CHAPTER V: FASCISM AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

1. Rise of Fascism and Nazism

Italy: Fascism is a great authoritarian mass movement which was started in Italy during the years following the first world war. Ever since the unification Italy remained a weak state lacking a centralized government, a strong army and vital industrial resources. Italia Irredenta was a rankling sore and she was behind the rest of Europe in the race for colonial empire. It was the lure of the eastern coast of the Adriatic and of an African empire which drew her in the first world war on the side of the Allies. The Allies were victorious but Italy got only a part of the irredenta and small additions to Libya and Somaliland. For these little territorial gains she had to pay heavily with a crushing war debt, a budget deficit of 12,000 million lire, high prices and acute unemployment. In the prevailing atmosphere of depression and disappointment there were communist outbreaks in cities like Turin and Milan as well as in the countryside after the model of the Bolshevik and Spartacist revolts. But they failed due to the internal divisions among the communists, anarchists and social democrats. The government was preserved in spite of its weakness. Parties in power were equally divided and there was no stable majority.

It was in this situation, in 1919, that Mussolini formed the fasci di combattimento, i.e., the fascist group of fighters "to face two dangers -- the conservatism of the Right and the destructiveness of the Left". The fasci was not a party but a movement, said Mussolini, "a political revolt against weak and incapable governments which had allowed state authority to decay".

Germany: National socialism or Nazism also had its historical origin in the later post-war German situation. The victorious Allies wanted to thrust a punitive treaty upon the defeated powers and the settlement of Versailles was intended to serve the purpose. Its object was to ruin Germany economically and to cripple her politically. Germany was to lose one-eighth of her land in Europe and one-eighth of her European subjects. She was deprived of her coal and iron. Her army was
limited to 10,000 men and her navy to 15,000. With the small economic
resources left to her she was to pay an unspecified sum to the Allies
by way of reparations. As a guarantee for the execution of these terms
the Rhineland was occupied by Allied troops. In consequence of irregu­
lar payments they took even Ruhr in 1923. Thus Germany was without
industrial resources and means of self-defence, economically crippled
and treated as a leper in international parleys.

The year 1931 was worst for Germany. The world economic crisis
had set in bringing slump in business and unemployment. Germany was
living on borrowed money. As other states were affected by the crisis
they could not afford to give her loans. As everywhere goods were over­
produced she could not command high prices for her goods. Hence Germany
was forced to stop reparation payments, reduce costs and face unemploy­
ment. The people resented when Stresemann tried to pay the national
debt by imposing high taxes.

During all these time the National Socialist Party organized by
Adolf Hitler was going ahead with its cry for national unity, abrogation
of Versailles and liberation from foreign yoke. With specious promises
and grandiloquent propaganda it seized the mind of the youth, of the
lower middle class and of the working classes. It also united under its
banner the Junkers, the capitalists, the monarchies and the army politi­
cians embittered by Germany's military collapse, all of whom were
alarmed at the growth of communism. At the fateful hour when the parties
had failed to solve the problem of Germany and a stable majority was
lacking President Hindenberg summoned Hitler to become Chancellor and
to form government.

2. Political Creed

It is difficult to give a comprehensive formulation of fascism as
there is no manifesto summarising its aim and policy. "My programme
is action and not talk", says Mussolini, "we are solvers of problems." Thus fascism is described as a pragmatic doctrine. It derives its creed
not from reasoning but from experience. It aims at governing the nation
and its programme is the moral and material greatness of the nation.
This pragmatic attitude, however, leads to certain theoretical assumptions. The nation and the national will become a well-cultivated myth. The fascist Blackshirts carried with them *fasci*, i.e., bundle of rods after the manner of the lictors in ancient Rome, the symbol of unity and authority. The nation and the state are glorified beyond anything on earth. The state as the embodied spirit of the nation is the incarnation of highest value and morality that man can ever attain.

With its stress on the glorification of the nation fascism insists upon the "iron logic of nature" which will always make the strong prevail over the weak. Hence it aims at educating the nation to develop its strength, courage and resolve and by these means to ensure its victory. Thus all fascist activity is devoted to prepare for a world war by which the supremacy of the nation will be established. Fascism repudiates all ideas of international peace and harmony. "War alone brings up to their tension all human energies and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it. Fascism carries this anti-pacifist spirit over even into the lives of individuals. It is education for combat."¹

These words of Mussolini are amplified in his famous statement, "War is to the man what maternity is to the woman. I do not believe in perpetual peace; not only do I not believe in it but I find it depressing and a negation of all the fundamental virtues of man."² Therefore, the whole nation must be militarised for the purpose of war.

