of Sciences, 1970), 2 vols. Woolf, *European Fascism* was recently reissued in a slightly revised form as *Fascism in Europe* (London: Methuen, 1981).

2. By now there are many critiques of these older approaches. Among the best are: Bernt Hagtvet, "The Theory of Mass Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic: A Re-Examination," in *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, Jan Petter Myklebust (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp. 66-117; Manfred Clemenz, *Gesellschaftliche Ursprünge des Faschismus* (Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), pp. 26-57, 96-126, 235-49. In some ways totalitarianism theory has fallen more to the relentless accumulation of monographic research than to frontal critique. For an introduction to that scholarship, see: Jane Caplan, "Bureaucracy, Politics and the National Socialist State," in *The Shaping of the Nazi State*, ed. Peter Stachura (London: Croom Helm, 1978), pp. 234-56; Hans Mommsen, "National Socialism—Continuity and Change," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Walter Laquer (London: Wildwood House, 1976), pp. 179-210.

3. Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London: New Left Books, 1974); Renzo De Felice, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1976). Poulantzas's book on fascism has excited little formal discussion compared to his other writings. The major exceptions are an excellent short essay by Jane Caplan and a more abstract piece by Ernesto Laclau. Likewise, De Felice's work has not had a great deal of impact outside the specifically Italian discussion. See: Jane Caplan, "Theories of Fascism: Nicos Poulantzas as Historian," in *History Workshop*, no. 3 (May 1977), pp. 83-100; Ernesto Laclau, "Fascism and Ideology," in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*

writers have settled for a typological approach to the definition of fascism, by using essentially descriptive criteria (ideological ones have tended to be the most common) as a practical means of identifying which movements are "fascist" and which are not. Yet this begs the more difficult conceptual issues and leaves the stronger aspects of definition (like the dynamics of fascism's emergence, and its relation to class, economics, and political development) to the concrete analysis of particular societies.[4]

Understandably, this is an outcome with which historians can live. In fact, the enormous proliferation of empirical work over the past ten to fifteen years has concentrated overwhelmingly on more immed- iate problems, normally with a national-historical definition (for ex- ample, on nazism or Italian fascism rather than on fascism in general). We "know" far more than ever before, but this remains the knowledge of highly particularized investigations. Not surprisingly, a common response has been the Philistine cry of despair (or perhaps of triumph). "Reality" is simply too "complex." Radical nominalism easily follows,

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(London: New Left Books, 1977), pp. 81-142; Michael Ledeen, "Renzo De Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (October 1976): pp. 269-82.

4. See, e.g., Stanley Payne's useful general text, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), pp. 195ff., 6ff. Payne proposes a "descriptive typology" based on "(a) the fascist negations, (b) common points of ideology and goals, and (c) special common features of style and organization." The "negations" involve antiliberalism, anticommunism, and qualified anticonservatism. The common goals include a new kind of "national authoritarian state," a "new kind of regulated, multi-class, integrated national- economic structure," a radical foreign policy, and "an idealist, voluntarist creed." The stylistic and organizational features are: "an aesthetic structure of meetings, symbols and political choreography"; militarized forms of mass mobilization; a stress on violence, masculinity and youth; and a "tendency towards an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command."

This is very similar to the approach of Juan Linz, who has published a number of widely cited and influential essays proposing "a multidimensional typological definition" of fascism. See his "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Per- spective," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Laqueur, pp. 3-121. Personally, despite its many valuable insights, I find Linz's general argument obscure, inconclusive, and confusing in the density of its cultivated empirical complexity. Moreover, the typology described above needs to be extended by a further set of distinctions between the different kinds of fascist move- ments. One possibility would be the following: (1) successful indigenously generated move- ments (Italian fascism, nazism, Francoism); (2) small imitative movements that achieved no particular popularity in their home societies, that is, the British Union of Fascists, or the various Scandinavian Nazi groups); (3) larger indigenous movements that have strong similari- ties of ideology, sociology, and style but that originated independently of Italian or German sponsorships that had a different configuration of social forces, and that never took power under peacetime conditions, that is, Arrow Cross in Hungary, or Iron Guard in Rumania); finally, (4) the so-called Quisling regimes installed by the Germans during the war.

and there is little agreement on whether fascism even exists as a general phenomenon.[5]

At the same time, there is now a large body of excellent work that lends itself to theoretical appropriation. Some of this is on the less significant fascisms of the north and west of the European continent or on the larger but ambiguous "native fascisms" of eastern Europe and facilitates a stronger comparative dimension to the discussion. Other contributions are on specific aspects of German and Italian history, including the structure of interest representation, the sociology of the Nazi movement and the nature of the Nazi electorate in Germany, and the precise dynamics of the post–First World War crisis in Italy. In the long run, this intensive reworking of the empirical circumstances of the fascist victories, based on exceptionally elaborate primary research, on often sophisticated methodologies, and on "middle-level generalizations," promises to reconstruct our theoretical understanding of fascism. My own object is more modest. It is clear that the coherence of current research relies on a number of organizing perspectives derived from the older theoretical literature. These perspectives run through the analytical structures of particular works with varying degrees of explicitness and self-consciousness. The aim of this essay is to identify some of those perspectives, to explore their strengths and weaknesses, and, by drawing on more recent theoretical discussions, perhaps to suggest where future interest might fruitfully be directed.[6]

I

One of the commonest emphases in the literature is a kind of deep historical perspective that proceeds from the idea of German, and to a

5. For a particularly pointless such disussion, see Gilbert Allardyce, "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1979): pp. 367-88.

6. A familiar but important disclaimer should be entered here. By making certain criticisms of existing works, I am *not* trying to discount their value or consign them to the scrapheap. I wish to open up discussion, nothing more. In certain ways this essay connects with a larger intellectual project, concerned with redrawing the agenda of German historical discussion for the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. See David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung: Die gescheiterte burgerliche Revolution von 1848* (Frankfurt on the Main: Ullstein, 1980), and the controversy it has aroused. This present essay originated in a review essay for another journal, and it is only fair to mention the texts that originally provoked it, as they clearly helped formulate the judgments on which the following exposition rests. They include: Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide;* Mosse, ed., *International Fascism;* Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition;* Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists;* Heinrich August Winkler, *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus: Zur Revision des Historischen Materialismus* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1978); Jurgen Kocka, *White Collar Workers in America 1890-1940: A Social-Political History in International Perspective* (London: Sage Publications, 1980).

lesser extent Italian, peculiarity when compared with the "west." In this case the possibility of fascism is linked to specific structures of political backwardness. These structures are themselves identified with a distinctive version of the developmental process and are thought to be powerful impediments against a society's ultimate "modernization." This "backwardness syndrome" is defined within a global conceptual framework of the most general societal comparison. It stresses the complex interaction and "lateness" of industrialization and national unification and consequent predisposition both toward a particular kind of economic structure and toward a far more interventionist state. The divergence from "Western" political development is usually expressed in terms of the absence of a successful Anglo-French-style "bourgeois revolution," an absence that facilitates the dominance, after national unification, of an agrarian-industrial political bloc with strong authoritarian and antidemocratic traditions. The failure to uproot such "preindustrial traditions" is thought to have obstructed the formation of a liberal-democratic polity, and in general this is taken to explain the frailty of the national liberal traditions and their inability to withstand the strains of a serious crisis. In recent social science this perspective stems from (among others) Barrington Moore, Jr., Alexander Gerschenkron, and the discussions sponsored by the Social Science Research Council Committee on Comparative Politics. In contemporary Marxism it has drawn new impetus from discussions of the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. But in both cases the analysis may be traced back to the end of the last century.[7] This perspective has thus influenced how most historians have tended to see the problem of fascism, but it has done so by structuring the argument's underlying assumptions and not by being itself an object of discussion.

The argument was put in an extreme, discursive form by Ralf Dahrendorf in *Society and Democracy in Germany,* which deeply influenced a generation of English-speaking students of German history.

7. For discussions of these analytical traditions, see: Blackbourn and Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung;* and John A Davis, ed., *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). For valuable examples, see Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy;* Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Raymond Grew, ed., *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Bernt Hagtvet and Stein Rokkan, "The Conditions of Fascist Victory," in *Who Were the Fascists,* ed. Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, pp. 131-52. Hagtvet and Rokkan's article links the "violent breakdown of competitive mass politics" to a complex "geoeconomic-geopolitical model" in which a country's early "geopolitical position," its "semi-peripheralization" in the world economy, and its manner of unification supply the vital preconditions for the emergence of fascism.

