
P R O B L E M S

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Britain's Pro-Fascist Past

Tory Guilt in Supporting Mussolini. This included Churchill, whose objection to Hitler was that he made Germany strong enough to threaten the British Empire

Tories Made a Europe Fit for Fascists

Black Lives and Other Past Victims

Michael Foot on Tory Support for Mussolini

Orwell's Review of Foot's Work

Orwell on British Jews

Churchill on Fascism in 1927

Fascism and Union Jackery

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Tories Made a Europe Fit for Fascists

By Gwydion M. Williams

Many have asked whether Britain actually lost both World Wars.

It is certainly true that new allies had to be gained during the war, in order to emerge as technically a victor.

Few historians would dispute that the British Empire was much weaker after World War One, despite reaching its maximum size. It was forced to treat the USA as an equal. And Britain's rulers were also alarmed at the notion that France was now the strongest power on Continental Europe.

The Fall of Singapore in 1942 vastly damaged Imperial prestige, and gave the USA clear dominance over Britain.

So it is not a foolish question.

But it is also the *wrong* question.

Split 'British Interest' into Left and Right, and you get a much clearer answer. One that shows very clearly where the guilt lies.

On most issues, Tories were the main offenders. And the Left was not entirely wrong even on the issue of weapons spending. Up until 1938, Britain and France already had enough military power to curb Hitler's rise or to save the Spanish Republic. They just didn't use that power.

The Tories used their power with what might have seemed 'benevolent roguery' – as did the pre-1914 Liberal elite who made extensive secret plans for a war to break Germany.¹ But these plans went so badly wrong that they later chose to pretend they had never existed.

World War One weakened Britain's grip on Ireland so much that the long-standing dispute over Home Rule was settled, at least for Southern Ireland. And Britain had to fight a war to prevent an independent Irish Republic

emerging. Gained a limited victory by winning over some of those who had fought for that Irish Republic, but now accepted Home Rule and Partition.

At home, the 17th-century pattern of Tories / Conservatives and Whigs / Liberals was finally displaced by the rising Labour Party, which formed a minority Government in 1923.

Globally, the new Communist International was now a challenge to both Imperialism and the right of the Ruling Class to rule. Before 1914, challenges to both had been marginal.

And the new borders made after World War One had not created the stability that would have resulted from breaking up Germany into three or four smaller states. (It had only been unified since 1870 and there were many cultural, political and religious differences.) Instead further instability was created by fragmenting the Austro-Hungarian Empire into states full of displaced minorities. Something like a Danubian Federation would have been much more natural, and avoided many future tragedies.

A Second World War was widely expected. And once it became clear that the Bolsheviks had won in Russia, it might easily be a war to suppress this new Soviet Union.

In this context, the Centre-Right that ruled the British Empire saw Italian Fascism as very useful. And the general instability was seen as useful in making France dependant on a close alliance with Britain.

Then when unstable Germany got Hitler as its 13th Chancellor, the rulers of Britain were friendly. Let him move by stages from Chancellor to unchallenged Dictator.²

Hitler was allowed to build up his armed

¹ <http://www.british-values.com/index-to-articles/hankey/>

² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/hitler-the-13th-chancellor/>

forces, violating the Versailles Treaty. And also allowed a series of foreign-policy triumphs, beginning with the re-militarisation of the Rhineland.

We know now that had Britain threatened war over this, over the unification with Austria or with the threat of war over his demands on Czechoslovakia, he would have had to back down. The German Army did not think they could win such wars, and were ready to remove him.

Was this really a misjudgement by Britain's experienced and well-informed leaders? Or was it a calculated that if Hitler fell, German Communism might revive?

Was it even a hope that Nazi Germany would end up waging war against the Soviet Union? Suppress the biggest threat to the global power of the British Empire, at very little cost to the British ruling class?

To admit this would make them look like outsmarted fools. They ended up needing the Soviet Union to save them from Hitler.

Unscrupulous cunning by Stalin produced this very unexpected outcome. A much more natural result would have been Nazi Germany attacking the Soviet Union, while the West stood neutral.

World War Two was a major victory for all parts of Britain's Left. A major defeat for the Tories and other right-wing forces. Their cherished Empire lost its core with Indian Independence, and unwound over the next few decades. They survived by becoming subordinate to the USA, at that time well to the left of most Tories.

This last will sound very strange to most people. But things changed a lot after the Suez Crisis of 1956, when the USA demonstrated to the fading British Empire and French Empire that they were helpless in the face of US power. And requiring Israel to return to the borders it had secured in 1949.

Politics in both Europe and the USA shifted well to the left in the 1960s. But the US mainstream shifted less and ended up rather to the right of the new British and Continental-Europe mainstream.

Back in the 1930s, the USA was a rather radical and subversive force from the viewpoint of the British centre-right. Fascism was in many ways closer to their values.

The soft attitudes to fascism were no accident or misunderstanding. They were a logical part of politics that was to fail disastrously.

And it counted for plenty that the rulers of Britain were fairly friendly, at a time when the British Empire was the world's only Superpower.

Italian Fascism very nearly failed in 1924.

This overlooked fact is shown in detail by Michael Foot in a half-forgotten work called *The Trial of Mussolini*.

In 1924 and later, the Tory government and the Centre-Right treated fascism as a positive idea wherever Parliamentary Democracy yielded a result they did not like. Helped it spread within Europe, and throughout the world.

Nor was this in any sense a betrayal of their traditions. Democracy was a subversive fringe idea until the last quarter of the 19th century.

The basis of the original Tory Party was sympathy for Royal power within an agreed Parliamentary system. A system where the House of Lords was powerful, and where a majority of seats in the House of Commons were dominated by a few hundred rich families.

Parliament is not a democratic institution. It is a mediaeval heritage that was adapted for the rising forces of democracy. And which has not served them very well.

Parliaments also tend to fail when they are added to an alien society. They resemble the Cargo Cults of some Pacific Islands - close mimicry of the externals and the essentials are missed.

A regular system of rival parties works only when politics is treated as a game with rules – almost as a sport. The antagonism has definite limits.

Privileged Britons liked the political freedoms that a Parliamentary system gave them, and their considerable freedom to criticise their rulers. This did not mean they wanted the same freedoms extended to other men.

And definitely not to women.

Nor to colonial subjects – Britain's North American colonies were at odds with a government favoured by George 3rd, but solidly backed by a majority of MPs in an undemocratic parliament. In an era when General Elections happened over several weeks, it would have been perfectly possible to have given a colonies a few MPs of their own. Adam Smith even proposed this in *The Wealth of Nations* – published 1776, when it was much too late for such a cure. But before that, the Westminster Parliament lived up to its description as '*the best gentleman's club in London*'.

Even men like George Washington were not wanted there. He had been lieutenant colonel and second-in-command of the 300-strong Virginia Regiment. But when he sought to become an officer in the regular British Army, he was refused.

Ruling classes tend to be smart at ruling the existing system, but very bad at making timely reforms and concessions to keep the system stable. And are then surprised, offended and indignant when it collapsed on them.

This is happening right now. The elite of the Anglosphere, along with their tame thinkers and publicists, do not see themselves as greedy bunglers who wasted the enormous opportunities in the 1990s. Instead they ask us to rally behind them in the face of unexpected outbreaks of evil in Middle-Europe, the Islamic World, Russia, China and the militantly Hindu Republic of India.³ And the *utterly unexpected* fact that death rates from Covid-19 match very closely the strength of New Right ideas.

In the late 18th century, White Racism did not have a definite grip on the Empire. Britons in India mixed

³ See <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/> for more.

freely with the local elite, including marrying their woman and accepting the offspring as part of the British elite. This never entirely died, with aristocrats from the Indian Subcontinent being let into British aristocratic circles where most colonial administrators would not be wanted. But in India, power was firmly in the hands of those defined as White. And unlike colonies where there was a white majority, those with a majority deemed racially inferior were dominated by officials appointed by Britain even when they had some sort of elected body.

The British Empire was parliamentary from 1688, but democracy for middle-class white males was resisted until 1832.

No serious prospect of any sort of democracy where those defined as being of the White Race did not have a secure majority. Where they were few and nearly powerless they might be allowed to vote. Where it might matter, they were excluded.

Not democratic for most white males until the 1880s.⁴ And the 1870s also saw the end of the public voting that had traditionally made it hard for those with votes to defy the will of the local grandees.

This was particularly significant in Ireland, where the Home Rule League came from nowhere to win 60 out of Ireland's 101 seats in 1874. The first election with the Secret Ballot, so that the rich could not intimidate the mostly middle-class voters.⁵

There was an understood hierarchy within what was called the White Race. The prospect of an elected Home Rule government dominated by Roman Catholic voters in Ireland was unacceptable to many Britons. It looked likely to lead to Civil War in 1914, when the First World War confused the process.

That World War was technically about a refusal by Serbia and Russia to allow a proper investigation into Serbia's use of terrorism and assassination to gain control of Bosnia. There was good cause to suspect: their Security Services were dominated by Dragutin Dimitrijevic and others who had in 1903 deposed and murdered a Serbian king who was soft on pushing the Serbian claim to Bosnia.⁶

Western histories used to speak of 'Gallant Little Serbia' and cover this up. And have been evasive ever since the West decided in the 1990s that any Serbian claim to Bosnia was an abomination.

Other issues counted for more. France wanted majority-German sections of Alsace-Lorraine, against the will of the majority living there. But the main motivation was the British Empire's desire to break the rising German Empire. German along with the USA had built industrial bases that were superior to Britain and were ending its brief reign as

the Workshop of the World.

Foot's work takes the form of a trial in which Mussolini illustrates how close he was to mainstream British politicians and media people.

This might have come out if a real trial had happened. But since Italy switched sides, they got away with a lot.

"In October 1943, the Allied leaders had established the United Nations War Crimes Commission, an independent body tasked with investigating and recording the evidence of war crimes, and identifying where possible the individuals responsible; and reporting to the Governments concerned, when there was prima facie case for the prosecution of those individuals. Indeed, by March 1948 the Commission identified and listed more than 1,200 Italian nationals, who could have been held accountable for heinous war crimes, and in particular those committed on the territories of Ethiopia and Yugoslavia...

"Despite these initiatives, apart from the 40 trials the British conducted in Italy immediately after the end of the conflict, no Italian nationals would be held accountable for the commission of international crimes."⁷

Some were executed or otherwise punished by the Italians themselves. And Mussolini was lynched. It has been suggested that he was deliberately given to his enemies to stop him talking, but I rather doubt this. Still, it is a pity we never got to hear his side of things.

As it happened, only German Nazis faced an International Tribunal. And the German state had undeniably operated gigantic death camps in Occupied Poland. All sorts of unwanted populations were destroyed there, including non-Jewish Poles. But Jews were the main victims. And the gigantic scale of the killing was shown by vast numbers of flourishing Jewish communities that had few survivors or no survivors.

Six million Jews was the SS estimate. And the common use of the figure obscures the fact that several million others were also killed by the murder-machine. It was a monstrous crime.

Note also that at least eight million non-Jewish Germans died in a war that Hitler could have ended favourably at several points.

My estimate is that Hitler caused 45 to 52 million deaths in a war he had no need to fight. 34 to 41 million for military ends. Perhaps 11 million killed by a death-machine that drained resources from the war and helped defeat him.⁸

And had the conventional war gone otherwise, the USA could have used its newly invented nuclear bombs to win. These, of course, would not have come so soon without German-Jewish scientists that he drove out, as well as Jews in the

⁴ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/40-britain/665-2/>

⁵ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1874_United_Kingdom_general_election_in_Ireland and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1868_United_Kingdom_general_election_in_Ireland.

⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Coup_\(Serbia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Coup_(Serbia))

⁷ https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2887267

⁸ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/deaths-caused-by-hitler/>

USA who were motivated by his declared enmity.

The most crucial individuals mostly get overlooked. Einstein's famous letter did not convince the US administration that a useful atomic bomb could be made in time to be used in the current war. Britain had also been investigating, and the initial estimates were that several tons of uranium would be needed to start a chain reaction. This meant that it might be a useful source of industrial power, but that bombs would be impossibly large.

So unimportant did it seem that a detailed calculation was left to expatriate German physicists Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls: Jewish refugees from Hitler but also technically 'enemy aliens'.

Unexpectedly, they found that a few kilograms of the right isotope of uranium would explode with the energy of thousands of tons of dynamite. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frisch%E2%80%93Peierls_memorandum) Separating it from common uranium was tricky, but the US managed it. German might have managed it had one of their scientists made the right calculations, and only after the war was it clear that they had not.

Hitler's extremism was in the end self-defeating. But it still came close to success.

It was also rather an accident that it came to be seen as an anti-Fascist war rather than an anti-German war. Italy might well have stayed neutral, as Spain and Portugal did. And given the close ties with Britain, having Italy as an ally seemed possible:

"As World War II began, Ciano and Viscount Halifax were holding secret phone conversations. The British wanted Italy on their side against Germany as it had been in World War I." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini#War_declared)

With a neutral Italy, all of the right-wing politicians who had been fond of him would not have been as embarrassed or discredited as they in fact were.

If you try to map past mainstream politics onto modern ideas, you find it increasingly matching the Hard Right and even the Far Right.

Those governments mostly did not use the same

methods as fascism, but mostly because they were securely in control.

Almost all governments used torture, and brutal types of execution.

Before the 19th century, all accepted slavery, though sometimes it was of a mild sort.

I'd say that Marx got it right when he identified the main cause as the undermining of small property and personal security by the growth of capitalism.

The Right mostly get this wrong. And our current New Right have proved to have no competence over major decisions that change or preserve societies across the decades.

Marxism is a good beginning, but not the blighted post-Stalin version that Moscow pushed. (See <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/stalin-was-the-real-heir-of-lenin/>.)

Hysteria against Marxism leads to twisted views, because the Cold War was won by the West accepting many values once seen as Marxist.

Right-wingers often show superficial cleverness. Thus the 1958 film version of *The Quiet American* reverses what Graham Green saw. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Quiet_American_\(1958_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Quiet_American_(1958_film))) But he was right, and trying to save the incoherent government they created in South Vietnam was a disaster for the USA.

The big problem with lying is that it is not true. Live life in a cloud of lies and you become ineffective.

Britain's democratically elected government was broadly pro-Fascist until at least March 1938, when German demands on Czechoslovakia became an issue. And in the end they sold out Czechoslovakia.

It only became clearly anti-Fascist when Italy declared war in June 1940, and then only because Churchill would not make peace after a decisive defeat.

If you can call Trump or Pinochet fascist, then the Polish government created by Pilsudski was definitely fascist.

Black Lives and Other Past Victims

By Gwydion M. Williams

All lives matter, but not all lives are equally at risk.

Racism is currently the main issue. But it was a big error when this got separated from issues of general liberation in the 1960s.

All of us have slave ancestors. Slavery was the normal condition of civilisation until the last few centuries. It was found also in most tribal societies.

Race-based slavery was just the last spasm –

though maybe the nastiest, since older forms of slavery did allow some slaves to rise high within the society they had been sold into.

Pulling down the statue of a Bristol slave-owner whose business involved the deaths of maybe 20,000 Africans along with the 100,000 sold as slaves needed to be done. It is shameful that it had to be done illegally by protestors, rather than by the elected regional government.

But it is only partly a racial issue.

Britons Quite Often Were Slaves

A thousand years ago, Bristol was denounced for selling English slaves to Ireland. Part of an old tradition. One which extended back to Celtic times. Several years back, I wrote an article explaining this:

"Celtic antiquities include a slave-chain that must have been used for the securing of a six-pack of British slaves, to be sold from Free Britannia to the Roman Empire in the days before the Roman conquest.

"Celtic tribal chieftains probably took the same view as West African tribal chieftains would later take, sell an unwanted slave or war captive and have the cash to buy something more useful. But trade with a stronger society mostly leads to conquest by that society. Britain was invaded by the Roman Empire and made part of an Empire that took slavery to an extreme that no other empire ever did...

"The Roman Empire was one of many states that copied the imperial model invented by Cyrus and the Persians. All of them had slaves, but mostly as a small inferior class at the bottom of society. Rome with its gigantic slave-based farms and factories was an exception.

"Roman Britannia was conquered by the freedom-loving English, who however kept slaves and sold them too, when there was a market. Saxons were in turn conquered by Normans. Slavery continued, as part of normal commerce:

" *Archbishop Anslem, at the London Council of 1102, denounced the practice of selling Englishmen as 'brute beasts'; his pious contemporary Bishop Wulfstand preached against the practice of selling English slaves from Bristol to Ireland.* (The Slave Trade by Hugh Thomas, Picador 1997, page 35)

"Bristol's role began with equal-opportunity enslavement. The English slaves sold to Ireland were probably bought by middlemen who sold them on to a much richer Islamic world. And in those impoverished days, it was maybe a step up to a happier cleaner life for an unfree English man or woman.

"Some churchmen were true to the anti-slavery bias in Jewish and Christian tradition—the only sacred scriptures in which servile origins are admitted and even seen as a sign of divine favour. But others were less idealistic.

"*Out of nearly 500 Visigothic laws which survived... almost half referred to some aspect of slavery. St Isidore of Seville... had, meantime, no doubt about the divine origin of slavery: 'Because of the sin of the first man, the penalty of servitude was inflicted by God on the human race; to those unsuitable for liberty'.* (Ibid, page 34.)

"The ideas were strikingly similar to 19th century pro-slavery arguments, except that this was white-on-white enslavement. All that changed between the 12th and 18th centuries was the colour of those found suitable for a servile role." ([Slavery in the British Empire](#).)

As a man with Welsh and Devonshire parents, I have no doubt that many of my more distant ancestors would have been slaves. That some of their relatives up to the 18th century would have been shipped to the West Indies as slaves, and

perhaps merged with an African population in the same predicament. This was normal enough for Robert Louis Stevenson to have it as the threatened fate of his hero in his novel *Kidnapped*. Losers from the 18th century Jacobite rebellions and in the 17th century Monmouth Rebellion ended up in slavery along with those brought from Africa.