Fascism leads to a totalitarian state not identified with an absolute ruler or dynasty but resting on the domination of a party. The party is the cement which holds together the framework of state and the *duce* or leader emerges as the man of destiny in whom is vested the supreme direction of state policy. The party is an instrument in his hand. Its intervention in national life is far-reaching. It is directly represented on every organization to which the state gives recognition. It brings all the activities of the community, -- political, economic and cultural, within its ambit and under its discipline.

1. Benito Mussolini: The Political Doctrine of Fascism
Representative government and the jury system are discontinued. Political liberty, freedom of speech, of association, of the press are curtailed and education is controlled in a manner that the rising generation is imbued with the fascist idea. Fascism repudiates the assumptions, ideals and methods of democracy, liberalism and socialism. It wants the democratic slogans of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' to be replaced by the higher and nobler ones of 'responsibility, discipline and hierarchy!'

Although fascism is an authoritarian doctrine and rejects the sovereignty of the multitude it is nevertheless a mass movement and enlists the cooperation of the masses. It recognizes and utilizes the nationalistic devotion of the masses but denies their capacity to guide and govern because they are lacking in culture and training. According to Bruno Bauer, the Left Hegelian, the masses are refractory medium of ideas. They are a social expression of the metaphysics of matter. They are driven by ignorance and passion. They are preoccupied with the practical and material. They clip the wings of critical thought and bring it down to the concrete. The masses may be appealed to as the passive material element to be harnessed to the active ideal element. This broadside upon the core of democratic philosophy came handy for fascist totalitarianism.

National will can be best expressed and the national ends served by the leader or duce and the people should give unconditional obedience to him. This does not mean any denial of freedom. If liberty is understood not as a right but as a duty then certainly there is no opposition between freedom and authority. Just as the private self-realization of a man is possible through the exercise of his rational will over his impulses, so the development of the finer types of individuals in society is made possible by the supremacy of public law and order over all the degenerative activities of its average citizens. "Thus always", declares Gentile, "the maximum of liberty coincides with the maximum of state force". Law and the state are the supreme manifestations of liberty.

1. Giovanni Gentile: Che cosa è il Fascismo, pp. 49-50
The ease with which the fascist revolution was accomplished in Italy paved the path for the victory of national socialism in Germany. Within a year after the assumption of office Hitler suspended the Weimar constitution abolished all political parties and the office of the President, declared the third German Reich and assumed dictatorial power as its Chancellor and fuhrer. The Reichstag fire became a handy plea for the suppression of constitutional liberties. Germany was ruled by executive decrees, secret police and concentration camps. Hitler had his measures ratified by a plebiscite. With popular sanction Germany became a totalitarian state run by a single political party under the direction of a leader.

Next to totalitarianism, the second pillar of national socialism was an arrogant racialism. Gobineau's theme in the Inequality of Human Races was developed by Richard Wagner and was readily seized by the Nazis. The race was invested with a mystical character and glorification of the race became a credo, a myth of universal mission. The Nazi philosopher Rosenberg wrote, "To-day a new faith awakens; the myth of the blood, the faith that by defending his blood we defend also the divine nature of man. The faith, embodied in scientific clarity, that the Nordic blood represents that mystery which has replaced and conquered the ancient sacraments." The myth of Nordic race, of its glorious past and historical destiny was sedulously spread among the masses and the most bitter persecution of the Jews ensued. They were deprived of citizenship, barred from public offices and from liberal professions, and robbed of their property and sent to exile. From anti-semitism the Nazis were easily drawn into persecution of the Church which objected to the new Heathenism of race idolatry instituted by them.

The third pillar of national socialism was the philosophy of war. All scholarship and artistic creation were mobilized in the service of the struggle to which the state was supposed to be committed by history. Hitler wrote in his Mein Kampf, "The principle which in its time made the Prussian army the wonderful instrument of the German people must

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in the future become the principle of the structure of our whole conception of the state: authority of every loader downwards and responsibility upwards." "War is the essence of everything," wrote Carl Schmitt, "the nature of the total war determines the nature and form of the totalitarian state."

Behind the philosophy of total war was the spiritual incentive of a blind faith, faith in the unique historical mission of Germany. The race was invested with all imaginable virtues and others who stood on its way were charged with all imaginable vices. In conquest the conquest of the race lies the salvation of mankind. The new mission of Germany was thus defined by Oswald Spengler: "To work out a new mode of political will and action from the newly formed conditions of the twentieth century, to bring to light new forms, methods, and ideas, which like the ideas of the French Revolution and the customs of the English House of Commons will spread as models from one land to the other, until the history of the coming time progresses in forms whose beginnings will in the future be found in Germany."

