

# Extravagantia II: Koliko Fašizma? [Extravagantia II: How much fascism?]

—A selection from the book by Rastko Močnik, *How Much Fascism?*, *Studia Humanitaria Minora*, Ljubljana, 1995. Translated by Novica Petrović

## I. Introduction: Anti-fascism '95

In issue no. 15. of the periodical IZI [Izbjeglice za izbjeglice – Refugees for Refugees], published in Ljubljana in June 1995, a reporter working for the Ljubljana daily Delo contributed an article the main point of which can be summarised by the following quote: “All European states, with the exception of Great Britain, succumbed to the German onslaught without much visible resistance, capitulated and soon enough established collaborationist regimes... All these states that are members of the European Union today, with the exception of Churchill’s England, and all their neighbouring states were fascist states in the 1940’s... Europe was liberated from these fascist regimes by the English and the Americans... That is why the only thing Europeans can celebrate on May 9th can be liberation from fascism, but not victory over it.”

As far as states are concerned, one can perhaps really say something like that. But one cannot say anything of the kind concerning Europeans. When the Second World War began, the anti-fascist Europe and the international anti-fascist movement had already been defeated in their struggle against fascism – I am referring to their defeat in the Spanish Civil War. Long before European governments capitulated, prisons in Italy and concentration camps in Germany had already been populated with opponents of fascism, those who would not accept it, those who thought with their own minds and those who were pronounced different. It would be difficult to find an area in Europe where there was no resistance to fascism: be it armed or unarmed resistance, on home ground or abroad, in exile, on battlefields in Europe and outside Europe. In the year 1939, Europeans had been fighting fascism for two decades already, and would go on doing so for the next six years.

When European states capitulated before fascism, people of Slovenia established *Osvobodilna fronta* [the Liberation Front] less than two weeks after the capitulation of “their own” state. The capitulating attitude of European states and the collaboration of parts of their ruling classes were among the reasons why the peoples living in the area of the former Yugoslavia fought not only against fascism but also for a different kind of state, which is why they managed to pull off a revolution.

At the time, the peoples of Yugoslavia had already had a long experience with fascism, with a state that collaborated with fascism and with a fascist state. They already had a tradition of fighting against fascism – Italian fascism, European fascism in Spain, and fascism at home. They were among the first victims: while fascist squadras went wild in Italy, they set the Slovenian cultural centre in Trieste on fire even before they came to power. But they were also among the first ones to organise resistance: between 1927 and 1929, TIGR enabled Slovenian and Croatian patriots to join forces and establish what was probably the first international organisation formed for the purpose of fighting fascism.

The above-mentioned issue of the IZI periodical provides data on how many refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina there were in various states; at the moment, there are 22,667 refugees in Slovenia. Three years before there had been approximately 75,000. It is worth remembering how the Slovenian state said at the time that there were one hundred and twenty thousand refugees, and we shall never forget the statements given by its officials or the media harangue before, in August 1993, the state decided to close its borders for those exiled from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a poll conducted after the closing of the borders, more than half of the respondents spoke in favour of admitting the exiles. Then, too, the people spoke differently from the state; then, too, the people fought fascism.

The conduct of states when faced with fascism is worth pondering, and the decisions made by the people are worth remembering. It is on account of those decisions, the battles fought and the sacrifices made by ordinary individuals that today we may say, in 1945, the people of Europe defeated fascism. Will they defeat it in 1995?

There is a definite connection between oblivion and the powerlessness of today. States organise oblivion, conclude pacts with fascism, may fall prey. People remember, resist and persist. Today, there is no anti-fascist front, there are individuals who refuse to resign to the existence of fascism, who know that there may be more to life than hatred, anxiety and war, and who have the strength to demand from the state to behave differently from the way states and powers-that-be behaved half a century ago. I have written these analyses in order to make those demands successful, so that people should know how to formulate them and so be able to bring the nightmare of this century to a close.

And I have also done this so that the world we shall leave behind should not be worse than the one we were born in.

## II. Utopia and self-deception of the spirit

Today, every utopia is discredited. At the very mention of this word, a disciplined user of the dominant ideology must think of the guillotine or of Gulag. On the other hand, the rare statements in favour of reviving utopianism, which one could still come across in the 1980's, today sound utopian themselves.

Still, it makes one suspicious to see how voraciously political classes have taken over the more popular variants of the former philosophical fanfares about "the end of the utopian thought." It is truly irritating when vulgarised dregs of the intellectual *doxa* of our youth become the agitprop slogans of the ideological avant-garde of the new ruling class. History warns us all of intellectual responsibility only too gladly by bashing us on the head; we have made mistakes, but only get to perceive them as such afterwards. Notwithstanding the sirens beckoning into darkness, we are obviously still not committed enough to *enlightenment*; we do not sufficiently deal with *prejudices*. And when these prejudices gain material existence in the apparatuses of oppression and exploitation, then what would once have amounted merely to cleaning the edges of the sphere of theory assumes the false value of analysis.

Today, intellectual engagement spins in a vicious circle within which it always misses theory. It is either dedicated to shedding light on the given topic, meaning dealing with the ideological effects on the edges of the problem areas, thus losing time and power by opening fields that it never manages to process. Or, it neglects these marginal activities, as a result of which intellectual weed grows

and gains momentum, gaining "material existence" in ideological and who knows what other apparatuses, grabbing thought by the scruff of its neck and forcing it into self-defence. Amidst cleaning and fire-fighting duties, there is no time or strength for authentic theoretical production.

Anyhow, it is worth pointing out that this is a new situation. It may be connected with the ebbing of the utopian impulse. If this is not enough of a consolation, we could perhaps draw some much needed confidence from a conclusion that, if the truth must be told, it is the bleakest one yet. The detritus from which they put together new cages for us and make new blindfolds for our eyes once constituted elements of legitimate constructions of theoretical production.

### 1. The end of grand narratives?

If we ponder the phrase, "the end of grand narratives has arrived", we will see that a certain strategy is of decisive influence here. First of all, this "end" applies only to possible *alternative narratives*. The dominant ones need not even be narrated, the established structure squeezes them out of its own accord. If we renounce all other significance, what remains is only that which lasts of its own accord, what has been institutionalised, established within the system, certified by the automatism of behaviour, the constraints of the economy, what has been imprinted into everyday routines, protected by fear and feelings of being threatened, and on top of everything else, by the police and the army. As a corollary, banning grand narratives is suspiciously close to banning thought itself. Soon enough, the moment it ventures beyond the beaten track of ossified everyday routine – which it is only too glad to do! – thought gets deservedly accused of "greatness"; as soon as it gets articulated – which is also something that thought cannot do without! – it gets placed in the dock of the tribunal of public opinion, where "grand narratives" belong. The dwarfishness of the established system is dangerous! What remains is only that which dependably exerts its influence on the big and the small, the narrow-minded and the obese – what remains is the eternal selfishness of the solipsistic individual of bourgeois society. And much to our surprise, through this sloppiness, dwarfishness, and lack of anything in the way any perspective, there unfolds the greatest epic in the history of mankind – the march of global capitalism!

The degree of magnitude is, of course, a relative quantity: in view of the fact that it is not possible to think, even "on a small scale," without a broader framework, and that local thought requires global consciousness all the more, the rejection of grand narratives is suspiciously close to rejecting thought as such. The ban also pertains to alternative narratives and actually prohibits thought itself; it is not just that it is forbidden to think in the long term, in great strokes, possibly peeking through the nearby fence. What it is all about is that the absence of the "grand" scale releases the small-scale illusions of all kinds of surveillance, criticism and denial, illusions that the greatest existing system feeds on.

### 2. Recuperation by means of inversion

The critique of "grand narratives" has a pedigree worthy of respect. The "narrative" was once attacked on account of the fact that narration produces *totalisation*. The narrative selects "events," links them into a "whole," the whole having a "point" – and all of the above, functioning as an *ideological mechanism*, it regulates the self-understanding of its victims, establishes the image of the world for them, interprets the present and the past, determines the promises of the future, impos-

es beliefs and provides reasons. The “grand narratives” criticised by this theory are the big ideologies of Western imperialism – from the time when it still worked on establishing the preconditions for its system, from the time when it still did not function as a “natural” product. The “initial establishment of preconditions,” of course, could not unfold without wars and conquests, was not possible without administration and oppression – nor was it possible without ideological foundations. The grand narratives of ideological foundations did not only hold together the army of conquistadors, clerks, gatherers, engineers and builders – they especially programmed the spirits and the bodies of those whose intended role was to be coolies and labourers, porters and policemen, lower-ranking officers and local intelligentsia, the administrators and executors of their new slavery.

Now, however, when the system has been established, when it functions of its own accord, unless something interferes with its functioning, if it is not opposed too much, the new narrative about the end of “grand narratives” is the new opium for the colonised peoples of Eastern Europe. Just as the misery of the proletariat is a precondition for the establishment of capitalism and its most dependable staple product, even though this no longer refers to the proletariat from the era of industrial revolution and Marxist utopian constructions, but to the new global proletariat on the margins and in the white spots of the system; so intellectual misery is a precondition for conquering new colonies from the Adriatic to Siberia, almost a prerequisite for the “proletarianisation” of new recruits to the world system. And, of course, a prelude to establishing new local class rules – which tell us the fairy tale about “the end of grand narratives.”

It would appear that the ideology of world governance uses one of the mechanisms of mythological thought. From the same elements, from the same matrix, it derives the opposite point by means of some kind of *inversion*. In keeping with the general paucity of “white mythology,” this inversion is *mechanical* in character; it consists in returning the same piece of information to the sender, *but in such a manner as to direct him/her to the assumptions that the statement itself rests upon*. The information about “grand narratives,” their repressive character and their “end,” directed against “the system,” as a promise of its defeat, only brings the system back – “*de te fabula narratur*” – by merely turning that same *statement* (“the end of grand narratives,” etc.) against the assumptions of the critique, pointing it in the direction of its declarative situation. Did not the critique of world imperialism *assume* the anticolonial revolution, the struggle of the oppressed and the downtrodden for liberty, for independence, to be its tacit but explicit basis, a point of reference and orientation, *the possibility of its declaration*? Did it not flirt with the ideology of the Third World, of the damned of this world, of those bewitched by slavery, did it not flirt with their rebellion, *with their grand narrative*?

Serves you right – says the story about the end of grand narratives now – for not having listened to Che and produced “two or three Vietnams,” for opting to warm your bottoms sitting in the debate salons of the academia! It is too late now, the grand narratives have come to an end. The system has appropriated the subversive ideology, what has occurred, as we used to say in the 1960’s, is *recuperation*. Recuperation could work because the declarative position of academic critique was “false” right from the start, for it was always already a part of the system itself.

