

# US National Standard in Culture

## Harry Luce of *Time-Life* on Work Ethic



## Fascism in America 1

**Harry Luce:** In speaking about the people of the United States, you must understand that the rest of the world does not think as you do—so lax about protecting freedom!

You are best to safeguard the freedom.

**Bill Paley:** Especially of *religious faith*. Faith is here defined as things not seen. And if you do not see the end of life, you can still prepare for it nevertheless and this is working for faith. It could be a goal to become a kinder person, a better person. It could be preparation for the ascension. It could be to have more backdirect balanced. These are religious goals. You can name it grace. The Will of God. They lead to the fount of living waters, that is uniquely of the United States and Great Britain.

**Harry Luce:** Other than doing this work-ethic of faith, you will find fascism at your doorstep as the religion that foreign countries yearn for is the powerful galvanizer of power such as Hitler, Stalin or Napoleon to have *you* enslaved.

**J. Paul Getty:** The rationality will be Marxism, that it is toward the proletariat rising to power.

**Nancy of Oregon:** The name of God is YHVH, I AM THAT I AM.

**J. Paul Getty:** The reasoning is racist, against the I AM Race which the United States is.

**J.P. Morgan:** You forget so easily the lessons of history.

Source: *Friendly Fascism*, Bertram Gross, 1980

President Eisenhower warned in his farewell address against the potential for the disastrous rise of power in the hands of the military-industrial complex.

Nearly two decades later, the military-industrial complex does not walk alone. It has many partners: the nuclear-power complex, the technology-science complex, the energy-auto-highway complex, the banking-investment-housing complex, the city-planning-development land-speculation complex, the agribusiness complex, the communications complex, and the enormous tangle of public bureaucracies and universities whose overt and secret services provide the foregoing with financial sustenance and a nurturing environment. Equally important, the emerging Big Business-Big Government partnership has a global reach. It is rooted in colossal transnational corporations and complexes on which the sun never sets. These are elements of the new despotism.

**MOSES:** You cannot win over fascism such as the one Hitler or Mussolini or even the G20 nations arrayed against the United States without emotion at the great injustices.

**Nancy of Oregon:** The rationalist is only looking for opportunism. It fails to look at patriotism in what this country is about, why you are here even in the United States. The opportunist is only looking for personal gain not the freedom of the nation as a whole.

# The Rise and Fall of Classic Fascism

BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS fascist movements developed in many parts of the world.

In the most industrially advanced capitalist countries—the United States, Britain, France, Holland and Belgium—they made waves but did not engulf the constitutional regimes. In the most backward capitalist countries—Albania, Austria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, and Yugoslavia—there came to power authoritarian or dictatorial regimes that boastfully called themselves “fascist” or, as the term soon came to be an all-purpose nasty word, were branded “fascist” by their opponents. The most genuine and vigorous fascist movements arose in three countries—Italy, Germany and Japan—which, while trailing behind the capitalist leaders in industrialization and empire, were well ahead of the laggards.

## ITALY, GERMANY, JAPAN

In Milan on March 23, 1919, in a hall offered by a businessmen’s club, former socialist Benito Mussolini transformed a collection of black-shirted roughnecks into the Italian Fascist party. His word “fascism” came from the Latin *fasces* for a bundle of rods with an axe, the symbol of State power carried ahead of the consuls in ancient Rome. Mussolini and his comrades censured old-fashioned conservatives for not being more militant in opposing the socialist and communist movements that arose, in response to the depression, after World War I. At the same time, they borrowed rhetorical slogans from their socialist and communist foes, and strengthened their support among workers and peasants.

In their early days these groups had tough going. The more respectable elements in the Establishment tended to be shocked by their rowdy, untrustworthy nature. Campaign contributions from businessmen came in slowly and sporadically. When they entered electoral contests, the Fascists did badly. Thus, in their very first year of life the Italian Fascists suffered a staggering defeat by the Socialists.

In 1920 the left-wing power seemed to grow. Hundreds of factories were seized by striking workers in Milan, Turin, and other industrial areas. Peasant unrest became stronger, and many large estates were seized. The Socialists campaigned under the slogan of "all power to the proletariat."