Insipite of the sadistic barbarism practised by the Nazis in the name of the race and the state their propaganda stormed the German mind. There are several reasons for this success. Their demand for pan-German unity and German independence, for German empire, for national army, their cry to save the fatherland from the conspiracy of Western imperialists and of Eastern Bolsheviks, their promise to guarantee employment and social security had an easy appeal among different sections of the people. Germany was fed up with political parties of which she had no less than twenty-four in the general election of 1930. Weak and unstable ministries and parliamentary deadlocks discredited the constitutional regime which had not yet taken deep root. The people wanted a strong government and Nazis gave them one.

3. Economic Structure and Planning

Fascist economy is in conformity with the political dogma. Fascists admit neither, on the one hand, the individualist's standard
of private right of property-owners, nor, on the other hand, the socialist's criterion of the labourers' right to the full product of their labour, nor the collectivist's ideal of a distribution of products according to the several needs of the users. Nationalism and socialism are peculiarly blended in the economic programme of fascism.

The basic concepts of fascist economy are derived from syndicalist theories of the Italian labour movement. While repudiating an uncontrolled capitalism, fascism does not want to bring the whole national economy under state direction. "Private enterprise in the sphere of production is the most effective instrument and the most consonant with national interests." But at the same time "State intervention in economic activities arises when private initiative is lacking or inadequate or when the political interests of the state are involved." Thus banks and foreign trade are placed under direct government control. Industries, 'important for national defence', are brought within the orbit of government undertakings, the stock being largely held by the state. Even in the sphere of private enterprise, i.e., agriculture, small industries and internal trade, the employer has to direct the enterprise with the active collaboration of workers ensuring 'reciprocal rights and duties'. It is recognized that private organization of production is a matter of national concern.

In order to implement these postulates and to coordinate the relations between capital and labour the economic life is organized on a vocational basis into Syndicates. By a law of 1926 every occupation has to form two unions or Syndicates, one for employers and one for workers. In the case of the fine arts and liberal professions there is only one union without any distinction between employers and workers. The Syndicates are organized into a hierarchy from the municipal to the national body. Their main function is collective bargaining. The two Syndicates in each occupation representing capital and labour enter into collective contract laying down wage rates, working hours, leave.

1. Labour Charter, 1927
rules, indemnities, disciplines, etc., i.e., all aspects of labour relations.

This is the Corporate State as defined in the Labour Charter of 1927 directed to "harmonise apparently conflicting class interests on a plane of absolute equality". To harmonise the divergent interests and to bring together employers and workers to co-operate on a footing of equality in the same association new organs of the state are created in 1934, viz., the Corporations. Here equal number of representatives of capital and labour sit together along with representatives of the fascist party and collaborate to direct production in private enterprise so that it should serve public interest. The aggregate of the Corporation Councils form the National Council of Corporation which speak for all corporate interests in the production.

The Corporations advise the government over the entire range of production, distribution and exchange and aim at achieving a planned economy. The planning and regulation are not done by state socialism, i.e., by bureaucratic organs but by the producers themselves acting through the machinery of the Corporations which are autonomous self-governing bodies and represent different branches of economic activity.

Thus, instead of political parties economic organizations become the basis of the fascist national state. The National Council relieve Parliament of functions for which it is not suited. Geographical representation is replaced by vocational representation in the Assembly for which the syndical structure provides the machinery. The fascist Grand Council issue an official list of candidates out of a panel proposed by the Syndicates and refer them to plebiscite for a vote of 'yes' or 'no'. For a totalitarian state having a single political party the old democratic institutions have evidently become anachronism.

In Germany the economic life was regimented not on the principle of Corporate State but in course of gearing up industry and agriculture on a war footing as part of military preparation. All men engaged in the production, manufacture and sale of foodstuff are members of
an agricultural corporation which is charged with the function of regulating agriculture on the lines set by official policy, e.g., controlling prices and fixing the quantities of produce to be supplied to the market. An Economic Corporation is established through which the government imposes complete control over industry, commerce and banking. The state can stop the expansion of industrial plants or distribute through retail shops and compel investment of profit in public loans. As the employers are brought under the Economic Corporation the workers are under the control of Labour Front. Lock-outs, trade unions and strikes are made illegal. Employment is found in the war industries and social security is guaranteed. An artificial stability is introduced in the Nazi economy by the extermination of the Jews who own huge bulks of capital, by heavy rearmament programme and by the introduction of a barter system of foreign exchange so as to parry the effects of a falling currency.