But still, this propaganda reaches further than its salon-type critics. In the meantime, while they sat in academic salons toying with their postmodernisms and deconstructions, a revolution did occur. Instead of “two or three Vietnams”

in the American sphere, Afghanistan happened – and it was in the entire sphere of the Soviet whip. As for us here, we did our bit – and since old Europe neither jumped nor danced, the “Hic Rhodus, hic salta” moment passed, and the only thing left after the failed reconciliation were the thorns of the present.

### 3. The ideology of “the end of narratives” and the institutionalisation of national masquerade

And how does that ideological make-up compare with the other side of contemporaneity – that contemporaneity which got so overzealously, so recklessly, rigidly, barbarously, wildly engaged when it came to the *institutionalisation of the ur-model of all “grand narratives,”* that is to say, the institutionalisation of the national epic? We probably have to rely on a distinction that imposed itself upon us in the course of our former analyses of the one-party rule. The ideology of the rulers should be distinguished from the ruling ideology. *The ruling ideology* is the one that exists, in material terms, within the institutional network, and the current glue of the institutional network is *the ethnic state*. On the other hand, *the ideology of the rulers*, the ether of self-understanding of the ruling class, or at least the greater part of its factions, is the ideology of pacts concluded between the political class and other power groups (in the economy, administration, the machinery for producing public opinion, and only partially in “culture”). It is also, which is of particular importance – a tool for establishing short-term “civic” consensuses *on the horizon of the nationalist “grand narrative.”*

This structural opposition was established in the course of the diachronic development of “post-communist” societies. First, a bunch of lunatics dressed in national costumes burst onto the scene, introducing, through a repressive organisation of political public opinion, the revolutionary act of institutionalisation into the masquerade of “primary-school nationalism.” When the pathos of the initial ideological accumulation was spent in the course of establishing the state-legal framework of the ethnic state, the command positions were taken over by sober pragmatists, who initiated the procedure of normalisation into the prose of everyday capitalism. They announced the end of “grand narratives” only when the vampire national epic was securely established and a “narrative” of any kind could only come from the other side of the barricade.

*Anti-utopianism* is thus *simultaneously* the structure of the ideology of the rulers *and the ideological formulation* of its attitude towards the ruling ideology. As the ideology of the ruling elite, anti-utopianism is everyday wisdom, a specific *phronesis* that enables the new political classes to manoeuvre among the “indigenous” trends of capitalist economy. These trends are inaccessible to the political classes in nation states anyway, for they unfold on an essentially higher level. And that ideology reformulates that which is *structurally given* into that which is *politically desirable*. By “protecting,” on the level of *statement*, the self-realising effects of the capitalist system, and by protecting, on the level of *making a statement*, that is, in reality itself against those very effects, it maintains its ruling position despite the changes occurring in capitalist trends. The anti-utopian “pragmatism” is merely an admission of eternal defeat made in advance, a perpetual alibi for accommodating to situations that the subscribers to this ideology cannot keep under control. And admitting defeat in the world system is a guarantee of “victory” in the microcosm of the nation state; it is an ideology through which the new local class rule is reproduced.

If the new political class maintains its world-historical position by ideologically reformulating that which is *structurally necessary* into that which *it wants in political terms*, and if it reproduces its position of power within the society by ideologically formulating its attitude towards that which is *not necessary in structural terms* (that is, towards the ethnic state) as a *non-attitude*, something “non-necessary”; the ethnic state, viewed from this perspective, begins to appear as something that is *beyond the political will*, in view of the fact that it is not possible to formulate either “will” or “non-will.” If the anti-utopian ideology assumes the attitude of denial, *Verleugnung*, towards the world system, when it comes to the system of the national-ethnic state, its attitude is one of negation, denegation, that is, *Verneinung*. “Suppression” (the contradictions of capitalism, class struggle, exploitation on the world and the national level, etc.) is the “positive content” of anti-utopianism. “Negation” is the attitude that the ideology of the rulers establishes towards the ruling (ethno-nationalist) ideology.

If anti-utopianism possesses two elements, “the content-related” and the “relational”, and if, consequently, anti-utopianism is an albeit deformed but still *reflected* political position, which comprises both the self-determining mechanism (denial) and the mechanism of the attitude towards one’s own other (denegation) – what about the element whose negation is established through anti-utopianism? What is the situation of utopianism?

#### 4. Utopia as an image and an act

Anti-utopianism has its own image of utopia. To put it more precisely, through its negation it establishes utopianism in a special interpretation, as a “grand narrative.” According to this interpretation, utopia is a more or less defined notion of what “society” should be like; therefore, it is a *request* that, as this interpretation would have it, utopianism would be prepared to realise by fire and sword. Hence, the connection with the guillotine and – somewhat rashly – with the Gulag. (The rashness concerning the Gulag is due to the fact that, first of all, the Gulag systems were actually anti-utopian reactionary systems; secondly, it is due to this rashness that we neglect the real problem, namely, how utopian ideology may function legitimately and in a conservationist manner, be it in Gulag-like or neoliberal systems.)

If we try to find an ideology that would correspond to that notion of utopia, contemporary fascism is an evident candidate. To put it more precisely, it is those ethnic policies the most consistent variant of which today is implemented through war, crime and military crime, which we refer to as contemporary fascism for want of a better name. A characteristic of such ideologies is that they are convinced that they have a notion of society; as far as we can judge on the basis of its realisations so far, this conviction is “utopian,” for these comprise various peripheral capitalisms, “neo-colonial” societies that can survive relying on less authoritarian regimes, and are certainly possible without “fascism.” “The ethnic utopia,” as a matter of fact, actually typically occurs precisely in such peripheral “neo-colonial” environments, but it is not necessary at all for such environments to really organise themselves in such a utopian fashion. All this means that “utopia,” which is negated by the contemporary anti-utopianism, is utopian self-imposed blindness. This self-imposed blindness, somewhere and sometimes, manages to be imposed, through authoritarian policies, upon those very same (peripheral) societies that the anti-utopian ideology aspires to rule.

This means that anti-utopianism *in this dimension expresses – from the position of one of the parties involved –* the ideological conflict within the ruling political class of peripheral societies.

Now we see the specific economy of the anti-utopian ideology. It is capable of *simultaneously* negating the reactive romantic tensions of the ethnic institutional system *and* blocking those motivations that might bring into question *the entire construction of peripheral capitalism*, from the structure of the state to the economic premises and legitimation mechanisms of political rule. It is, therefore, through negation that anti-utopianism intervenes in the *non-antagonistic contradiction* within the framework of the political class and its broader surroundings of social power – thereby blocking (at least ideologically) the possibility of *establishment, articulation of an antagonistic contradiction* between the new social (economic, political, administrative, cultural, communication, military) power and the oppressed, the exploited, those who are excluded from the new system. That is why anti-utopianism has every chance of becoming a new hegemony on the periphery of capital. Of course, that is precisely why such anti-utopianism *misses* the utopian potential of “contemporary spirit,” and that may be precisely the reason why it will not be able to perform its blockade much longer.

It is enough to take a look at the latest rise of utopianism, the 1980’s, the alternative, social upheavals, to get a picture with the help of which we can at least begin an analysis. Those times and those upheavals were certainly not “utopian” in a vulgar anti-utopian sense; they did not have a model of the future society in their pocket, they did not even use the term “the future society.” And yet, they did “aspire to reach beyond the boundaries of the era,” even though this was not expressed in the shape of a globalistic “demand,” but presented itself of its own accord, through resistance to the current order. The dialectics of those relations, responses, collisions and conflicts was complex: it was partly immediately analysed by theory, and partly it still awaits processing. Here, we can only summarise those dimensions that are of importance for our purpose.

The utopianism of the 1980’s somehow corresponded to Mannheim’s definition: the realisation of his aspirations demanded a real abolition of the current relations. However, it only corresponded to that concept “somehow”; that is to say, with some important additional definitions. The most important specific characteristic was that the utopianism of the time *did not understand itself in this way*, and this was due to the fact that its demands were not globalistic-frontal, and they are not such because they did not originate from a “programme,” from a “vision,” but from various *practices* that various individuals and groups *effectively* carried out. The demands arose from *productions*, which, in turn, originated from the actual postulates of the *products, styles and outcomes* of those practices and productions. To the extent that those “demands” were shaped – as a response to blockades, attacks, persecution, “guilt,” restrictions – they were diffuse and disparate. They relied in particular *on the already existing horizons* within the framework of “historical reality.” The vindictive, programmatic, *political* moment crystallised and coagulated *at the points of contact between the rigid horizon of the establishment, the “system” and alternative practices, productions, styles and outcomes*. Even in these articulations there was nothing “utopian” in the vulgar sense of the term. Their horizon, their “reality,” their “sociability,” “historical activity” already existed, were already there – precisely within the framework of the alternative. Alternative self-understanding therefore felt all too obligated to “the real state of

affairs” to feel any kind of need for additional construction of “utopias.” *But, paradoxically, this is precisely where the true utopian moment within the alternative was to be found.* And from that very moment originated the only characteristic that, in the historical fate of the alternative, somehow corresponds to the vulgar notion of “utopia”; namely, that its “realisation,” its historical effect, denied the expectations, aspirations and “demands”; that, from the point of view of its cause, the outcome was even catastrophic.

We can define the utopian moment as blindness, self-blinding or “fateful illusion” – *hamartia* in self-understanding. The alternative actually had a “concept” of its responsibility towards the historical situation, but the “content” of that concept was an illusion. The place, the *locus* of that blindness can even be precisely determined: at the “points of contact” with the system, where the alternative had to shape its “demands” in order to make credible *the preconditions for the possibility* of its practices, productions, and styles (which were happening anyway); the formulation of “demands” *unfolded following the dictates of the system.*

The above self-blinding can be conceptualised in a number of ways. We could say that the alternative insufficiently made use of the mechanisms of overdetermination, even though, ironically, it was precisely its own theory that introduced this concept of preconditioning, which had a central role in the political reaches of this theory. But this kind of postulate is not sufficient, a rigorous conceptualisation must also comprise *the logic* of self-blinding. And that means *the mechanisms of subjectivation*, connected with the discursive articulation, the discursive establishment of “historical positions.” And the alternative as a cultural undertaking, was nothing else but a “discursive articulation, in the broadest and the most dramatic sense.” That only means that the “utopian” moment of self-blinding was its *inner* moment, necessary and inevitable, even constitutive.