Empire Legacies

My ancestors must also include a few also slave-owners, from when slavery for poorer Britons was normal in Britain. But probably none directly involved in the overseas slave-trade, unlike those of George Orwell, wrongly held up as the prime champion of Freedom. Orwell (Eric Blair) also concealed the significant fact that his father worked for the Opium Department in British India. (See [Orwell Looking Down on British Workers](#).)

Opium in India was legal, because the British Empire made the laws. But it was an abomination, with Indian peasant farmers forced to grow it. With the East India Company not directly trading it illegally, but selling it to merchants like Jardine Matheson, who illegally sold it via 'freedom-loving' Hong Kong.

A fictionalised and romanticised version of the main founder is presented as hero by popular author James Clavell in the historic novel *Tai-Pan*. And again in the 1960s in '*Noble House*', which floated the idea that Hong Kong might subvert People's China when the 1997 lease on most of it ran out. He was part of the New Right rubbish that has caused the world immense suffering, and is now hopefully being rejected.

The current intense wave of 'Black Lives Matter' should be part of the general rejection of the New Right. Ronald Reagan began the undermining in the name of Individual Freedom of the push towards racial equality than had been happening with Civil Rights. And used this as a lure for White Racists among ordinary US Citizens. Kept them happy with the idea that Blacks were still below them. Diverted them while their secure jobs were destroyed for the benefit of a small elite that was itself multi-racial, and happy to bring in superior workers from all over and regardless of skin colour.

The New Right shamelessly used White Racism, but did not believe in it. They were not like the Southern Democrats, who had maintained Segregation but also backed the New Deal. When the US Democrats were forced to be serious about racial and sexual equality, the New Right as a rising force with the US Republicans won over Southern Racist voters with a series of phoney promises.

Phoney because Republicans as much as Democrats oversaw the disappearance of the majority status in the USA of those classed as Caucasian or White. Big business preferred to minimise taxes and let many born in the USA grow up badly educated and often useless for a rapidly changing economy. Let them kill themselves with

opioids more dangerous even than heroin, but legal and freely pushed by doctors encouraged by drugs companies.

Big Business moved a lot of its production overseas, mostly to China. Big Business imported well-educated people from all over the world, notably from the Indian Subcontinent.

Phoney because the triumph of the Adventurous Rich did not boost overall growth, even though they sincerely believed that it would. It dragged it down. It messed up Japan, which ruined its Economic Miracle by believing imported New Right values. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_asset_price_bubble).⁹ It slowed down growth in the West, which never recovered even the inferior performance of the disorderly 1970s.¹⁰ ([The Mixed Economy Won the Cold War](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/).)

To keep going with this failure, they encouraged a very high level of imprisonment. Promoted police forces that in the USA had always been Armies of Occupation for non-white areas. Previously also for those seen as Inferior Europeans, Irish and South Europeans, but later these were incorporated to keep the others down.

And whereas the New Right are almost all callous to all non-rich humans regardless of colour, the US Republicans had to win elections and had always used dirty methods. In the last few years, they have abandoned their brief attempt to win right-wing non-white votes. Initially appalled by Trump, whose father supported the Klu Klux Klan, they came round to him when they saw he was a winner.

In the USA, there are huge numbers of white-racist votes that are not committed right or left. That would have voted for Saunders on class grounds, but feel happy with Trump as an all-but-open racist.

When I posted an earlier version of these arguments as a blog, someone called me ignorant and posted a swarm of pictures showing right-wingers associating with black people. But US racism has never involved complete separation. Just keeping blacks inferior.

Since proportionately more blacks than whites are killed by the police, either the police are racist, or the blacks must deserve it. But even for identical crimes, black offenders are more likely to be killed and get heavier sentences.

The USA is engaging now in blatant racism. And is putting off the rest of the world. I would be **delighted** if Trump got back: it would definitely kill the USA's dwindling global influence.

In Britain, the Tories have proved much cleverer. They can still juggle policies and have several non-white individuals in top jobs, while still getting a racist vote that has nowhere much else to go. Harshness to immigrants and now Brexit keeps the racists happy, with the Windrush scandal as just

the most extreme part of it.

Why do these individuals accept it? Maybe their true view is **Only My Life Matters**, and others are not their concern. That was the essence of Thatcherism, and is also a much older aberration of human thinking.

Maybe someone from Britain's ethnic minorities could do a series entitled **Only My Life Matters**, featuring all the nice things these individuals have, and their failure to act on blatant Tory racism.

Britain has nothing like the USA's problem with thuggery by police, though it certainly has some. It certainly helps that very few Britons own guns. Police are less at risk and can be more reasonable. And there is a single multi-unit police force under firm government control. In the real world, as distinct from libertarian fantasies, this is the best actual control for the problems and general evils of having a police force.

And if you think that few police or no police would be a better idea, you have almost certainly never been anywhere near a place where actual police power is weak. Things done by the Provisional IRA have shocked people, and did include some grim actions, but they were World Champions in terms of being Alternative Police. Always had a hard core determined to uphold the dignity of a movement more than a century old. Did so by grim methods, knee-capping and murder. But did avoid the sort of endless and lethal gang violence that you get in the USA, Brazil, and many other places. Even tried, though with little success, to contain the spread of drugs and much nastier criminality in the Irish Republic.

We need police. But we also need decent politics, if 'public order' is to be respected. If it is to be worth respecting.

If the people who pulled down the Bristol statue ever get put on trial for Criminal Damage, I would expect a British jury to uphold the fine old tradition of Perverse Verdicts and let them off.

The War Against Unworthy Statues.

June 2020 saw a massive expansion in the previously neglected **Black Lives Matter**. People noticed that there were suddenly a lot more white faces than in previous protests. And a renewal of long-standing protests against statues seen as glorifying racism. Most of them in the USA definitely erected to glorify racism and the pro-slavery war of the US Confederacy, it must be said.

(For details, see The War of Two Racisms. Listed at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>.)

Only the brief dominance of Northern Radicals and intense hostility to the 'Rebels' allowed for Constitutional Amendments that made black people technically equal. These were mostly very rich radicals, which was still possible in the 1860s before the rise of significant socialist parties. They were not bothered by most black people being poor and unequal: they just wanted no formal racism or slavery to offend their core beliefs.

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_asset_price_bubble

¹⁰ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

When I speak of 'white' and 'black', I reference only the social fact that most people at the time saw it as valid, and many still do. It has no biological reality. Humans are diverse, but the old notion of several separate developments of distinct races of Modern Human was always unlikely. DNA studies have now thoroughly discredited it.

I happen to be a rather pure Anglo-Celt, red-headed and blue eyed, with parents of Welsh and Devonshire origin. DNA testing also suggests that I have rather more than most Britons of the heritage of the first two waves of modern humans to settle Europe. (<https://gwydionmadawc.com/about/my-dna-results/0>). 46% Hunter-Gatherer and 43% Farmer, and only 12% from the Metal-Age invaders who conquered using chariots and are believed to have brought an early version of the Celtic language. Who certainly eliminated older languages and cultures: these persist in a few enigmatic pre-Celtic place-names. And elsewhere in Europe, in the Basque language and perhaps a few others, and surprisingly in famous names like Athens,

When it comes to exploitation and slavery, I see black people as merely the final victims

The Northern Radicals created formal racial equality. They would also have liked to give women the vote, but reckoned that this needed another Constitutional Amendment and that it would not be possible to fight and win on both issues. And were most likely correct: mainstream US politics at the time was far to the right of what it became even in the 1950s.

When the North chose to be reconciled with the

former Rebels, it was accepted that White Power was part of the deal. And it also applied to those black people who managed to settle in the North. There was also intense hostility to them settling the West.

That the USA later on never brought in official Racism of the sort you saw in South African is an oddity. But the white population of South Africa was mostly of Dutch and British origin, and thought of law as something very solemn and respectable. You could only be racist if it were written down clearly that racism is legal – which also helped keep communities mixed when large numbers of non-European immigrants arrived from the 1950s.

The USA, having written down detailed rules in its 1789 Constitution, also started early on in learning how to be Official Shysters. The notorious Dredd Scott judgement, which helped start the Civil War, was a blatant example. The United States Supreme Court decided 7–2 against Scott, finding that neither he nor any other person of African ancestry could claim citizenship in the United States. But **the US Constitution nowhere says anything about race.**

Rather than go to the trouble of getting White Racism written into the laws, when this was the majority view, US politicians preferred to cheat. And then in the 1960s, needing Black Africa, they overturned formal racism. But, as I explained above, the US Republicans prevented a genuinely non-racial society being built.

There is now a war over the past. But it is worth emphasising that claims to a glorious anti-Fascist past for either Britain or the USA are false.

Michael Foot on Tory Support for Mussolini

By Gwydion M. Williams

Most Britons would admit that Britain has past guilt for racism and imperialism. But pro-Fascism? Were we not the heroes of the anti-Fascist struggle?

Actually not.

More exactly, the British Left was anti-Fascist from the start. The Centre-Right were mostly sympathetic. Centrists were neutral.

From the foundation of Italian Fascism in November 1921, and down to Mussolini declaring war on Britain and France in June 1940, the British Establishment had been friendly to Italian Fascism.

And not entirely hostile to German Nazism. Germany under Hitler was treated with a sympathy never shown to its democratic and mostly left-wing governments.

For that matter, if you can call Baathism fascist and Franco fascist, then the Polish

government for which Britain went to war in 1939 was also fascist. Pilsudski, after doing heroic work establishing a democratic Polish Republic, tried retiring from politics in 1923. In 1926 he launched a coup and ruled as a fairly popular dictator until his death in 1935. There were elections, but no one at the time counted it as a regular Parliamentary Democracy.

Note also that Britain and the USA were friendly to Iraq's Baath regime while the Cold War was on. They saved Saddam Hussein in 1987, after his war against Iran looked likely to end in defeat.¹¹

The USA had a military alliance with Franco's Spain. They helped to keep it as a right-wing dictatorship until Franco's death.

¹¹ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-004-october-1987/why-the-west-saved-saddam-hussein-in-1987/>

Arguably it was not fascist: ideological fascists were dumped after Hitler lost the war.

A similar right-wing militarist and authoritarian regime in Portugal was not just supported, but was a member of NATO. And was permitted to keep its colonial empire in Africa until a left-wing coup in 1974 established a conventional Western democracy.

For Italian Fascism, I thought it worth putting back into circulation the best portions of a work by Michael Foot, who was leader of the Labour Party from 1980 to 1983. As a young journalist during the Second World War, he wrote a pamphlet or short book called *The Trial Of Mussolini*.¹² Mussolini at that time was prisoner, having been technically deposed by the Grand Council of Fascism, and then dismissed and arrested by the Italian King.

Mussolini was later rescued, and became a puppet ruler of an unusually brutal regime backed by the German Army. When this collapsed, he tried to escape, but was caught and killed by his Italian enemies.

Had Mussolini survived, he would probably not have been given a War Crimes trial. Almost all Italians escaped such judgements, though some were executed by the Italians themselves.

It is a sad fact that the supposedly impartial processes of International Law have only ever been applied to the defeated. The bulk of Mussolini's regime switched over to the Allies before the end of the war, so almost all of the guilty escaped.

In any case, the main point of Foot's pamphlet was to expose the Tory Party. Which it does very nicely.

Surprisingly, this work has never been republished, apart from a recent e-book version which I discovered only after getting a print version.¹³ But I found in it an excellent summary of Tory and British Establishment closeness to the world's very first fascist regime.

Why on earth has the left allowed this to be forgotten?

It's a sad fact that most of the Hard Left spends the bulk of its time detailing how terrible other left-wingers are. Moving in circles that automatically hate Tories, they forget the need to prove to the public that Tories have committed far worse crimes. And committed them for much worse reasons than anyone on the left.

Foot's method for his imagined trial is to take published statements by various notable Tories and imaging those people being summoned to repeat

these things at a tribunal.

"In the case of Mussolini it is clear that an unforeseen accident might at any moment deprive him of the chance of vindicating himself before a public tribunal. This volume has, therefore, been compiled with the purpose of ensuring that justice is done. All the essential statements attributed in its pages to the various witnesses are genuine, and may be corroborated from the newspaper cuttings at the time. None of the chief characters are fictitious. Some even, have been raised from the dead to participate in the proceedings and to ensure that no relevant evidence is omitted."
(Introduction)

Mussolini is charged in much the same terms that various notable Germans, not all Nazis, were to be later charged at Nuremberg:

"Benito Mussolini, you stand indicted and charged before this special Court as a prime enemy of the human race and a chief criminal responsible for the greatest war in history. The particulars of offence alleged in the indictment are that you did ruthlessly and brutally establish yourself in power as the Fascist dictator of Italy by the suppression of parliament, the bludgeoning of your opponents and the banishment of all free institutions within Italian domains; that you did persistently and increasingly defy all international obligations undertaken by yourself; that in defiance of these obligations you did treacherously make war on Abyssinia in 1935; that in defiance of these obligations again you did make war in Spain during the years 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939; that you did treacherously make an alliance with Nazi Germany in 1936 and that you did thenceforward do all in your power to assist her in her ambitions against the free world; that you did treacherously stab France in the back in 1940; that you did treacherously make war on Greece, Britain and Russia with all of whom you had signed treaties of non-aggression; in short, that you devoted your life and energies and all the resources of the Italian state which you were able to muster to spreading havoc, ruin and the most bloodthirsty war among your fellow men.

"Benito Mussolini, how say you, do you plead guilty or not guilty to the crimes alleged in the indictment.

"Benito Mussolini: NOT GUILTY." (Page 5-6)

We then get more details:

"The first charges the Prisoner with having ruthlessly and brutally established himself as the Fascist dictator of Italy. I do not imagine that the Prisoner or his Counsel will dare to deny it. Benito Mussolini was summoned to Rome to become Prime Minister in October, 1922. It may be held that he was constitutionally appointed and that several non-Fascists were included in his first Cabinet. It is also true that he denied any wish to 'govern against Parliament.' However, these and similar phrases which he employed for obvious purposes were quickly proved meaningless. He warned Parliament at the temporary character of its authority. He set up a rival organisation called the Fascist Grand Council, which was invented with the real power in so far as anyone possessed power apart from himself. I may perhaps remind Gentlemen of the Jury that it was this body whose adverse vote was the immediate cause of the downfall of the Prisoner in July, 1943. Between the institution of the Council and the downfall of the Prisoner there is, so far as I am aware, no recorded instance of this

¹² *The Trial Of Mussolini: Being A Verbatim Report Of The First Great Trial For War Criminals Held In London Sometime In 1944 Or 1945*. Published October 1943

¹³ <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/the-trial-of-mussolini>. I seldom read e-books and have no idea what this item is actually like.

body having acted as anything other than a rubber-stamp for the whims of the dictator. Until that fateful July day in 1943 the outside world was not aware of the fact that the proceedings of this Council included the democratic superfluities of debate and vote. Surely little further illustration of the dictatorial power of the Prisoner throughout those years is required." (Page 6).

Note that this is very different from Leninist regimes. There, the leader mostly has to debate with an inner core of a Central Committee elected at a Party Congress. They can theoretically be removed by a hostile vote, as Khrushchev actually was removed in October 1964. And frequently they are forced to compromise.

Right-wing leaders tend to be personal dictatorships. But authority for life for a single man was the norm for almost all political authority before modern times. Mostly inherited, meaning sometime a woman would hold it. Sometime elected but a job for life, as with the Doges (Dukes) of Venice.

Hereditary monarchs are usually put in a different category from dictators. But there is no logic to it.

In Italy, the King remained a theoretical superior, but actually with much less power. Only after Mussolini had visibly failed was it possible to remove him.

Historically, such arrangements are not unusual. In Japan, it was common for the Emperor to be Sacred Ruler and the Shogun to have actual power. France in early mediaeval times had a similar system: the Merovingian dynasty became powerless and the Mayor of the Palace had real power. But in this case, the Catholic Church used its authority to depose the Merovingian and allow the Carolingians to call themselves Kings.

In Italy, the King who had appointed Mussolini and then eventually deposed him tried abdicating, to save the monarchy for his son. But a referendum in 1946 established a Republic. No one was forgiving of the royal role in creating Mussolini's dictatorship. Or rather, they might have forgiven the dictatorship had it not led to a needless war and the occupation of their country.

But as early as 1924, Mussolini was clearly not an ordinary politician:

"However, to clinch this first part of the argument I will quote a few further facts. The Jury may be surprised to learn that elections were held in Italy in the year 1924. This may appear at first sight a denial of my thesis. Yet any doubts to which this fact may give rise are groundless. The Prisoner had already taken the precaution before the election of forcing through a new Electoral Law which prescribed that the party gaining the majority of votes at the polls should hold at least two-thirds of the seats in the new Chamber. This was, of course, a simple device for ensuring that all minority opinion would be trampled down by the Fascist hordes. And, of course, the Prisoner did not rely on this measure alone. The elections were the

most violent and disorderly in modern Italy. Trained thugs and hooligans presided over the polling booths. These tactics were successful in securing a predominantly Fascist Parliament." (Ibid.)