It has also functioned strategically in a large body of work on the Imperial period of German history (1971–1918), whose authors write very much with 1933 in mind. One of the latter, Jurgen Kocka, ex-plicitly reaffirmed Dahrendorf's argument in a recent article highlight-ing the specific backwardness of German political culture. In Kocka's view, "German society was never truly a bourgeois society"; "bour-geois virtues like individual responsibility, risk-taking, the rational settlement of differences, tolerance, and the pursuit of individual and collective freedoms" were much "less developed than in Western Europe and the USA." Indeed, the chances of "a liberal-democratic constitu-tional development" were blocked by a series of authoritarian obstacles. Kocka lists: "the great power of the Junkers in industrial Germany and the feudalizing tendencies in the big bourgeoisie; the extraordinary power of the bureaucracy and the army in a state that had never ex-perienced a successful bourgeois revolution and that was unified from above; the social and political alliance of the rising bourgeoisie and the ever-resilient agrarian nobility against the sharply demarcated prole-tariat; the closely related antiparliamentarian, antidemocratic, and antiliberal alignment of large parts of the German ruling strata." In fact, the "powerful persistence of pre-industrial, pre-capitalist traditions" pre-empted the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic and favored the rise of right-wing extremism.[8]

Kocka's arguments are representative for the generation of German historians who entered intellectual maturity during the 1960s, in a fertile and (for the time) liberating intellectual encounter with the liberal social and political science then in its North American heyday. This is particularly true of those historians who have explicitly addressed the question of nazism's longer-term origins, for whom figures like Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Sauer, Ernst Fraenkel, Martin Broszat, M. Rainer Lepsius, and Dahrendorf provided early intellectual exam-ples.[9] Here, for instance, is Hans-Jurgen Puhle summarizing the argu-ment in terms that correspond precisely to the ones used by Kocka: Fascism is explained by the special characteristics of a society "in which the consequences of delayed state-formation and delayed indus-trialization combined closely together with the effects of the absence

8. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1967; 1st ed., Munich: Piper-Verlag, 1965); Jurgen Kocka, "Ursachen des Nationalsozialismus," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte,* June 21, 1980, pp. 9–13.

9. Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973; original German edition 1969); Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?" *American Historical Review* 73 (1967): 404–24; idem, "Das Problem des Deutschen Nationalstaats," in *Moderne Deutsche*

of bourgeois revolution and the absence of parliamentarization to form
the decisive brakes on political democratization and social emancipa-
tion.[10]
It should be noted that those who advocate this approach to
fascism explicitly advance it as an alternative to Marxist approaches.
For this purpose they reduce Marxism, polemically and rather simplis-
tically, to a set of orthodox variations on themes bequeathed by the
Comintern and ignore the contributions of (among others) Nicos Pou-
lantzas, the Gramsci reception, and Tim Mason.[11] Thus in a labored pole-
mic against the German new left Heinrich August Winkler explains

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Sozialgeschichte, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Cologne: Kiepenhauer und Wietsch, 1968), pp.
407-36; Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941); Martin
Broszat, *Der National-sozialismus: Weltanschauung, Programm und Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart:
Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1960); M. Rainer Lepsius, "Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur: Zum
Problem der Demokratisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft," in *Deutsche Parteien vor 1918,*
ed. Gerhard A. Ritter (Cologne: Kiepenhauer und Wietsch, 1973), pp. 56-80; and Dahrendorf,
Society and Democracy in Germany. By "German historians" in this context I mean historians
in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is hard to say exactly how broad this generational ex-
perience was, partly because the ideological fronts have changed again since the early-1970s,
with the most self-conscious exponents of avowedly "social-scientific" history (for example,
as represented in the controlling group of the journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*) left feeling
relatively isolated within the West German historical profession as a whole. But for a fairly
representative example of literature and authors at the height of the earlier liberalizing trend
(several of the contributors have since moved quite markedly to the right), see Michael Sturmer,
ed., *Das kaiserliche Deutschland: Politik und Gesellschaft 1981-1918* (Dusseldorf: Droste,
1970).

   10. Hans-Jurgen Puhle, *Von der Agrarkrise zum Prafaschismus* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag,
1972), p. 53. The constipated nature of this sentence is an accurate (even benevolant) reflec-
tion of the original German.

   11. The literature on Gramsci is now enormous. Among the most useful discussions of
what he had to say about fascism in particular are the following: Alastair Davidson, *Antonio
Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography* (London: Merlin Press, 1977), pp. 185-201;
Walter L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: Antonio Gramschi's Political and Cultural
Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 71-101; Christine Buci-Glucks-
mann, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 295-324; Paolo
Spriano, *Antonio Gramsci and the Party: The Prison Years* (London: Lawrence and Wishart,
1979); and Davis, ed., *Gramsci and Italy's Passive Revolution.* For the work of Tim Mason
the following are most important: "The Primacy of Politics: Politics and Economics in Na-
tional-Socialist Germany," in *The Nature of Fascism,* ed. Woolf, pp. 165-95; *Sozialpolitik im
Dritten Reich* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977); "Zur Entstehung des Gesetzes zur
Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit vom 20. Januar 1934: Ein Versuch uber das Verhaltnis 'ar-
chaischer' und 'moderner' Momente in der neuesten deutschen Geschichte," in *Industrielles
System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik,* ed. Hans Mommsen, Dietmar
Petzina, and Bernd Weisbrod (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1974), pp. 322-51; "Intention and Explan-
ation: A Current Controversy about the Interpretation of National Socialism," in *Der "Fuhrer-
staat": Mythos und Realitat,* ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kettenacker (Stuttgart: Klett-
Cotta, 1981), pp. 21-42; "Open Questions on Nazism," in *People's History and Socialist
Theory,* ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 205-10.

nazism as largely the result of preindustrial survivals that in other
(healthier) societies had been swept away. This was "why certain cap-
italist societies became fascist and others not."[12] Or, as Kocka puts
it, adapting Max Horkheimer's famous saying: "Whoever does not
want to talk about preindustrial, precapitalist, and prebourgeois tradi-
tions should keep quiet about fascism."[13]

    Kocka specifies this argument in a detailed study of American white-
collar workers between 1890 and 1940 in an explicit comparison with
Germany.[14] He begins with a well-known feature of nazism, namely, its
disproportionate success among the "lower middle class" or petite
bourgeoisie and, in particular, among white-collar workers. He then
abstracts a "general social-historical hypothesis" from this—that the
lower middle classes develop a *"potential* susceptibility to right-wing
radicalization as a consequence of transformation processes that typi-
cally appear at advanced stages of capitalist industrialization"—and tests
it against the experience of American employees in retailing and indus-
try between the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World
War.[15] After careful discussions of social origins, educational back-
ground, income differentials, organizational experience, and status
consciousness, he concludes that American white-collar workers were
much less likely to see themselves as a distinct class or status group
superior and hostile to the working class. This "blurring of the collar
line" helps explain the absence of "class-specific" political tendencies
comparable to those of German employees. While the latter turned to
the Nazis in large numbers, their US counterparts joined with manual
workers in support of the New Deal. Thus the comparable socioeco-
nomic situations of white-collar workers in the two countries failed to

    12. Winkler, "Die 'neue Linke' und der Faschismus: Zur Kritik neomarxistischer Theorien
uber den Nationalsozialismus," in *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus,* pp. 116, esp. 74–83. Winker's
essay "German Society, Hitler and the Illusion of Restoration, 1930–33," in *International
Fascism,* ed. Mosse, pp. 143–60, puts a similar point of view.
    13. Kocka, "Ursachen des Nationalsozialismus," p. 11. For similar arguments, see Puhle,
Von der Agrarkrise, p. 53, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918*
(Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1973), pp. 238ff., 226.
    14. Kocka, *White Collar Workers in America.* The original German edition appeared as
*Angestellte zwischen Faschismus und Demokratie: Zur politischen Sozialgeschichte der Anges-
tellten: USA 1890–1940 im internationalen Vergleich* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Rup-
precht, 1977). Kocka has by this time accumulated a small mountain of publications on the
subject of white-collar workers. Among the most important are: *Unternehmungsverwaltung
und Angestelltenschaft am Beispiel Siemens 1847–1914: Zum Verhaltnis von Kapitalismus und
Burokratie in der deutschen Industrialisierung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1969); "Vorindustrielle
Faktoren in der deutschen Industrialisierung: Industrieburokratie und 'neuer Mittelstand,' "
in *Das kaiserliche Deutschland,* ed. Sturmer, pp. 265–86; *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg: Deutsche
Sozialgeschichte 1914–1918* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1973), esp. pp. 65–95.
    15. Kocka, *White Collar Workers,* p. 5.