We can also, in a stenographic manner and using the Hegelian jargon, place the utopian moment in the difference between what “the historical position” or, *sit venia verbo*, “the level of spirit” is “for itself,” and what it is “in itself.” The drama of appropriating the “in itself” is the basic formula of *the phenomenology of spirit*, which can also be formulated “materialistically” as a process in which the “in itself” pounces upon, surprises, prevents the illusions of “being-for-itself,” even though these illusions are – and precisely because they are – constitutive for “being-in-itself.” If we deprive this jargon of its teleological charge, while preserving the positive moment of “abolition,” *Aufhebung*, which resides in *alienation* –, we are still left with the conclusion that the utopian element is constitutive, if not for some possible “upheaval of the spirit,” then all the more so *for any spiritual upheaval.* That is why insistence on the utopian moment today constitutes *self-deception of the spirit.*

### 5. Is it still permissible to think?

We easily reconcile ourselves to the fact that we shall never be able to think everything through, and that even the little that has been given to us to think we shall not be able to think through in its entirety. Today, this modesty, which is not much of a virtue because it is our fate anyway, confronts us with a dramatic ethical problem: are we still allowed to think at all? If that which is “unthought” is within the framework of the alternative – even if indirect and contingent – and yet undeniably connected to the horrors of today, which leave us speechless, and if, on the other hand, we know that the “unthought” is constitutive of every thought:

do we still dare, do we still have the temerity to think, can we still afford to be so arrogant as to make thoughts public?

Hopefully, it may be just a sophism that we can reject by means of an opposite sophism, the Aristotelian argument that even that very dilemma is the fruit of thinking. In order to ask ourselves whether we are allowed to think, we already had to think in order to arrive at that question at all. This means, the dilemma in question presupposes something the possibility of which it finds doubtful, thus responding to itself, for it “pragmatically” denies itself.

We could also say that what makes horrors horrible to us, the observers, is precisely the fact that we are left speechless, our thought petrified, when confronted with them. That thought and speech, therefore, the speech of thought, constitute the first gesture of refusal, opposition, and resistance. Or, to put it less pathetically and less self-admiringly, if the horrors of today are the work of the masses that are, no matter how abhorrent we may find it to admit this, still a kind of human community, then it is only possible to stop them “jointly,” that is to say, through speech, reciprocity, and one day, possibly, through solidarity.

If then, beyond the ethical dilemma and actually with it, we are forced and obligated into practical thinking, and if utopianism is a constitutive element of such thinking, then anti-utopianism constitutes abdication of the spirit and is an accomplice that allows the horrors of today. Conversely, utopianism is no mere self-defence of the spirit; the defence of the spirit is but the first step against today and beyond it. This sounds sufficiently “utopian” to hope that it is also reflective – and thereby practical.

### III. How much fascism - again

In the current debate about fascism, it is probably of importance that it has been initiated by the media and not, say, by some voice of public, or social critique. It wasn’t even initiated by the alternative, still less by the established politics. Actually, the political establishment was not to be expected to do this, for the general reason that ever since the beginning of the period of the multiparty democracy, it has not initiated any intellectual discussion – on the contrary, it has stifled quite a few. It is also due to the particular reason that the political establishment manifests a leaning towards, perhaps even a predilection, for the right, including the extreme right. This is proven, for example, by the fact that even prominent members of both parties, which do plead for “tolerance,” occasionally resort to the racist kind of jargon. Another indication of this is the government’s coarse arrogance in the course of negotiating with the trade unions, especially when compared to its mellifluous servility when it fraternises with the Catholic Church establishment.

The alternative and critically intoned science have tried to place this debate on the agenda a number of times, but until now they have not been particularly successful at it. Within the space of a year that has elapsed since last such attempts (in 1995, *editor’s note*), a lot has obviously changed, leading the media, which have so far been almost exclusively fascinated by the multiparty rule, towards issues that they have not been able to deal with within such narrowly defined borders. The most important change is probably that “fascistoid symptoms” have coalesced within the framework of parliamentary politics, that extreme and populist parties have realised themselves within the political establishment, so that it is no longer necessary to leave the intellectually undemand-

ing rut of the parliamentary establishment for “fascism” to present itself as an issue worthy of being considered.

This is the first paradox of discussions about fascism: under some circumstances, probably under some of the current ones, what public debates about fascism prove is precisely the power of fascism. It would appear that these debates are an achievement of fascism itself, which has earned itself the right to qualify for the subject of a public debate. Perhaps that is why one tends to feel awkward at the very use of the term “fascism”: on the one hand, we have a feeling that we are “painting the devil,” and on the other, it seems that it is fascism itself that guides our hand in the process.

In the sphere of “new democracies,” the first one to really initiate a debate was probably Milan Popović in the daily *Borba*. In the spring of 1992, he warned that the Nazi technology used for the purpose of legitimating the powers-that-be was still not sufficient to pronounce, for example, the regimes in Serbia or Croatia fascist in the true sense of the term: “...these regimes cannot become fascist ones... first of all because of their (semi-)peripheral, extremely dependent status on the hierarchical world system, that is, on the world economy.” In the course of the election campaign in early 1993, the same writer dealt with this issue again, on the pages of the same daily paper, under the telling title of “Fascism, after all.” This time around, he interpreted the positioning of “post-communist” societies on the (semi-)periphery of the world system relying on Chomsky’s theory of fascism (*Deterring Democracy*, 1991), within the framework of which “marginality” (as being paradigmatic in Italy following the First World War and, with some modifications, also in Germany, as well as in South America in the second half of the 20th century, and today in numerous “Third World” countries) is precisely one of the preconditions for the development of fascistogeneus dynamics. This dynamics typically unfolds in three phases: 1. the phase during which reactionary powers in the world centre offer indirect support or even directly install fascist apparatuses on the periphery; 2. the phase during which there is an increase of tension between the (democratic) centre and the former (fascist) client; 3. the phase in which direct confrontation occurs. Popović provides other arguments as well, referring to Wallerstein, and it has to be admitted that his analysis has been confirmed to a large extent in the meantime precisely within the framework of those regimes that are of greatest interest to him: the Milošević regime oscillates between the first and the second phase, having, for the most part, entered phase two; the Tuđman regime also oscillates between the first and the second phase, remaining mainly within the boundaries of the first one for the time being. Does this theory apply to our local (Slovenian, editor’s note) relations? One can at least note that the protagonists of the local fascisization very much strive to enter “the first phase”; it is obvious that “theories” of a “communist conspiracy,” warnings that democracy has not been secured yet and that, therefore, the nationalist revolution should be shifted to “phase two,” the hypotheses about the “UDBO [Security Service]-Mafia,” even some characteristics of international liaising, belong to the logic of the first phase of fascist dynamics. Judging by this, at least in political terms, if not in broader social terms as well, there is a possibility that fascistogeneus dynamics might be initiated with us, too.

But let us remain sceptical. There are other reservations that one may have concerning the use of the term “fascism.” The first one is purely methodological: there is reason to fear that we are pondering contemporary phenomena

relying on categories from the past, thus missing precisely that which is most important about them, namely, their topical character. The other reservation is ethical: the label of fascism indisputably produces stigmatisation; let us not forget how this designation was abused, for example, when they tried to criminalise punk, and how we spoke out against the use of such methods in political conflicts. Finally, indiscriminate use of such an extreme expression is also politically problematical: whoever gets tagged with this label loses political legitimacy. Consequently, in the final analysis, such a person gets a push towards “fascistoid” acts and tendencies.

These problems are not new. Almost all their elements have been manifested, for example, in the course of German attempts to do away with the country’s Nazi past. And our position today seems to be more complex than that of Germany. In that country, the main issue was “memory” and “construction of the past,” which referred to only one, though gigantic problem. As for us, we have been affected by two historical issues at the same time, namely, the issue of domestic fascism before 1945 and the issue of the one-party rule after World War Two. There are two more problems today: the establishment of a state in the spirit of nationalism, accompanied by a pronounced “Blut und Boden” rhetoric of the Demos party, spiced up with the local equivalent of racism, namely “Balkanism”; and the emergence of radically right-wing and populist politics. The circumstances under which we are faced with these issues are significantly worse than they were in the former Federal Republic of Germany. “Adenauer’s” Germany, whatever objections might be and have been levelled at it by critically-minded individuals and movements, did manage to establish a firm constitutional framework of parliamentary democracy, supplemented by an “independent public sphere” of intellectual power and prestige that we would have approached only if the 1980’s had lasted some ten years longer. With us, the constitutional framework is still relatively weak, and also lacks adequate foundations, both in terms of the legal system and particularly in terms of, to use Habermas’s expression, an “ethical citizens’ consensus.” There is no independent public sphere at all; worse still, all the established political forces have been engaged in destroying it in one way or another.

If we think of the great contribution that the 1960’s movements in Germany and their rich heritage made to that country’s attempts to deal with its past and its struggle against neo-Nazism and the fascistoid excesses of right-wing politics, we can perceive a significant parallel in our local history, a parallel which warns us anew of the falling standards in the realm of political culture and general social relations, which occurred with the introduction of parliamentary democracy. In the era of “extraparliamentary opposition” and new social movements in Western Europe, in our country, too, there appeared social movements that, driven by numerous cultural, subcultural and countercultural motives, especially in cooperation with the then flowering theoretical production, created the seeds of an independent and free public sphere outside the ruling and established, then one-party politics. This structural social transformation is probably the fundamental reason for the transformation, at long last, in the technology of state-political decision-making, that is to say, for the introduction of parliamentary multiparty democracy.

One observation that imposes itself even when one gives the recent past a cursory examination is that, *in the historical dimension, on the level of social events in a broader sense* (economic, political, ideological), *we were already continuously in-*

*volved in "European" events.* Lest the task of proving this should prove too easy, we can even disregard the 1960's, because that particular decade provided a rather favourable set of circumstances the world over, even though it is worth noting that the first major manifestations of the 1960's occurred almost simultaneously in Berkeley and in Ljubljana, and that in the mythical year of '68, students in Belgrade kept the university under control longer than anywhere else. We can also disregard the significance of the Yugoslav brand of self-management socialism for the progressive world debate, and the theoretical, political and ideological importance that the Yugoslav "third path to socialism" undoubtedly had. Likewise, we can temporarily disregard the non-alignment movement, the first, and at least for a while, successful way of organising "the despised of this world," within the framework of which Yugoslavia had a leading role. Also, we shall not speak of the rise of social and political thought in our country, which, on the one hand, drew a lot from that "participation in world history," and on the other, fortified it, pushed it forward and at the same time criticised it.