For Mussolini, this situation was an opportunity to be exploited. He countered with a nationwide wave of terror that went far beyond ordinary strikebreaking. Mussolini directed his forces at destroying all sources of proletarian or peasant leadership. The Fascist *squadristi* raided the offices of Socialist or Communist mayors, trade unions, cooperatives and left-wing newspapers, beating up their occupants and burning down the buildings. They rounded up outspoken anti-Fascists, clubbed them, and forced them to drink large doses of castor oil. They enjoyed the passive acquiescence—and at times the direct support—of the police, the army, and the church. Above all, business groups supplied Mussolini with an increasing amount of funds. In turn, Mussolini responded by toning down the syndicalism and radical rhetoric of his followers, and, while still promising to "do something for the workers," began to extol the merits of private enterprise.

On October 26, 1922, as his Fascist columns started their so-called March on Rome, Mussolini met with a group of industrial leaders to assure them that "the aim of the impending Fascist movement was to reestablish discipline within the factories and that no outlandish experiments . . . would be carried out."<sup>1</sup> On October 28 and 29 he convinced the leaders of the Italian Association of Manufacturers "to use their influence to get him appointed premier."<sup>2</sup> In the evening of October 29 he received a telegram from the king inviting him to become premier. He took the sleeping train to Rome and by the end of the next day formed a coalition cabinet. In 1924, in an election characterized by open violence and intimidation, the Fascist-led coalition won a clear majority.

If Mussolini did not actually march on Rome in 1922, during the next seven years he did march into the hearts of important leaders in other countries. He won the friendship, support, or qualified approval of Richard Childs (the American ambassador), Cornelius Vanderbilt, Thomas Lamont, many newspaper and magazine publishers, the majority of business journals, and quite a sprinkling of liberals, including some associated with both *The Nation* and *The New Republic*. "Whatever the dangers of fascism," wrote Herbert Croly, in 1927, "it has at any rate substituted movement for stagnation, purposive behavior for drifting, and visions of great future for collective pettiness and discouragements." In these same years, as paeans of praise for Mussolini arose throughout Western capitalism, Mussolini consolidated his rule, purging anti-Fascists from the government service, winning decree power from the legislature, and passing election laws favorable to himself and his conservative, liberal, and Catholic allies.

Only a few days after the march on Rome, a close associate of Hitler, Herman Esser, proclaimed in Munich among tumultuous applause: "What has been done in Italy by a handful of courageous men is not impossible here. In Bavaria too we have Italy's Mussolini. His name is Adolf Hitler. . . ."

F. L. CARSTEN<sup>3</sup>

In January, 1919, in Munich, a small group of anti-Semitic crackpot extremists founded the German Workers Party. Later that year the German Army's district commander ordered one of his agents, a demobilized corporal, to investigate it. The Army's agent, Adolf Hitler, instead joined the party and became its most powerful orator against Slavs, Jews, Marxism, liberalism, and the Versailles treaty. A few months later, under Hitler's leadership, the party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party and organized a bunch of dislocated war veterans into brown-shirted strong-arm squads or storm troops (in German, S.A. for *Sturmabteilung*). The party's symbol, designed by Hitler himself, became a black swastika in a white circle on a flag with a red background.

On November 8, 1923, in the garden of a large Munich beer hall, Adolf Hitler and his storm troopers started what he thought would be a quick march to Berlin. With the support of General Erich Ludendorff, he tried to take over the Bavarian government. But neither the police nor the army supported the *Putsch*. Instead of winning power in Munich, Hitler was arrested, tried for treason, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, but confined in luxurious quarters and paroled after only nine months, the gestational period needed to produce the first volume of *Mein Kampf*. His release from prison coincided with an upward turn in the fortunes of the Weimar Republic, as the postwar inflation abated and an influx of British and American capital sparked a wave of prosperity from 1925 to 1929. "These, the relatively fat years of the Weimar Republic, were correspondingly lean years for the Nazis."<sup>4</sup>

Weimar's "fat years" ended in 1929. If postwar disruption and class conflict brought the Fascists to power in Italy and nurtured similar movements in Germany, Japan, and other nations, the Great Depression opened the second stage in the rise of the fascist powers.