produce identical ideological or political orientations. If this is so, Kocka argues, perhaps the general hypothesis that explains the rise of fascism by the "changes, tensions, and contradictions inherent in advanced capitalist societies" needs to be qualified.[16]

Kocka considers a number of explanations for the divergence, juxtaposing German and American particularities in each case. First, the socialist consciousness and greater independence of the German labor movement, which led to its deliberate isolation in the political system, was not found in the US, and American white-collar workers had far less reason to construct ideological defences against the left. Second, ethnicity fragmented the potential unity of workers and petite bourgeoisie far more than religious or ethnic differences did in Germany. Third, the swifter emergence of the interventionist state in Germany emphasized the importance of the collar line by legally cementing the lines of differentiation (for example, separate insurance legislation for white-collar employees), while, fourth, the existence of "a stratified educational system" strengthened the barriers between occupations by lowering mobility between manual and nonmanual jobs. Each of these points is well taken, though the enormous expansion of tertiary employment in Germany after the turn of the century (and hence the broadly based recruitment of the white-collar labor force) is probably understated, as are the conceptual difficulties in mobility studies, which Kocka takes rather uncritically on board.[17]

But Kocka reserves his major explanation for a *fifth* factor, namely "the continuing presence or absence of preindustrial corporatist/bureaucratic traditions at advanced states of industrialization."[18] In the United States the absence of feudal traditions has long been seen as a crucial determinant of the country's political culture, permitting the hegemony of democratic citizenship ideals and the containment of class animosity.[19] In Germany, by contrast, the political culture suggests a "deficit in some essential ingredients of a modern bourgeois or civil society that was closely but inversely related to the strength of Germany's preindustrial, precapitalist, and prebourgeois traditions."

16. Ibid.
17. Kocka concedes that the inadequacy of the evidence may ultimately vitiate the comparison in this respect. Moreover until Hartmut Kaelble's work the research was all on the American side. See Kaelble, "Sozialer Aufstieg in den USA und Deutschland, 1900–1960: Ein vergleichendes Forschungsbericht," in *Sozialgeschichte Heute*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1974), pp. 525–42; and idem, *Historical Research on Social Mobility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).
18. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, p. 265.
19. For a recapitulation of these debates, see Jerome Karabel, "The Failure of American Socialism Reconsidered," *Socialist Register 1979* (London: Merlin Press, 1979), pp. 204-27.

In the case of white-collar workers this created much ready support for the fascists.[20]

There is much to agree with in Kocka's account, which is exactly the kind of controlled comparison the field so badly needs. By taking the idea of preindustrial continuities and arguing it through in a very specific context he enables us to see more clearly its attractions and disadvantages. The very concreteness of the analysis allows the case for the German *Sonderweg*—German exceptionalism—to be made very convincingly. At a general level his conclusions therefore seem unimpeachable. This applies most certainly to his stress on "the *relative autonomy* of social-structural and sociocultural developments" within the larger process of capitalist industrialization. As the American material shows, there is nothing in the logic of capitalist industrialization per se to send industrial workers automatically to the left and nonmanual ones automatically to the right of the political spectrum (or, one might add, to associate specific ideologies or political attitudes necessarily with any particular social group).

At the same general level, it is hard to quarrel with Kocka's formulation of the preindustrial argument: "The uneasy coexistence of social structures that originated in different eras, the tense overlayering of industrial capitalist social conflicts with preindustrial, precapitalist social constellations—the 'contemporaneity of the uncontemporary'— defined Germany's path to an industrial society, but not America's."[21] However, on a practical level, this point is not wholly convincing. To single out the primacy of preindustrial traditions seems arbitrary, not least because some of the major German particularities in Kocka's list—for example, the rise of the Social Democratic party (SPD) or the constitution of *Angestellten* (low-status public employees and employees in the private sector) as a separate social category by the interventionist state—are formed during industrialization rather than before it.[22] Moreover, though Kocka seeks to establish German peculiarity as compared to the "West," what he actually shows with most of his argument is American peculiarity as compared to Europe, certainly with the European continent and in many ways with Britain too.

20. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, p. 266.

21. Ibid., pp. 281f. The phrase "contemporaneity of the uncontemporary" originates with Ernst Bloch. In some ways it corresponds to Trotsky's "uneven and combined development" and the Althusserian "overdetermination."

22. In other ways the argument seems strained. Thus the suggestion that "corporatist remnants in German society help explain why working-class status in itself was more important than differences between crafts and occupations" seems both eccentric and obscure, as does the reference to "the relative insignificance of the line between skilled and unskilled workers in German trade unions and social structure." See ibid., p. 265.

Ultimately Kocka's view of fascism is confusing. On the one hand,
he upholds the relationship between capitalism and fascism ("the sus-
ceptibility of the new middle class to right-wing extremism . . . . would
not have existed without the changes, tensions, and crises that accom-
panied the creation of an industrial capitalist society"), pointing only
to capitalism's interaction with older preindustrial traditions in a
complex causal dialectic ("the tension and crises inherent in industrial
capitalist systems, on one side, *and* the repercussions of the collision of
older traditions with industrialization and modernization, on the
other").[23] But on the other hand, he gives analytical priority to the
preindustrial part of the equation, making it the real difference between
Germany (which went fascist) and other countries (which did not).[24]
However, all capitalist societies are forged from precapitalist materials,
and this is as true of the United States (with its nonfeudal legacy of
property-owning white democracy), as it is of Germany with, if we fol-
low Kocka for the sake of argument, its feudal legacy of military and
bureaucratic traditions and elsewhere. In the period of industrializa-
tion itself the implied ideal of a "pure" capitalism without precapitalist
admixtures (the "modern bourgeois or civil society" that Germany is
supposed not to have been and against which German history is mea-
sured) never existed. That being the case, the crucial problem becomes
that of establishing how certain "traditions" became selected for
survival rather than others—how certain beliefs and practices came to
reproduce themselves under radically changed circumstances and how
they became subtly transformed in the very process of renewal. Pre-
industrial values had to be rearticulated in the new conditions of an
industrial-capitalist economy. It is this process of *active reproduction*
through a succession of *new conjunctures* between the 1870s and
1930s, surely, that has first claim on our attention.

Thus Kocka's argument can only be tested on the terrain he de-
liberately abandoned, namely, the immediate context of the Weimar
Republic. It is here that white-collar attitudes acquired their specific
content and political effectivity—in the vicissitudes of the capitalist
economy and in the permanent political uncertainty after 1918, for to
ensure their disproportionate right-wing orientation (and eventually
to harness a fascist potential) required a positive ideological labor,
on the part of employers, the state, and the right-wing parties.

One of the least satisfactory aspects of the preindustrial argument
is its assumption of inevitability. This long-range sociocultural deter-
minism of preindustrial traditions implies that German white-collar

23. Ibid., pp. 282f.
24. This is also true of Winkler, "Die 'neue Linke' und der Faschismus," p. 83.

employees were simply not available for left-wing politics until after
1945. This is partly belied by the manifest dividedness of white-collar
allegiances until the late-1920s, and once we concede the existence of
significant exceptions, as in any historical argument indeed we must
(why did the causal chain of preindustrial status mentalities and right-
wing proclivities work for some white-collar groups at different times
but not for others?), the preindustrial argument looks far less compel-
ling. In fact, there is much evidence that in the earlier circumstances of
the German Revolution many white-collar workers moved significantly
to the reformist left. That the left-wing parties (especially the SPD)
failed to respond creatively to these possibilities was less the result of
German white-collar workers' ineluctible conservatism (bequeathed by
the absence of bourgeois revolution and so on) than of specific political
processes and their outcomes, which were themselves naturally subject
to the disposing and constraining influence of social and economic
determinations.

Similarly, we can scarcely understand the nature of the "collar
line" unless we also examine the technical division of labor, the social
context of the workplace, and the position of white-collar workers in
the labor process—all of which were experiencing some basic changes
in the early-twentieth century, in Germany no less than America, but
which are strangely absent from Kocka's final account. In the end,
the invocation of preindustrial ideological continuities confuses these
issues, though the argument is handled more constructively in Kocka's
text than in most others.