His rule was also consolidated by criminal violence:

"Even so, a few independent voices did survive. One was that of the Socialist leader, Matteotti. On May 30, 1924, he denounced the Government for its unconstitutional methods. The Prisoner himself undertook the reply. He suggested—if such be a proper term to describe the Prisoner's normal and violent manner of speech—that if the few remaining minority M.P's [sic] did not cooperate with the Government they would be crushed. Three days after delivering his speech Matteotti was foully murdered and the same fate befell many others who had dared to oppose the regime. Thus by the end of 1924 the personal dictatorship of the Prisoner was established. There was no disguise and it is therefore not necessary for me to elaborate the argument. I will merely conclude this part of the indictment with a few statements quoted from the Prisoner himself which will be passed to the Jury as exhibits. 'I assume alone' said the Prisoner on August 24, 1924, 'the political, moral and historical responsibility for all that has happened.' By May 15, 1925, the theory had taken a yet more concrete form. 'There must be,' said the Prisoner on that day, 'subordination of all to the will of the Chief.' Gentlemen of the Jury, the Duce has arrived. I ask you to greet him. I do not imagine that at this late date he will disown the title." (Page 6-7)

He also helped push Europe towards the World War that actually happened:

"In November, 1936, the Prisoner signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with the Nazi rulers of Germany. In March, 1938, he accepted the German conquest of Austria, which, incidentally, involved him in another treachery; the Prisoner had often sworn in years gone by that he would protect the independence of Austria with the last drop of Italian blood. In April, 1939, he invaded Albania, again in defiance of a special Non-Aggression Treaty signed with the ruler of that state and again in defiance of his several treaties with Britain not to alter the status quo in the Mediterranean.

"These, however, were inconsiderable crimes done in preparation for the greatest crime of all. The Prisoner waited until France was on her knees. He saw her down and out. He could not refrain from kicking, especially as he hoped that a few kicks would bring many spoils. Without warning and without a shred of excuse Italian troops were ordered by the Prisoner to march into France, to hold and to seize and to plunder what they could." (Page 9)

All of this might have been avoided had Mussolini not survived his 1924 crisis:

"A mounting rage against the disappearance and murder of Matteotti spread throughout the land. The Government was shaken to its roots. The Prisoner sat more uneasily in power then than at any time before his downfall in 1943. He had to make resort to the most desperate remedies to secure his place. First he denied any complicity in the murder and then, since this excuse was not believed, he sought to implicate all others who surrounded him in the crime. He threatened to expose them for their offences against the law, which they had undertaken at his orders.

"And, of course, the Prisoner learnt from this incident. Henceforward he accepted the doctrine of Machiavelli that it is better to be feared than loved. 'For me' he said quite openly, 'violence is perfectly moral, more moral than compromise and bargaining.' 'My regime,' he insisted on June 22, 1925, is 'anti-parliamentary, anti-democratic, anti-liberal.' On May 27, 1927, he declared: 'We have erected the Corporate State. Today we solemnly bury the lie of universal democratic suffrage.' By this date the Prisoner had certainly fulfilled the first part of his programme. 'What is the State,?' he had asked in 1923 and given his own answer. 'It is the Gendarme. All your codices and doctrines and laws are worthless without him.' From 1922 to 1927 that principle was enforced. I ask you, Gentlemen, to remember the dates.

"The violent doctrines of the Prisoner were exemplified not only in domestic affairs. He was equally ingenuous and frank in foreign dealings even at this early date. Eighteen months before obtaining power he stated that 'Fascism does not believe in the vitality and principles which inspire the so-called Society of Nations. In it the Nations are not at all on a footing of equality. It is a kind of Holy Alliance of the plutocratic nations of the Franco-Anglo-Saxon group, to guarantee to themselves, despite the inevitable conflicts of interest, the exploitation of the greater part of the globe.' In 1921 he gave first expression to a policy which was later to become famous. 'It is destined,' he said, 'that Mediterranean should become ours, that Rome should be the directing city of civilisation in the whole of the West of Europe.'" (Page 14)

That's the prosecution case. But Foot, who was not much concerned with the sins of the discredited Mussolini, imagines the Counsel for the Defence choosing to admit the facts, but deny that they were crimes:

"Now, Gentlemen, you may wonder why I, who am defending the Prisoner should recall these black details in his early career. I have done so with a purpose. I have recalled this record as well as my meagre talents and hasty study will permit in order that the prosecution shall not again be able to resurrect any of these topics to affect your judgment. For I hope to be able to prove to you shortly that none of these actions performed in the early part of the Prisoner's career provide fitting subjects for your scrutiny. I will prove to you that this record is not such that it should call for your condemnation. Rather it is one which demands your praise and adulation. I will give you the proof from the mouths of a series of eminent witnesses. I hope, my Lord, I may call them now. The first is Sir Austen Chamberlain.

"(Sir Austen Chamberlain takes the witness box.)"

"Counsel: Sir Austen, what was your position in the British Government in 1924?

"Sir Austen: I was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Counsel: What was the first foreign mission which you undertook in that exalted capacity?

"Sir Austen: I paid a visit to Rome.

"Counsel! What was the date of your visit?

"Sir Austen: The date was December 6 to 12, 1924.

"Counsel: What was the purpose of your visit?

"Sir Austen: It was to establish friendly relations with the new Italian Government. But it was also a social visit. I paid

two or three social calls on Mussolini at that time, accompanied by my wife.

"Counsel: Oh, yes, I seem to recall some incident connected with your wife. She was photographed, was she not?

"Sir Austen: Yes.

"Counsel: Shaking hands with Mussolini?

"Sir Austen: Yes." (Page 15)

Austen Chamberlain was the son of Joseph Chamberlain, and older half-brother of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He served as Chancellor of the Exchequer (twice) and was briefly Conservative Party leader before serving as Foreign Secretary from 1924 to 1929. From 1931 he was a noted back-bencher and a supporter of re-armament. And he died in 1937, which is why Foot earlier spoke of 'raising the dead'.

His support for Mussolini went far beyond normal politeness to a foreign government. Mussolini had been a leading socialist before 1914. He was won over by the notion of Italy joining the war on the British side. And on his journey towards Fascism, he had British help:

"In 1917 Mussolini got his start in politics with the help of a £100 weekly wage (the equivalent of £6000 as of 2009) from the British security service MI5, to keep anti-war protestors at home and to publish pro-war propaganda. This help was authorized by Sir Samuel Hoare.¹⁴

"In March 1917 [Sir Samuel Hoare] was posted to Rome, where he remained until the end of the war. His duties included helping to dissuade Italy from dropping out of the war. In Italy, he met and recruited the former socialist leader Benito Mussolini on behalf of the British overseas intelligence service, which was then known as MI1(c). Newly-published documents show that Britain's intelligence service helped Mussolini to finance his first forays into Italian politics as a right-wing politician. Hoping to keep Italy on its side in 1917, during the First World War, British intelligence gave Mussolini, a 34-year-old editor of a right-wing newspaper, £100 a week to keep his propaganda flowing."¹⁵

You could say that was just the sort of odd alliances that happen in wars. But the Tories continued to view Mussolini as a friend when he overthrew the Parliamentary Democracy that we are repeatedly told that Britain's rulers cherish.

Note that the British Empire was at the time the world's only Superpower. The USA had chosen to withdraw from European entanglements and not join the League of Nations. So evidence of British backing counted for a lot. And to Italians, Mussolini and his wife photographed with the British Foreign Secretary and his wife would have been understood as clear personal ties to the strongest world power at the time:

"Counsel: And do you recall that a million and a half copies

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Mussolini#Formation_of_the_National_Fascist_Party

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Hoare,_1st_Viscount_Templewood

of that photograph were printed by order of Mussolini and distributed throughout Italy?

"Sir Austen: I was not responsible for Mussolini's internal affairs

"Counsel: Of course not, Sir Austen. You said as much at the time, I believe, in an interview with the *Tribuna* which was also widely quoted. I have a copy here with which to jog your memory. Perhaps you will be good enough to read it to the Court.

"Sir Austen: (reading) "Signor Mussolini is a wonderful man and a formidable worker. I cannot enter into the internal policy of foreign countries, but I must say Signor Mussolini is working for the greatness of his country, and is bearing a tremendous weight upon his shoulders...

"Counsel: Thank you, Sir Austen. That is enough. I do not think we need trouble you with the special intimacies of your conversation with the Prisoner at that date. Perhaps the Court is more concerned with the political implications of your visit. I have discussed this incident with the Prisoner. He has repeated to me the statement which he made at the time to the Fascist Council when the news came through that the Labour Government of Britain had fallen in 1924 and had been succeeded by a Conservative Government. It may be remembered that Arthur Henderson, a member of that Labour Government, had rudely described the Prisoner as 'the murderer of Matteoti.' Hence, the Prisoner's jubilation at his fall. Hence his rejoicing at the return of a new Government. 'Victory' he exclaimed to his Counsellors, 'one sector of the international anti-Fascist front has collapsed.' That appears to have been putting it rather high. However, you, Sir Austen, did not disappoint these hopes altogether. Certainly you had eminent support for your opinions." (Page 16)

And it was not just politicians. Press lord Harold Harmsworth had become enormously influential through his newspaper the *Daily Mail*. And in 1919 he had received the title Viscount Rothermere, which is used here:¹⁶

"I must call the next witness—the late Lord Rothermere.

"(Lord Rothermere takes the witness box.)...

"Rothermere: As I left Signor Mussolini's room [in 1928] I was pleased to see, in a prominent place on a table that contains some of his most valued possessions, a photograph of Sir Austen Chamberlain, signed with a message of personal good wishes. Sir Austen Chamberlain has done a great deal during his period of office to develop the good relations that exist between the British and the Italian Governments. It should be the firm resolve of every future British Foreign Secretary to maintain and strengthen an international friendship which is so valuable to both countries.

"Counsel: Thank you, Lord Rothermere. Was that the first occasion on which you had the privilege of meeting the Prisoner?

"Rothermere: No. The first meeting between Signor Mussolini and myself took place in the summer of 1924, at a time when the murder of the Socialist Deputy, Matteoti, by a criminally extremist section of the Fascist Party, had, as

Mussolini told me, 'hampered his work.' That was the most critical time of Mussolini's eventful period of power. The prejudice of the whole world was against him; wrongly regarding him as responsible for a political murder which had done most deadly injury to his own regime. The calm strength and self-reliance Mussolini showed then, his set determination to cut out the evil growth that had manifested itself in the Fascist organisation of his creation, were proof unmistakable of his great force of character. He came with full success through that test laid down by Rudyard Kipling in the familiar lines:

"If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you.'

"Counsel: Just one moment, Lord Rothermere, before you finish the verse. Did he cut out the evil growth? There is a rumour that Amerigo Dumini, the murderer of Matteoti, lived a good deal longer than you did, that he was, in fact, found among the civilians of Derna when Wavell's troops entered the town, in 1941. However, that is by the way. Did you find, Lord Rothermere, that your first opinion was justified by later events?

"Rothermere: As a close student of international politics I was better placed than most people to realise the immense significance of the accession of Mussolini to position and power. By snatching Italy from the very edge of the abyss of Bolshevism, he had saved the civilisation of Western Europe. In his own country he was the antidote to a deadly poison. For the rest of Europe he has been a tonic which has done to all incalculable good. I can claim with sincere satisfaction to have been the first man in a position of public influence to put Mussolini's splendid achievement in its right light.

"Counsel: I can understand your pride. But were there not some who objected to your policies?

"Rothermere: When I heard armchair critics, who generally had made a complete failure of their own lives, denouncing Mussolini who raised the life of a whole nation to manifest success I could only marvel at the vanity and ignorance of some types of human nature. It was beyond the capacity of the Liberals and the Socialists to recognise true greatness.

"Counsel: This, then, was your final judgment. I do not recollect any retraction of your views at a later date. Would you tell this Court what you told your readers in March, 1928?

"Rothermere: He is the greatest figure of our age. Mussolini will probably dominate the history of the 20th century as Napoleon dominated that of the early 19th century. I am proud of the fact that the *Daily Mail* was the first newspaper in England, and in 'the world outside Italy, to give the public a right estimate of the soundness and durability of his work. Counsel: I am most grateful for your testimony. However, I am sure that in fairness to yourself the Court, in setting the proper value on that last tribute to the greatest figure of the age, will remember the date. It was in 1928—before you had met Hitler." (Page 16-18)

Foot was entirely right about Dumini. He had been lightly punished for the murder of Matteoti, serving only eleven months of a five-year prison sentence. He was punished more severely when he tried making demands on the Fascist leadership, and was exiled to Libya:

"He remained in the region for more than a decade and was captured by the British Army at Derna during the North

¹⁶ Note that saying 'Lord' rather than Viscount is normal British practice for such titled persons.

African Campaign of World War II. Sentenced to death as a spy, he was hit by 17 bullets from a firing squad and still managed to remain alive, escaping to safety in Tunisia during the night.

"As Dumini returned to Italy, he was received with astonishment and offered yet another generous pension. He went into business as a transporter and bought a villa in a residential area of Florence.

"With the 1943 fall of fascism in southern Italy, he joined the German-backed Italian Social Republic. After the Allied occupation of that region, Dumini was arrested in Bologna and placed on trial for Matteotti's murder. He was given a life sentence, but spent no more than eight years in prison and, following more than a decade in quiet retirement, died at the age of 73 at Rome as the result of a domestic accident."¹⁷

Rothermere died in 1940. He and his elder brother Viscount Northcliffe did enormous harm with their cheap populist right-wing newspaper. A paper that seems to have recently overtaken the more crudely noxious *Sun* as Britain's best-selling paper.¹⁸

The *Daily Mail* had encouraged Britain to see Germany as an intolerable threat before 1914. But was supportive of both Italian Fascism and German Nazism until they threatened British hegemony:

"Lord Rothermere was a friend of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, and directed the Mail's editorial stance towards them in the early 1930s. Rothermere's 1933 leader 'Youth Triumphant' praised the new Nazi regime's accomplishments, and was subsequently used as propaganda by them. In it, Rothermere predicted that 'The minor misdeeds of individual Nazis would be submerged by the immense benefits the new regime is already bestowing upon Germany'. Journalist John Simpson, in a book on journalism, suggested that Rothermere was referring to the violence against Jews and Communists rather than the detention of political prisoners.

"Rothermere and the Mail were also editorially sympathetic to Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists. Rothermere wrote an article titled 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts' published in the *Daily Mail* on 15 January 1934, praising Mosley for his 'sound, commonsense, Conservative doctrine', and pointing out that: 'Young men may join the British Union of Fascists by writing to the Headquarters, King's Road, Chelsea, London, S.W.'

"The *Spectator* condemned Rothermere's article commenting that, '... the Blackshirts, like the *Daily Mail*, appeal to people unaccustomed to thinking. The average *Daily Mail* reader is a potential Blackshirt ready made. When Lord Rothermere tells his clientele to go and join the Fascists some of them pretty certainly will.'

"The paper's support ended after violence at a BUF rally in Kensington Olympia in June 1934. Mosley and many others thought Rothermere had responded to pressure from Jewish businessmen who it was believed had threatened to stop advertising in the paper if it continued to back an anti-Semitic party. The paper editorially continued to oppose the

arrival of Jewish refugees escaping Germany, describing their arrival as 'a problem to which the *Daily Mail* has repeatedly pointed.'¹⁹

Whereas Rothermere's legacy flourishes, that of George Ward Price has almost vanished. But he counted at the time.

"The next Witness is Mr. G. Ward Price, Special Correspondent of Lord Rothermere's Newspaper the *Daily Mail*.

"(Ward Price takes the witness box.)

"Counsel: Mr. Ward Price, I fully understand that the views you hold today on the Prisoner at the bar may differ somewhat from those which you held at earlier dates. However, I must explain that you have not been called as a witness in order to express your present views. I gather that you are still able to enlighten a wide public with your expert opinions on the Italian situation through the columns of the *Daily Mail*. That is your affair and theirs. The business of this Court is different. I wish the Court to be informed of the views which you held before the Prisoner became involved in this war. I will ask you to cast your mind back to those earlier days and in order that no injustice may be done you my questions will be framed in such a manner that you need not depart at all from the statements which have already appeared in print under your signature. Your evidence is essential, for you knew these Dictators and it was in your writings that the international significance of Fascism was most appreciated. Let us imagine, therefore, that this is the year 1924, the year of Matteotti's death. How does Fascism appear to you at that date? Is it true that Fascism has but small support?

"Ward Price: Behind Mussolini stands all that is best in Italy. His supporters include the leaders of the Italian manufacturing industries which are now progressing with greater strides than any in Europe. Fascist Government in Italy arises from the game natural instinct of self-preservation as exists in England none the less strongly for as yet being hidden.

"Counsel: You think so highly of Mussolini's regime at that time that it has a lesson for us?

"Ward Price: For those Britons who realise the dangerous condition into which their country's affairs are drifting, Italy stands out today as an example and encouragement. From 1920 to 1922 her condition was so desperate that to us it would have meant disaster beyond repair. Yet none who knows both countries can deny that the economic position of Italy is now far better than our own, her national prospects brighter, her people of all classes happier and more contented.

"Counsel: And what is your opinion at that time of Mussolini himself?

"Ward Price: Not in our time only, but down through history Mussolini will remain an inspiration to all who prize freedom and love their native lands.

"Counsel: Let us move forward to 1926. Do you still hold to your opinion in that year?

"Ward Price: Fascism has raised the Italian nation to a degree of order, prosperity and self-confidence equalled in

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amerigo_Dumini

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/jun/19/daily-mail-eclipses-the-sun-to-become-uks-top-selling-paper>

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily_Mail#Support_of_fascism

no other European country. After four years' trial its rule is more popular with Italians than any executive has been since they became a nation.

"Counsel: Move forward again to 1932. What now is your judgment in 1932?

"Ward Price: The greatest evolution of the last decade of world history has been the regeneration of the national genius of Italy.

"Counsel: Can you think of some historical parallel by which we may estimate the immensity of this achievement?

"Ward Price: When he formed the first Fascio at Milan in 1919, Mussolini started as far-reaching a revolution in the world's political development as Luther brought about in its religious structure when he nailed his " 95 Theses " to the door of the Church in Wittenberg 402 years before.

"Counsel: What do you think at this time in 1932 are the qualities which have enabled him to do this?

"Ward Price: Principal among them are courage and objectivity.

"Counsel: Any others?

"Ward Price: It is the secret of his success that he had imparted his faith to his fellow countrymen. Ignorant and prejudiced people talk of Italian affairs as if that nation were subject to some tyranny which it would willingly throw off.

"Counsel: How then do you explain the criticism of his regime?