Fascist and Nazi economic planning accounted for much economic improvement in the draining of marshes, development of coastal areas, reforestation of mountains to prevent soil erosion, stabilization of currency, electrification, synthetic production and social insurance. The objective is to attain economic self-sufficiency and this is done by production of domestic supplies of raw materials. Artificial substitutes are invented for imported goods such as synthetic wool and rubber. Raw materials of inferior quality are discovered and put to use. Intensive cultivation of arable land and growing of potatoes and sugar beets are encouraged to attain self-sufficiency in food. While the standard of living is lowered the goal of self-sufficiency is attained. Unemployment is reduced due to the expansion of armaments and public works, military conscription, institution of labour camps, discouragement of female labour and shortening of working hours. The motto is summed up in the slogan 'guns for butter'. Acute hardship is the price the people have to pay to prepare themselves for war and to recover their national rights.
International Fascism

Fascism had a fruitful soil in those countries where prevailed a feeling of disillusionment and cynicism during the post-war years. Fascist principles were accepted to a varying degree by the governments or opposition forces of different European countries like Spain, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece and even France and Belgium. The most outstanding Asiatic power to accept fascism was Japan. International fascism had its nuclei in 1936 when the Rome-Berlin Axis was announced and the anti-Comintern Pact was concluded between Italy, Germany and Japan. Although fascism differed from country to country, they had some outstanding common features. Thus all fascist parties glorified their own nations and along with that the supremacy of their races. Secondly, with their stress on the 'iron logic of nature' that the strongest will prevail over the rest they advocated an expansive policy for the state. So, the whole nation must be united and militarized. To fulfill this objective the fascist party must be in sole responsibility of the government. Party democracy will only introduce chaos and hamper national progress. Fascists, therefore, stand everywhere for a one-party government. At the helm of the party and of the state is the leader, a despot entitled to unconditional obedience. Inspite of all civil liberties being curtailed the fascist governments enlisted public support with the assurance of economic security. With all its defects fascism gave a relief against prevailing unemployment and social insecurity. Hence there was little murmur against the complete centralization of state power and subordination of the individual.

Hegel and Fascism

Hegel is often blamed with the charge that fascism is the direct descendant of his philosophy. This is due to certain obscurities in his writings which lent themselves to such misinterpretation and misconception. Hegel's theory of the world-historical nation
together with his peculiar conception of freedom justifies his glorification of state. For him "the state is the actually existing realized moral whole". The Absolute is nothing but Reason unfolds itself in this world with a view to realize its essence which is freedom, and freedom can be best realized through the laws of the state. Hegel glorifies that state which has realized this freedom, if not of all still of the most of its people and this is the only criterion of superiority of one nation over the others. Obviously, this role of the state does not lead to curtailment of individual liberty. The essence of liberty is the unification of the particular with the universal. The purpose of the state is to give opportunities, though in conformity with society, for the full development of the individual, what is curtailed by the laws of the state is his irrational will or brute passion. Unlike Hegel, the fascists have no such moral purpose before them and instead of accepting the individual's right to his own development they declare themselves as implacable enemies of liberalism. In Hegelian philosophy the individual has his rational right within the framework of a highly rational state while in fascism individuals have no right except "the right to obey" a government of brute force. It is, however, undeniable that Hegel's statism, however rational as a philosophy, is bound to degenerate whenever applied in practice and lead to an arrogant authoritarian government. Fascism is a typical illustration of such degeneration in the background of popular frustration after the first world war.

Secondly, Hegel's glorification of the state is limited to the world-historical state because of its great moral duty. The world-historical nation will rise to leadership by its inherent right above other nations who are inferior to it. The fascists reduce this theory to a mockery when they claim all their respective nations to be superior to the others and each nation is imbued with a craze for expansion.

Thirdly, Hegelism seems to have influenced fascism in making the constitution of the state. Hegel's conception of state does not
conceive of popular participation, 'discharge of public business from below'. Politics is a philosophic science which must remain within the domain of rational thought and cannot be given over to 'the subjective accident of opinion and caprice'. The machinery of the state will be operated by a well-trained intellectual aristocracy and the monarch will be the head of the executive. Fascism accepts this constitutional creed but instead of the Hegelian aristocrats the party managers come into power with the leaders at the top who either replaces the king or keeps him as a puppet. The plea that an irresponsible ruler is more qualified to represent national interest than an elected assembly has been raised time and again, before and after Hegel, by Stafford and Laud in England, by Louis XIV in France and by the Tsars and Pobedonostov in Russia. Hegel never stood for despotism either of a party or of a person however great. His was an institutional centralization whereas, in his opinion, the best elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy were combined in the interests of the individual as well as of the community.