In Germany, where all classes were demoralized by the crash, Hitler recruited jobless youth into the S.A., renewed his earlier promises to rebuild the German army, and expanded his attacks on Jews, Bolshevism, the Versailles treaty, liberalism, and constitutional government. In September 1930, to the surprise of most observers (and probably Hitler himself), the Nazis made an unprecedented electoral breakthrough, becoming the second largest party in the country. A coalition of conservative parties, without the Nazis, then took over under General Kurt von Schleicher, guiding genius of the army. With aged Field Marshal von

Hindenberg serving as figurehead president, three successive cabinets—headed by Heinrich Brüning, Franz von Papen, and then von Schleicher himself—cemented greater unity between big business and big government (both civilian and military), while stripping the Reichstag of considerable power. They nonetheless failed miserably in their efforts to liquidate the Depression. Meanwhile Adolf Hitler, the only right-wing nationalist with a mass following, was publicly promising full employment and prosperity. Privately meeting with the largest industrialists he warned, “Private enterprise cannot be maintained in a democracy.” On January 30, 1933, he was invited to serve as chancellor of a coalition cabinet. “We’ve hired Hitler!” a conservative leader reported to a business magazine.<sup>5</sup>

A few weeks later, using the S.A. to terrorize left-wing opposition and the Reichstag fire to conjure up the specter of conspiratorial bolshevism, Hitler won 44 percent of the total vote in a national election. With the support of the Conservative and Center parties, he then pushed through legislation that abolished the independent functioning of both the Reichstag and the German states, liquidated all parties other than the Nazis, and established concentrated power in his own hands. He also purged the S.A. of its semisocialist leadership and vastly expanded the size and power of his personal army of blackshirts.

Through this rapid process of streamlining, Hitler was able to make immediate payments on his debts to big business by wiping out independent trade unions, abolishing overtime pay, decreasing compulsory cartelization decrees (like similar regulations promulgated earlier in Japan and Italy), and giving fat contracts for public works and fatter contracts for arms production. By initiating an official pogrom against the Jews, he gave Nazi activists a chance to loot Jewish shops and family possessions, take over Jewish enterprises, or occupy jobs previously held by German Jews.

Above all, he kept his promise to the unemployed; he put them back to work, while at the same time using price control to prevent a recurrence of inflation. As Shirer demonstrates in his masterful *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Hitler also won considerable support among German workers, who did not seem desperately concerned with the loss of political freedom and even of their trade unions as long as they were employed full time. “In the past, for so many, for as many as six million men and their families, such rights of free men in Germany had been overshadowed as he [Hitler] said, by the freedom to starve. In taking away that last freedom,” Shirer reports, “Hitler assured himself of the support of the working class, probably the most skillful and industrious and disciplined in the Western world.”<sup>6</sup>

Also in 1919, Kita Ikki, later known as “the ideological father of Japanese fascism,” set up the “Society of Those Who Yet Remain.”

His *General Outline of Measures for the Reconstruction of Japan*, the *Mein Kampf* of this association, set forth a program for the construction of a revolutionized Japan, the coordination of reform movements, and the emancipation of the Asian peoples under Japanese leadership.<sup>7</sup>

In Japan, where organized labor and proletarian movements had been smashed many years earlier and where an oligarchic structure was already firmly in control, the transition to full-fledged fascism was—paradoxically—both simpler than in Italy and Germany and stretched out over a longer period. In the mid-1920s hired bullies smashed labor unions and liberal newspapers as the government campaigned against “dangerous thoughts,” and used a Peace Preservation Law to incarcerate anyone who joined any organization that tried to limit private property rights. The worldwide depression struck hard in Japan, particularly at the small landholders whose sons had tried to escape rural poverty through military careers. The secret military societies expanded their activities to establish a Japanese “Monroe Doctrine for Asia.” In 1931 they provoked an incident, quickly seized all of Manchuria, and early in 1932 established the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.