"Ward Price: With that rather morbid commiseration for fanatical minorities which is the rule with certain imperfectly informed sections of British public opinion, this country long shut its eyes to the magnificent work that the Fascist regime was doing. I have several times heard Mussolini himself express his gratitude to the Daily Mail as having been the first British newspaper to put his aims fairly before the World.

"Counsel: Your views seem strangely to confirm those put forward by Lord Rothermere. Why was he and why were you so eager to spread the news of this new doctrine? Or, in other words, what was your final judgement at that time in 1932 on the new phenomenon?

"Ward Price: I asked myself this question: Will this prove to be the century of Universal Fascism, as Mussolini declared—in the same way as the last century was the age of that democracy which is now becoming so universally discredited? The possibility of the fulfilment of his prophecy was never greater since the Duce formed his first Fascio in the heart of a nation torn by civil conflict, and so laid the foundations of all those rapid and extensive reforms and improvements upon which the Fascist regime today, amid the resuscitated glories of Ancient Rome, looks back with lawful pride.

"Counsel: Mr. Price, it would be indelicate and irrelevant for me to ask whether these views of yours ever changed. However, I see that you wrote a book on this subject, the latest edition of which was published in August, 1938. Would you read to the Court the estimate of the character of the prisoner which appears on page 220, an estimate which you state you had no reason to alter during a fourteen years' acquaintance with the Prisoner.

"Ward Price: 'He is an Elizabethan. Allowing for altered conditions, he stands to modern Italy as Raleigh and Drake did to England in Queen Elizabeth's day. He incarnates the

new spirit which has possessed his nation, and between the Italy of the early 20th century and the England of the early 17th there is much spiritual resemblance—the same internal national pride, the same unbounded optimism, the same fierce sense of opening opportunity, the same quick, sensitive temper, the same tendency to recklessness, the same full-blooded heat of a nation that feels its youth and strength.'

Counsel: We must all be grateful to Mr. Ward Price for his first-hand recollections. I am sure we will now read his articles with greater attention and scrutiny. But I must still ask the patience of the Court to call a few more witnesses." (Page 18-21)

Ward Price is almost forgotten. The legacy of Emil Ludwig has fared better: several of his books have been reprinted in the 21st century.

That he was a Jewish enthusiast for Mussolini might seem odd, particularly since he emphasised his Jewishness:

"Emil Ludwig (originally named Emil Cohn) was born in Breslau, now part of Poland. Born into a Jewish family, he was raised as a non-Jew but was not baptized. 'Many persons have become Jews since Hitler,' he said. 'I have been a Jew since the murder of Walther Rathenau, from which date I have emphasized that I am a Jew.'"²⁰

Rathenau was a German industrialist, writer and liberal politician, assassinated by right-wingers in 1922.

But until the mid-1930s, Mussolini's Italy was not anti-Jewish. There were some Jews among the leaders. His mistress Margherita Sarfatti has been called 'The Jewish Mother of Fascism'. So it is not so odd for Ludwig in 1929 to be admiring him:

"I call Mr. Emil Ludwig, the eminent historian.

"(Emil Ludwig takes the witness box.)"

"Counsel: Mr. Ludwig, when did you pay your first visit to the Prisoner?

"Ludwig: In the Spring of 1929. Subsequently I had other interviews with him.

"Counsel: Had you any preconceived views about his regime before you saw him?

"Ludwig: It was certainly with mixed feelings that I paid my first visit. My friends and I were first attracted by the social features of Mussolini's revolution. I mean that part of his programme which established an organisation for the protection of the working classes. But of course we were opposed to the policy of shackling the Press and prohibiting the free expression of opinion. When I first came to visit him I certainly felt more against him than for him.

"Counsel: Did you retain these views? What was your first impression?

"Ludwig: The mental picture of Mussolini which is generally formed by the outside public is by no means true to life. As one enters the marvellous hall on which the master craftsmen of four centuries have lavished their artistic genius it appears at first to be quite empty. Soon a man stands up from a desk at the far end, about twenty yards distant, and approaches the centre of the hall to greet the

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emil_Ludwig

visitor. He is rather small and of stocky build. At first one is rather surprised to notice the delicate and almost feminine hands. But that feeling changes the moment he grasps the hand of the guest. It is a manly and firm shake. The deep black eyes and the large domed forehead are in striking contrast. And here you have an illustration of the basic contradiction that underlies Mussolini's whole nature. Like every man of creative genius, he is a combination of masculine and feminine qualities, the Act and the Dream...

"Counsel: Did he give you examples of the constructive work?"

"Ludwig: Anyone who had lived in Italy for several years, as I did, and who then went through the country again could not fail to be struck by the improvements which were everywhere visible.

"Counsel: Did he speak to you about his foreign policy?"

"Ludwig: Yes. I asked him why he had made such bellicose speeches in the Spring of 1930. And this was his reply: 'We had been irritated and I had to convince myself how far the nation would follow me in case of an emergency. When I had ascertained that it would follow me to a man in case of necessity I delivered a speech over the radio which gave assurances of peace; in the opening of 1931. And here again I was convinced that the feeling of the nation was with me. I have never urged people into war. All constructive men need peace.'

"Counsel: And did he convince your historical judgment?"

"Ludwig: I considered Mussolini as a guarantee of peace in Europe. He appealed to me as a constructive statesman, desiring to lift his people to a higher standard of living and give them a more forward place among the nations. Moreover, when I saw him he was becoming gradually less violent, less volcanic and less extreme. And he was correspondingly more pensive, slower to come to conclusions and far more careful about taking drastic decisions. He was essentially a constructive realist. In spite of all the opposition I feel towards his system of government, I believe that in his youth Mussolini was not a mere revolutionary. He yearned, I think, for the establishment of a definitely new order of things. And if he sought power it was not for its own sake but rather that he might help in building up this new order after which he yearned." (Page 21-23)

Winston Churchill was as guilty as the other Tories over Mussolini. But he had from very early on been hostile to Hitler. In 1943 he was an essential wartime leader, so Foot deals mildly with him:

"Counsel: Thank you, Mr. Ludwig. Your evidence has been especially valuable. It has put the argument in its full historical perspective. However, you may claim and perhaps the other witnesses may claim that your views were upheld by a more eminent figure, whom I do not propose to put into the witness box, but whose testimony is certainly valuable. I will now read to the Court the speech delivered by Mr. Winston Churchill when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer under Mr. Baldwin. The speech was made to the Italian and Foreign Press in Rome on January 20, 1927. After it has been read it will be placed at the disposal of the Jury alongside the other exhibits provided by the Attorney-General 'I could not help being charmed,' said Mr. Churchill, 'like so many other people have been,

by Signor Mussolini's gentle and simple bearing and by his calm, detached poise in spite of so many burdens and dangers. Secondly, anyone could see that he thought of nothing but the lasting good, as he understood it, of the Italian people, and that no lesser interest was of the slightest consequence to him. If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been whole-heartedly with you from the start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism. I will, however, say a word on an international aspect of Fascism. Externally your movement has rendered a service to the whole world. The great fear which has always beset every democratic leader or a working class leader has been that of being undermined or overbid by someone more extreme than he. Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the masses of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism.'" (Page 23)

Churchill remains a British hero. Neville Chamberlain is now universally condemned for weakness in the face of Hitler. But he had also not been hostile to Fascism as such:

"Gentlemen, on this part on the indictment I will call but one further witness. I must then ask you to allow me to develop my argument on the basis of the evidence which you and I have heard. I began with one Chamberlain. It is perhaps fitting I should conclude with another. Mr. Neville Chamberlain will take the Witness Box now but I must reserve the right to recall him later if the Attorney-General wishes the trial to continue.

"(Mr. Neville Chamberlain takes the Witness Box.)"

"Counsel: In April, 1938 you signed an Agreement with Italy. It dealt with a question of foreign affairs and we may have to discuss them at greater length later. However, at the conclusion your speech you chose to pass your judgment on the domestic affairs of Italy. I would be grateful if you would quote that reference in full as it appeared in Hansard for the instruction of the Court.

"Mr. Chamberlain: 'In former days we had a close friendship with the old Italy, the Italy which with our warm approval and sympathy, won her independence and her unity under Cavour and Mazzini and Garibaldi—(Hon. Members: and Matteoti.)—Today there is a new Italy, an Italy which, under the stimulus of the personality of Signor Mussolini, is showing a new vigour, in which there is apparent new vision and new efficiency in administration—(Mr. A. V. Alexander: 'And new horrors')—and in the measures which they are taking to improve the conditions of the people. With the laying aside of temporary differences which this Agreement has brought about, I believe that we may look forward to a friendship with the new Italy—(Mr. Alexander: 'Never')—as firmly based as that by which we were bound to the old.'

"Counsel: Gentlemen of the Jury, you have listened with great patience to a sequence of witnesses. I am sure you will not complain about their eminence and variety. You have listened to a Conservative Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a well-known newspaper proprietor whose chief newspaper had at that time the widest circulation of any daily journal in Britain, a well-known journalist who had

received exceptional opportunities for travel and acquaintance with international affairs, a well-known and perhaps the most well-known of modern historians, a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer who has since become Prime Minister of Britain and leader of the Conservative Party, and finally another Prime Minister and Conservative Leader whose evidence was supplied at the time when he held both those high offices.

"I asked you earlier, Gentlemen, to remember certain dates: the date of Matteoti's murder; the date of the Prisoner's first intervention in foreign affairs at Corfu; the dates of the violent words and actions which marked the early career of the Prisoner, which were noted by the Attorney-General and elaborated by myself. I ask you to recall those dates again, and I ask you to consider that all the opinions expressed by the witnesses on the character of the Prisoner and the nature of the regime which he had established were expressed subsequent to those dates. The personal good wishes of Sir Austen Chamberlain were sent to the Prisoner after the death of Matteoti and after the suppression of the Italian Parliament. The tributes of Lord Rothermere, the prophecies of Mr. Ward Price, the historical assessment of Mr. Emil Ludwig, the glowing praise of Mr. Winston Churchill for the personal charm of the Prisoner and his valiant work in saving civilised society, the final word of Mr. Neville Chamberlain were all spoken after and in some cases long after the Prisoner had committed the crime, if crime it be, alleged by the Attorney-General, of having ruthlessly and brutally established himself in power as the Fascist dictator of Italy by the suppression of Parliament, the bludgeoning of opponents and the banishment of all free institutions within Italian domains." (Page 23-25)

"Now, Gentlemen, I think you will agree that this extraordinary evidence puts a totally new aspect on the whole trial. For on the basis of this evidence I will make three contentions, which I do not feel the Attorney-General will choose to debate.

First, these witnesses prove that a great section of Conservative opinion on Britain not merely approved but applauded the regime which the Prisoner had established in Italy. Crimes may have been committed in the process of establishing it (although the witnesses make hardly any reference to them) but in the opinion of the witnesses and the opinion which they represented the establishment of a Fascist dictatorship in Italy was an achievement on which the Prisoner should be congratulated rather than condemned. In their consideration the murder of Matteoti, the suppression of Parliament, the attack on Corfu—to mention no further items—were not matters sufficiently grave to affect their final judgment. The good which the Prisoner did, according to their criteria of what is good, far outweighed these trifles.

That is my first contention. However, the witnesses were not content to applaud the achievements of the Prisoner. They actually assisted him in his task. The visit of Sir Austen Chamberlain to Italy so soon after the murder of Matteoti and when indeed, as I have revealed, the regime was in the midst of a crisis on account of this event and when the whole fortune of the Prisoner was in the balance, must surely have acted as a powerful support for his regime. He was able to claim, and he and his newspapers did claim, that whatever failures there had been in domestic

affairs, the new regime was winning victories and prestige in the sphere of foreign politics...

I now reach my third contention. It is clear that the question of whether the Prisoner can be held guilty of the first count in the indictment is not a question of fact or of law. It is a matter of politics and a matter on which the most varying opinions have been held and may still be held. Mr. Arthur Henderson and the Labour Party may have regarded the Prisoner at that time as the murderer of Matteoti, the champion of a despicable creed and a potential disturber of the peace. A great body of Conservative opinion took a quite contrary view, and indeed as you have heard some of them even desired that his regime should be taken as a model for this country. Has this Court been assembled here to pronounce on the forgotten views of the political parties? Should we not have examined the Jury to determine their political opinions and their political past? Have they the right now to condemn a Fascist dictator whom, possibly, as followers and admirers of Sir Austen Chamberlain or registered readers of the *Daily Mail* they were applauding and assisting twenty years ago?" (Page 25-26)

"There was hardly any year in which the Prisoner omitted to give this warning of his intentions to the world. 'Within ten years,' he said, in 1932, 'Europe will be modified, and will be Fascist or Fascised. The antithesis by which contemporary culture is enchained can only be overcome in one way, by the doctrine and wisdom of Rome.' Again, in 1934: 'War is to a man as maternity is to a woman. I do not believe in perpetual peace.' And lest anyone should think that these were merely the phrases of the platform, let me quote from the famous article written by the Prisoner for the *Encyclopedia Italiana*. 'Above all,' he says, 'Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates pacifism born of a renunciation of the struggle and an act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it.'

"From these quotations it appears that the Prisoner did not disguise his aims. Where then is the deception or the treachery? Of course, the prosecution may quite legitimately claim that they can produce an equally abundant array of pacific professions from the mouth of the Prisoner. I am sure they can. But even if they were to do so, would their case really be advanced?...

"Treachery, as I have said, implies treachery to something. In this case, according to the indictment, it implies treachery to a standard of international morality. It is the breach of so many international obligations which deeply shocks the Attorney-General. I wonder where he and the Crown which instructed him gained this austere view of international ethics. It would be interesting and also highly relevant to this case to know. Unless he can establish some body of international law to which the vast majority of politicians subscribe and against which the Prisoner has offended, I do not see how he can call upon this Court to pronounce a sentence." (Page 30-31)

Foot through the fictional Defence Counsel then attacks the notion that International Law was taken seriously by leading Tory politicians. He imagines calling John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon:

"(Lord Simon takes the witness box.)

"Counsel: Lord Simon, at what date did you become Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs?

"Simon: In 1932...

"Counsel: What was your first association as Foreign Secretary with the Prisoner?

"Simon: It concerned the Four Power Pact.

"Counsel: What was the date?

"Simon: The Four Power Pact was signed in Rome in March, 1933, by England, France, Germany and Italy.

"Counsel: What were the purposes of the pact?

"Simon: The Four Powers were to declare, first their intention to coordinate their European policy; next, their readiness to consider a revision of the Peace Settlement; and next, desire to 'integrate their policy in the Colonial sphere.'

"Counsel: Did you succeed in coordinating your European policy?

"Simon: The Pact never came into operation. France refused to ratify it.

"Counsel: It seems to me, Lord Simon, that you do yourself much less than justice. Was not this the start of the policy which was so happily revived at Munich in 1938? Surely it was. However, if the Court will allow I would like to intervene at this moment with one or two observations. A month or two before this Pact was signed the Prisoner had been engaged in an attack on the whole Geneva system. 'The system of conferences is finished,' he said, in denouncing 'the eternal fiction or conventional lie by which incense must be burnt to democratic equalitarianism, which does not exist in nature and never existed in history.'

"It was in this mood that he put forward the project of a Four Power Pact and the speed with which you, Lord Simon, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, accepted the invitation and went to Rome must have represented for him a considerable triumph. For the Prisoner the Four Power Pact system had obvious advantages. It excluded Russia from the Councils of Europe. It was deeply resented by the smaller Powers in Eastern and Balkan Europe. It marked a noticeable blow to French prestige particularly in Poland who now first began her policy of orientating her view towards that of Germany. Indeed, some of the smaller Powers almost regarded the Four Power Pact as a breach of British obligations towards the League. That was no doubt putting it too highly, especially as the plan fell through. In any case I hope you will excuse the digression. I only wish to establish the point that at this time the Prisoner had a clear and pronounced policy which was so little disguised that Dr. Benes described it at that time in the Parliament of Prague. It was a policy, he said, to secure (1) a special status for the Great Powers, especially against the lesser states of Central and South-Eastern Europe, (2) a new balance of power aimed at the weakening of France and her friends, (3) Treaty revision on such lines as would weaken the Little Entente and Poland, and (4) Colonial concessions to Italy...

"Counsel: And is it also not a fact that a few weeks before Stresa you had discussed a naval treaty with Hitler in Berlin and that a few weeks after Stresa your successor, Sir Samuel Hoare, signed an Anglo-German Naval Treaty which could only be construed as a direct and unilateral breach of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. Was not the

Pact in fact so condemned by France, Russia and several other countries since it allowed Germany to build a fleet almost as large as France's and one which could almost certainly command the Baltic?

"Simon: Sir Samuel Hoare is well able to answer for himself. Counsel: And the same applies, I suppose, to the First Lord of the Admiralty at that time?

"Simon: Certainly." (Page 32-34)

Next comes Sir Samuel Hoare. He had become notorious over the Hoare-Laval Pact with French Prime Minister Pierre Laval. This partially recognised the Italian conquest of Abyssinia (modern Ethiopia), but caused an outcry even in right-wing circles. The King was supposed to have remarked "*no more coals to Newcastle, no more Hoares to Paris.*"²¹

(Hoare is an old English surname meaning grey-haired or white-haired, and also found in hoar frost. But it is pronounced identically to 'whore'. And until the 1960s, Paris was identified by the English as a den of un-English vices.)

He was removed from office when the Labour Party joined the wartime coalition, being blamed for earlier policies of appeasement. He was British ambassador to Spain from 1940 to 1944, and arguably did good work ensuring that Spain remained neutral.

Pierre Laval, his partner in the Pact, collaborated with the Nazi occupation. This included the deportation of Jews, most of whom were murdered. Also shipping French labourers to the German war effort. The French executed him in October 1945.

"I would like to call Sir Samuel Hoare.

(*Sir Samuel takes the witness box.*)

"Counsel: What was your first association with the Prisoner?

"Hoare: My first association was in 1915, when I went to Italy on a special mission . . .