Let us restrict ourselves to the era of "extraparliamentary oppositions" in the West and later social movements. In parliamentary democracies, these new political forms stepped outside the established political apparatuses and established a new political life, new forms and new "styles" of organisation, and produced alternative publics. But in our case, we were outside the establishment in advance because of the nature of the political system, but we also had to develop new forms, models and styles, and especially, of course, a "new" public, which means a real public as an alternative to the "inner public" of the establishment and the "false public" that was only the ideological apparatus of the one-party state. The way extraparliamentary movements in parliamentary democracies had to fight for penetrating the mechanisms of decision-making, we had to find ways of penetrating "the system." In parliamentary democracies, this was not possible without the critique of progressive and leftist system organisations; with us, it also required a critique of the only party there was, the monopolist Communist Party. Just like extraparliamentarianism and the new social movements in the West led to transformations inside the political establishment ("Eurocommunism," the coming of socialist democracies to power), so the alternative managed to transform the political establishment with us, that is, to end the one-party system and introduce parliamentary democracy.

At first, the introduction of parliamentary democracy was nothing but adjustment of the state-political sphere to the deeper changes in society. For a number of different reasons, to which we partly pointed in the course of the actual development, and which will partly have to be additionally analysed in the future, what came to pass was that, to a large degree, the consequence liquidated its causes. This process, too, was closely connected with "European," even world events: the rise of neoliberalism, first of all in the metropolises and subsequently worldwide; the slowing down of reformed communisms; the electoral defeats of social democracy. Due to the specific character of development in the democratic system, now we participate anew in European and world history, although not at its progressive but at its regressive end: our development here is now part of the general developments in "Eastern Europe." The proof that this "participation" in many ways assumes less drastic forms is the fact that from its very beginning it was not necessary at all. In the analyses conducted so far, we have dealt with, for reasons to do with practical polemics, the politics of the right, Demos, reaction-

ary groupings and the former communists, which produced this regressive turnabout. What remains, however, is the more important part of the task: to analyse the policies that enabled a counter-strike. What is certainly worth thinking about is how the alternative wasted or lost, during the short period between 1989 and 1990, the hegemony it had been creating for ten or fifteen years. Also, it is worth analysing how the social effects of the alternative hegemony, which appeared to be so deep, increasingly gave way to conservative, even reactionary "restoration." These analyses we have yet to conduct: for now, suffice it to say that the local new populism, new "fascism," new right-wing extremism, are the ways in which we participate in European, or even world history. This does not mean, of course, that those phenomena are in any way "necessary"; perhaps we shall be the first to remove them convincingly. It only means that they are real, that the historical "logic" is realised through them, broader than the local one, which still runs deeper than everyday political complications.

The dimensions of the "restoration" shock are gigantic: the presentation of peripheral capitalism as "renewal," that is, a violent introduction, in one way or another, of rather backward capitalist relations; the establishment of a state based on nationalist ideology; the abolition of the independent public sphere and the monopolisation of the political process in the hands of party, ownership or even ideological "elites."

It would appear that these disturbing outcomes of the "shift," which to a great extent destroyed the achievements of the social transformations of the last decade, have created a situation to which a part of society and a part of the political elite respond with fascistoid reactions. The real question is not whether this or that political group actually resorts to fascistoid methods, still less whether this or that politician manifests behaviour that might qualify him or her for a "leader," and the will to apply such talents. The real questions are whether there do exist circumstances in which extreme political attitudes stand a chance and authoritarian persons might succeed, and what the causes of those circumstances are.

The thesis that liberal democracy automatically produces fascistoid effects and that in a system of parliamentary rule the removal of such "reflexes" is a permanent task is seductive, albeit somewhat old-fashioned. In its more pessimistic variants, this thesis maintains that fascism is one of the possible responses to the internal contradictions of parliamentarianism, and that therefore classical liberal policies are not successful when fighting fascism. But even if we accept this, we may say, somewhat simplified view, we can note that, nevertheless, additional reasons are needed, special circumstances in which the "fascistoid by-products" of liberal democracy become truly significant. One of such special reasons may be if a sense of insecurity spreads among broad segments of the population. In the current circumstances of intensified social stratification, economic transformation and peripheral inclusion in the capitalist system, this precondition is certainly fulfilled.

We can also define this reason differently: fascism may be a way of resolving a real crisis in the existing relations between the economy and exploitation. Even though a while ago it did appear that the crisis of the one-party rule and the corresponding system of exploitation was already resolved, the introduction of the peripheral Eastern European capitalism brought about a deeper crisis, maybe precisely because, in view of the already achieved historical level of Slo-

venian society, that system is anachronistic and produces critical outcomes due to its backwardness.

The next reason may be a social-psychological one: the importance of mass-scale resentment in broad segments of the population that have a feeling that they are “victims of injustice.” At a moment when a new class rule is being established, and in a society in which, as sociological research has shown, egalitarianism is a deeply anchored ideology of the masses, that precondition is fulfilled as well, particularly if, among increasingly broad layers of the population, there is a deepening awareness that they have been separated from the processes of political decision-making and a rising sense of powerlessness. What also tends to happen is that some political groups particularly cultivate and incite such psychological processes; on the other hand, until now no political group has proved able to establish a convincing alternative to either liberal peripheral capitalism or the increasingly dangerous monopolisation of economic, political and general social power in the hands of the “new” class.

Finally, in contemporary parliamentary democracies it is more or less clear that the system cannot survive if it is not supported by a free public sphere that is independent of the political establishment in the narrower sense of the term. Multiparty democracy can only survive in a “political” environment that is much broader than multiparty parliamentarianism. That particular precondition has not been fulfilled in our case, and even worse, today we are further from something like that than we were in the final years of the one-party rule. We can assume that a more or less clear sense of this dramatic shortcoming is the reason that eventually led the ideological apparatuses of the multiparty system to initiate a debate on fascism. Perhaps we can hope that this debate will at least contribute to the establishment of a public sphere and the broadening of the political space beyond the framework of the party establishment.

The most challenging part of the current episode involving fascism and anti-fascism is not political fascism, which has long been with us, but cultural fascism, which does appear anew. A somewhat stereotypical explanation of the current radicalisation of a significant part of cultural establishment means that the “intellectual elite,” having done a heroic job when it came to introducing democracy, now feels rejected at the moment of “normalisation,” which is why it resorts to more forceful registers. Contrary to this view, we put forward the thesis that the “intellectual elite” continues its heroic job, that its task, now as before, is directed against the beginnings of an independent public sphere, and aims to prevent the establishment of that intellectual position that a developed democracy makes possible.

Their role model, actually, is the classical moralist writing, a type of engagement that historically belongs to the first half of the 19th century in Europe, that is to say, a position in which the only public was of the bourgeois-literary kind, and when there was no real political public. Contrary to this, the contemporary intellectual position only developed towards the end of the 19th century, that is to say, in the era of developed parliamentarianism, mass press and a developed public sphere, which extended beyond the framework of parliamentary politics. This position, of course, was created by the labour movement and the development of socialism, as well as the spread of general literacy. At the root of this process lies the intellectual response to the crisis of European civilisation. If we wish to position this break in anecdotal terms, we can date it by referring to the

Dreyfus affair. It was then that the role of the intellectual was established, of one who applies his expert knowledge outside his immediate field, that is to say, in the political public sphere.

The role of the intellectual in the one-party system was reminiscent of the intellectual role in Heine’s time, precisely because at that time, just like in the era of the one-party system, there was no political public sphere to speak of. Still, that social position was finished off by the student movements of the 1960’s. Later, the new theoretical intelligentsia, in cooperation with the cultural self-organisation movements of masses of the young and subsequently with the new social movements, initiated the establishment of an independent sphere of political public, outside the one-party state apparatus. In the course of this historical turnabout, which ended successfully sometime around the middle of the 1980’s, the classical “dissident” position had no role whatsoever; precisely the opposite, it was then already an ideological ingredient of the cultural establishment and, therefore, on the other side of the barricade.

The current fascization of the mandarin establishment attempts to apply that specimen of bourgeois “literary” and limited “public,” and through its radicalism it proves the historical crisis and probably the end of the historical potential of such archaic “intellectualism.” In its own way, this maybe proves that with the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy in place, an independent and broader sphere of political public has begun to gain in strength after all; it is a guarantee of a successful functioning of parliamentarianism, and at the same time an area in which it is possible to develop a modern European intellectual position. That is why, in spite of all the darkness being spread by the new fascism of old intelligentsia, we can still be optimistic. Naturally, on the condition that we successfully develop those initial elements that are the historical cause of this radicalisation. If we help the development of that sphere, the mandarin phantoms will evaporate of their own accord, even if they are only vampires from the dumpster of history.

#### IV. After the purloined revolution

I wrote the texts contained in this booklet in 1995, at the time of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, of political instability, when in the functioning of this state [Slovenia] one could discern a malignant mixture of rigidity, incompetence, authoritarianism and panic. By means of these writings, I tried to respond to the intellectual *urgency* of the moment, which was all the more dramatic because it appeared then that those who “perform the social function of intellectuals” – to use Gramsci’s expression – decided to mobilise extremist right-wing ideologies and to engage, through their great social power, supported by the influence of elite associations and the school canon, the “intellectual establishment,” that is, a great part of the ideological apparatus of the state, pointing it in the direction that, in my view, led into fascism.

The main correction that I would now propose is that what, three years ago, appeared to me to be some kind of *aberration* is actually the *normal state of affairs* of the epoch, which will probably last a while longer. That is why, in something of a hurry, perhaps even in a state of panic, I tried in those writings to sketch the *historical* processes that had led to a specific set of circumstances favourable to fascistoid trends. These are limited primarily to intellectual and ideological dimensions, but do encompass the “material existence of ideology” in the school apparatus, touch upon political constructions in their materiality and in the discursiveness of their

reproduction. All the same, they neglect excessively the fundamental long-term processes in society, and especially in its “economic basis,” if I may use this jargon, so zealously discredited today. That is why in this preface I shall provide an outline of what should be written in some future treatises in order to supplement these writings – and what, perhaps, could be preserved for the future from them.

The basic postulate, it would appear to me, still remains; namely, the question is not “*Fascism – yes or no?*” but “*How much fascism?*” That means that what we stenographically call “fascism” is a structural element of the installation, and also, it would appear to me, in the reproduction of the local “semi-peripheral” capitalism. This hypothesis disproves the myth, common to the ideology of liberalism and to most Marxisms, that the capitalist way of production, and allegedly the capitalist social formation, are capable of reproducing themselves *without extraeconomic pressure*. The persistence of this myth is all the more noteworthy because the thinker whom liberalism considers to be its originator and Marxism thinks of as the main object of their criticism, actually thought otherwise. In fact, Adam Smith warned that the immanent logic of the “free market,” which, on account of the interests of “those living on profits” spontaneously tends towards monopolisation, can only be stopped by resorting to the state measures imposed by the ruler. Thus, the very first classical formulation already diagnosed “the free market” to be inherently suicidal, so that the only thing that could keep it alive is state pressure. Neoliberalism confirmed this classical thesis in practice – from Reagan’s antimonopolist legislation to the brutal suppression of British trade unions under the rule of Margaret Thatcher. The world’s hegemonic power of today also ensures the “freedom” of the world market through financial terror, political extortion and military “policing” – sometimes going solo, other times through its military extensions, mostly through “world” organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or the World Trade Organisation.