At home, the Japanese premier was assassinated and replaced by an admiral, as the armed forces pressed forward for still more rapid expansion on the continent and support for armament industries. As the frontiers of Manchukuo were extended, a split developed between two rival military factions. In February 1936, the Imperial Way faction attempted a fascist coup from below. Crushing the rebels, the Control faction of higher-ranking officers ushered in fascism from above. “The interests of business groups and the military drew nearer, and a ‘close embrace’ structure of Japanese fascism came to completion,” writes Masao Maruyama. “The fascist movement from below was completely absorbed into totalitarian transformation from above.”<sup>8</sup> Into this respectable embrace came both the bureaucracy and the established political parties, absorbed into the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. And although there was no charismatic dictator or party leader, the Emperor was the supercharismatic symbol of Japanese society as a nation of families. By 1937, with well-shaped support at home, the Japanese army seized Nanking and started its long war with China.

## BREEDING GROUNDS OF FASCISM

Before fascism, the establishments in Italy, Japan, and Germany each consisted of a loose working alliance between big business, the military, the older landed aristocracy, and various political leaders. The origin of these alliances could be traced to the consolidation of government and industry during World War I.

"Manufacturing and finance," writes Roland Sarti about World War I in Italy (but in terms applicable to many other countries also), "drew even closer than they had been before the war to form the giant combines necessary to sustain the war effort. Industrialists and government officials sat side by side in the same planning agencies, where they learned to appreciate the advantages of economic planning and cooperation. Never before had the industrialists been so close to the center of political power, so deeply involved in the decision-making process."<sup>9</sup>

United in the desire to renew the campaigns of conquest that had been dashed by the war and its aftermath, the establishments in these countries were nonetheless seriously divided by conflicting interests and divergent views on national policy. As Sarti points out, big-business leaders were confronted by "economically conservative and politically influential agricultural interests, aggressive labor unions, strong political parties ideologically committed to the liquidation of capitalism, and governments responsive to a variety of pressures."<sup>10</sup> Despite the development of capitalist planning, coping with inflation and depression demanded more operations through the Nation-State than many banking and industrial leaders could easily accept, more government planning than most governments were capable of undertaking, and more international cooperation among imperial interests than was conceivable in that period.

The establishment faced other grave difficulties in the form of widespread social discontent amidst the uncertain and eventually catastrophic economic conditions of the postwar world. One of the challenges came from the fascists, who seemed to attack every element in the existing regimes. They criticized businessmen for putting profits above patriotism and for lacking the dynamism needed for imperial expansion. They tore at those elements in the military forces who were reluctant to break with constitutional government. They vilified the aristocracy as snobbish remnants of a decadent past. They branded liberals as socialists, socialists as communists, communists as traitors to the country, and parliamentary operations in general as an outmoded system run by degenerate babblers. They criticized the bureaucrats for sloth and branded intellectuals as self-proclaimed "great minds" (in Hitler's phrasing) who knew nothing about the real world. They damned the Old Order as an oligarchy of tired old men, demanding a New Order of young people and new faces. In Japan, the young blood was represented mainly by junior officers in the armed forces. In Italy and Germany the hoped-for infusion of new dynamism was to come from the "little men," the "common people," the "lost generation," the "outsiders," and "uprooted" or "rootless." Although some of these were gangsters, thugs, and pimps, most were white-collar workers, lower-level civil servants or, declassed artisans and small-business men.

But the fascist challenge did not threaten the jugular vein. Unlike

the communists, the fascists were not out to destroy the old power structure or to create an entirely new one. Rather, they were heretics seeking to revive the old faith by concentrating on the fundamentals of imperial expansion, militarism, repression, and racism. They had the courage of the old-time establishment's convictions. If they at times sounded like violent revolutionaries, the purpose was not merely to pick up popular support from among the discontented and alienated, but to mobilize and channel the violence-prone. If at the outset they tolerated anti-capitalist currents among their followers, the effect was to enlarge the following for policies that strengthened capitalism. Above all, the fascists "wanted in."

In turn, at a time of crisis, leaders in the old establishment wanted them in as junior partners. These leaders operated on the principle that "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." Ultimately, the marriage of the fascist elements with the old order was one of convenience. In Italy and Japan, the fascists won substantial control of international and domestic politics, were the dominant ideological force, and controlled the police. The old upper-class structure remained in control of the armed forces and the economy. In Japan, the upper-class military was successfully converted to fascism, but there were difficulties in winning over Japan's family conglomerates, the *zaibatsu*.

Thus, while much of the old order was done away with, the genuinely anti-capitalist and socialist elements that provided much of the strength in the fascist rise to power were suppressed. The existing social system in each country was actually preserved, although in a changed form.