"Counsel: An old acquaintance I We will not trouble you, Sir Samuel, with the details. It might cause embarrassment for and arouse prejudice against my client. I was referring to your first association with the Prisoner in connection with the crimes alleged against him in the indictment. I do not expect any detailed recital. There are, however, a few points concerning the Abyssinian affair.

"Hoare: I became Foreign Secretary in 1935 and on July 11, some time after the Abyssinian dispute had already come before the League, I made my view clear. I made it clear that we had always understood and well understood Italy's desire for overseas expansion. Indeed, we had in the past done our best to show our sympathy with Italian aspirations in a practical way. In 1925, we ceded Jubaland to Italy and in the negotiations at that time we showed our willingness to endeavour to ensure for Italy some territorial satisfaction by a reasonable and legitimate arrangement with Abyssinia." (Page 35-6)

Jubaland was an ethnic Somali territory, and was added to Italian Somaliland. It lies in the south of

²¹ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom .

Somali territory: Britain remained British Somaliland in the north. And with the central government of once-unified Somaliland broken down, both now have their own administrations.

Foot shows that Tory policy was consistent:

"I will now call Mr. Duff Cooper.

"(Mr. Duff Cooper takes the witness box.)

"Counsel: Mr. Duff Cooper, I would like you to take up a few points of evidence just about the period where Mr. Amery left off. What was your view of the correct policy towards Italy after the sanctions period, say, about 1937?

"Duff Cooper: I was in favour of letting bygones be bygones and seeking to restore with Italy those happy relations which so long existed between that country and ourselves.

"Counsel: Were you hopeful that this policy would prove successful?

"Duff Cooper: I felt that between Italy and England there could never be any serious misunderstanding. Our friendship with Italy was very ancient despite the little opposition put up to Julius Caesar when he first landed.

"Counsel: And were your hopes still good even after you had resigned from the Government objecting to its policy towards Germany? You wrote an article on Italy on November 2, 1938? Would you quote to us the relevant passages from that?

"Duff Cooper: "It is not the dictator countries but the aggressor countries that are a menace to world peace. Sometimes the two coincide, but not always, and the post-war history of Italy provides an interesting case in point. From the March on Rome until the invasion of Abyssinia—a period of thirteen years – no cloud troubled the blue sky of Anglo-American relations, and during the whole of that period the influence of Signor Mussolini in the councils of Europe was definitely on the side of peace. Concerning the Abyssinian episode the less said now the better... There seems to be no reason why the interests of Great Britain and those of Italy should ever clash. Italy has urged need of peace to consolidate her Empire. Her European frontiers are satisfactory, she has scope for colonisation in Africa, and her highly civilised population abominates war." (Page 48-49)

The final witness is George Lloyd, 1st Baron Lloyd. Another interesting character:

"He was suspicious of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi movement, which he saw as a threat to Britain. He was agitating for rearmament against Germany as early as 1930, before Churchill did. From July 1937 onward, Lloyd was the president of the British Council, a purportedly independent group meant to engage in cultural propaganda promoting the British way of life to the rest of the world that was in fact under the control of the Foreign Office. As head of the British Council, Lloyd ran his own private intelligence network, employing as one his spies, the journalist Ian Colvin, who served as the Berlin correspondent of The News Chronicle.[24] Unusually, Lloyd enjoyed a privileged access to the secret reports of MI6, the British intelligence service."²²

He was serving in Churchill's government as

Leader of the House of Lords when he died in 1941, at the age of 61.

Like Churchill, he had been keen to win over Mussolini against Hitler, or at least keep him neutral. Mussolini was neutral until the Fall of France convinced him that Hitler was a certain winner. And of course Spain was kept neutral, as was right-wing and authoritarian Portugal.

Tories in the 1930s were only very reluctantly enemies of Nazi Germany. They were never anti-Fascist. The pretence of anti-Fascism only happened because they failed to hold onto their old ally Mussolini, a man whose career British right-wingers had supported at critical moments:

"Lloyd: I wrote a pamphlet which contained some references to Italy.

"Counsel: What was its name?

"Lloyd: The British Case.

"Counsel: I know the pamphlet. Would you be good enough to read to the Court your references to Italy appearing on pages 37 and 38?

"Lloyd: "Above all, the Italian genius has developed, in the characteristic Fascist institutions a highly authoritarian regime, which, however, threatens neither religious or economic freedom^ nor the security of other European Nations. It is worth while to note that quite fundamental differences exist between the structure and principles of the Fascist state and those of the Nazi and Soviet States. The Italian system is founded on two rocks: first, the separation of Church and State and the supremacy of the Church in matters not only of faith, but of morals; second the rights of labour. The political machinery of Fascism is, indeed, built up on Trade Unionism, while that of the German State is built up on the ruins of the German labour movement."

"Counsel: Thank you. That seems most comprehensive. And at what date did this tribute appear?

"Lloyd: 1940.

"Counsel: That seems very late. Are you sure the Jury will be right in taking this as a semi-official expression by the Foreign Office or does it only express your private views?

"Lloyd: Of course, it expresses my own views.

"Counsel: And did not the publication of the pamphlet call forth some rebuke from the authorities?

"Lloyd: No.

"Counsel: How do you account for that?

"Lloyd: It had a preface of commendation from Lord Halifax.

"Counsel: What was his position then?

"Lloyd: Foreign Secretary.

"Counsel: So it was a semi-official pamphlet." (Page 50)

The broad conclusion is that it was the British governments, Tory or 'National Government', that allowed Mussolini to offend:

"Could Abyssinia have been conquered by the armies of Italy if the policy of the British Government had been dictated by the speech of September 11, 1935, rather than the private compact of September 10? Could Spain have been successfully invaded without the assistance of Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax? Could Italy have brought such assistance to Nazi Germany if her prestige and power

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Lloyd,_1st_Baron_Lloyd#Political_career

had not been enhanced from the day Lord Simon went to Rome in 1933 to the day Mr. Chamberlain went there in 1939? Gentlemen, if these high personages are also to be condemned, then perhaps the alleged crimes of the Prisoner might assume a recognisable character. But if they are guiltless, I cannot see by what standard the guilt of the Prisoner is to be established. Does the Attorney General propose a series of war trials? Is Sir Samuel Hoare to be brought home from Madrid to face his accusers? Is Lord Simon at last to leave the Woolsack for the dock? Is Lord Halifax to be arraigned as immoral? Are the mortal remains of Mr. Chamberlain to be dug up like Cromwell's and hurled into a common pit? The very idea is monstrous, fantastic, unthinkable." (Page 55)

"Mussolini told the Court in his speech of a day in October 1936 when the newspapers in Rome announced the fall of Madrid. Madrid did not fall until 1939. I ask the Court to remember that fact when it makes its verdict. I ask it to make its verdict in gratitude for those three years and as some poor balm for the four years which have followed.

"The Italian newspapers almost spoke the truth. Mussolini was not alone in his military estimate. Hitler and Franco with him had agreed that it would all be over by November at the latest. All the calculations at the Palazzo Venezia were based on that simple reckoning. It may be that Hitler sent his troops to Spain to try out new weapons and to give his commanders military experience. Mussolini could afford no such luxuries. He expected an easy triumph, one which would transform his dream of 'the Roman Lake' very near to reality. A Spain conquered in 1936 would have been an Italian Spain. But before the victory was achieved whole armies had to be squandered, a large Air Force was dissipated and an exchequer was bankrupted. How would Mussolini have desired not to have forfeited those losses before facing the more exacting challenge of 1940 and 1941?

"Yet this was not all that was lost. If Spain had become Fascist in 1936 almost all Europe would have succumbed—without a war. Europe was overrun later but she was overrun by force. What a difference that made to the future of human kind we shall never be able to measure. We can only guess, but the guess is frightening enough. When Europe was overrun in 1940 and 1941 a bitter legacy of enmity against the conquering power was left in every land. That indelible hate is the ally of freedom to-day. You can see its working in Yugoslavia. How many more German or Italian divisions would there have been in Libya or Tunis or Sicily if Yugoslavia had given to the invader even a grudging welcome? Spain did in 1936 what Yugoslavia did, to her honour, in 1941. Spain decreed that the Axis could not rely on domestic Quislings to achieve their conquests. They must bring whole armies to the aid of the Quislings and the armies brought with them the ultimate hope of Europe's redemption. Because the subject lands were subdued by force and not by cunning, the victims chose resistance before acquiescence, resistance which will one day change to revolt and rebellion. Spain was the model. She taught free Europe how to resist and how to fight.

"Yet it was only done by a hairsbreadth... The Government of Largo Caballero departed. Moorish troops came within a fourpenny tram ride of the centre of the city. The Republic was 'helpless and discredited,' said the *Times* newspaper in London. It was just 'a faction fight,' said Sir Samuel

Hoare. Yet fortunately for the editor of the *Times* and Sir Samuel Hoare and the rest of humanity, Madrid did not fall until three years after, until the Basques had been pounded into the sea, until the rest of Spain had been sliced in half, until hunger had descended on the beleaguered armies, until muscles were so strained, feet so weary and bleeding, stomachs so empty that human courage could do no more.

"Spain was not altogether alone in her battle. She had valuable support from distant Russia. She had other friends, too, who were ready to assist her. They came from Nazi prison camps, from Fascist prison cells, from Poland and Canada, from the slums of Glasgow and the backstreets of the Rhondda. They came to save, but also to avenge. So much they believed could be set right on Spanish fields: a February in Vienna, a March in Berlin, long years in Lombardy, an epoch in London. Here, they believed, the Fascist tide could be fought and turned back. Here, they believed, they could fight the decisive battles later contested at Alamein and Stalingrad. Here they could rescue the peace and freedom of Europe, for if Mussolini could be overthrown on a Spanish battlefield, the impact would be felt in Rome and Milan and soon in Berlin and Hamburg.

"It was not an idle calculation. Nor was it lack of valour which brought these hopes to naught. Spain was defeated in London and Paris, where ignorant men believed that the peace of Europe could be sustained even if Mussolini conquered and where cowardly men believed that the freedom of Europe could be salvaged even if Spain became a corpse. It was by no act of the statesmen in London that Mussolini was prevented from gaining the swiftest and what would have been the most menacing of his triumphs. That service was performed by ragged ill-equipped armies, sometimes called 'scum'; and not merely were those armies deprived of the right to buy weapons; they had to fight against a Mussolini whose 'perfect good faith' was applauded in the British House of Commons even while his soldiers were battling to retrieve the bloody check administered to them before the gates of Madrid in 1936. To the blind eyes and stony hearts of some gentlemen in London, Mussolini was a better friend of peace than Dr. Negrin, who obstinately refused to perform for his country the task discharged for France by Potato in 1940. And while Count Grandi was being received in the salons of Mayfair, other Italians of the International Brigade were helping to win a battle at Guadalajara, fortunately for England and the world.

"Values have changed since those evil days. London and Stalingrad have fought like Madrid. The issues at these later battles were more momentous because the world crisis had scaled a higher peak, the last ditches had been reached and the penalties for failure had become more fateful for all men, yet in heroism neither city need seek a better comparison than Madrid...

"Yet Spain so far has not been able to share the new liberation. The first victim is not the first rescued. Spain was defeated; her prisons have been filled; her people have gone hungry; they have been hurled back into the dark cavern of serfdom from which they sought to break free." (Page 65-67)

Franco's Spain avoided joining the Nazi side. It was denied NATO membership, but the USA massively backed it. Franco remained in power

and kept much the same system till his death in 1975.

There was and still is a broad preference for fascism over Democratic Socialism. And most post-war progress was based on fear of the Soviets winning the Cold War.

Things were snatched back as the Soviet Union faded.

Things similar to fascism are seen as useful, as they were in the 1920s and 1930s:

"The England of the Chamberlains, the Simons and the Hoares, the England of the Conservative Party which held absolute power throughout almost the whole period, has been described to you. It was this England which condoned Fascism, consorted with Fascism, connived at imperialist war, abandoned any hope of building a sane and secure international Society and only fought the Prisoner and considered him guilty at the last hour when it was already too late to save mankind from the cataclysm.

"Yet there was still another England. This other England detested Fascism from the day of its birth. It fought against the betrayal of Abyssinia. It denounced the policy which led to the massacre of Spain. It struggled in opposition throughout those years to build an international society and it understood that the chief enemy which must be fought was Fascism in whatever guise it might appear and in

whatever land it might capture the apparatus of the State. This was the England of the Left, the England of Labour, the England which inherited and adapted to the modern age the European policy which made this country the leader of the nations in the nineteenth century. This England made errors too, but they were errors of a quite different nature from those crimes committed by the men who believed they could reach comfortable terms of settlement with the forces of Fascism which threatened to engulf the continent in a new Dark Ages. The error of this England was that they did not fight hard enough for their faith. Sometimes they accepted for a time the soothing assurances of the British accomplices of Fascism. Sometimes they forgot for a while the full scale of the menace. Sometimes they were cowed by the accusation of 'warmonger' which was fixed upon them by their Conservative opponents whenever they revealed in its true colour the mortal danger which the growth of Fascism presented to the British nation." (Page 81)

The case is excellent now, as then. So why has it been forgotten?

As I said, there is a habit on the left to fight other leftists in the battle of ideas. To overlook the need to fight the centre-right view, even though more than half of the society can be won over to this view in the right circumstance.

Orwell's Review of Foot's Work

By Gwydion M. Williams

George Orwell did a review of Foot's work.

As usual, his main interest was in sneering at other people on the left:

"Now, the book is a fanciful one, but this conclusion is realistic. It is immensely unlikely that the British Tories will ever put Mussolini on trial. There is nothing that they could accuse him of except his declaration of war in 1940. If the 'trial of war criminals' that some people enjoy dreaming about ever happens, it can only happen after revolutions in the Allied countries. But the whole notion of finding scapegoats, of blaming individuals, or parties, or nations for the calamities that have happened to us, raises other trains of thought, some of them rather disconcerting." (Two Wasted Years: The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume XV. Page 294)

He accepts Tory guilt, but he downplays it:

"All this 'Cassius' brings out, but he does shirk its corollary. Throughout his book it is implied that only Tories are immoral. 'Yet there was still another England, he says. This other England detested Fascism from the day of its birth.. This was the England of the Left, the England of Labour. True, but only part of the truth. The actual behaviour of the Left has been more honourable than its theories. It has fought against Fascism, but its representative thinkers have entered just as deeply as their opponents into the evil world of 'realism' and power politics."

Foot was a working journalist and had published under the pseudonym 'Cassius'. Orwell probably knew just who this was, but kept to the rules by not saying. But his impulse, as usual, was to aim mostly at those with politics similar to his own.

"Realism' (it used to be called dishonesty) is part of the general political atmosphere of our time. It is a sign of the weakness of 'Cassius's' position that one could compile a quite similar book entitled The Trial of Winston Churchill, or The Trial of Chiang Kai-Shek, or even The Trial of Ramsay MacDonald. In each case you would find the leaders of the Left contradicting themselves almost as grossly as the Tory leaders quoted by 'Cassius.' For the Left has also been willing to shut its eyes to a great deal and to accept some very doubtful allies. We laugh now to hear the Tories abusing Mussolini when they were flattering him five years ago, but who would have foretold in 1927 that the Left would one day take Chiang Kai-Shek to its bosom? Who would have foretold just after the General Strike that ten years later Winston Churchill would be the darling of the Daily Worker? In the years 1935-39, when almost any ally against Fascism seemed acceptable, Left-wingers found themselves praising Mustapha Kemal and then developing a tenderness for Carol of Rumania.

"Although it was in every way more pardonable, the attitude of the Left towards the Russian regime has

been distinctly similar to the attitude of the Tories towards Fascism. There has been the same tendency to excuse almost anything 'because they're on our side.' It is all very well to talk about Lady Chamberlain photographed shaking hands with Mussolini; the photograph of Stalin shaking hands with Ribbentrop is much more recent. On the whole, the intellectuals of the Left defended the Russo-German pact. It was 'realistic,' like Chamberlain's appeasement policy, and with similar consequences." (Page 295)

This overlooks the circumstances. Left-wingers accepted right-wing allies at a time when Nazism looked very likely to win the war. And Churchill accepted Soviet Russia as an ally for just the same reason.

Successive British governments had supported Mussolini, when there were plenty of other options.

The Tories let the elected government of Spain be denied weapons. Note that the government was of Left Radicals and did not include Spain's Socialists or Communists until the actual Civil War started. The Spanish Communists were initially a very small party. Moreover they rejected the idea of going beyond what was acceptable to the non-socialist Radicals.

As for the Soviet Union, Stalin had been denied an agreement that would stop Hitler from attacking the Soviet Union. He then did his best to set Hitler and Britain at war with each other. Or at least too bitter to gang up against him.

The abrupt collapse of Poland was a shock to everyone. But it seems likely that if Stalin had not managed to end the long-standing British support for fascism, fascism would have won.

As far as individual guilt goes, Orwell suggests that Churchill, Chiang Kai-Shek and Ramsay MacDonald could have had a trial like Mussolini's.

Absurd for Ramsay MacDonald. He tolerated bad Tory policies, but must have sincerely thought he was doing the right thing. And he didn't initiate any repression.

Churchill had been part of the tolerance of fascism. But he also chose to stick to Toryism and Parliamentary Democracy in the 1930s, when other options were open. And was decisive in Britain's refusal to abandon the war after the Fall of France. And likewise refused to

Chiang Kai-Shek was guilty of numerous murders of political opponents, and not just Communists. But he hadn't started any wars, and was essential to keep China fighting at a time when a capitulation to Japan might have happened.