II

One point emerges clearly enough from Kocka's account: the
explanatory potential of a sociological approach to fascism is limited.
This should not be misunderstood. I am not voicing hostility to socio-
logy per se, either to the use of different kinds of social theory or to
the adoption of social-scientific methodology, quantitative or other-
wise. Nor am I suggesting that sociological approaches to fascism in
particular are completely lacking in value. Quite the contrary, in fact.
The careful dissection of the fascist movements' social composition
through analysis of the leadership, activists, and ordinary membership
and through a long tradition of sophisticated electoral analysis has been
an essential feature of recent research. It has generated an enormous
amount of information and many new questions, providing the indis-
pensable foundation for any intelligent reflection.[25]

25. In addition to the voluminous contents of Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, eds., *Who
Were the Fascists,* there is a useful introduction to such research in Reinhard Mann, ed., *Die
Nationalsozialisten: Analysen faschistischer Bewegungen* Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980).

The problems arise with the larger conclusions. Writers move too easily from an empirical sociology of the fascist movement and its electorate to a general thesis concerning its origins and conditions of success. This is usually linked to conceptions of modernization, social change, and the impact of economic crisis. Such conceptions combine with the deep historical perspective identified above to suggest that fascism is structurally determined by a particular developmental experience. This is powerfully represented, for instance, in Barrington Moore's celebrated arguments about the relationship of different developmental trajectories ("dictatorship" and "democracy") to the societal dominance of different types of modernizing coalition (based on specific configurations of landowning and urban-bourgeois elements and their links to popular forces). In German historiography, especially, it is strongly implied that fascism follows logically from patterns of partial or uneven "modernization," which throw unreformed political institutions and "traditional" social structures into contradiction with the "modern" economy. In some versions this effectively redefines fascism as a more general problem of political backwardness.

In this approach, the notion of traditional strata, who are unable to adjust to modernization for a mixture of material and psychological reasons, has tended to play a key part. Since the 1920s, for example, there has been general agreement that fascism originates socially in the grievances of the petite bourgeoisie or lower middle class. In the words of Luigi Salvatorelli in 1923, fascism "represents the class struggle of the petty bourgeoisie, squeezed between capitalism and the proletariat, as the third party between the two conflicting sides."[26] This was a common contemporary judgment and has been pursued repeatedly by both historians and sociologists, Marxists and non-Marxists alike.

Most of the accumulated evidence (and a mountain of continuing research) is assembled in an enormous collection of essays recently edited by Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Petter Myklebust, *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*. While the aggregate effect of around eight hundred pages is hard to assess, it seems to confirm the received assumptions. There have been attempts to suggest that other social groups were ultimately more important in the fascists' makeup or that class was less important than "generational revolt."[27] But on the evidence of *Who Were the Fascists*, the fascist

26. Quoted by David D. Roberts, "Petty-Bourgeois Fascism in Italy: Form and Content," in *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Petter Myklebust (Bergeni Universitetforlaget, 1980), p. 337.

27. Several authors have suggested that the working class was more important to the social base of the Nazis. See: Max Kele, *Nazis and Workers, 1919–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); and Conan J. Fischer, "The Occupational Background of the SA's

movements' social composition seems to have been disproportionately weighted toward the petite bourgeoisie (that is, small-scale owners and producers, together with the new strata of salaried employees, including lower-grade civil servants, junior managerial and technical personnel, teachers, clerical workers, and parts of the professions).[28]

At the same time, to call fascism flatly a protest movement of the petite bourgeoisie is clearly an oversimplification. As David Roberts observes in an excellent discussion, "Petty Bourgeois Fascism in Italy," the tendency is to "assume that if we can find social categories enabling us to distinguish fascists from non-fascists, we have the key to explaining the phenomenon," with consequences that are potentially extremely reductionist.[29] Historians of Italian fascism, and of nazism as well, habitually analyze it "in terms of socio-economic crisis and the traumas and frustrations which industrial modernization causes the lower middle class."[30] As already suggested above, this argument conjoins with another popular thesis concerning the relationship of fascism to modernization, where the movement's specificity derives from "its appeal to certain kinds of people who see themselves as losers in modern technological civilization," who reject "the modern industrial world," and who take refuge in an ideology of "utopian anti-modernism."[31] The problem here is that the correlations between fascist ideology, the support of the petite bourgeoisie, and general economic trends are drawn in a way which is too general and mechanical. Though the casualties of capitalist industrialization were certainly prominent among the radical right's supporters, this was by no means the whole story.

The deficiencies in this standard view, as Roberts reminds us, "stem not from the insistence on the petty bourgeois role in fascism, but from

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Rank and File Membership during the Depression Years, 1929 to mid-1934," in *Shaping of the Nazi State*, ed. Stachura, pp. 131-59. More recently, Richard F. Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), has shifted the focus to the "upper classes" as the decisive factor. The "generational revolt" argument has been advanced very unconvincingly by Peter Merkl, "Comparing Fascist Movements," in *Who Were the Fascists*, ed. Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, pp. 752-83.

28. The volume is extraordinarily useful from this point of view, not least because of its genuinely comprehensive coverage of the European continent. Philippe Schmitter on Portugal, Daniele Wallef on *Christus Rex* in Belgium, and Herman van der Wusten and Ronald E. Smit on Holland are particularly useful, as are the ten sophisticated essays on Scandinavia.

29. Roberts, "Petty Bourgeois Fascism in Italy," p. 337.

30. Ibid., p. 338.

31. Edward Tannenbaum, *The Fascist Experience: Italian Society and Culture 1922-1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), p. 4; Henry A. Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," in *Reappraisals of Fascism*, ed. Turner (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), pp. 133f. The view was put in Wolfgang Sauer's seminal article of 1967 and in several of the discussions at the 1967 Reading Conference. See Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?"; and A. F. K. Organski, "Fascism and Modernization," and Gino Germani, "Fascism and Class," in *The Nature of Fascism*, ed. Woolf, pp. 19-41, 65-96.

the inferences about motivation that are made from this fact of social composition."[32] Roberts highlights a quite different ideological tendency in the Italian petite bourgeoisie: so are from "trying to preserve traditional values and repudiate the modern industrial world," its exponents were firmly committed to a heavily productivist vision of industrial progress and harbored few "backward-looking" anxieties about the modern world in the way normally attributed. In fact, they were preoccupied less with the socioeconomic problems of declining preindustrial strata than with the long-term political questions of Italy's national integration and cultural self-confidence. Their resentments were aimed less at the bearers of capitalist industrialization than at the representatives of a narrowly based parliamentary liberalism (not forgetting, of course, the socialist left, whose growth the latter seemed irresponsibly to permit).

In Roberts' view, petit bourgeois fascism emerged as a critique of "Italy's restrictive transformist political system" under the radicalizing circumstances of the First World War. As "political outsiders," its spokesmen presented themselves as a new populist "vanguard," capable of providing the ideological leadership effectively abdicated (as they saw it) by the old Giolittian establishment. Moreover, their urgency stemmed not just from the shattering experience of the war but from the ensuing crisis of the *biennio rosso*, with its alarming evidence of Socialist electoral gains, working-class insurgency, and ambiguous *Popolari* radicalism.[33] Under these circumstances, radical nationalism was an intelligible response to the social dynamics of national disintegration. Affirming the virtues of industrial power, productivism, and class collaboration, its architects offered a program of national syndicalism that "could mobilize and politicize the masses more effectively and thereby create a more legitimate and popular state."[34]

32. Roberts, "Petty Bourgeois Fascism in Italy," p. 337. The following quotations come from the same essay, which offers a summary of his argument in idem, *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

33. The *Partito Popolare Italiano* (Popular party), formed in 1918-19, was Italy's first Catholic party and the political ancestor of Christian Democracy. In 1919-22 it became the vehicle for a variegated movement of agrarian radicalism, although the various forces acting to control agrarian radicalism always ensured that it could never become a true peasants' party.

34. Roberts, "Petty Bourgeois Fascism in Italy," p. 345. This recourse to Mazzini was anything but traditional backward-looking in the sense normally intended by such descriptions. As Roberts says, "in Italy, after all, nationalism was hardly traditional for the society as a whole, and it could still have progressive consequences in such a context. Since these fascists were seeking alternatives to the political patterns that had developed because of the way Italy was unified, it was plausible for them to turn to Mazzini, who represented all the unfulfilled promise of the Risorgimento; his vision of a more popular kind of Italian unity had not been achieved, so it was not merely reactionary nostalgia that led fascists to look to him for ideas

Thus, it is worth considering the possibility that fascism was linked as much to the "rising" as to the "declining" petite bourgeoisie. Now on past experience (the celebrated "gentry controversy" in Tudor-Stuart historiography is a good example), this kind of terminology may create more trouble than it is worth.[35] So let me explain carefully what I mean. Both Germany and Italy were societies experiencing accelerated capitalist transformation, through which entire regions were being visibly converted from predominantly rural into predominantly urban-industrial environments. In both cases the process was extremely un-even (in vital ways, functionally so), with equally large regions trapped into social and economic backwardness (the south in Italy, the East-Elbian parts of Prussia, and the Catholic periphery of the south, south-west, and extreme west of Germany). In Italy the process was more concentrated and dramatic, producing interesting similarities with Tsarist Russia: for example, the massive spurt of growth from the 1890s to the Great War; the very high levels of geographical, structural, and physical concentration of industry, which brought masses of workers together in a small number of centers and created new con-urbations with politically volatile populations; the interventionist role of the state, linked to a powerful complex of railway, heavy-industrial, shipbuilding, engineering, and hydro-electrical interests, to the selective involvement of foreign capital, and to a well-knit oligopoly of govern-ment, industry, and banks; an exclusivist and oligarchic political system; and a dramatic discrepancy between north and south, between a dy-namic industrial sector, which in all respects was highly advanced, and an agricultural one, which was equally and terribly backward.