## THE AXIS

From the start fascism had been nationalist and militarist, exploiting the bitterness felt in Italy, Germany, and Japan over the postwar settlements. Italians, denied territories secretly promised them as enticement for entering the war, felt cheated of the fruits of victory. Japanese leaders chafed at the rise of American and British resistance to Japanese expansion in China, and resented the Allies' refusal to include a statement of racial equality in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Germans were outraged by the Versailles treaty; in addition to depriving Germany of 13 percent of its European territories and population, the treaty split wide open two of Germany's three major industrial areas and gave French and Polish industrialists 19 percent of Germany's coke, 17 percent of its blast furnaces, 60 percent of its zinc foundries, and 75 percent of its iron ore.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, each of the fascist nations could ground their expansion in national tradition. As far back as 1898, Ito Hirobumi, one of the

founders of the "new" Japan after the Meiji restoration of 1868, had gone into great detail on Japan's opportunities for exploiting China's vast resources. While the late-nineteenth-century Italians and Germans were pushing into Africa, the Japanese had seized Korea as a stepping-stone to China and started eyeing Manchuria for the same purpose. Mussolini's imperial expansion in Africa was rooted, if not in the Roman empire, then in late nineteenth-century experience and, more specifically, in the "ignominy" of the 1896 Italian defeat by ill-armed Ethiopian forces in Aduwa. Hitler's expansionism harked back to an imperialist drive nearly a century old—at least.

Now, while Japan was seizing Manchuria, Mussolini responded to the crash by moving toward armaments and war. He used foreign aid to establish economic control over Albania, consolidating this position through naval action in 1934. In 1935 he launched a larger military thrust into Ethiopia and Eritrea.

By that time, the Nazi-led establishment in Germany was ready to plunge into the European heartland itself. In 1935, Hitler took over the Saarland through a peaceful plebiscite, formally repudiating the Versailles treaty. In 1936 he occupied the Rhineland and announced the formation of a Berlin-Rome Axis and the signing of a German-Japanese Pact. Hitler and Mussolini then actively intervened in the Spanish Civil War, sending "volunteers" and equipment to support General Franco's rebellion against Spain's democratically-elected left-wing republic.

The timetable accelerated: in 1938, the occupation of Austria in March and of Czechoslovakia in September; in 1939, the swallowing up of more parts of Czechoslovakia and, after conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August, the invasion of Poland. At this point, England and France declared war on Germany and World War II began. Japan joined Italy and Germany in a ten-year pact "for the creation of conditions which would promote the prosperity of their peoples." As a signal of its good intentions, Japan began to occupy Indochina as well as China. Germany did even better. By 1941 the Germans had conquered Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. They had thrown the British army into the sea at Dunkirk and had invaded Rumania, Greece, and Yugoslavia. A new world order seemed to be in the making.

For Japan, it was the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," and for Italy a new Roman Empire to include "the Mediterranean for the Mediterraneans." And, for Germany, the new order was the "Thousand-Year Reich" bestriding the Euro-Slavic-Asian land mass.

## ANTI-FASCIST FAILURES

Only one thing could have broken our movement: if the adversary had understood its principle and from the first day had smashed with extreme brutality the nucleus of our new movement.

ADOLF HITLER <sup>12</sup>

Neither at home nor abroad did fascism's adversaries understand the potentials of the major fascist movements and counter them effectively.

For many years, Mussolini's regime had been supported by American bankers. From 1933 up to the outbreak of World War II Hitler received tremendous financial aid from private British banks and the Bank of England itself. Government appeasement of fascist aggression went back to Western flabbiness in the face of Japan's seizure of Manchuria in 1932, the British negotiation of a 1935 naval treaty with Germany (which recognized Germany's right to rearm), the League of Nation's futile gestures over Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia, and the general acquiescence to Hitler's occupation and militarization of the Rhineland. In early 1938, the Western powers stood idly by as Hitler's armies, with the help of the local Nazis, swallowed up Austria. Later in the same year the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy signed the famous Munich agreement, which authorized Germany to absorb the Sudetenland, that part of Czechoslovakia with a significant German population. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, returned home announcing "peace with honor" and "peace in our time." Hitler responded by taking over all of Czechoslovakia.