Contemporary “extraeconomic” practices that keep alive the current system of the world economy also point to the fact that the reproduction of the system does not depend so much on market relations but on relations in *the sphere of production*. In this way, they confirm that the theoretical shift from market analysis towards analysing production methods performed by Karl Marx was justified. The transformations in production relations are, of course, the central dimension in “transition” processes as well: new relations are established by means of state regulation, legal measures of state coercion. The juridical-economic formula “privatisation and denationalisation” now itself belongs to the *normalisation discourse* through which the ruling ideology managed to *neutralise* the dramatic dimension of that historical process. If we try to condense these developments into another formula, we can say that the process of divesting the state of its authority as the political-administrative representative of *solidarity*, arising from work, has just been brought to its close; what has been established in its place is the new *civil society* form of rule based on private ownership of capital. In this new context, the policing function when it comes to the regulation of *conflicts arising from the exploitative nature of new production relations* belongs to the state. The state now mostly channels and regulates conflicts arising from the insurmountable contradictions of the new system, arbitrates, and occasionally performs a repressive function in the course of buffering those conflicts which cannot be channelled into parliamentary democracy procedures or into some extraparliamentary negotiating (temporary) solution. Sociability is no longer based on solidarity but

on conflicts. Hence the necessity of permanent *operative* presence of the state and the necessity of this liberal *etatism*, which is in total opposition to the declared political ideology of the liberal state. That is why it is all the more brutal in its dry pragmatism, and its legitimation discourses are that much more cynical.

The “extraeconomic” violence of the state is, therefore, an integral element of “normal” reproduction of social relations based on private ownership. It is, then, all the more to be expected in “transition”-related circumstances when the state, as the main factor of thorough transformation, must at least temporarily rule as a *state in a state of emergency*. This particular formula is one of the possible explanations of the fascisization with the state, particularly developed by Nikos Poulantzas. The real theoretical problem, therefore, is why in some states undergoing “transition” this fascisization *has never occurred*. Among the many reasons for this, the political-ideological dimension was probably important: 1. “the discourse, passions and illusions” of democratic revolution kept the peoples of Eastern Europe fascinated for some time after the revolution had already been “stolen”; 2. the social reaction of the deprived masses stripped of power was initiated relatively late, and was relatively skilfully manipulated by the reformist communist parties with social-democratic programmes.

Neither of the above has happened here. The paths of the revolution of human rights spread through the “broader society” through the filter of nationalist ideologies, maybe because, paradoxically, the Yugoslav democratic revolution was never sufficiently “pathetic.” It was entirely *avant la lettre* “politically correct” and politely enlightening. The communist leadership rejected all too lightly the solidary responsibility imposed by the former ideology, merrily embracing the transition jargon, and switched, without any particular upheavals, from the communist “new class” to a liberal “new class.” Even though the reformed communist parties inspired surprising confidence in the civic electorate, they made a succession of bad estimates and political mistakes, allowing a right-wing radicalisation of deprived social layers, thus significantly helping to articulate “fascisization from above” by means of “fascisization from below.”

Concerning our local relations, then, we must explain *the surplus of violence* against the “transitional” regulation of “rule of law” and *the surplus of ideological extremism* against the “democratic” methods of fabricating public opinion. For the moment, it is only possible to offer the initial elements for interpretation; at this stage, the answers are necessarily theoretically eclectic, disconnected, and perhaps even mutually contradictory. They are therefore theoretically one-sided, and simplify too much; they cannot achieve a synthesis on the level of analysis, instead, they try to derive it by means of the alibi of the coherence of their subject, which they look for in the phantom of “national society.” This designation of the subject is doubly wrong: First, on the one hand, the effect of the “imagined community,” whose construction was allegedly analytically dealt with by these contributions, is tacitly accepted as their self-evident horizon; and second, on the other hand, they neglect the decisive dimension in the production of their subject, namely, the specific “transitional” inclusion of some special social-economic space, defined by the non-orthodox variant of state socialism, in the world capitalist system. Let us outline briefly how we could explain, from a point of view that would eliminate the shortcomings of these contributions, what we, perhaps somewhat cynically, refer to as the surplus of violence and the surplus of extremism in local relations.

One of the problems when trying to explain these radicalisations lies in the fact that we cannot avoid the attractive stereotype of regressive “resurrection” of old tensions and frustrated political programmes. In these essays I tried to offer a *structural* analysis that encompassed, for the most part, only one of the ideological levels, namely, the level of “high” or the ruling culture. This approach should be deepened. If we opt for the initial formula only, the strategic position of “outdated” or “anachronistic” structures, which have established themselves so quickly and all-encompassingly in the local societies, could be designated in the following manner: The “*anachronistic*” structures that the resistance to inclusion in the system of world capitalism relies on (meaning resistance to the intrusion of contemporary relations of inequality and exploitation in areas that, until now, have at least to some degree “resisted” the world system) are at the same time the structures taken over by this inclusion, “invested into” by precisely those relations of inequality and exploitation in the world capitalist system. The nation state, with its “civil society” supplement, the nation, is perhaps the pre-eminent one among those “anachronistic” constructions. In today’s relations, the “sovereignty” of the nation state boils down, at best, to the right of jurisdiction within a limited area of the world system. (And in “transitional” states this right is very conditional and is mainly realised as the obligation of fulfilling the “expert” ultimatum of hegemonistic world or “international” organisations and the political pressures of the so-called “international community.”) Nevertheless, in its real limitation, the “sovereignty” of nation states can be an operative element in the functioning of the world system, wherein it can create the conditions of “unequal international exchange” and investment niches, lower the value of labour by means of state regulation, lower ecological standards through the absence of state regulation, and create and regulate new markets of goods, production factors and labour through local policies, etc. It is through their archaic character that nation states bring “pseudo-natural” diversification into the landscape of the world economy, creating local landscapes through which world capital moves with its products and exchanges, thus successfully compensating for the existing tendencies of falling profit rates and “falling profits.” On the other hand, various forms of local resistance to these processes view the nation state as a shield and a defence weapon. Thus, a great, if not the major, part of political battles within the nation state unfold within the coordinates of the false dilemma between “cosmopolitanism” and “localism.” What characterises both elements of this opposition is fascination with the power of the state and temptation in the face of monopoly on physical violence.

But this still cannot explain fascization. This is the position of all “transitional” states, of many states from the centre, and even of some states from the first division. We must search for further origins: for example, the ideological horizon and the models of understanding the classes, coalitions and groups that those nation states, as they brag about themselves, “created” and appropriated. These ruling coalitions understood themselves as colonial powers even before they managed to qualify “their” states as “colonies.” The ur-model of such conduct was provided by the Slovenian communists when they broke up the last Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, whereupon they took the first plane to return to “their” state. It did not occur to them that after a negative gesture it was possible to do something positive; they did not see the democratic fermentation throughout Yugoslavia, they failed to see that the entire Yugoslavia

expected democratic action of them, they did not want to know that they were in a position of being able to respond to the question posed by the historical moment. Neither they nor the later political classes thought of looking over the national fence. Some of those political Mafias actually wanted to expand their borders and violently export their limitations – “forcibly,” by means of ethnic cleansing, mass killing. “A people that oppresses other peoples is not free itself!” Naturally, but what should also be taken into consideration is the fact that a people that has fallen into the trap of nationalism is not free either.

So much about the “specific” local characteristics, but even they will not be enough for providing an explanation. What should also be explained is how these intellectually thin political classes with an antiquated ideology and schematic programmes managed to crush the democratic revolution of human rights, destroy the public, devastate the rich and diverse social space by introducing the plundering “Eastern capitalism.”

Translated by Novica Petrović

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## On Post-Fascism

### How citizenship is becoming an exclusive privilege.

—G. M. Tamás

I have an interest to declare. The government of my country, Hungary, is — along with the Bavarian provincial government [provincial in more senses than one] — the strongest foreign supporter of Jörg Haider's Austria. The right-wing cabinet in Budapest, besides other misdeeds, is attempting to suppress parliamentary governance, penalizing local authorities of a different political hue than itself, and busily creating and imposing a novel state ideology, with the help of a number of *lumpen* intellectuals of the extreme right, including some overt neo-Nazis. It is in cahoots with an openly and viciously anti-Semitic fascistic party that is, alas, represented in parliament. People working for the prime minister's office are engaging in more or less cautious Holocaust revisionism. The government-controlled state television gives vent to raw anti-Gypsy racism. The fans of the most popular soccer club in the country, whose chairman is a cabinet minister and a party leader, are chanting in unison about the train that is bound to leave any moment for Auschwitz.

On the ground floor of the Central European University in Budapest you can visit an exhibition concerning the years of turmoil a decade or so ago. There you can watch a video recorded illegally in 1988, and you can see the current Hungarian prime minister defending and protecting me with his own body from the truncheons of communist riot police. Ten years later, this same person appointed a communist police general as his home secretary, the second or third most important person in the cabinet. Political conflicts between former friends and allies are usually acrimonious. This is no exception. I am an active participant in an incipient anti-fascist movement in Hungary, a speaker at rallies and demonstrations. Our opponents — in personal terms — are too close for comfort. Thus, I cannot consider myself a neutral observer.

The phenomenon that I shall call *post-fascism* is not unique to Central Europe. Far from it. To be sure, Germany, Austria, and Hungary are important, for historical reasons obvious to all; familiar phrases repeated here have different echoes. I recently saw that the old brick factory in Budapest's third district is being demolished; I am told that they will build a gated community of suburban villas in its place. The brick factory is where the Budapest Jews waited their turn to be transported to the concentration camps. You could as well build holiday cottages in Treblinka. Our vigilance in this part of the world is perhaps more needed than anywhere else, since innocence, in historical terms, cannot be presumed.<sup>1</sup> Still,

1 Multiculturalist responses are desperate avowals of impotence: an acceptance of the ethnicization of the civic sphere, but with a humanistic and benevolent twist. These avowals are concessions of defeat, attempts to humanize the inhuman. The field had been chosen by post-fascism, and liberals are trying to fight it on its own favorite terrain, ethnicity. This is an enormously disadvantageous position. Without new ways of addressing the problem of global capitalism, the battle will surely be lost. But the new Dual State is alive and well. A Normative State for the core populations of the capitalist center, and a Prerogative State

post-fascism is a cluster of policies, practices, routines, and ideologies that can be observed everywhere in the contemporary world; that have little or nothing to do, except in Central Europe, with the legacy of Nazism; that are not totalitarian; that are not at all revolutionary; and that are not based on violent mass movements and irrationalist, voluntaristic philosophies, nor are they toying, even in jest, with anti-capitalism.