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and inspiration as they sought solutions to contemporary problems." For a similar argument in the context of German radical nationalism, see Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven and London: Yale Uni-versity Press, 1980), esp. chap. 5, pp. 160–205.

35. For a useful introduction to the gentry controversy and its historiographical context, see R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 90ff. The problem of trying to establish precise causal correlations between "rising" or "de-clining" social forces and specific ideologies or political movements should be plain. It is none-theless important to think carefully about why radical nationalism (and other aspects of the fascist ideological project) proved so appealing to *different* categories of people. The interesting thing about radical nationalism in Germany was its ability, in a complicated process covering the first two decades of the century, to harness the aspirations of both the old petite bour-geoisie and the new—the small producers, traders, and businessmen in town and country and the new technocracy of the professional and managerial intelligentsia. If I understand Roberts correctly, his work lends itself to a similar sort of argument in Italy. The problem of fascism then becomes in part the process of unifying, or at least combining on a stable basis, the dispar-ate aspirations of a variegated social base.

This situation produced complex political effects. Simplifying wildly, we might say that the pace of social change outstripped the adaptive capabilities of the existing political institutions. This was particularly so when the political institutions had to respond to new social forces: agricultural populations concerned for their future in an economy increasingly structured by industrial priorities; urban populations demanding a more rational ordering of their hastily impro-vised city environment; a potential chaos of private economic interests; the mass organizations of the industrial working class; and the more diffuse aspirations of the new professional, administrative, and mana-gerial strata of the bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie. It is the last of these groups that interests me here.

During the 1890s, in both Germany and Italy (and, we might add, Austria, Hungary, and Spain), an existing political bloc of industrial, agrarian, and military-bureaucratic interests entered a protracted period of instability and incipient dissolution from which it never really recovered. With such widespread political uncertainty, large numbers of the educated citizenry experienced a radical scepticism about the appropriateness of the existing political forms, which were largely liberal and parliamentary. Acutely conscious of the sociocultural fissures in their newly unified nations, such people took recourse to a new kind of radical nationalism, which stressed the primacy of na-tional allegiances and priorities (normally with a heavily imperialist or social-imperialist inflexion) over everything else. Under circumstances of unprecedented popular mobilization, in which socialists and other "antinational" elements achieved an increasingly commanding posi-tion for themselves, this lack of confidence in the unifying imagination of the liberal and conservative political establishment acquired an extra political edge. From the turn of the century radical-nationalist voices called for a new drive for national unity, at first as a kind of dissenting patriotic intelligentsia, but more and more from an independent politi-cal base, with its own organized expressions and wider social resonance.

In my own work on Germany, I have characterized this dissenting radical-nationalist politics as a new kind of right-wing populism.[36] It was to be found above all in the ideology and mass agitational practice of the nationalist pressure groups, for which the Pan-German League may be considered a vanguard, but which included the Navy League,

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36. Eley, *Reshaping the German Right.* The argument is also summarized in Eley, "Some Thoughts on the Nationalist Pressure Groups in Imperial Germany," in *Nationalist and Racial-ist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914,* ed. Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 40-67.

the Defence League, the anti-Polish movement, and a variety of other organizations. Originating in the regional and local dissolution of the old Bismarckian power bloc (essentially an industrial-agrarian coalition, hegemonically ordered by a right-wing liberal politics), it created a new space for disinterested patriotic activism. Though aimed at the directly "unpatriotic" activities of the socialists, at "ultramontanes," and at national minorities (especially the Poles), this right-wing populism was also motivated by a growing anger at the alleged faintheartedness of the constitutional government, at the old-style conservatives, and, above all, at the liberal parties from whom many of the radical-nationalist activists came by personal background, family, or general milieu.

Radical-nationalists thus raised a radical right-wing challenge, at first obliquely and then openly, to the established political practices of the dominant classes. If Germany was to enter into its imperialist heritage, they argued, if patriotic unity was ever to be achieved and domestic squabbling overcome, if the work of national unification was to be completed and the nation's internal divisions healed, and if the challenge of the left was to be met, then a new political offensive to regain the confidence of the people was required. This "populist" demand—for a radical propagandist effort to win the right to speak for the "people in general"—produced a crisis of confidence in the existing political system.[37] The system consequently lost some of its hegemonic capability and was unable to organize a sufficient basis of unity among the dominant classes and a sufficient basis of consent among the subordinate classes to permit stable government to continue.

In Germany this point was reached around 1908-9, and may have opened the way for a far-reaching reconstitution of the party-political right over the next decade. In Italy the process was more strung out, extending from the intellectual nationalist ferment of the early 1900s to the interventionist drive of 1914-15. Arguably, a similar process was unleashed by Spanish Regenerationism after the Spanish-American War.[38]

37. My use of the term populist is not intended to invoke a specific historical experience, like that of Russian or North American Populism in the later-nineteenth century. It refers to a broadly based appeal to "the-people-in-general" against unrepresentative, ineffectual, and morally flawed dominant interests. As such, it could become articulated into both a politics of the right and a politics of the left. For the key text in stimulating this specific theoretical usage, see Ernesto Laclau, "Towards a Theory of Populism," in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, pp. 143-99. See also Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,' " in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Samuel, pp. 227-40.

38. For Italy see: Alexander De Grand, *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy* (Lincoln and London, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Wilhelm Alff, "Der Begriff Faschismus," and "Die Associazione Nazionalista Italiana von 1910," in *Der Begriff Faschismus und andere Aufsatze zur Zeitgeschichte* (Frankfurt on the Main: Surhkamp Verlag, 1971), pp. 14-95. For Spain see Joan Connelly Ullmann, *The Tragic Week: Anticlericalism in Spain, 1876-1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

My suggestion is that we can explain the attractions of radical nationalism (and by extension those of fascism) without recourse to the cultural and economic "despair" of threatened traditional strata, to concepts of antimodernism, or to the persistence of Kocka's preindustrial traditions. Those attractions may be grasped partly from the ideology itself, which was self-confident, optimistic, and affirming. It contained an aggressive belief in the authenticity of a German/Italian national mission, in the unifying potential of the nationalist panacea, and in the popular resonance of the national idea for the struggle against the left. Radical nationalism was a vision of the future, not of the past. In this sense it harnessed the cultural aspirations of many who were comfortably placed in the emerging bourgeois society—the successful beneficiaries of the new urban-industrial civilization, whose political sensibilities were offended by the seeming incapacity of the establishment to respond to the left-wing challenge.

While I would concur with Roberts that radical nationalism definitely appealed to a certain type of patriotic intellectual or activist, I also believe that the ideology could achieve only a limited popular appeal in times of relative social and political stability. But in times of crisis, which brought the domestic unity, foreign mission, and territorial integrity of the nation all into question, this might easily change. The dramatic conjuncture of war and revolution between 1914 and 1923 produced exactly a crisis of this kind.

Given certain recognized social determinations (like the status distinctions between white-collar and manual work and the deliberate fostering of white-collar consciousness of employers and the state), we should concede a certain effectivity to this specifically political factor when trying to explain the radical right-wing preferences of large sections of the new petite bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, though we are well equipped with data concerning the voting patterns in Weimar elections, or the relative prominence of different occupations amongst the Nazi party members, we are still very ignorant about the social histories of particular professions and categories of white-collar employment. What we *do* know certainly suggests that this avenue of enquiry is worth pursuing. The presence of professionals, managers, and administrators among Nazi activists is now well attested, and the Nazi state provided plenty of scope for the technocratic imagination—in industrial organization, public works, social administration, and the bureaucracy of terror.[39] This sort of evidence moves securely with the direction of

39. See the following: F. Zipfel, "Gestapo and the SD: A Sociographic Profile of the Organizers of Terror," in *Who Were the Fascists,* ed. Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, pp. 301-11; G. C. Boehnert, "The Jurists in the SS-Fuhrerkorps, 1925-1939," in *Der "Fuhrer-*

the above remarks. At the very least the grievances of the "traditional" petite bourgeoisie co-existed in the fascist movements with other aspirations of a more "forward-looking" and "modernist" kind.