The Western appeasement of fascist aggression was rooted in an unequal balance between interventionists and noninterventionists. The most influential interventionists were those forces committed to continuing dominance by the leading capitalist powers. In Europe their most outstanding spokesman was Winston Churchill, whose main interest was in preservation of the British Empire. In the United States, where old-time statesmen like Henry Stimson had futilely called for sanction against Japan for the seizure of Manchuria, many northeastern corporate and banking groups gradually came around to Churchill's position. As members of a decades-old Anglo-American alliance, they gradually began to see American intervention against Axis aggression as reversing the relationship between the two countries and making this an "American Century" in the ultra-frank words of Henry Luce, editor of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*. These interventionist forces were supported by anti-fascist refugees, the Jewish communities in democratic countries, many liberals and radicals, and—with the exception of the twenty-two months of the

Nazi-Soviet pact between August 23, 1939 and June 22, 1941—all Communist parties and their sympathizers.

For many years the noninterventionists prevailed. Many British, French, and American leaders came to realize that there was a genuine logic in the fascist calls for a revision of the Versailles treaty; they hoped that with limited expansions, the Axis appetites would be satisfied and that with a few minor changes the old order could be maintained. Others were immobilized by the vaunted Nazi superiority in warfare. Still others were genuinely upset by the possibilities of mass destruction inherent in the new-style warfare. In Europe, memories of World War I were too vivid for many Europeans to risk death defending the Spanish Republic or Czechoslovakia, let alone the distant Africans in Ethiopia. In the United States, a March 1937 Gallup poll reported that 94 percent of Americans favored staying out of all wars instead of taking the risks involved in trying to prevent them from erupting or spreading.

One of the most powerful forces behind noninterventionism was widespread Western endorsement of the Axis powers' anti-Russian stance. The Japanese seizure of Manchuria seemed more acceptable if Japan would then be encouraged to continue north and west into Siberia. Germany's drive to the east was more plausible if the Germans would be satisfied with swallowing up the Soviet Union and leave the other powers alone. At best the fascists and communists would bleed themselves to death and the old order would be rescued from the twin specters of communism and fascist expansion. Or else the Soviet regime might be destroyed and Russia "regained." At least the Axis powers and the Soviet Union would both be greatly weakened, to the benefit of the Western democracies. Just as the French aristocrats and businessmen as far back as 1935 had sincerely believed "Better Hitler than Léon Blum," top business circles sincerely believed "Better Hitler than Stalin."

The leaders of the Soviet Union would also have preferred an isolationism of their own, standing by while the capitalist powers destroyed themselves in interimperialist warfare. Since this was unlikely, their major strategy was to try to divide the capitalist powers by linking up with one side or another. This was the logic of their Brest-Litovsk peace treaty of 1918, their Rapallo agreement with Germany in 1922, the winning of diplomatic recognition from Mussolini in 1924, the negotiation of trade agreements with the Weimar Republic, and the renewal of these agreements with Hitler in April 1933 (one of the first international acts of recognition of the Third Reich). At the same time, in an effort to develop a buffer zone against eastward German expansion, the Soviet union entered into a number of pacts with its Western neighbors. Non-aggression treaties with China, Poland, the Baltic states, Finland, and France became the prelude to a drive for "collective security against the aggressors" in the League of Nations, spearheaded by Foreign Com-

missar Maxim Litvinov. After Munich in 1938, as the prospects of collective security seemed dimmer, Stalin went back to the former Soviet policy of closer relations with Germany. Litvinov was replaced by Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov, who negotiated the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939. A week later Hitler invaded Poland. By the next September, when the Axis of Germany, Italy, and Japan was finally cemented with ten-year pacts, he had conquered Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The Battle of Britain was under way.

## FASCIST EXPLOITS

The essence of the new fascist order was an exploitative combination of imperial expansion, domestic repression, militarism, and racism. Each of these elements had a logic of its own and a clear relation to the others.

Imperial expansion brought in the raw materials and markets needed for more profitable economic activity. By absorbing surplus energies as well as surplus capital, it diverted attention from domestic problems and brought in a flood of consumer goods that could—at least for a while—provide greater satisfactions for the masses.