But so keen was George Orwell to snipe at those close to his own politics, that he was ready to let off the real criminals of the Far Right:

"'Cassius' ends his book with the judge's summing-up, and leaves the verdict open, seeming to invite a decision from his readers. Well, if it were left to me, my verdict on both Hitler and Mussolini would be: not death, unless it is inflicted in some hurried unspectacular way. If the Germans and Italians feel like giving them a summary court-martial and then a firing-squad, let them do it. Or better still, let the pair of them escape with a suitcase-full of bearer securities and settle down as the accredited bores of some Swiss pension. But no martyring, no St. Helena business. And, above all, no solemn hypocritical 'trial of war criminals,' with all the slow cruel pageantry of the law, which after a lapse of time has so strange a way of focusing a romantic light on the accused and turning a scoundrel into a hero." (Page 297)

Taking Orwell as your model for left-wing politics seems to me to guarantee the triumph of the Centre-Right.

And that, indeed, has normally been the outcome.

Orwell on British Jews

"Although Jews in England have always been socially looked down on and debarred from a few professions (I doubt whether a Jew would be accepted as an officer in the Navy, for instance), antisemitism is primarily a working-class thing, and strongest among Irish labourers. I have had some glimpses of working-class antisemitism through being three years in the Home Guard—which gives a good cross-section of society—in a district where there are a lot of Jews. My experience is that middleclass people will laugh at Jews and discriminate against them to some extent, but only among working people do you find the full-blown belief in the Jews as a cunning and sinister race who live by exploiting the Gentiles. After all that has happened in the last ten years it is a fearful thing to hear a workingman saying 'Well, I reckon 'Itler done a good job when 'e turned 'em all out', but I have heard just that, and more than once. These people never seem to be aware that Hitler has done anything to the Jews except 'turned 'em all out'; the pogroms, the deportations etc. have simply escaped their notice. It is questionable, however, whether the Jew is objected to as a Jew or simply as a foreigner. No religious consideration enters. The English Jew, who is often strictly orthodox but entirely anglicised in his habits, is less disliked than the European refugee who has probably not been near a synagogue for thirty years. Some people actually object to

the Jews on the ground that Jews are Germans!

"But in somewhat different forms antisemitism is now spreading among the middle class as well. The usual formula is 'of course I don't want you to think I'm antisemitic, but—'—and here follows a catalogue of Jewish misdeeds. Jews are accused of evading military service, infringing the food laws, pushing their way to the front of queues, etc., etc. More thoughtful people point out that the Jewish refugees use this country as a temporary asylum but show no loyalty towards it. Objectively this is true, and the tactlessness of some of the refugees is almost incredible. (For example, a remark by a German Jewess overheard during the Battle of France: 'These English police are not nearly so smart as our SS Men'.) But arguments of this kind are obviously rationalisations of prejudice. People dislike the Jews so much that they do not want to remember their sufferings, and when you mention the horrors that are happening in Germany or Poland, the answer is always 'Oh yes, of course that's dreadful, but—'—and out comes the familiar list of grievances. Not all of the intelligentsia are immune from this kind of thing. Here the get-out is usually that the refugees are all 'petty bourgeois'; and so the abuse of Jews can proceed under a respectable disguise. Pacifists and others who are anti-war sometimes find themselves forced into antisemitism.

"One should not exaggerate the danger of this kind of thing. To begin with: there is probably less antisemitism in England now than there was ten years ago. In the minor novels of that date you find it taken for granted oftener than you would nowadays that a Jew is an inferior or a figure of fun. The 'Jew joke' has disappeared from the stage, the radio and the comic papers since 1934. Secondly, there is a great awareness of the prevalence of antisemitism and a conscious effort to struggle against it. But the thing remains, and perhaps it is one of the inevitable neuroses of war. I am not particularly impressed by the fact that it does not take violent forms. It is true that no one wants to have pogroms and throw elderly Jewish professors into cesspools, but then there is very little crime or violence in England anyway. The milder form of antisemitism prevailing here can be just as cruel in an indirect way, because it causes people to avert their eyes from the whole refugee problem and remain uninterested in the fate of the surviving Jews of Europe. Because two days ago a fat Jewess grabbed your place on the bus, you switch off the wireless when the announcer begins talking about the ghettos of Warsaw; that is how people's minds work nowadays.

"That is all the political news I have. Life goes on much as before. I don't notice that our food is any different, but the food situation is generally considered to be worse. The war hits one a succession of blows in unexpected places. For a long time razor blades were unobtainable, now it is boot polish. Books are being printed on the most villainous paper and in tiny print, very trying to the eyes. A few people are wearing wooden-soled shoes. There is an alarming amount of drunkenness in London. The American soldiers seem to be getting on better terms with the locals, perhaps having become more resigned to the climate etc. Air raids continue, but on a pitiful scale. I notice that many people feel sympathy for the Germans now that it is they who are being bombed—a change from 1940, when people saw their houses tumbling about them and wanted to see Berlin scraped off the map."

George Orwell, *London Letter*, May 1943. Found in *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, Volume XV. *Two Wasted Years*, pages 110-111.

Churchill on Fascism in 1927

"Before leaving for London by the mid-day train to-day, Mr. Churchill received representatives of the Italian and foreign Press. Mr. Churchill informed his audience that he had prepared what he, an ex-journalist, considered the questions and answers most likely to help them in their work, and that a typed copy of this would be given to whomsoever desired one. The following are extracts in his own words from the impressions made upon him by a week's visit to Italy.

"You will naturally ask me about the interviews I have had with Italian statesmen and in particular with Signor Volpi. Those interviews were purely private and of a general character. It is a good thing in modern Europe for public men in different countries to meet on a friendly and social basis and form personal impressions of one another. It is one of the ways in which international suspicion may be diminished and frank and confident relations maintained. I could not help being charmed, like so many other people have been, by Signor Mussolini's gentle and simple bearing and by his calm detached poise in spite of so many burdens and dangers. Secondly, anyone could see that he thought of nothing but the lasting good, as he understands it, of the Italian people, and that no lesser interest was of the slightest consequence to him.

"I am sure that I am violating no confidence when I saw that a large part of my conversation with Signor Mussolini and with Count Volpi turned on the economic position of the Italian wage earner... I was very glad to have it proved to me by facts and figures that there is a definite improvement month by month over the preceding year...

"I have heard a great deal about your new law of corporations which, I am told, directly associates twenty millions of active citizens with the State and obliges the State to undertake very direct responsibilities in regard to these dependents. Such a movement is of the deepest interest, and its results will be watched in every country. It will certainly require the utmost good will and cooperation of all the people, as well as the wise and clear guidance of the State. But at any rate, in the face of such a system, ardently accepted, it is quite absurd to suggest that the Italian Government does not rest upon popular bases or that it is not upheld by the active and practical assent of the great masses.

“If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been wholeheartedly with you from the start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism. But in England we have not had to fight this danger in the same deadly form. We have our way of doing things. But that we should succeed in grappling with Communism and choking the life out of it—of that I am absolutely sure.

“I will, however, say a word on the international aspect of Fascismo. Externally, your movement has rendered a service to the whole world. The great fear which has always beset every democratic leader or working-class leader has been that of being undermined or overbid by someone more extreme than he: It seems that a continued progression to the Left, a sort of inevitable landslide into the abyss was characteristic of all revolutions. Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the mass of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter, no great nation will be unprovided with the ultimate means of protection against cancerous growths, and every responsible labour leader in every country ought to feel his feet more firmly planted in resisting levelling and reckless doctrines. The great mass of people love their country and are proud of its flag and history. They do not regard these as incompatible with a progressive advance towards social justice and economic betterment.’

Mr. Churchill On Fascism.

The Times, 21 January 1927.]

Churchill was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1924 till 1929, when Labour won the General Election. He was not included in the National Government that was formed in 1931. Those were his ‘wilderness years’, lasting till he got back his old job of First Lord of the Admiralty when the war started.

Fascism and Union Jackery

By Brendan Clifford

This is the introduction to a pamphlet of the same name, with historic writings demonstrating the similarity of ideas. The entire pamphlet is available as a PDF at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/f-free-pamphlets/>.

Why did the English State not become Fascist in the period between the two World Wars, when so many European States did?

Because it was Fascist enough already.

I had reason to ask that question about thirty years ago, and that is the answer I got.

In order to consider the question I had to form a definite idea of what Fascism was. In current usage on the Left it was a mere term of abuse which could be applied to any strong assertion of authority. And there was associated with it the notion of a Fascist psychology in a populace in the form of a predisposition towards deference to authority. Insofar as there was a notion of it as a distinct economic form, it was the Corporation (that is, a public body in which both sides of the class antagonism of Capital and Labour were represented).

The Corporation was taken to be a

deviation from the norm—in fact from two norms which had become entangled in each other as a consequence of the War of 1941-45 in which Britain and the USA were allied with Bolshevik Russia. The norms were the Free Market in which each was in competition with all, and the Socialist economy in which all productive property was publicly owned by a state serving the interest of Labour.

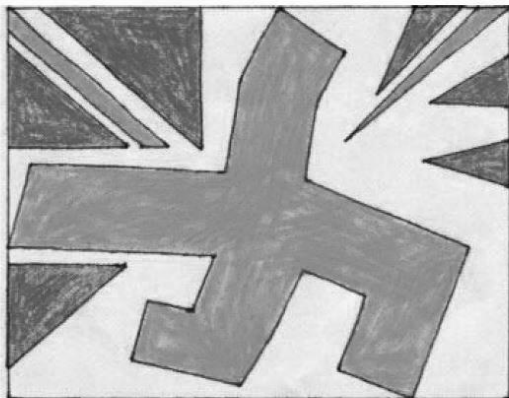
To this notion of Fascism there might also be added at will, Imperialism, nationalism, irredentism, racism, slavery, genocide and thought control.

But all of these things were operative in the British system. (Nationalist irredentism was deliberately encouraged by Britain in Italy in 1915, for the purpose of bringing it into the War as an ally, and it was in that movement that Mussolini, hitherto a radical socialist, made the combination of Socialism and Nationalism which was the

hallmark of Fascism. And French irredentism was the basis of the secret Anglo-French military alliance of 1908-1914, which led to European War in July 1914 and to World War in August 1914. And in 1917 British Imperialism backed the extreme irredentist claim of Jewish nationalism on Palestine and set in motion the movement of conquest and ethnic cleansing in the Middle East which remains a major source of disorder in the world today.)

One has to take language much as one finds it, and it would not have made sense in terms of the prevailing language to describe the English State as Fascist, even though it shared the features that were widely held to be the features of the Fascist State. Fascism as a distinct phenomenon had therefore to be defined on a much narrower ground.

Union Jackery: the pre-history of Fascism in Britain



by
Brendan Clifford

If Fascist Italy was racist, it was so only in the forms of racism which were general to Europe, and which were more strongly marked in England than in Italy. If it was Imperialist, it was much less so than England, and its Imperialism followed lines approved by England in the secret Treaty of London in 1915 as an inducement to Italy to make war on Austria. But Italy was Fascist and England was not. What distinguished the Fascist State from the State which was not Fascist, therefore, lay elsewhere than in Imperialism, racism and other phenomena which were widely seen as essential features of Fascism, but were in fact the common features of most modern capitalist states. (And, as for anti-Semitism, Italy in the 1920s appears to be the state which had least of it.)

It seemed to me that Fascism was the means by which the authority of the state as the framework of national life was restored, and the social elements of the market, which had fallen into antagonism, were brought back into functional combination, after state authority and social cohesion had been disrupted by the World War, the destructive Peace which followed it, and the influence of the Bolshevik state and social system established in Russia in 1918.

Fascism differed from authoritarian restorations of order, such as had often occurred, in that the force which it applied to the re-establishment of the authority of the state was drawn from the elements of disorder themselves. Which is to say, Fascism succeeded in holding the ring against Bolshevism because it was a popular force capable of operating on the same ground. And neither in Italy in the 1920s, nor in Germany in the 1930s, was there anything like the slaughter which accompanied the suppression of the Paris Commune by Thiers and Marshal McMahon in 1871 on behalf of the orthodox bourgeois democracy. The enemy against which the capitalist order was saved by Mussolini and Hitler exerted a restraint on the means by which it was saved. Hitler and Mussolini knew they had to win over the forces of the enemy in large numbers, which was not a consideration for Marshal McMahon in putting down the Communards. (His military enemy, Germany, had gone home, leaving him to his own devices.)

Judged by historical standards, there was little killing in Italy and Germany until British foreign policy brought about a second World War. And the major killing was done after the Bolshevik State was brought into that war and became the major fighting force opposed to Germany.

When General de Gaulle took office in France in the late 1950s, bringing to an end the long series of ephemeral French Governments, the event was described as Fascist by socialist publications in Britain, including, as I recall, the Labour Party weekly, *Tribune*. While I thought that view was wide of the mark, I was not involved in politics and it did not cross my mind that I would ever be a writer of history, and I did not record my opinion anywhere.

Ten years later, having strayed into politics, I took up a position on the conflict in Northern Ireland which caused me to be regarded with suspicion by rightthinking people as a defender of Fascism in the shape of Ulster

Unionism—and then, in the following decade, many of the right-thinkers leap-frogged over me to absurd extremes of Unionism which I would never have contemplated.

Around the same time, I allowed myself to be persuaded to go on a cheap package holiday to a Fascist State, that being the only way we could afford a holiday in the sun. I had myself little taste for either holidays or the sun, but I went along with it with the intention of enduring the holiday and the sun and ignoring the Fascist State. But, despite my best efforts, it began to be borne in on me after a couple of days that Franco Spain was a lively and surprisingly open society, that the prevailing notion of it as a Catholic-clerical regime was groundless, and that the set-up had a capacity to evolve.

My impressions of Fascist Spain, and of the Ulster Protestants, were made by simple perception—which is of course the most complex thing in the world, being infinitely more complex than the most elaborate theory. I subsequently backed up both impressions with some investigation, and went on record with both of them.

I assumed that Fascist Spain was capable of democratic evolution. And I was convinced that the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe were cul-de-sacs incapable of evolving, and I never set foot in any of them when it became possible for me to do so. This went entirely contrary to general opinion on the Left, and against my own predisposition, but I had to go by what I saw.

It was as a matter of self-defence in Northern Ireland that I worked out the understanding of Fascism set out here. I first gave it general expression in connection with Spain. And then I heard a long interview with Anthony Eden, in disgraced retirement in the Caribbean, in which he explained that he had met the Fascist revival head-on at Suez and that, even though his invasion had failed, enough was done to stop Fascism in its tracks.

Eden was the leading anti-Fascist in British Establishment circles in the 1930s. Churchill, the voice in the wilderness denouncing appeasement, was not anti-Fascist at all. He went out of his way to praise Mussolini. He said that, if England had been defeated in the Great War, and subsequently humiliated as Germany had been, he hoped somebody like Hitler would have emerged to restore it to health and strength, and it was obvious who he had in mind. (In 1918-19 Churchill had advocated alliance with Germany against Bolshevism and the humiliating of Germany

disgusted him, but he needed to be in power, so he swallowed his sense of honour and said "Hang the Kaiser!" in chorus with the rest of them.)

When Churchill resigned from the Government in the early 1930s, and went into the wilderness to condemn appeasement, the issue on which he did it was not Nazi Germany but India. He was outraged as an Imperialist by a minor appeasement of (that is, concession to) the Indian independence movement. And, when some time later he began demanding that preparation be made for another war on Germany, it was not the Fascist regime that he objected to but the fact that it was restoring the strength of the German State.

He understood Fascism and admired it, but the very thing he admired it for caused him to regard it as an enemy under England's historic balance-of-power strategy towards Europe. That strategy determined that the strongest state in Europe should be regarded as an enemy, whatever the character of its regime—monarchical France or democratic Republican France from the 1690s to the 1790s, Imperial France in the early 19th century; democratic Germany in the early 20th century and Fascist Germany in the late 1930s.

But Eden was something of an Anti-Fascist. He was affronted by Italian conduct in the 1930s, even though balance-of-power considerations did not apply, while Churchill thought it was lunacy to alienate an ally on ideological grounds. Fascism was an issue for Eden, and he imagined that the Anti-Fascist War had made Fascist States legitimate targets. And so, when he became Prime Minister, and saw what he understood to be a Fascist resurgence in Egypt, he made war on it. But his war ended in disgrace, with Nasser being the generally-acclaimed hero of the hour. I did not think that Eden's characterisation of Nasser's regime was absurd. I therefore concluded from the affair that Fascist states were legitimate entities in the post-1945 world order, providing they were Fascist in substance only, and did not make a point of affronting the victors of 1945 by developing cults of Hitler or Mussolini. (Nasser's regime was certainly not Liberal democratic, or Bolshevik, or feudal, or aristocratic-authoritarian, or military-authoritarian, or Napoleonic- Imperial. It was a non-Liberal, non-Bolshevik state of the popular kind, and it straddled an ideological antagonism.)

The misconception of Fascism—or the

absence of any conception connected with the word—was not a mere matter of academic interest. I had no academic interest whatever in the matter, and the academics did not concern themselves with it in any way that I found relevant to practical affairs. But the use of the word with its hazy, or even self-contradictory associations, had seriously damaging practical consequences on two occasions in my experience. The first was in May 1974 in Northern Ireland, when popular Unionist opposition to a power-sharing Government of Unionists and Nationalists arose following the revelation in a Dublin Court that the Sunningdale Agreement under which it operated was based on a confidence trick. I supported the Unionist/Nationalist devolved Government, and also the Council of Ireland which the Agreement provided for. Unionist agreement to the Council was given on the understanding that the assertion of sovereignty over Northern Ireland made in Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution of the Republic was to be withdrawn. Within two months of the Northern power-sharing Government taking office, the Dublin Government was brought to Court on a charge of being in breach of these Articles of the Constitution by recognising British sovereignty in the North. Its Defence pleading was that it had not recognised British sovereignty and the claim of sovereignty by the Republic still stood, and was not prejudiced by the Agreement. And the Government (whose Northern spokesman was Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien) let it be known that it did not intend to put an amendment of those Articles to a Constitutional referendum.