III

We can take this critique of the petit bourgeois thesis further. Despite the overrepresentation of the petite bourgeoisie, fascist parties were always more eclectic in their social recruitment than much of the literature leads us to suppose. Two observations in particular might be made. On the one hand, peasants proved especially important to a fascist party's ultimate prospects, because the transition from ideological sect to mass movement was achieved as much in the countryside as the towns. This was true of both Italy (1920-21) and Germany (1928-32). Indeed, some of the smaller fascist movements owed their weakness to the country population's relative immunity to their appeals. This applies both to Norway and Sweden, where farmers kept to the established framework of agrarian-labor cooperation, and to Finland, where neither the Lapua movement (1929-32) nor its successor the IKL (People's Patriotic Movement) (1932-44) could break the hold of the Agrarian Union and Coalition party on the smaller farmers.[40] On the other hand, it is also clear that many fascist parties acquired significant working-class support. The best example is the Nazi party itself, with 26.3 percent who were workers in 1930 and 32.5 percent in 1933. Though higher than the working-class membership of the Italian Fascist party (15.4 percent in 1921), this was by no means exceptional. Both Miklos Lacko and Gyorgy Ranki show that the Hungarian Arrow Cross

staat," ed. Hirschfeld and Kettenacker, pp. 361-74; Mason, "Zur Entstehung des Gesetzes zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit"; Karl-Heinz Ludwig, *Technik und Ingenieure im Dritten Reich* (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1976); Alan D. Beyerchen, *Scientists under Hitler: Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978). See also Klaus-Jurgen Muller, "French Fascism and Modernization," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (October 1976): pp. 75-108.

40. For discussions of agrarian fascism in Italy and Germany, see: Joseph Baglieri, "Italian Fascism and the Crisis of Liberal Hegemony, 1901-1922"; and Nico Passchier, "The Electoral Geography of the Nazi Landslide," in *Who Were the Fascists*, ed. Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebust, pp. 327ff., 283ff. The Scandinavian essays in the same volume are especially useful and show how illuminating the comparison with smaller and more marginal fascisms can be. For Norway see: Jan Petter Myklebust and Bernt Hagtvet, "Regional Contrasts in the Membership Base of the *Nasjonal Samling*," ibid, pp. 621-50; Hans Hendriksen, "Agrarian Fascism in Eastern and Western Norway: A Comparison," ibid., pp. 651-56; Sten Sparre Nilson, "Who Voted for Quisling?" ibid., pp. 657-66. For Sweden see Bernt Hagtvet, "On the Fringe: Swedish Fascism 1920-45," ibid., pp. 735-38. For Finland see: Risto Alapuro, "Mass Support for Fascism in Finland," ibid., pp. 678-84; and Reijo E. Heinonen, "From People's Movement to Minor Party: The People's Patriotic Movement (IKL) in Finland 1932-1944," ibid., pp. 689ff.

won much support from workers, in both the more proletarian districts
of Budapest and the industrial areas of Nograd, Veszprem, and Ko-
marom-Esztergom.[41]

There is a tendency in the literature to play down the importance
of this working-class support in the interests of the petit bourgeois
thesis, especially in the German case, where the research is extensive.
Certainly, we can admit that the Nazis made most progress among
specific types of workers. Tim Mason lists: "the volatile youthful
proletariat" in the big cities, who went straight from school to the dole,
who lacked the socializing education of a trade-union membership,
and who provided many of the SA's rank-and-file support; the "uni-
formed working class" in public employment, especially in the rail-
ways, post office, and city services; and those in the small business
sector of provincial Germany, "where the working-class movement had
not been able to establish a stable and continuing presence."[42] It seems
clear that the Nazis failed to breath the historic strongholds of the
labor movement—the urban industrial settings that contained the eight
million or so wage earners who voted habitually for the SPD and
the   Communist   party   (KPD)—and   had   to   be   content with
those categories of workers the left had failed (or neglected) to or-
ganize.

Yet this was surely significant enough. Though not a sufficient basis
for contesting the left's core support, it deprived the left of a much-
needed larger constituency. As Mason points out, between 1928 and
July 1932 the combined popular vote of the SPD and KPD fell from
40.4 percent to 35.9 percent, and it was progressively unclear how they
were to break through the "sociological, ideological, religious and, not
least, sex barriers" that defined the "historic" working class in Ger-
many. Mason suggests, in fact, that under the conditions of economic
crisis after 1929 these barriers were virtually impassable. By eliminating
the chances for either reformist legislation or effective trade-union
economism, the depression "robbed the working-class movement of
its anticipatory, future-directed role for the working class in general,"
and "to the degree that industry and trade shrank, the potential con-
stituency of the workers' parties stagnated." The effect, Mason con-

41. Figures for Germany and Italy are taken from Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Defini-
tion*, pp. 60f. An additional 23.4 percent could be considered in the Italian case to account
for agricultural laborers. For Hungary, see: Miklos Lacko, "The Social Roots of Hungarian
Fascism: The Arrow Cross," in *Who Were the Fascists*, ed. Larsen, Hagtvet, and Myklebuest,
pp. 395–400; and Gyorgy Ranki, "The Fascist Vote in Budapest in 1939," ibid., pp. 401-16.
42. Tim Mason, "National Socialism and the Working Class, 1925–May 1933," in *New Ger-
man Critique*, no. 11 (Spring 1977), pp. 60–69.

cludes, was a disastrous "narrowing of the political arena of the working class movement."[43]

This brings us to an interesting problem. In effect, the SPD and KPD were facing, under particularly extreme, urgent, and dramatic circumstances, the classic dilemma of the European left in the period after the stabilization of 1923-24: how to win popular support for socialism by electoral means at a time (contrary to earlier predictions) when the industrial proletariat in the classical sense had little chance of becoming a numerical majority of the voting population and when a reformist practice had ceased to show tangible returns. In the crisis of Weimar, moreover, the cause of socialism had become inextricably linked to the defence of democratic gains. It became imperative for the left to break out of the class-political ghetto for which its entire previous history had prepared it, by building broader political alliances and by appealing not only to workers but to white-collar employees, small owners, pensioners, professional people, students, and so on. Most of all, it was imperative to conceive of other-than-class collectivities rallying the people as consumers, as women, as tax-payers, as citizens, even as Germans—not as some opportunist and eclectic pluralism of discrete campaigns but as the coherent basis for the broadest possible democratic unity. Yet it was in this democratic project that the politics of the left proved lamentably deficient, at least until after 1935, when the Popular Front revealed a new strategic perspective. It was less the left's inability to carry the working class itself (though, as Mason points out, in 1930-32 about half the wage-dependent population voted for other parties), than its abdication from this wider popular-democratic mobilization, that proved most fatal to the Republic's survival.[44]

Arguably, it was precisely here that fascism showed its superiority. In the end, the most striking thing about the Nazi party (NSDAP), for instance, was not its disporportionate dependence on a particular social group (the petite bourgeoisie), but its ability (by contrast with the two working-class parties) to broaden its social base in several different directions. The promiscuous adaptability of Nazi propaganda has often been noted, and it was certainly adept at tapping manifold popular resentments, promising all and nothing in the same breath. But this remarkable diversity of social appeal can easily mislead. Though both cynical and opportunist, Nazi eclecticism was also a major constructive achievement. The Nazis rallied a disparate assortment of social and

43. Ibid., pp. 59, 65.
44. Ibid., p. 60.

political elements, who lacked strong traditions of cooperation or effective solidarity in the political sphere, and often surveyed long histories of hostility and mutual suspicion. From September 1930 to January 1933 the NSDAP was a popular political formation without precedent in the German political system. It not only subsumed the organizational fragmentation of the right. It also united a broadly based coalition of the subordinate classes, centered on the peasantry and petite bourgeoisie but stretching deep into the wage-earning population.