Domestic repression in each of the three countries was essential to eliminate any serious opposition to imperialism, militarism, or racism. It was used to destroy the bargaining power of unions and the political power not only of communists, socialists, and liberals but of smaller enterprises. It helped hold down wages and social benefits and channel more money and power into the hands of big business and its political allies.

Militarism, in turn, helped each of the Axis countries escape from the depression, while also providing the indispensable power needed for both imperial ventures and domestic pacification.

All of the other elements were invigorated by racism, which served as a substitute for class struggle and a justification of any and all brutalities committed by members of the Master Race (whether Japanese, German, or Italian) against “inferior” beings. This may not have been the most efficient of all possible formulae for exploitation, but it was theirs.

No one of these elements, of course, was either new or unique. None of the “haves” among the capitalist powers, as the fascists pointed out again and again, had built their positions without imperialism, militarism, repression, and racism. The new leaders of the three “have nots,” as the fascists pointed out, were merely expanding on the same methods. “Let these ‘well-bred’ gentry learn,” proclaimed Hitler, “that we do with a clear conscience the things they secretly do with a guilty one.”<sup>18</sup> There was nothing particularly new in Mussolini’s imperialism and militarism.

His critics at the League of Nations in 1935, when a weak anti-Italian embargo was voted on, may have seemed shocked by his use of poison gas against Ethiopian troops, but he did nothing that French, British, English, and Dutch forces had not done earlier in many other countries. The Japanese and Germans, however, were a little more original. In China and other parts of Asia, the Japanese invaders used against Koreans, Chinese, Burmese, Malayans, and other Asians even harsher methods than those previously used by white invaders. Similarly, up to a certain point, the Nazi war crimes consisted largely of inflicting on white Europeans levels of brutality that had previously been reserved only for Asians, Africans, and the native populations of North, Central, and South America.

In open violation of the so-called "laws of war," German, Japanese, and Italian officials—to the consternation of old-style officers from the upper class "gentry"—ordered the massacre of prisoners. All three regimes engaged in large-scale plunder and looting.

Since German-occupied Europe was richer than any of the areas invaded by the Japanese or Italians, the Nazi record of exploitation is more impressive. "Whenever you come across anything that may be needed by the German people," ordered *Reichsmarschall* Goering, "you must be after it like a bloodhound. . . ." <sup>14</sup> **The Nazi bloodhounds snatched all gold and foreign holdings from the national banks of seized countries, levied huge occupation costs, fines and forced loans, and snatched away tons of raw materials, finished goods, art treasures, machines, and factory installations.**

**In addition to this unprecedented volume of looting, the Nazis revived the ancient practice of using conquered people as slaves. In doing so, they went far beyond most previous practices of imperial exploitation. By 1944, "some seven and a half million civilian foreigners were toiling for the Third Reich. . . . In addition, two million prisoners of war were added to the foreign labor force." Under these conditions German industrialists competed for their fair share of slaves. As key contributors to the "Hitler Fund," the Krupps did very well. "Besides obtaining thousands of slave laborers, both civilians and prisoners of war, for its factories in Germany, the Krupp firm also built a large fuse factory at the extermination camp at Auschwitz, where Jews were worked to exhaustion and then gassed to death."** <sup>15</sup>

Domestic repression by the fascists was directed at both working-class movements and any other sources of potential opposition. In all three countries the fascists destroyed the very liberties which industrialization had brought into being; if more was destroyed in Germany than in Italy and more in Italy than in Japan, it was because there was more there to destroy.

All three regimes succeeded in reducing real wages (except for the

significant increments which the unemployed attained when put to work by the armaments boom), shifting resources from private consumption to private and public investment and from smaller enterprises to organized big business, and channeling income from wages to profits. As these activities tended to "de-class" small entrepreneurs and small landowners, this added to the pool of uprooted people available for repressive activities, if not for the armed services directly. Moreover, each of the three regimes attained substantial control over education at all levels, cultural and scientific activities, and the media of communication.