Unionist opposition to the establishment of the Council of Ireland then developed rapidly. But the devolved Government, supported by Dr. O'Brien in Dublin and by the Northern Ireland Ministers of the London Government, insisted that the establishment of the Council should go ahead, regardless of the revelation that Unionist acquiescence to it had been achieved by a confidence trick. This approach led in May 1974 to a General Strike of the Unionist population.

The leading Nationalist personnel in the Stormont Government were Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin, both of whom were Left Socialists of the British kind as well as Irish Nationalists. Dr. O'Brien, the spokesman of the Dublin Government, was then in his Socialist phase. And a British General Election in the Spring 1974 threw out Heath's Tory Government, which had brought about the

Sunningdale Agreement, and the Northern Ireland Office came into the hands of Left-Socialists who were long-standing associates of Fitt and Devlin: Merlyn Rees and Stanley Orme.

Faced with the General Strike against the Council of Ireland, Fitt and Devlin declared it to be a Fascist uprising with which there could be no negotiation, and they were supported in this view by Rees and Orme. All four were intent on crushing the Fascist revival and preventing a recurrence of what had happened forty and fifty years earlier in Germany and Italy, and they were encouraged in this course of action by Dr. O'Brien.

The British Trades Union Congress was enlisted in the Anti-Fascist campaign. Its General Secretary declared that it could not be an authentic strike since its object was political, and he presented himself to lead a strike-breaking back-to-work movement, which was ignored by all but a handful of Communist Party adherents.

Fitt and Devlin called on the British Army to break the Strike, and Rees did his best to respond. But the greater the strike-breaking pressure of the state, the greater the support for the Strike became within the Protestant community. It became a strike of the whole community. And then, inevitably, the Anti-Fascist campaign collapsed.

From the time of the Dublin Court action, I had been trying to persuade Fitt and Devlin to manoeuvre on the Council of Ireland in order to preserve the power-sharing in the North. But they wouldn't hear of it. They would have no truck with Fascism. And they never did manoeuvre on the Council or negotiate with the opposition. Rather than concede on the point at issue, they preferred that the house should be pulled down. The entire Sunningdale arrangement was scrapped; which had not been an aim of the Strike.

There can be no doubt that Fitt and Devlin were in the grip of a genuine delusion that the issue was Fascism, and that the British Ministers were in sympathy with their view. And so, at that critical moment in their political careers, and in the history of Northern Ireland, their misconception of Fascism deprived them of the capacity for political manoeuvre and led them to destroy what they wanted to preserve. And they were lost souls thereafter.

Dr. O'Brien was a different case. He was something of a European intellectual. A few years after he had helped to wreck Sunningdale, he lost his seat in the Dail and

set up as an intellectual again, and the attitudes he then struck appeared to me to be very similar to those of the Italian intellectual, Pareto, who became one of Mussolini's Senators. And O'Brien's book on The Millennium argues that liberal civilisation must be defended, against the world which it has disrupted, by severe measures of elitist authoritarianism.

My view of the those circles ever since.

The second occasion on which a misconception of Fascism had damaging practical consequences occurred in Britain three years later over the proposal of a Royal Commission to establish a system of Workers' Control in industry. This was rejected by virtually the entire spectrum of socialism because it had the form of "corporatism", and corporatism was vaguely, but pervasively, felt to be the means by which capitalism in crisis subjugated labour. "Corporatism", in the sense of official bodies on which both sides of the class antagonism of capital and labour were represented, was taken to be a hallmark of Fascism in the 1920s-30s, and this continued to be the case for decades after 1945. It involved class collaboration between workers and capitalists and it was unacceptable in principle to the strict ideologists of both sides. In the Liberal view, the only proper arrangement was universal competition between individuals. In the strict Socialist view (systemised in Bolshevism, but held by a wide swathe of opinion beyond the Communist Parties) the only proper arrangement was control over the economy and the state by the working class as a collective body, with no place for anything else: and, until that could be brought about, there should be no alleviating, class-collaborationist arrangements, because such arrangements were only a means of preserving capitalism.

Insofar as I took part in British Socialist affairs, it was from the viewpoint of Ernest Bevin, the great Trade Union boss, organiser of the massive union of general workers, who entered the Cabinet in the crisis of May 1940 without having a seat in Parliament. A seat in Parliament was got for him but he never acquired the Parliamentary manner. He ran the country as Minister for Labour from 1940 to 1945, and laid the foundations for the welfare state that was rapidly constructed after 1945.

Bevin wielded working class power for a constructive purpose in a way that was never done before and has never been done since. Parliamentary socialists, ideologically well to

his Left (such as Aneurin Bevan and James Maxton) were scandalised by his un-Parliamentary conduct and his class-collaborationism. He made deals with the Tories, who were then in a chastened condition, and implicated them in the arrangements he was making for the post-war era, instead of proceeding in the manner of class antagonism, and saving up the reforms for the time when Labour would win the post-war election and introduce them in the style of class war. And his Socialist critics wondered what was the point in the war against Fascism when Fascism was being built in Britain under cover of it.

Most of the wartime critics were given practical things to do by the post-war Government. Bevan was given the job of constructing the National Health Service, and he got on with it. But, once the predominating personal influence of Bevin was removed in the early 1950s, Bevan and his colleagues reverted to their own ideology. No major reform of society was ever again enacted by the Labour Party. And the socialist outlook, which had harassed Bevin in the 1940s but was unable to stop him, succeeded in stopping others from building on the post-1945 reform.

The Communist Party held by its understanding that corporatism was the essence of Fascism while the Left Socialists were mustered for corporatist work by Bevin and Attlee, and it described the post-war reform as "creeping Fascism". The Left Socialists, while not disowning what they had been led to do in 1945-50, never investigated how that great reform had been brought about and, when left to their own devices after 1951, they gravitated naturally towards the Communist Party view when further reforms were proposed.

In the 1970s the great issue in Britain was how to harness working class power to the economic process. That power had become very great under the 1945 reform, but socialist ideology continued to depict the workers as an oppressed proletariat.

Trade Union power, exempt from the law of contract, had become destructive of the economic process. Bevin's idea was that the workers should acquire property rights in the economy (and thereby cease to be what is meant by a proletariat). But Bevanite socialism had no time for that class collaborationist idea.

In 1973 Ted Heath's Tory Government proposed the establishment of a great Corporation for the determination of relative incomes. The existing method was that Trade

Unions leap-frogged each other in the gaining of wage increases, each leap usually having the form of a strike, the annual round of wage increases therefore being an annual round of strikes. Heath proposed that incomes differentials should be established by a Prices and Incomes Board on which the Trade Unions would be represented, along with the Employers and the Government. The Trade Unions would have been the major power on the Board, the employers being then in a very weakened condition (by reason of Trade Union power and the very high rate of taxation). But the Unions rejected the proposal, preferring that incomes differentials (that is, the different rates of payments for workers in different industries) should be determined through the market.

The Heath Government fell four months later in an election precipitated by a Coal Strike. (I wrote a pamphlet supporting the Tories.) Heath was removed from the Tory leadership. Margaret Thatcher's understanding was that Capitalism had been granted a reprieve, and she was determined to make the most of it. A Labour Government headed by Harold Wilson followed. Wilson, though a Bevanite, understood that the existing state of affairs could not continue, and he was supported in this view by another Bevanite, Barbara Castle. The Trade Unions had to be brought into a position of responsibility in the economic process. Wilson set up a Royal Commission to inquire into the feasibility of a system of Workers' Control. The Commission (chaired by Ernest Bevin's biographer, Alan Bullock) reported in favour, and proposed equal representation for Shareholders and Trade Unions on the controlling bodies of enterprises, with Government representation in an arbitrating function. The proposal was rejected across the entire spectrum of the Labour movement, from the Communist Party to anti-Communist free marketeers like Frank Chapple. The Institute for Workers' Control, which was Marxist in outlook, rejected it. And Neil Kinnock, who was Bevanite Socialist, rejected it. He wrote an article against it for the *New Statesman* criticising the Bullock proposals as not establishing simple control by the workers all at once—and not many years later he set about reshaping the Labour Party into a capitalist party under the influence of Thatcherism.

The Bullock proposal was not acceptable to the Left (which was then the greater part of the Labour movement) because it was not the Revolution. And it was not acceptable to the

ideologists of capitalism because it was much too close to being a revolution. And thus capitalism was given a second reprieve. That was in 1977. Thatcher came to power in 1979. She played effectively on the dangers of Corporatism. Somebody in her entourage understood that this was a way of disabling influential elements of the ideological Left, for which Corporatism was the threshold of Fascism, if not Fascism itself. The position of Bevanite Socialism (as well as of the Communist Party) dissolved very quickly after 1979. It was caught between two conflicting views of Thatcherism—it had defeated Corporatism, which was incipient Fascism; or it was itself Fascism in the other sense of authoritarianism. Neil Kinnock gave expression to the latter view in a piece of powerful rhetoric on the eve of Thatcher's 1983 election victory. Then, replacing Michael Foot as Party leader, he set on foot the process of adaptation to Thatcherism, which culminated in Blairism.

Fascism is taken to be a deviation from the norms of a stable system. But it arose in the region between two mutually exclusive systems, and this led to two mutually exclusive norms being applied to criticism of it. Liberal-democratic capitalism and Bolshevik socialism each had its standard of normality from which Fascism was seen as an unstable deviation. From the Bolshevik view it was seen as a class collaborationist deviation from the norm of proletarian dictatorship. From the Liberal-democratic capitalist viewpoint it was seen as a "corporatist" deviation from the norm of general individualist competition in a free market operating with minimal state control.

While Fascism undoubtedly did deviate from the liberal capitalist ideal, or ideology, it was characterised by Bolshevism as the final defence of Capitalism. And it is not reasonably disputable that that is what it was. It was in fact recognised as performing that function by many of the leaders of the liberal capitalist world, including its future leader in what came to be called the Anti-Fascist War, Winston Churchill.

In the Europe disrupted by the Great War, and by the catastrophic Peace imposed at the end of it, capitalism was not sustainable on the basis of what was taken to be its characteristic ideology and political system: liberal democracy. Fascism borrowed heavily from Bolshevism in the work of saving Capitalism from Bolshevism.

This state of affairs, which was relatively clear in the 1920s-30s, was clouded by the

Anti-Fascist War in which Liberal-capitalism and Bolshevism were allies. In the course of that war the mutually exclusive conceptions of the norm from which Fascism was seen as a deviation were merged into an incoherence, through which it became all but impossible to see its distinguishing features.

The two great antagonistic forces in the world were Bolshevism and Capitalism. When these two forces found themselves in military alliance against the Fascist states of Germany and Italy, and the war of the Grand Alliance of 1941-45 was called the Anti-Fascist War, that conjured up Fascism as a monstrous power, drawing its energy from some infernal source, against which all the other forces of mankind had to bond together for survival. But, if one traces the actual history of the period chronologically, that Grand Alliance of fundamental enemies is seen to be the product of the misconceived and erratic foreign policy of Britain, the dominant power in the world after 1918.

The Anti-Fascist War might be described as a deviation from the normal, inherent, antagonism of the post-1918 world, caused by the bungling and irresponsible British foreign policy. That inherent antagonism was briefly suspended in 1941-44. It sprang back into operation the moment the deviation was got out of the way. But, between 1941 and 1944, the war effort of the Western Allies was entirely dependent on the success of the vastly greater war effort of the Bolshevik ally, and this dependency caused some strange phenomena. There was, for example, a major Hollywood feature film on the Moscow Trials of the late thirties, *Mission To Moscow*, showing them as a preparation of the Soviet Union for its historic task of saving civilisation from Fascist barbarism. Both before and after that era of collaboration, the Moscow Trials were depicted in the dominant propaganda of the West as barbaric atrocities, and Bolshevism was presented either as a cause of Fascism, or as a kind of 'Totalitarianism' which shared many of its features. But the collaboration of 1941-45—and the fact that it was Bolshevism that defeated Nazism and, by doing so, saved Britain from having to make a humiliating settlement in the war that it declared in 1939 but lacked the will to prosecute with its own resources—left an enduring impression on influential strata of British opinion until the 1980s. This was the case both with the Trade Unions, which were immensely influential institutions of British public life until then, and with the Universities, where most of the

leading intellectuals were members of the Communist Party or some other Marxist organisation.

The ideology of the Anti-Fascist War thus ran on for forty years after the defeat of Germany and Italy, and the two mutually-exclusive conceptions of the norm from which Fascism was a deviation were squashed against each other. And, when the Soviet Union collapsed, and the forms of Marxism associated with it withered, the habit of characterising enemies as Fascist if they were not Communist had become ingrained. And, even the last more or less Communist state in Europe, Yugoslavia (which did not collapse with others because it had sustained itself for forty years in conflict with the Soviet Union and in alliance with the West), was usually described as Fascist rather than Communist in the Western propaganda campaign against it. And, once that last survival of Communism was got rid of, a new universal enemy was raised in its place: Islamofascism. The resistance of the Islamic world to Western liberal subversion (conducted by military, economic, and cultural means) was characterised as Fascist, even though there is no substantial point of similarity between it and the political movement which saved the capitalist order in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

(One reason for the current use of the word appears to be that many of the spindoctors of the post-Thatcher British regime were either members of the Communist Party or some other such body at the start of their careers, or they are the children of members of those bodies, and the term of disapprobation which comes naturally to them, now that they have become leading members of the capitalist elite of the world, is Fascist.)

The Great War, which broke up the evolving civilisation of Europe, began as a European War. As a European war, it would probably have run its course without undermining the basic structure of things. France desired the recapture of the nationally-mixed area of Alsace-Lorraine, which it had conceded to Germany as a consequence of its failed aggression of 1870 (the object of which was to prevent the political unification of Germany). For this purpose it formed an alliance with Tsarist Russia, a straightforwardly expansionist State which aimed to drive through the Balkans and acquire Constantinople/Istanbul as an outlet to the Mediterranean. The trigger for war was a

Serbian act of aggression in Bosnia, which had become a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following its withdrawal from the Ottoman Empire. Neither Austria nor Germany had expansionist aims. Their object was security within their existing boundaries.

A war between those three expansionist states and the two central states whose objects were defensive would in all probability have ended in a settlement which did no more than modify or confirm boundaries. And this would certainly have been the case if Britain had used its influence as the most powerful State in the world to impose limits on the conduct of the war.

In the first week of the war, however, Britain declared war on Germany and within a couple of weeks it had placed an army in a pre-arranged position alongside the French. The preparations for this had been made in effective secrecy many years before the war, and French conduct was determined by this secret alliance. German conduct, on the other hand, was influenced by the understanding that Britain had nothing at stake in the European war and would remain neutral. The German Government tried to ascertain British intentions and this is what it had been led to believe.

But Britain declared war on 4th August on the excuse of German infringement of Belgian neutrality. But, if its object had been to ensure that Belgian neutrality was respected, it need only have informed the German Government that it would treat any infringement of it by Germany as a reason for making war on Germany. It was well known that the German war plans in the face of the Franco-Russian alliance, by which it was greatly outnumbered, involved a flanking march through Belgium with the purpose of dealing with France before the Russian steamroller gathered momentum. If Britain had declared its intention of going to war over Belgian neutrality, Germany would have foregone the advantage of the flanking march rather than add Britain to its enemies. But Britain played its cards in a way that leaves little room for doubt that its purpose was to gain the infringement of Belgian neutrality as a moral reason for making war.

This is the kind of amoral morality which I have described as forensic—a kind of special pleading in a court in which the advocate and the judge are one and there is no cross-examination. But it works extraordinarily well in England, and the English populace (and a great part of the Irish) went to war in a state of high moral indignation. That moral character of

the British war effort was one of the influences subverting European civilisation. The other (connected with it) was the purpose of destroying Germany as an economic rival. An equation was made between virtue and profit by Richard Baxter, the Protestant divine, in the 17th century, and so it has been ever since.

Germany, though greatly outnumbered, displayed an unexpected power of resistance. Britain used up its regular army very quickly. Then it used up its vast Volunteer armies. Finally, it resorted to conscript armies of the Continental kind, which it had hitherto deplored. And the greater the human cost of the war became, the greater became the moral stance, and the more vehement became the rejection of proposals for a settlement. Total victory or downfall—a position groundlessly attributed to Germany by British propaganda—was in fact the British position. In a war animated by fundamentalist morality which denied any purpose of material gain, what other stance was reputable?

A reckless ideology of ultra-democracy became part of the war propaganda and influenced the conditions imposed on the defeated states in 1919. The Italian Government was lured into the war in 1915 by means of a secret Treaty which recognised its maximum irredentist claims in Austria, both in the region of Trent and in the Adriatic. A large part of Italian society, including the Catholic Church, was against taking part in the war. Prominent among the forces advocating war was Mussolini, hitherto a radical Socialist, who now combined irredentist nationalism with Socialism.

Italy suffered greatly in the war. Its militarism was not of the stolid kind that one finds throughout English society.

Much of Italian society never supported the war. At the end of the war it was found that some of the *irredenta*, which England had promised to Italy in 1915, it had since promised to somebody else. Thus Italy, having suffered greatly from the stress of a war of whose advisability much of the population had not been convinced, was swindled out of the fruits of victory for which the Government had been persuaded to make war. The Bolshevik Revolution made an immediate and profound impact on the demoralised condition of post-war Italy. The political order of the Italian State broke down. The pre-war democratic order could not be restored. And Mussolini's 1915 merger of Nationalism and Socialism, by means of which he helped to take Italy into war, re-emerged in the post-war situation to

restore the authority of the State over elemental and divisive democracy. And it preserved the capitalist order by means of the "corporations" which overcame raw class antagonism and reconciled a sufficient part of the working class to class collaboration. (Where capitalist economy is functional there is de facto class collaboration. It was when the labour and capital elements fell into antagonism, and the labour movement could not dominate the situation by abolishing the system, that the two elements were brought back into conjunction, or collaboration, by the formal organisation of corporations. There has always been extensive class collaboration in England beneath the veneer of all-out class conflict.)

A functional economy exists within an effective system of national authority. It must be national in the sense that the various human elements of the economy, which are also social elements, must tolerate each other and engage in relatively stable interaction with each other, within a generally accepted collective framework.