Lastly, it is said that the idea of violence and war as conceived in fascism, is borrowed from Hegel. At the beginning of World War II, Prof. Karl Alexander von Müller wrote, "It is in this battle of souls that we find the sector of the trenches which is also entrusted to the German historical scholarship. It will mount the guard. The watchword has been given by Hegel. The spirit of the universe gave the command to advance; such command will find itself blindly obeyed." It is true that Hegel extolled war as a justification of Providence, the way to greatness of the world historical nation. But it is only the superior

1. Hegel, however, had some respect for public opinion as a repository of 'common needs and tendencies' and of the substantive principles of justice. His leftist disciple Bruno Bauer treated it as an obstructive and regressive force. See ante, p.48

2. Historische Zeitschrift, Sept.15, 1939

3. See ante, p.17
nation which has the right to fight and if necessary, to dominate inferior nations; and here again, the criterion of superiority is the realization of freedom. Moreover, he did not go so far as to say, like the fascists, that war is normal. Unlike then, Hegel had in his mind a universal conception of state and a universal standard to measure the merit of violence. Fascist ideology leads to perpetual danger of war and a complete burial of peace which are outside Hegelian philosophy.

In spite of these fundamental differences there is no doubt that fascism drew inspiration from some of the main principles of Hegelian thought. Hegel's exaltation of the state and insistence upon the supreme part it plays in the making of worthy individuals are transmitted to the neo-idealist philosophy and Giovanni Gentile made the step from idealism to absolutism. It is not by accident that Gentile became one of the leading fascist doctrinaires of Italy.

But the godfather of fascist ideology was Frederick Nietzsche, a very slender and sickly man who dethroned Hegel's Reason and replaced it with the doctrine of will-to-power. Nietzsche saw the tragedy of life in the emasculation of the Western civilization through the propagation of Christian virtues. He proclaimed it the duty of the modern man to be heroic in all spheres of life. To him life is the supreme reality. It is to be glorified even when it is most terrible, most equivocal and most false and so be subordinated all moral values to hardness, virility and fighting virtues. The fascists combined Hegel's glorification of state and nationality with Nietzsche's theory of will-to-power, Hegel's absolute state with Nietzsche's irrationality. This work was done by Oswald Spengler who identified Prussianism with Socialism and defined this philosophy as "will to power, struggle for the well-being, not of the individual but of the whole".

1. Spengler: Prussianism and Socialism
Mussolini began his political life as a left-wing Social Democrat with syndicalist leanings and suffered exile in Switzerland. From his early associations and Marxist teachings he learnt his party technique and the principles of a totalitarian state governed by a party. He imbibed from Marx his hatred of individualism and liberal democracy as outmoded doctrines. The democratic state was really a bourgeois state serving the interests of the middle class and leaving the working proletariat to be exploited by the capitalists. But he rejected categorically the doctrine of historical materialism which explains the history of mankind exclusively in terms of economic development. He also denied that class-struggle was the principal agent of social transformation; he contemplated the fusion of classes into a "a single ethical and economic reality". Class struggle was corroding democratic institutions and bringing the state and the whole social order into ruins. He did not see in it the seed for revolution and a future classless society. On the contrary, this is the malady which must be cured. The cure is in the social harmony of the corporate state. While in Marxism the state is a passing necessity for liquidation of classes, in fascism the state remains the supreme omnipotent organization to guide the affairs of the people. Fascism and its German prototype, national socialism have, therefore, very little socialism in them beyond state control of certain trades and heavy industries, some inroads on private enterprise in the interests of the community and the aspiration, as old as humanity, towards social relations in which the sufferings and sorrows of the poor will be alleviated.

Marxist critics have described fascism as the last trench battle of decadent capitalism against the rising forces of the exploited masses. Like many other Marxist tenets it is too simple a characterization of a highly complex political phenomenon derived from a variety of situations. Fascism has been
killed at its citadels but capitalism is entrenched more strongly than ever in the fortress of democracy. Fascism owed its birth to two sets of circumstances: on the one hand, military defeat, political humiliation, national disintegration and economic collapse; on the other hand, total failure of the saner ideologies of liberalism, social democracy and communism. The Marxian interpretation of fascism is not a rational analysis but is an expression of anger. It is merely a vocabulary of abuse. The explanation lies in the strong anti-communist flavour of fascism. Communism had to turn upon its adversary its own weapon of propaganda and rouse the frenzy of the masses against it.