In Germany, however, domestic repression probably exceeded that of any other dictatorial regime in world history. An interesting, although little known, example is provided by Aktion t 4. In this personally signed decree, Hitler ordered mercy killing for hospital patients judged incurable, insane, or otherwise useless to the war effort, thereby freeing hospital beds for wounded soldiers. At first the patients were "herded into prisons and abandoned castles and allowed to die of starvation." Since this was too slow, the Nazis then used "a primitive gas chamber fed by exhaust fumes from internal combustion engines." Later they used larger gas chambers where "ducts shaped like shower nozzles fed coal gas through the ceiling . . . Afterward the gold teeth were torn out and the bodies cremated." Two years later, after about ten thousand Germans were killed in this manner, a Catholic bishop made a public protest and the extermination campaign was called off.<sup>16</sup>

By this time, however, Aktion t 4 had been replaced by Aktion f 14, "an adaptation of the same principles to the concentration camps, where the secret police kept their prisoners—socialists, communists, Jews and antistate elements." By the time he declared war on the United States in December 1941, Hitler extended Aktion f 14 to all conquered territories in his "Night and Fog" (*Nacht und Nebel*) decree, through which millions of people were spirited away with no information given their families or friends. This was an expansion of the *lettres de cachet* system previously used by French monarchs and the tsar's police against important state prisoners. Under this method untold thousands vanished into the night and fog never to be heard of again.<sup>17</sup>

Each of the three regimes, moreover, developed an extra-virulent form of racism to justify its aggressive drive for more and more "living space" (in German, the infamous *Lebensraum*). Italian racism was directed mainly against the Africans—although by the time Italy became a virtual satellite of Nazi Germany, Mussolini started a massive anti-Jewish campaign. Japanese racism was directed mainly against the Chinese, the Indochinese, and in fact, all other Asiatic people and served to justify, in Japanese eyes, the arrogance and brutality of the Japanese troops. The largest target of Nazi racism was the Slavs, who inhabited all of the Eastern regions destined to provide *Lebensraum* for the Master Race.

And during World War II more Slavs were killed than any other group of war victims in previous history.

But Nazi racism went still deeper in its fanatical anti-Semitism. Hitler, of course, did not invent anti-Semitism, which ran as a strand through most significant ideologies of the previous century. While a strong strain of anti-Semitism has usually characterized the Catholic church, Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, went further in urging that Jewish "synagogues or schools be set on fire, that their houses be broken up and destroyed."<sup>18</sup> Nazi anti-Semitism brought all these strands together into a concentrated form of racism that started with looting, deprived the German Jews (about a quarter of a million at that time) of their citizenship and economic rights under the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, and then—following Martin Luther's advice with a vengeance—led to the arson, widespread looting, and violence of the *Kristolnacht* ("The Night of the Broken Glass") of November 1938. Early in 1939 Hitler declared, in a Reichstag speech, that if a world war should ensue, "the result will be . . . the annihilation of the Jewish race throughout Europe," a threat and near-prophecy that he kept on repeating in his public statements. A few weeks after the Nazi invasion of Russia he started to make it a reality with a decree calling for a "total solution" (*Gesamtlösung*) or "final solution" (*Endlösung*) of the Jewish question in all the territories of Europe which were under German influence. The "final solution" went through various stages: at first simply working Jews to death, then gassing them in the old-style chambers used under Aktion t 4, then using still larger gas chambers capable of gassing six thousand prisoners a day—to the lilting music of *The Merry Widow*—through the use of hydrogen cyanide.

While business firms competed for the privilege of building the gas chambers and crematoria and supplying the cyanide, recycling enterprises also developed. The gold teeth were "melted down and shipped along with other valuables snatched from the condemned Jews to the Reichsbank. . . . With its vaults filled to overflowing as early as 1942, the bank's profit-minded directors sought to turn the holdings into cold cash by disposing of them through the municipal pawnshops." Other recycling operations included using the hair for furniture stuffing, human fat for making soap, and ashes from the crematoria for fertilizer. While a small number of cadavers were used for anatomical research or skeleton collections, a much larger number of live persons—including Slavs as well as Jews—were used in experimental medical research for the German Air Force on the effects on the human body of simulated high-altitude conditions and immersion in freezing water. All in all, of an estimated 11 million Jews in Europe, between 5 and 6 million were killed in the destruction chambers (and work gangs or medical laboratories) at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belsen, Sibibor and Chelмна, as well as minor camps that used such old-fashioned methods as mere shooting.<sup>19</sup>