By reason of the Great War and the destructive Peace which followed it, there was a breakdown in systems of authority and an associated breakdown in the relationship of the social elements to each other, both politically and economically. Liberal democracy was powerless to draw the antagonistic elements back together in a system of national authority. The Fascist movement did it by force, in the sense of doing it outside the system of Parliamentary representation and the organs of force which it authorised. But the force, by which the antagonistic elements were brought back into combination, was derived from those elements themselves by a vigorous political movement with a blunted ideology which was able to draw to itself substantial numbers of people from both sides of the antagonism.

Liberal democracy was dysfunctional in post-war Europe, because where it is functional it is always much more than it appears, and because in post-war Europe all it was its ideology.

Functional Liberal-democracy necessarily exists within a strong system of state authority, though in its presentation of itself that is never explicit. In its pure ideological form it is only the tip of the iceberg. And what surprised me was the extent to which, in its response to Italian Fascism, it showed an understanding of its own authoritarian pre-conditions, which it never describes, or does so only by

euphemism.

When I say that England did not go Fascist between the Wars because it was Fascist enough already, what I mean is that it did not need to reconstruct itself as a functional system of authority, because its system of authority, far from breaking down in consequence of the war, had actually been strengthened by the triumphant militarism of the event.

In 1914 there was the prospect of severe class struggle, a kind of war had broken out over votes for women, and civil war between the two major parties was threatening over Irish Home Rule. The war swept all of this aside. The most extensive of all the Reform Acts, that of 1918, was carried through without adverse consequence under cover of the universal Jingoism of the time. And the War Coalition, consisting chiefly of Tories, won the post-war Election by a landslide. The system of authority was reinforced even though one of its pillars, the Liberal Party, self-destructed in 1916 under the stress of the War for which it was itself responsible. Its place was taken by the Labour Party (which had supported the War). And Labour was groomed into a routine of subordination to the established system with the help of eminent Liberals who joined it. Nevertheless, party-politics was suspended as a precaution in 1931 in the face of the great economic crisis of capitalism. This was done by the formation of a National Coalition of the Labour, Tory, and Liberal Parties, under a Labour Prime Minister to begin with, and later under a Tory Prime Minister. Mainstream party-politics was not resumed until 1945.

The National Coalition was not Fascism, since it was enacted by agreement within the Parliamentary forms. But it warded off Fascism by moving next door to it. And Winston Churchill went into the wilderness in order to be available as the Fascist leader in case one was needed.

In Germany there was no effective system of national authority in operation after 1918. Britain insisted that things should be done with the state in Germany which went entirely against the practices which it considered necessary to the maintenance of political stability in its own affairs. The monarchy was abolished on Allied insistence and a form of ultra-democracy derived from first principles replaced it. The most influential philosopher of affairs of state in Britain was Edmund Burke. Burke was a Whig who never ceased to be a Whig, but he was adopted by the Tory revival of the early 19th century, and later by the

radical Liberals. John Morley wrote an approving biography of him.

If Burke had one basic principle, it was that in affairs of state first principles should be avoided like the plague, and that the construction of a democratic state from first principles could only lead to catastrophe. When change was necessary, it should be brought about through a modification of what existed, and the less the better. This was the meaning of his criticism of the French Revolution, which was the guiding philosophy of those who managed state affairs in England throughout the 19th century. But in Germany in 1919 the monarchical state with which people were familiar (and which was as democratic as the British state) was abolished, and a new, theoretically-perfect, ultra-democratic republic was constructed in its place. (Corresponding changes also occurred in the devolved states within Germany.) This was done under the supervision of the Versailles Conference, in which Britain was the dominant power. And then the Weimar democracy, which had no entrenched structures of authority, was required to make a confession of guilt on behalf of the German people for causing the War. The confession of guilt was signed, although everybody knew it was a false confession, because the Versailles Powers threatened, in the event of refusal, to resume the war against this new, disarmed and helpless German state. And, on top of this, Weimar had to agree to pay the victor states the entire cost of the War.

The ultra-democracy of the Weimar system, in which there was no effective structure of authority behind the democracy, facilitated the proliferation of political parties, and the antagonism of the parties prevented the establishment of a structure of authority by the Parliament. In this situation, political parties acquired structures of state for themselves. The great economic crisis of the early 1930s led to a situation in which a weak, floundering Parliamentary system was confronted with two Opposition-States, one Communist, the other Fascist. And when Hitler, as leader of the largest party, assumed the office of Chancellor early in 1932, he did not so much come to power by acquiring that office, as bring power with him to the office.

He then suppressed the welter of conflicting parties very quickly—more quickly than Mussolini had done. And, as was the case with Mussolini, the power to do so was largely drawn from the parties that were suppressed. Once authority was asserted forcefully, it

became an attractive alternative to the futile conflict of parties in the Weimar system.

Burke's critique of the democracy of the French Republic applies with much greater force to the democracy of the Weimar Republic—but somehow it is never applied to it.

The case with regard to Fascism is entirely different in Ireland than it is in England. For most of the modern era Ireland was held by the English State on the basis of naked force, and what was called the 'Irish Government' was merely a Department of the London Government, responsible like all other Departments of Government, to the English electorate, such as it was. Even when an Irish Party representing the great bulk of the Irish population appeared in the Westminster Parliament, the Government of Ireland was conducted by the English parties on a mandate given by the English electorate. Fascism is a form of government thrown up in a democratic body politic, and there was no Irish Government based on an Irish body politic until the 1920s.

For a long period after the conquest of Ireland by the British Glorious Revolution of 1688, the experience of government by the Irish was similar in kind to the experience of government by a number of peoples in Eastern Europe after the Nazi conquests of 1939 and 1941. Using the term in the very loose sense in which it is so often used, it might be said that there was Fascist government in Ireland from 1690 until 1829 at least, though in the light of what the British State did in Ireland after its authority was rejected by the first democratic election held in Ireland, 1921 would be a more realistic date, if not 1923. But that had nothing to do with the Irish, who were mere victims.

Irish Fascism, in the sense in which I use the term, was not possible before 1922. It was only then that the semblance of a sovereign body politic operating in freedom came into being in Ireland.

The British State partially relinquished control of three quarters of Ireland in 1922, but it did so on terms which enabled it to manipulate the independence movement into conflict with itself. The Irish were presented with a dictated Treaty which conceded extensive self-government, but within the British Empire and under the sovereignty of the British Crown, with the threat of immediate and terrible war if that Treaty was not

accepted and complied with. A substantial part of the independence movement rejected the British ultimatum. A majority of the Dail bowed to the British ultimatum, as did the electorate. The party which accepted the Treaty under duress was manipulated into making war on the party which rejected it in order to establish the Treaty State. That war is generally called the Civil War, which in my opinion is a gross misnomer, since there was no conflict of ideals between the combatants, their only difference being on the issue of whether to submit to the British threat of overwhelming force.

The Treaty Party governed for ten years. But, as the British threat receded, the electorate returned to the Republican position. The Anti-Treatyites won the Election of 1932 and confirmed its victory in another Election in 1933. In a situation of some social conflict, the Treaty Party in opposition reorganised itself, changed its name to Fine Gael, adopted a Fascist programme, and organised a kind of Fascist militia, the Blueshirts, and also a League of Youth.

The Anti-Treaty Party, Fianna Fail, was supported at the critical juncture of transition by the IRA, which had remained in being as a considerable force, though defeated in the Treaty War of 1922-24. Fianna Fail won a series of elections during the next decade, warded off the Fascist party, and consolidated the State as a Parliamentary democracy. In 1936 Fine Gael exerted considerable pressure on the Government to recognise the Fascist insurrection in Spain against the elected Government, but Fianna Fail refused to do so until Franco achieved actual control of Spain three years later.

A widespread agitation in support of Franco's insurrection was organised by Fine Gael throughout the 26 Counties in the form of the Irish Christian Front, and a body of volunteers went to Spain to fight for Franco, led by a founder of Fine Gael, General Eoin O'Duffy.

The Fascist Party was the party of the wealthier and more respectable part of the society. That was normal for the 1930s. But, in later generations, the wealthy and respectable did not wish to remember what they had been then, and so we get this kind of 'history':

"One could argue that the 1930s IRA, with its hatred of free speech and its willingness to ally itself with Nazism and Italian fascism, was more truly fascist than was the Blueshirt movement, shirted as it was because of parochialism rather than because of genuine adherence to core fascist values."

That is from page 22 of 1922: *The Birth Of Irish Democracy* by Tom Garvin, Professor of Politics at University College, Dublin (Gill & Macmillan, 1996). Professor Garvin does not say what he thinks "*true fascism*" is, or list its "*core values*", and does not mention the fact that the party which declared Fascism to be its ideology and aim was Fine Gael. And his suggestion that the Blueshirt movement was "*parochial*" (by which I assume he means 'backwoods') is very misleading indeed. Two of the leading academics of the time, Michael Tierney and James Hogan, were among the active leaders of the Irish Fascist movement.

But Professor Garvin's misrepresentation of history is mild compared with that of the London Times on 14th August 1995, which illustrated an article on Fascism with a large photo of De Valera and Mussolini in 1939, and the caption was:

"Irish premier Eamon de Valera (in silk hat, third from left) with Fascists in Rome in 1939; under his 1937 constitution he styled himself Taoiseach in imitation of Duce".

Thus the leader of the Anti-Fascist Party is conjured into the leader of Irish Fascism. And there was no protest from the History Departments of the Irish Universities. (In fact De Valera was in Rome for the Coronation of Pius XII and spent most of his time at the Vatican. He had a brief formal meeting with Mussolini, as was customary for statesmen visiting the Vatican, and he gave the British Prime Minister a report of it on his way home.)

Professor Garvin characterises the IRA as the "*truly fascist*" party because of its "*hatred of free speech*" (unreferenced) and its alliance with Germany. He does not show that its connection with Germany was anything other than military. It was as far as I know only a connection with its enemy's enemy, without ideological alignment. The ideological Fascism was in Fine Gael, with which the IRA had no ideological affinity. And if the military connection is sufficient to make the IRA Fascist, what are we to say of the support, military and political, that Britain gave the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1938, even though it was supposed to be the guarantor of the Versailles Treaty?

A body of Republican volunteers that went to Spain to fight against Franco was very much more effective than the body of Fine Gael volunteers that went to fight for him.

I had long been interested in what might be termed the 'pre-history of Fascism' in England,

but my determination to produce something concrete on the matter crystallised when Athol Books was offered Professor Manuel Sarkisyanz's *Hitler's English Inspirers* to translate and publish. (It appeared in 2003.) The author's thesis was that important elements which went into the making of Nazism—such as social uniformity, class deference, national superiority, critical double standards, social darwinism, racism, imperialism, xenophobia, genocide—had first been pioneered and made 'respectable' in the public life of England and its Empire which saw itself as setting standards for the world. And he gives ample chapter and verse to prove his case. Whilst the Professor does detail the English fascists of the inter-war period, he is clear that Hitler's inspiration came not from these, but from politicians, academics and philosophers of the mainstream. Many of the people he mentions are only remembered as names these days, if that. But, while the people may be gone, their legacy remains embedded in current British culture and attitudes. Taking a closer look at these people is vital to understanding the present—and influencing future developments.

In a review of Manuel Sarkisyanz's book in 2004 I wrote:

"Hitler's inspiration was England, rather than any particular line of Englishmen. The English who declared themselves Fascist influenced him least of all. Hitler looked to the mainstream rather than the fringe, and to actions rather than words—although he specifically acknowledged his debt to the English war propaganda in the use of words. The English writers and politicians particularly singled out by Sarkisyanz are Burke, Carlyle, Disraeli, Baden-Powell, Churchill, Curzon, Milner, Kingsley, Kipling, Neville Chamberlain, G.B. Shaw and H. G. Wells" (p 8 Irish Political Review, February 2004).

What is virtually unique about Sarkisyanz's work is the way he applies the critical methods, normally applied by British writers to other countries, to England itself. The English are quite unselfconscious about the way they apply moral standards to the conduct of other countries, whilst viewing their own actions pragmatically. But Sarkisyanz will have none of this. He assesses the conduct of the Anglo-Saxon world from a rigorously democratic and humanist standpoint—and rejects contemptuously the idea that a civilising mission could justify the havoc that was wreaked around the world in the name of progress.

He understands very well that this is more than a matter of academic importance. The

English *modus operandi* has a disabling effect upon other countries which are induced to view their past in this light. Two examples spring to mind immediately: Germany and Ireland. Burdened with the Nazi legacy which is seen outside the context of standards set by the Anglo-Saxon world down the centuries, Germany has been unable to play its due part in Europe. (Indeed, guilt for what Hitler did to European Jewry even today prevents Germany judging the actions of Israel in Palestine by the same standards by which it views its own past.) And Ireland is now being reintegrated into the British sphere by an English-inspired critique of its recent past.

While what Professor Sarkisyanz has done is invaluable in drawing attention to the precursors of Fascism and in exposing English humbug, I felt that there was still more to be said on the question of Fascism. Above all, I feel it is important to analyse the various components which can go into its making.

Supposing England had lost this Great War of its own making, and had been treated as it treated Germany—losing its overseas markets and its Empire and subjected to penalties which expropriated most of its domestic products, and its monarchy abolished—it is highly improbable that its mode of Parliamentary government through party-political conflict of two essentially patriarchal parties would have continued. Its existential crisis would have been as great as that which it imposed on Germany and its economic crisis would have been even greater as its dependence on exploiting the material resources of the world was greater.

In these circumstances it is probable that there would have been a great proliferation of parties, each reflecting some particular grievance or interest, and that the hegemonic authority which had always existed behind the display of party conflict would have evaporated.

And, supposing that there was a development in accordance with Churchill's wishes—and order and a sense of national well-being was restored by an English Fascist movement—the body of literature which I outline here would form part of the literature of that movement. There would be no need to create a new body of literature for it. The intellectual

inheritance of Fascism in England would consist in great part of the literature of: the 18th century aristocracy; of the war against the French Revolution; of the middle-class democracy of the 1832 Reform; of the globalist economic development beginning with the war to compel the Chinese State to allow its subjects to purchase English opium; and of the populist Imperialism of the late 19th-early 20th centuries which was the precondition of social welfare reform.

(The pre-history of Fascism in Germany has been dwelt upon in infinite detail by English writers. Features of German life before 1933 which were also features of the Nazi state were sought out and mulled over. Lists of Germans whose influence was conducive to Fascism were drawn up, but the thing was done with little objectivity and different writers drew up different lists. For example, Fichte, the philosopher, and Bismarck, the statesman, might appear either in the lineage of Fascism or in the token group of 'good Germans'.

Unless one believes in some very strict order of determinism in human affairs, the possibility must be allowed that a different course of political action at certain junctures between 1919 and 1933 might have brought about a continuation of the Weimar Republic. But the pre-history of Fascism, that has been written about so extensively, would still have existed even though it did not happen to culminate in the Fascist state. And, if Fascism is not to be explained in terms of the political crisis which threw up the Fascist State, and the prior history of the society over many generations is to be invoked, I do not see what reasonable objection there can be to the idea of the pre-history of Fascism in England.)

Fascism would be a drawing together in concentrated form of features which had always formed a substantial part of the regime of the Glorious Revolution in England. That is what I mean by describing this collection of material by mainstream English writers as the pre-history of Fascism. (What appears here is a very small selection from the pre-Fascist English intellectual heritage, due to

constraints of space. I'm proposing to return to the matter in a further publication.)

Where the basic authority of the State has to be restored against the chaos of anarchic democracy, that is where Fascism arises. Ever since the English State was put on a secure footing over three centuries ago, the maintenance of its authority, partly by use of force and partly by the inculcation of deference in the populace, has been given absolute priority. What is called democracy—but which Rousseau would not recognise as democracy at all—was gradually introduced in the form of incremental enlargements of the electoral franchise in the course of many generations, in such a way that the pre-existing structures of authority remained intact. Authority was not established by this democracy. Edmund Burke thought it a mad idea that it might be. What happened was that authority introduced a kind of democracy amongst a deferential populace which had been so habituated to the authority of the state as to be scarcely aware of it. And the era of democratic reform in England was also the era of the most intensive militarism and Imperialism. And those in authority took it to be self-evident that militaristic Imperialism was a precondition of safe democratisation, with the result that the democracy of the British State almost unconsciously took militaristic Imperialism as part of the natural order of English affairs. And the condition of this democracy, as democracy, is brought out by the fact that the electorate now has to be badgered into voting, and it is being seriously considered that they should be enabled to do so as part of their shopping.

Fascism is part of the history of Capitalism. While capitalism as a system was under threat by reason of the elemental forces generated and unleashed by England's Great War for civilisation, Fascism was accepted as part of the legitimate order of civilisation. That is to say, capitalist or semi-capitalist States which did not conform to liberal-democratic norms were tolerated. But, when the threat to capitalism as a world system ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990,

the restraint which had been imposed on the militaristic centre of global capitalism—Ameranglia, the US-UK—no longer applied. Today we live in the era of democratic imperialism, when any State which is not ruled in the same way as Britain and America are governed is declared to be a legitimate target. What Anthony Eden thought he was right in doing in 1956 has now become unquestionably right. A moral right has been asserted to invade States which deviate from what Ameranglia holds to be the democratic norm. Targets are chosen

in accordance with the expedience of the moment. States which serve the interest, for the moment, of advancing Ameranglian global dominance are temporarily safe. But they are legitimate targets under the new morality, no less than the States listed in George Bush's "Axis of Evil".

The old, mindless view of Fascism will no longer do for anybody who does not want to be implicated in militaristic imperialism. A realistic critical understanding of the subject is required.

Brendan Clifford, October 2005

The entire pamphlet with historic writings demonstrating the similarity of ideas is available as a PDF at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/f-free-pamphlets/>.

For more on Fascism, see the extensive topic menus from <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>.

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