It did so on the terrain of ideology, by unifying an otherwise disjointed ensemble of discontents within a totalizing populist framework, namely, the radicalized ideological community of the German people-race. The resulting combination was extraordinarily potent—activist, communitarian, antiplutocratic, and popular, but at the same time virulently antisocialist, anti-Semitic, intolerant of diversity, and aggressively nationalist. In Germany this right-wing Jacobinism was all the more complex for the absence of a strong existing tradition of popular radical nationalism, though, as I have tried to argue above, one had begun to take shape after the start of the century. In Italy, as David Roberts argues, the Fascists had access to the suppressed Mazzinian tradition of unfulfilled radical-nationalist expectations, which they could then recover and transform. In Germany, in the absence of something similar, the recourse to new synthetic solutions (anti-Semitism, the race mission in the East, "national-socialism") was correspondingly all the more important. A similar contrast may have existed between the authoritarianism of a Pilsudski in Poland, which could conjure memories of national democracy for its present purposes, and the more radical innovations of the Arrow Cross and Iron Guard in Hungary and Rumania. This helps explain the greater radicalism of Nazi racialism and the apparent irrationism of the program's implementation during the Second World War.

This argument reinstates the importance of ideology for our understanding of fascism. In particular, it directs us to the contested terrain of popular-democratic aspirations, where the socialist left proved most deficient, the fascist right most telling, in their modes of political intervention. Where the left, in both Italy and Germany, kept aggressively to a class-corporate practice of proletarian independence, the fascists erupted into the arena and appropriated the larger popular potential.[45] Of course, putting it like this presupposes an expanded definition of ideology, where it means something more than what happens inside a few literati's heads, something more than the well-

45. The argument in this and the previous two paragraphs owes much to Laclau, "Fascism and Ideology."

tried intellectual history so popular with many Germanists during the
1950s and 1960s—not just ideas and attitudes, but also types of behav-
ior, institutions, and social relations. Ideology then becomes materially
embodied as well as just thought about, not only present in the fascist
movement's formal aims, but in its style of activism, modes of organi-
zation, and forms of public display. On this basis, fascism becomes
primarily a type of politics, involving radical authoritarianism, militar-
ized activism, and the drive for a centralist repressive state, with a radi-
cal-nationalist, communalist, and frequently racialist creed and with a
violent antipathy for both liberal democracy and socialism. Providing
these elements are treated not as some revealed unity, but as a set of
potentials whose concrete substance may be unevenly and partially
realized in "real" (particular, historical) fascisms such a definition could
be quite useful.

IV

My comments have been concerned mainly with the strong German
and Italian cases, with only occasional reference to fascist movements
elsewhere. I have also confined myself to a particular aspect of the
over-all problem, namely, the "coming to power" of indigenously
generated fascist movements, and have therefore not dealt with the less
compelling examples of the smaller imitative or client movements or
with the dynamics of established fascist regimes. In so doing, I have
suggested that the specificity of the fascist movements resided in a
particular capacity for broadly based popular mobilization, that is, in a
distinctive ideology or style of politics. Fascism is extreme in every way.
It registers a qualitative departure from previous conservative practice,
substituting corporatist notions of social place for older hierarchical
ones, and ideas of race community for those of clerical, aristocratic, and
bureaucratic authority. These and other aspects of fascist ideology are
intimately linked to its broadly based popular appeal. Fascism is an
aggressively plebeian movement, espousing a crude and violent egali-
tarianism. Above all, fascism stands for activism and popular mobili-
zation, embracing everything from para-military display, street-fighting,
and straightforward terror, to more conventional forms of political
activity, new propagandist forms, and a general invasion of the cultural
sphere. It is negatively defined against liberalism, social democracy, and
communism and against any creed that seems to elevate difference,
division, and conflict over the essential unity of the race-people as the
organizing principle of political life.

At the same time, fascism has not been a universal phenomenon
and has appeared in strength only in a specific range of societies. Two

main approaches are used to explain this variation. One is the deep historical perspective discussed in relation to Kocka. The structural factors stressed by Locka are clearly important and might be summarized as follows: accelerated capitalist transformation, in a dual context of simultaneous national state formation and heightened competition in the imperialist world economy; the coexistence in a highly advanced capitalist economy of large "traditional" sectors, including a smallholding peasantry and an industrial-trading petite bourgeoisie, "deeply marked by the contradictions of capitalist development";[46] and finally, the emergence of a precocious socialist movement publicly committed to a revolutionary program. This complex overdetermination (the "contemporaneity of the uncontemporary" or "uneven and combined development") characterized both German and Italian history before the First World War. In both countries there was an interpenetration of national and social problems. Most of the primary analytical traditions share some version of this framework (the political science literature on state formation, related theories of developmental crises, the particular works of Gershenkron and Barrington Moore, and most of the analogous literature within Marxism).

However, German historians have given this structural argument an additional formulation, which is far more problematic. Evaluating German development (or "misdevelopment," as they call it) by an external and linear model of modernization, which postulates an ultimate complementarity (which in Germany, for peculiar reasons, was obstructed) between economic growth and political democratization, such historians stress the dominance in German public life of preindustrial ideological traditions. The absence of a liberal political culture is thought to have permitted the survival of traditional authoritarian mentalities that enjoyed strong institutional power bases and that could then be radicalized in a future economic or political crisis. Thus "a reactionary protest potential" is created.[47] Fascism draws its support either directly from traditional social strata, or from newer strata (like white-collar employees) supposedly beholden to traditional ideas. This essentially is Kocka's argument.

Though not incompatible with a modified version of the above, the second approach, and the one advocated here, stresses the immediate circumstances under which the fascists came to power. These include the impact of the Great War, the nature of the postwar crisis in the European revolutionary conjuncture of 1917–23, the unprecedented

46. Ronald Fraser, "The Spanish Civil War," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Samuel, p. 197.
47. Kocka, *White Collar Workers*, p. 252.

gains of the left (both reformist and revolutionary), and the collapse of parliamentary institutions. Together these brought a fundamental crisis in the unity and popular credibility of the dominant classes, which opened the space for radical speculations. Here again, the German and Italian experiences were remarkably similar in these respects. In both cases the radical right defined itself against the double experience of thwarted imperialist ambitions and domestic political retreat, each feeding the other. In both cases the postwar situation was dominated by the public accommodation of labor, whose political and trade-union aspirations appeared to be in the ascendant. Trade unions had acquired a new corporative legitimacy; socialists had attained a commanding presence in large areas of local government; the national leaderships of the SPD and the Italian Socialist party (PSI); now occupied the center of the political stage; and substantial movements to their left (first syndicalist and then Communist) added an element of popular insurgency. In both cases, too, liberal or parliamentary methods of political containment were shown to have exhausted their potential, guaranteeing neither the political representation of the dominant classes, nor the mobilization of popular consent. In such circumstances fascism successfully presented itself as a radical populist solution.

Fascism thus prospered under conditions of general political crisis, in societies that were already dynamically capitalist (or at least, that had a dynamic capitalist sector) but where the state was incapable of organizing for the maintenance of social cohesion. The political unity of the dominant classes and of their major economic fractions could no longer be organized successfully within the existing forms of parliamentary representation and party government. Simultaneously the popular legitimacy of these forms also went into crisis. This way of formulating the problem—as a combined crisis of representation and of hegemony or popular consent—derives from the works of Nicos Poulantzas and Antonio Gramsci. It has been formulated with exemplary clarity for the case of nazism by David Abraham, in his recently published *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis:* "Could no bourgeois political force organize the political unity of the dominant economic fractions out of the diversity and facitiousness of their economic interests? Was no political unity possible and no mass political support available within the Republic, despite the single-mindedness of the dominant classes' anti-socialism? Were the maintenance of capitalist economic relations and political democracy so antithetical in *this* conjuncture that abandonment and undermining of the Republic were self-evident necessities for the dominant classes?"[48]

48. David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 287.

In the context of the Weimar crisis, adjustments within the existing institutional arrangements looked increasingly untenable, and more radical solutions beyond the boundaries of the existing political system consequently became more attractive.

The problem of defining fascism is therefore not exhausted by describing its ideology, even in its expanded sense. Fascism was not just a style of politics, it was also inscribed in a specific combination of political conditions (themselves the structured, mediate effect of complex socio-economic determinations), namely, the kind of dual crisis of the state just referred to. Although such a crisis is normally associated with the Great Depression after 1929, the postwar political crisis of 1917-23 was equally important. The global ideological context of the Bolshevik Revolution and its international political legacy gave enormous impetus to the radicalization of the right, and the more vigorous fascist movements generally arose in societies that experienced serious left-wing insurgencies after 1917-18. Hungary, Austria, Finland, and Spain, as well as Italy and Germany, are all good examples. Although the recent tendency has been to accept "that Francoism was *never* really fascism but rather some variant of limited, semi-pluralist authoritarianism," Paul Preston has argued convincingly that it was fascist (at least between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s), and he does so partly on the basis of "the Spanish crisis of 1917-23," which was "analogous to the Italian crisis of 1917-22."[49] This also supplies criteria for assessing the seriousness of crisis elsewhere. Thus the formation and fleeting victory of the Popular Front in 1934-37 threatened to create a comparable situation in France, until the breakup of the left government dissipated the gathering concentration of radical right-wing forces.