Why call this cluster of phenomena *fascism*, however post-?

Post-fascism finds its niche easily in the new world of global capitalism without upsetting the dominant political forms of electoral democracy and representative government. It does what I consider to be central to all varieties of fascism, including the post-totalitarian version. *Sans Führer, sans* one-party rule, *sans SA* or *SS*, post-fascism *reverses the Enlightenment tendency to assimilate citizenship to the human condition*.

Before the Enlightenment, citizenship was a privilege, an elevated status limited by descent, class, race, creed, gender, political participation, morals, profession, patronage, and administrative fiat, not to speak of age and education. Active membership in the political community was a station to yearn for, *civis Romanus sum* the enunciation of a certain nobility. Policies extending citizenship may have been generous or stingy, but the rule was that the rank of citizen was conferred by the lawfully constituted authority, according to expediency. Christianity, like some Stoics, sought to transcend this kind of limited citizenship by considering it second-rate or inessential when compared to a virtual community of the saved. Freedom from sin was superior to the freedom of the city. During the long, medieval obsolescence of the civic, the claim for an active membership in the political community was superseded by the exigencies of just governance, and civic excellence was abbreviated to martial virtue.

Once citizenship was equated with human dignity, its extension to all classes, professions, both sexes, all races, creeds, and locations was only a matter of time. Universal franchise, the national service, and state education for all had to follow. Moreover, once all human beings were supposed to be able to accede to the high rank of a citizen, national solidarity within the newly egalitarian political community demanded the relief of the estate of Man, a dignified material exist-

of arbitrary decrees concerning non-citizens for the rest. Unlike in classical, totalitarian fascism, the Prerogative State is only dimly visible for the subjects of the Normative State: the essential human and civic community with those kept out and kept down is morally invisible. The radical critique pretending that liberty within the Normative State is an illusion is erroneous, though understandable. The denial of citizenship based not on exploitation, oppression, and straightforward discrimination among the denizens of "homogeneous society," but on mere exclusion and distance, is difficult to grasp, because the mental habits of liberation struggle for a more just redistribution of goods and power are not applicable. The problem is not that the Normative State is becoming more authoritarian. The problem is that it belongs only to a few. A few interesting articles in English concerning recent developments: Harry Ritter, "From Hapsburg to Hitler to Haider," *German Studies Review* 22 [May 1999]: 269-284; Jan Müller, "From National Identity to National Interest: The Rise and Fall of Germany's New Right," *German Politics* 8 [December 1999]: 1-20; Michael Minkenberg, "The Renewal of the Radical Right," *Government and Opposition* 35 [Spring 2000]: 170-188; Jacob Heilbrunn, "A Disdain for the Past: Jörg Haider's Austria," *World Policy Journal* 28 [Spring 2000]: 71-78; Immanuel Wallerstein, "Albatros of Racism," *London Review of Books*, May 18, 2000, pp. 11-14; Rainer Bauböck, "Austria: Jörg Haider's Grasp for Power," *Dissent* [Spring 2000]: 23-26.

ence for all, and the eradication of the remnants of personal servitude. The state, putatively representing everybody, was prevailed upon to grant not only a modicum of wealth for most people, but also a minimum of leisure, once the exclusive temporal fief of gentlemen only, in order to enable us all to play and enjoy the benefits of culture.

For the liberal, social-democratic, and other assorted progressive heirs of the Enlightenment, then, progress meant universal citizenship — that is, a virtual equality of political condition, a virtually equal say for all in the common affairs of any given community — together with a social condition and a model of rationality that could make it possible. For some, socialism seemed to be the straightforward continuation and enlargement of the Enlightenment project; for some, like Karl Marx, the completion of the project required a revolution [doing away with the appropriation of surplus value and an end to the social division of labor]. But for all of them it appeared fairly obvious that the merger of the human and the political condition was, simply, moral necessity.<sup>2</sup>

The savage nineteenth-century condemnations of bourgeois society — the common basis, for a time, of the culturally avant-garde and politically radical — stemmed from the conviction that the process, as it was, was fraudulent, and that individual liberty was not all it was cracked up to be, but not from the view, represented only by a few solitary figures, that the endeavor was worthless. It was not only Nietzsche and Dostoevsky who feared that increasing equality might transform everybody above and under the middle classes into bourgeois philistines. Progressive revolutionaries, too, wanted a New Man and a New Woman, bereft of the inner demons of repression and domination: a civic community that was at the same time *the* human community needed a new morality grounded in respect for the hitherto excluded.

This adventure ended in the debacle of 1914. Fascism offered the most determined response to the collapse of the Enlightenment, especially of democratic socialism and progressive social reform. Fascism, on the whole, was not conservative, even if it was counter-revolutionary: it did not re-establish hereditary aristocracy or the monarchy, despite some romantic-reactionary verbiage. But it was able to undo the key regulative [or liminal] notion of modern society, that of universal citizenship. By then, governments were thought to represent and protect everybody. National or state borders defined the difference between friend and foe; foreigners could be foes, fellow citizens could not. *Pace* Carl Schmitt, the legal theorist of fascism and the political theologian of the Third Reich, the sovereign could *not* simply decide by fiat who would be friend and who would be foe. But Schmitt was right on one fundamental point: the idea of universal citizenship contains an inherent contradiction in that the dominant institution of modern society, the nation-state, is both a universalistic and a parochial [since territorial] institution. Liberal nationalism, unlike ethnicism and fascism, is limited — if you wish, tempered — universalism. Fascism put an end to this shilly-shallying: the sovereign was judge of who does and does not belong to the civic community, and citizenship became a function of his [or its] trenchant decree.

This hostility to universal citizenship is, I submit, the main characteristic of fascism. And the rejection of even a tempered universalism is what we

2 See G. M. Tamás, "Ethnarchy and Ethno-Anarchism," *Social Research* 63 [Spring 1996]: 147-190; Idem., "The Two-Hundred Years War," *Boston Review*, Summer 1999, pp. 31-36.

now see repeated under democratic circumstances [I do not even say under democratic disguise]. Post-totalitarian fascism is thriving under the capacious carapace of global capitalism, and we should tell it like it is.

There is logic in the Nazi declaration that communists, Jews, homosexuals, and the mentally ill are non-citizens and, therefore, non-human. [The famous ideologist of the Iron Guard, the suave essayist E. M. Cioran, pointed out at the time that if some persons are non-human but aspire to humanity [i.e., Jews] the contradiction might be sublated and resolved by their violent death, preferably, according to the celebrated and still-fashionable aesthete, by their own hand.] These categories of people, as the Nazis saw them, represented types crucial to the Enlightenment project of inclusion. Communists meant the rebellious “lower type,” the masses brought in, leaderless and rudderless, by rootless universalism, and then rising up against the natural hierarchy; Jews, a community that survived the Christian middle ages without political power of its own, led by an essentially non-coercive authority, the people of the Book, by definition not a people of war; homosexuals, by their inability or unwillingness to procreate, bequeath, and continue, a living refutation of the alleged link between nature and history; the mentally ill, listening to voices unheard by the rest of us — in other words, people whose recognition needs a moral effort and is not immediately [“naturally”] given, who can fit in only by enacting an equality of the unequal.

The perilous differentiation between citizen and non-citizen is not, of course, a fascist invention. As Michael Mann points out in a pathbreaking study,<sup>3</sup> the classical expression “we the People” did not include black slaves and “red Indians” [Native Americans], and the ethnic, regional, class, and denominational definitions of “the people” have led to genocide both “out there” [in settler colonies] and within nation states [see the Armenian massacre perpetrated by modernizing Turkish nationalists] under democratic, semi-democratic, or authoritarian [but not “totalitarian”] governments. If sovereignty is vested in the people, the territorial or demographic definition of what and who the people are becomes decisive. Moreover, the withdrawal of legitimacy from state socialist [communist] and revolutionary nationalist [“Third World”] regimes with their mock-Enlightenment definitions of nationhood left only racial, ethnic, and confessional [or denominational] bases for a legitimate claim or title for “state-formation” [as in Yugoslavia, Czecho-Slovakia, the ex-Soviet Union, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Sudan, etc.]

Everywhere, then, from Lithuania to California, immigrant and even autochthonous minorities have become the enemy and are expected to put up with the diminution and suspension of their civic and human rights. The propensity of the European Union to weaken the nation-state and strengthen regionalism [which, by extension, might prop up the power of the center at Brussels and Strasbourg] manages to ethnicize rivalry and territorial inequality [see Northern vs. Southern Italy, Catalonia vs. Andalusia, English South East vs. Scotland, Fleming vs. Walloon Belgium, Brittany vs. Normandy]. Class conflict, too, is being ethnicized and racialized, between the established and secure working class and lower middle class of the metropolis and the new immigrant of the periphery, also construed as a problem of security and crime.<sup>4</sup> Hungarian and Serbian ethnicists pretend

that the nation is wherever persons of Hungarian or Serbian origin happen to live, regardless of their citizenship, with the corollary that citizens of their nation-state who are ethnically, racially, denominationally, or culturally “alien” do not really belong to the nation.

The growing de-politicization of the concept of a nation [the shift to a cultural definition] leads to the acceptance of discrimination as “natural.” This is the discourse the right intones quite openly in the parliaments and street rallies in eastern and Central Europe, in Asia, and, increasingly, in “the West.” It cannot be denied that attacks against egalitarian welfare systems and affirmative action techniques everywhere have a dark racial undertone, accompanied by racist police brutality and vigilantism in many places. The link, once regarded as necessary and logical, between citizenship, equality, and territory may disappear in what the theorist of the Third Way, the formerly *Marxissant* sociologist Anthony Giddens, calls a society of responsible risk-takers.

The most profound attempt to analyze the phenomenon of political exclusion is Georges Bataille’s “The Psychological Structure of Fascism,”<sup>5</sup> which draws on the author’s distinction between homogeneity and heterogeneity. To simplify, homogeneous society is the society of work, exchange, usefulness, sexual repression, fairness, tranquility, procreation; what is heterogeneous: includes everything resulting from *unproductive* expenditure [sacred things themselves form part of this whole]. This consists of everything rejected by *homogeneous* society as waste or as superior transcendent values. Included are the waste products of the human body and certain analogous matter [trash, vermin, etc.]; the parts of the body; persons, words, or acts having a suggestive erotic value; the various unconscious processes such as dreams and neuroses; the numerous later elements or social forms that *homogeneous* society is powerless to assimilate [mobs, the warrior, aristocratic and impoverished classes, different types of violent individuals or a least those who refuse the rule — madmen, leaders, poets, etc.]; ... *violence, excess, delirium, madness* characterize heterogeneous elements ... compared to everyday life, heterogeneous existence can be represented as something *other*, as *incommensurate*, by charging these words with the positive value they have in *affective* experience.<sup>6</sup>

social” to “l’état pénal” has been repeatedly highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu.