The operative circumstances were ones that made it possible for the dominant classes to take extreme or exceptional solutions seriously, though not without well-founded hesitation. One circumstance was the emergence of the fascists as a credible mass movement, for without the popular materials an "extra-systemic solution" was clearly a "non-starter."[50] But, in general, recourse to the fascist option was politically most likely where the left had achieved significant inroads into the administration of state power and into the limitation of private capitalist prerogative or where combinations of entrenched left reformism

49. Paul Preston, "Spain," in *Fascism in Europe*, ed. Woolf, p. 332. See also: Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1978); Raymond Carr, *Modern Spain 1875-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 81-97; Gerald H. Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain 1914-1923* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

50. The term "extra-systemic solution" comes from the title of the penultimate section of Abraham's final chapter, "Towards the Extra-Systemic Solution," in *Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, pp. 313-18.

and concurrent revolutionary activity seemed to obstruct the resolution
of economic crisis and the restoration of order. For example, the most
persuasive reading of the crisis of Weimar stresses the importance of a
social democratic corporatism (in trade-union legislation, a ministry of
labor, compulsory arbitration procedures, unemployment insurance,
other welfare legislation) whose defensive strengths could not be dis-
mantled within the existing constitutional framework of parliamentary
decision making. The structural necessity of fascist remedies, given
certain inflexible commitments and requirements among the most
powerful fractions of the dominant classes, can then be located in the
labor movement's ability to defend the institutional advances of the
1918 revolution (or more accurately, of the political settlement of
1918-23).[51] When we add the SPD's strong position in provincial and
local government, the impressive militancy of the *Reichsbanner* militia,
and the continued vitality of a strategic Marxist-reformist vision among
the party intelligentsia, the appeal of a radical authoritarian solution
becomes all the more intelligible.[52]

This idea of a defensive social democratic corporatism may well be
a fruitful one for discussions of fascism. It lends a formal unity to the
political crisis of Weimar, between the foundering of the Grand Coali-
tion in March 1930 on the issue of insurance legislation and the precipi-
tation of the Papen-Hitler maneuver in December 1932-January 1933
by Schleicher's renewed corporatist exploration. Mutatis mutandis, the
argument also works for the Italian situation in 1918-22, where the
presence of a mass socialist party publicly committed to a revolutionary
program (however rhetorically) had paralyzed the state. Here the grow-
ing popular strength of the left, its aggressive use of the workers' coun-
cils in Milan and Turin, its commanding position in northern local gov-
ernment, and its massive concentrations of regional support, provoked

51. Here I am abstracting from a number of recent works, which are separated by numer-
ous specific differences and whose authors may not share the particular formulations I have
chosen. See in particular: Bernd Weisbrod, *Schwerindustrie in der Weimarer Republik: Indus-
trielle Interessenpolitik zwischen Stabilisierung und Krise* (Wuppertal: Hammer Verlag, 1978);
Weisbrod, "Economic Power and Political Stability Reconsidered: Heavy Industry in Weimar
Germany," in *Social History* 4, no. 2 (May 1979): pp. 241-63; Abraham, *Collapse of the
Weimar Republic;* Dirk Stegmann, "Kapitalismus und Faschismus 1929-34: Thesen und Mater-
ialen," in *Gesellschaft: Beitrage zur Marxschen Theorie,* ed. H. G. Backhaus (Frankfurt on the
Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976), 6: 14-75; Claus Dieter Krohn, "Autoritarer Kapitalismus:
Wirtschaftskonzeptionen im Ubergang von der Weimarer Republik zum Nationalsozialismus,"
in *Industrielle Gesellschaft und politisches System,* ed. Dirk Stegmann, Bernd-Jurgen Wendt,
and Peter-Christian Witt (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1978), pp. 113-29;
Charles S. Maier's summing-up at the 1974 Bochum conference on the Weimar Republic, in
Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung, ed. Mommsen, Petzina, Weisbrod, pp. 950ff.
52. See Wolfgang Luthardt, ed., *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer
Republik: Materialien zur gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung 1927-1933* (Frankfurt on the Main:
Surhkamp Verlag, 1978), 2 vols.

a massive counterrevolutionary backlash, organized through Mussolini's Fascists. In Germany (1918-33) Italy (1918-22), and even Spain (1931-36), we are dealing with limited socialist enclaves (physical, institutional, and attitudinal or ideological) within the existing state, which obstructed the stabilization being increasingly pursued by a powerful coalition with the dominant classes. Agreeably, a comparable situation threatened to develop in the wake of the Popular Front in France (1934-37) and might have in Britain as well, if the Labour Government had chosen to conduct a stubborn resistance to the demands for conservative stabilization in 1931 instead of capitulating. As Joseph Baglieri says of Italian fascism, "the movement's functional role against the socialists and the *Popolari* attracted the sympathies and support of all those interests which felt threatened by the post-war mobilization of the lower classes, the incipient process of economic and political democratization, and the breakdown of traditional authority. In the process of crushing the left, the fascists succeeded in offering these interests an alternative sovereignty which successfully stood in for the crumbling Liberal state."[53]

Fascism may be best understood, therefore, as primarily a counter-revolutionary ideological project, constituting a new kind of popular coalition in the specific circumstances of an interwar crisis. As such it provided motivation for specific categories of radicalized political actors in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, who were embittered by national humiliation and enraged by the advance of the left. As working-class insurgency defied the capacities of the existing liberal politics to achieve the necessary stabilization, this radical-nationalist cadre became an important pole of attraction for larger circles of the dominant classes and for others who felt threatened by the reigning social turbulence. In Italy, where the socialist movement was further to the left than in Germany and where no equivalent of the SPD functioned as a vital factor of order, this process of right-wing concentration around the redemptive potential of a radical-nationalist, anti-socialist terror was far more advanced. But later, in the renewed but differently structured crisis of 1929-34, a recognizable pattern recurred. Elsewhere, Spain and possibly Austria were the closest examples of a similarly enacted fascist solution. Other countries certainly generated their own fascist cadre—in some cases very large (France, Finland, Hungary, Rumania) and in some, quite small (Britain, Scandinavia). But the severity of the political crisis, and the degree of resilience of established political forms, determined the broader attractions of the fascist ideology.

53. Baglieri, "Italian Fascism and the Crisis of Liberal Hegemony," p. 333.

In the end both perspectives are necessary—the one stressing deep historical or long-term structures *and* the one stressing the immediate crisis. But we have to be clear about what exactly each of them may reasonably explain. Giving causal primacy to preindustrial traditions threatens to become both teleological and heavily determinist, locating the origins of fascism somewhere in the middle third of the nineteenth century, when Germany (and Italy) failed to take the "long hard road to modernity," in Dahrendorf's phrase. In a rounded analysis this approach would be complementary to the other approach rather than antithetical. Yet Kocka and other German historians make such aggressive explanatory claims for preindustrial traditions that they fail to realize the equal importance of the interior dynamics of the immediate crisis in giving rise to fascism. What is seen to be the driving contradiction of the latter—the antidemocratic mentalities that left various social groups so receptive to the fascist appeal—is displaced from its own contemporary context into a much deeper argument about the course of German history and its singularity. The clearly stated polemical purpose is to explain fascism not by its capitalist present but by the baleful influence of the feudal past. Winkler is quite explicit on this score. The antidemocratic outcome to the world-economic crisis in Germany, as opposed to "the other developed industrial societies," had "less to do with the course of the crisis itself than with the different preindustrial histories of these countries. The conditions for the rise of fascism have at least as much to do with feudalism and absolutism as with capitalism."[54]

This is unnecessarily restrictive. Older attempts to take the relationship between fascism and capitalism as the primary causal nexus were indeed crude and shortsighted. But that is no excuse for evading the challenge of recent discussions on fascism or on more general questions of the theory of the state, forms of domination, and so on. Historical discussions of the relationship between capitalism and fascism are proceeding with an unprecedented intensity, as even a cursory glance at current research on the Weimar Republic or the final years of liberal Italy quickly reveals. But they are doing so in an almost wholly "empirical" or "practical" way, without any guiding reference to the larger theoretical issues discussed in this essay. If we are truly to understand the problem, we must begin by theorizing fascism in terms of the political crisis that produced it.

54. Winkler, "Die 'neue Linke' und der Faschismus," p. 83.