- 3 Michael Mann, “The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing,” *New Left Review* 235 [May/June 1999]: 18-45.
- 4 See Mark Neocleous, “Against Security,” *Radical Philosophy* 100 [March/April 2000]: 7-15; Idem., *Fascism* [Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997]. The evolution from “l’état
- 5 Georges Bataille, “The Psychological Structure of Fascism,” [November 1933], trans. Carl R. Lovitt, in *Visions of Excess*, ed. Allan Stoekl [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], pp. 137-160. Concerning the problem of masses and violence, see Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon [London: Verso, 1998], pp. 105, 115-116. Also: Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley [San Francisco: City Lights, 1988]. An interesting liberal critique of Bataille’s theory of fascism can be found in Susan Rubin Suleiman’s “Bataille on the Street,” in Bataille: *Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill [London: Routledge, 1995], pp. 26-45. Bataille’s critique has to be understood within the context of the anti-Stalinist, revolutionary ultra-left. Two volumes of correspondence whirling around Bataille, Souvarine, Simone Weil, and the mysterious Laure [Colette Peignot] have recently been published: *Laure: Une rupture, 1934*, ed. Anne Roche and Jérôme Peignot [Paris: Editions des Cendres, 1999]; and Georges Bataille, *L’Apprenti sorcier*, ed. Marina Galletti [Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1999]. As to another radical critique of fascism in the 1930s, see Karl Polányi, “The Essence of Fascism,” in *Christianity and Social Revolution*, ed. J. Lewis, K. Polányi, D. K. Kitchin [London: Gollancz, 1935].
- 6 Bataille, “Psychological Structure,” 142. See the two intriguing drafts to the essay on fascism: “Cet aspect religieux manifeste ...” and “En affet la vie humaine ...” in Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2 [Paris: Gallimard, 1970], pp. 161-164. Also: Antonio Negri’s theory of constituent power and constituted power in his *Insurgencies*, trans. Maurizio Boscaqli [Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999], pp. 1-128, 212-229.

Sovereign power, according to Bataille [and to Carl Schmitt<sup>7</sup>], is quintessentially heterogeneous in its pre-modern sacral versions [kings ruling by Divine Right]. This heterogeneity is hidden in capitalist democracy, where the sovereign is supposed to rule through an impersonal legal order that applies equally to all. Fascist dictatorship is in business to uncover or unmask it. This explains the link of fascist dictatorship to the impoverished, disorderly, *lumpen* mob. And this is exactly, I should add, what gets lost in post-fascism. The re-creation of sacral sovereignty by fascism is, however, a fake. It is homogeneity masquerading as heterogeneity. What is left in the homogeneous sphere in the middle is the pure bourgeois without the *citoyen*, Julien Sorel finally and definitely robbed of his Napoleon, Lucien Leuwen deprived of his Danton. Fascism, having put an end to the bourgeois realization of Enlightenment [i.e. to egalitarian capitalist democracy], transforms the social exclusion of the unproductive [from hermits and vatic poets to unemployable paupers and indomitable rebels] into their natural exclusion [i.e., extra-legal arrest, hunger, and death].

Bataille's work comes out of the French objectivist sociological tradition, from Durkheim, Mauss, and Halbwachs through Kojève to Paul Veyne, wherein political repression and exclusion are not interpreted in moralistic and psychological, but in anthropological terms — as a matter of establishing identity. Bataille's revolutionary critique of the exclusion of the “heterogeneous” — the “useless,” people who are not “responsible risk-takers” — is based on an understanding of society, sexuality, and religion, a combination of Durkheim and Marx, if you wish, that might offer an alternative of our contemporary, on the whole Kantian, resistance to post-fascism. Our moralistic criticism, however justified, customarily precludes the comprehension of the lure of the phenomenon, and leads to a simplistic contempt for barbaric, benighted racists, rabble-rousers, and demagogues, and a rather undemocratic ignorance of peoples, fears, and desires.

An alternative line of argument, suggested by this tradition, begins by observing that the breakdown of egalitarian welfare states frequently means a shift in the focus of solidarity, fraternity, and pity. If there is no virtually equal citizenship, the realization of which should have been the aim of honest, liberal democrats and democratic socialists, the passion of generosity will remain dissatisfied. A feeling of fellowship toward kith and kin has always been one of the most potent motives for altruism. Altruism of this kind, when bereft of a civic, egalitarian focus, will find intuitive criteria offered by the dominant discourse to establish what and whom it will desire to serve. If civic politics cannot do it, racial feeling or feelings of cultural proximity certainly will. Identity is usually outlined by affection and received threats. He who will define those successfully wins. Nobody is better at describing this *identity panic* than Bataille.<sup>8</sup>

The half-mad pornographer and ultra-left extremist, as Bataille is still regarded in pet to, cannot be well received by self-respecting social theorists, I believe, but curiously his theory is borne out by the acknowledged standard work on the Nazi regime, written by the greatest legal hawk of the German trade union

movement, happily rediscovered today as the first-rate mind that he was.<sup>9</sup> In contradistinction to fanciful theories of totalitarianism, the great Ernst Fraenkel, summing up his painstaking survey of Nazi legislation and jurisprudence, writes that: [i]n present day Germany [he is writing in 1937-39], many people find the arbitrary rule of the Third Reich unbearable. These same people acknowledge, however, that the idea of “community,” as there understood, is something truly great. Those who take up this ambivalent attitude toward National-Socialism suffer from two principal misconceptions:

1. The present German ideology of *Gemeinschaft* [community] is nothing but a mask hiding the still existing capitalistic structure of society.
2. The ideological mask [the community] equally hides the Prerogative State [Fraenkel distinguishes the “normal,” so-called Normative State providing chiefly for civil law and the quasi-totalitarian Party state subordinated to the *Führerprinzip*] operating by arbitrary measures.

The replacement of the *Rechtsstaat* [Legal State] by the Dual State is but a symptom. The root of evil lies at the exact point where the uncritical opponents of National-Socialism discover grounds for admiration, namely in the community ideology and in the militant capitalism which this very notion of the *Gemeinschaft* is supposed to hide. It is indeed for the maintenance of capitalism in Germany that the authoritarian Dual State is necessary.<sup>10</sup>

The Autonomy of the Normative State [“homogeneous society”] was maintained in Nazi Germany in a limited area, mostly where the protection of private property was concerned [property of so-called Aryans, of course]; the Prerogative State held sway in more narrowly political matters, the privileges of the Party, the military and the paramilitary, culture, ideology, and propaganda. The “dual state” was a consequence of the Schmittian decision of the new sovereign as to what was law, and what was not. But there was no rule by decree in the sphere reserved to capitalism proper, the economy. It is not true, therefore, that the *whole* system of Nazi or fascist governance was *wholly* arbitrary. The macabre meeting of the Normative and the Prerogative is illustrated by the fact that the German Imperial Railways billed the SS for the horrible transports to Auschwitz at special holiday discount rates, customary for package tours. But they billed them!

People within the jurisdiction of the Normative State [Bataille's homogeneous society] enjoyed the usual protection of law, however harsh it tended to be. Special rules, however, applied to those in the purview of the Prerogative State [heterogeneous society] — both the Nazi Party leaders, officials, and militant activists, above the law, and the persecuted minorities, under or outside it. Before fascism, friend and citizen, foe and alien, were coincidental notions; no government thought systematically to declare war on the inhabitants of the land, who were members [even if unequal members] of the nation: civil war was equated with the absence of legally constituted, effective government. Civil war from the top, launched in peacetime, or at least under definitely non-revolutionary circum-

7 On the parallel between Bataille and Carl Schmitt, see Martin Jay, “The Reassertion of Sovereignty in a Time of Crisis: Carl Schmitt and Georges Bataille,” in *Force Fields* [New York, Routledge, 1993], pp. 49-60; Bataille's essay on “Sovereignty,” *The Accursed Share* vols. 2 and 3, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Zone Books, 1933].

8 See Jean Piel, “Bataille and the World,” in *On Bataille: Critical Essays*, ed. Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons [Albany: SUNY Press, 1995], pp. 95-106.

9 Ernst Fraenkel, *The Dual State* [1941], trans. E. A. Shils, E. Lowenstein, and K. Knorr [New York: Octagon, 1969]. See also: David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution* [Garden City: Anchor Doubleday, 1967], pp. 113-151.

10 Fraenkel, *The Dual State*, p. 153.

stances, turns sovereignty against the suzerain of the subject. The main weapon in this methodical civil war, where the state as such is one of the warring parties, is the continuous redefinition of citizenship by the Prerogative state.

And since, thanks to Enlightenment, citizenship [membership in the political community], nationality, and humanity had been synthetically merged, being expelled from citizenship meant, quite literally, exclusion from humanity. Hence civic death was necessarily followed by natural death, that is, violent death, or death *tout court*. Fascist or Nazi genocide was not preceded by legal condemnation [not even in the stunted and fraudulent shape of the so-called administrative verdicts of Cheka “tribunals”]: it was the “naturalization” of a moral judgment that deemed some types of human condition inferior. And since there was no protection outside citizenship, lack of citizenship had become the cause of the cessation of the necessary precondition of the human condition — life.

Cutting the civic and human community in two: this is fascism.

This is why the expression, albeit bewildering, must be revived, because the fundamental conceptual technique of civic, hence human, scission has been revived, this time not by a deliberate counterrevolutionary movement, but by certain developments that were, probably, not willed by anyone and that are crying out for a name. The name is post-fascism.

The phenomenon itself came into being at a confluence of various political processes. Let me list them.

### Decline of Critical Culture

After the 1989 collapse of the Soviet bloc, contemporary society underwent fundamental change. Bourgeois society, liberal democracy, democratic capitalism — name it what you will — has always been a controversial affair; unlike previous regimes, it developed an adversary culture, and was permanently confronted by strong competitors on the right [the alliance of the throne and the altar] and the left [revolutionary socialism]. Both have become obsolete, and this has created a serious crisis within the culture of late modernism.<sup>11</sup> The mere idea of radical change [utopia and critique] has been dropped from the rhetorical vocabulary, and the political horizon is now filled by what is there, by what is given, which is capitalism. In the prevalent social imagination, the whole human cosmos is a “homogeneous society” — a society of useful, wealth-producing, procreating, stable, irreligious, but at the same time *jouissant*, free individuals. Citizenship is increasingly defined, apolitically, in terms of interests that are not contrasted with the common good, but united within it through understanding, interpretation, communication, and voluntary accord based on shared presumptions.

In this picture, obligation and coercion, the *differentia specifica* of politics [and in permanent need of moral justification], are conspicuously absent. “Civil society” — a nebula of voluntary groupings where coercion and domination, by necessity, do not play any important role — is said to have cannibalized politics and the state. A dangerous result of this conception might be that the continued underpinning of law by coercion and domination, while criticized in *toto*, is not watched carefully enough — since, if it cannot be justified at all, no justification, thus no moral control, will be sought. The myth, according to which the core of

late-modern capitalism is “civil society,” blurs the conceptual boundaries of citizenship, which is seen more and more as a matter of policy, not politics.

Before 1989, you could take it for granted that the political culture of liberal-democratic-constitutional capitalism was a critical culture, more often than not in conflict with the system that, sometimes with bad grace and reluctantly, sustained it. Apologetic culture was for ancient empires and anti-liberal dictatorships. Highbrow despair is now rampant. But without a sometimes only implicit utopia as a prop, despair does not seem to work. What is the point of theoretical anti-capitalism, if political anti-capitalism cannot be taken seriously?

Also, there is an unexpected consequence of this absence of a critical culture tied to an oppositional politics. As one of the greatest and most level-headed masters of twentieth-century political sociology, Seymour Martin Lipset, has noted, fascism is *the extremism of the center*. Fascism had very little to do with *passéiste* feudal, aristocratic, monarchist ideas, was on the whole anti-clerical, opposed communism and socialist revolution, and — like the liberals whose electorate it had inherited — hated big business, trade unions, and the social welfare state. Lipset had classically shown that extremisms of the left and right were by no means exclusive: some petty bourgeois attitudes suspecting big business and big government could be, and were, prolonged into an extremism that proved lethal. Right-wing and center extremisms were combined in Hungarian, Austrian, Croatian, Slovak para-fascism [I have borrowed this term from Roger Griffin] of a pseudo-Christian, clericalist, royalist coloring, but extremism of the center does and did exist, proved by Lipset also through continuities in electoral geography.

Today there is nothing of any importance on the political horizon but the bourgeois center, therefore its extremism is the most likely to reappear. [Jörg Haider and his Freedom Party are the best example of this. Parts of his discourse are libertarian/neoliberal, his ideal is the propertied little man, he strongly favors a shareholding and home-owning petty bourgeois “democracy,” and he is quite free of romantic-reactionary nationalism as distinct from parochial selfishness and racism.] What is now considered “right-wing” in the United States would have been considered insurrectionary and suppressed by armed force in any traditional regime of the right as individualistic, decentralizing, and opposed to the monopoly of coercive power by the government, the foundation of each and every conservative creed. Conservatives are *le par ti de l'ordre*, and loathe militias and plebian cults.

### Decaying States

The end of colonial empires in the 1960s and the end of Stalinist [“state socialist,” “state capitalist,” “bureaucratic collectivist”] systems in the 1990s has triggered a process never encountered since the Mongolian invasions in the thirteenth century: a comprehensive and apparently irreversible collapse of established statehood as such. While the *bien-pensant* Western press daily bemoans perceived threats of dictatorship in far-away places, it usually ignores the reality behind the tough talk of powerless leaders, namely that nobody is prepared to obey them. The old, creaking, and unpopular nation-state — the only institution to date that had been able to grant civil rights, a modicum of social assistance, and some protection from the exactions of privateer gangs and rapacious, irresponsible business elites — ceased to exist or never even emerged in the majority of the poorest areas of the world. In most parts of sub-Saharan Africa and of the former

<sup>11</sup> See G. M. Tamás, “Democracy’s Triumph, Philosophy’s Peril,” *Journal of Democracy* 11 [January 2000]: 103-110. On alarming alternatives to politics as we know it, see Jacques Rancière, *La Méésentente* [Paris: Galilée, 1995], pp. 95-131.

Soviet Union not only the refugees, but the whole population could be considered stateless. The way back, after decades of demented industrialization [see the horrific story of the hydroelectric plants everywhere in the Third World and the former Eastern bloc], to a subsistence economy and “natural” barter exchanges in the midst of environmental devastation, where banditry seems to have become the only efficient method of social organization, leads exactly nowhere. People in Africa and ex-Soviet Eurasia are dying not by a surfeit of the state, but by the absence of it.

Traditionally, liberation struggles of any sort have been directed against entrenched privilege. Equality came at the expense of ruling groups: secularism reduced the power of the Princes of the Church, social legislation dented the profits of the “moneyed interest,” universal franchise abolished the traditional political class of landed aristocracy and the *noblesse de robe*, the triumph of commercial pop culture smashed the ideological prerogatives of the progressive intelligentsia, horizontal mobility and suburban sprawl ended the rule of party politics on the local level, contraception and consumerist hedonism dissolved patriarchal rule in the family —something lost, something gained. Every step toward greater freedom curtailed somebody’s privileges [quite apart from the pain of change]. It was conceivable to imagine the liberation of outlawed and downtrodden lower classes through economic, political, and moral crusades: there was, crudely speaking, somebody to take ill-gotten gains from. And those gains could be redistributed to more meritorious sections of the population, offering in exchange greater social concord, political tranquility, and safety to unpopular, privileged elites, thereby reducing class animosity. But let us not forget though that the social-democratic bargain has been struck as a result of centuries of conflict and painful renunciations by the traditional ruling strata. Such a liberation struggle, violent or peaceful, is not possible for the new wretched of the earth.

Nobody exploits them. There is no extra profit and surplus value to be appropriated. There is no social power to be monopolized. There is no culture to be dominated. The poor people of the new stateless societies — from the “homogeneous” viewpoint — are totally superfluous. They are not exploited, but neglected. There is no overtaxation, since there are no revenues. Privileges cannot be redistributed toward a greater equality since there are no privileges, except the temporary ones to be had, occasionally, at gunpoint.

Famished populations have no way out from their barely human condition but to leave. The so-called center, far from exploiting this periphery of the periphery, is merely trying to keep out the foreign and usually colored destitutes [the phenomenon is euphemistically called “demographic pressure”] and set up awesome barriers at the frontiers of rich countries, while our international financial bureaucracy counsels further deregulation, liberalization, less state and less government to nations that do not have any, and are perishing in consequence. “Humanitarian wars” are fought in order to prevent masses of refugees from flowing in and cluttering up the Western welfare systems that are in decomposition anyway.

Citizenship in a functional nation-state is the one safe meal ticket in the contemporary world. But such citizenship is now a privilege of the very few. The Enlightenment assimilation of citizenship to the necessary and “natural” political condition of all human beings has been reversed. Citizenship was once upon a time a privilege within nations. It is now a privilege to *most* persons in *some* na-

tions. Citizenship is today the very exceptional privilege of the inhabitants of flourishing capitalist nation-states, while the majority of the world’s population cannot even begin to aspire to the civic condition, and has also lost the relative security of pre-state [tribe, kinship] protection.

The scission of citizenship and sub-political humanity is now complete, the work of Enlightenment irretrievably lost. Post-fascism does not need to put non-citizens into freight trains to take them into death; instead, it need only prevent the new non-citizens from boarding any trains that might take them into the happy world of overflowing rubbish bins that could feed them. Post-fascist movements everywhere, but especially in Europe, are anti-immigration movements, grounded in the “homogeneous” world-view of productive usefulness. They are not simply protecting racial and class privileges within the nation-state [although they are doing that, too] but protecting universal citizenship within the rich nationstate against the virtual-universal citizenship of all human beings, regardless of geography, language, race, denomination, and habits. The current notion of “human rights” might defend people from the lawlessness of tyrants, but it is no defense against the lawlessness of no rule.

### Varieties of Post-Fascism

It is frequently forgotten that contemporary global capitalism is a second edition. In the pre-1914 capitalism of no currency controls [the gold standard, etc.] and free trade, a world without visas and work permits, when companies were supplying military stuff to the armies of the enemy in wartime without as much as a squeak from governments or the press, the free circulation of capital and labor was more or less assured [it was, perhaps, a less equal, but a freer world]. In comparison, the thing called “globalization” is a rather modest undertaking, a gradual and timorous destruction of *étatiste* and *dirigiste*, welfarist nation-states built on the egalitarian bargain of old-style social democracy whose constituency [construed as the backbone of modern nations], the rust-belt working class, is disintegrating. Globalization has liberated capital flows. Speculative capital goes wherever investments appear as “rational,” usually places where wages are low and where there are no militant trade unions or ecological movements. But unlike in the nineteenth century, labor is not granted the same freedoms. *Spiritus flat ubi vult*, capital flies wherever it wants, but the free circulation of labor is impeded by ever more rigid national regulations. The flow is all one-way; capital can improve its position, but labor — especially low-quality, low-intensity labor in the poor countries of the periphery — cannot. Deregulation for capital, stringent regulation for labor.

If the workforce is stuck at the periphery, it will have to put up with sweatshops. Attempts to fight for higher salaries and better working conditions are met *not* with violence, strikebreakers, or military coups, but by quiet capital flight and disapproval from international finance and its international or national bureaucracies, which will have the ability to decide who is deserving of aid or debt relief. To quote Albert O. Hirschman, *voice* [that is, protest] is impossible, nay, pointless. Only exit, exodus, remains, and it is the job of postfascism to prevent that.

Under these conditions, it is only logical that the New New Left has re-appropriated the language of human rights instead of class struggle. If you glance at *Die Tageszeitung, II Manifesto, Rouge*, or *Socialist Worker*, you will see that they are mostly talking about asylum-seekers, immigrants [legal or illegal, *les sans-*

*papiers*], squatters, the homeless, Gypsies, and the like. It is a tactic forced upon them by the disintegration of universal citizenship, by unimpeded global capital flows by the impact of new technologies on workers and consumers, and by the slow death of the global subproletariat. Also, they have to face the revival of class politics in a new guise by the proponents of “the third way” à la Tony Blair. The neo-neoliberal state has rescinded its obligations to “heterogeneous,” non-productive populations and groups. Neo-Victorian, pedagogic ideas of “workfare,” which declare unemployment implicitly sinful, the equation of welfare claimants with “enemies of the people,” the replacement of social assistance with tax credits whereby people beneath the category of taxpayers are not deemed worthy of aid, income support made conditional on family and housing practices believed proper by “competent authorities,” the increasing racialization, ethnicization, and sexualization of the underclass, the replacement of social solidarity with ethnic or racial solidarity, the overt acknowledgment of second-class citizenship, the tacit recognition of the role of police as a racial defense force, the replacement of the idea of emancipation with the idea of privileges [like the membership in the European Union, the OECD, or the WTO] arbitrarily dispensed to the deserving poor, and the transformation of rational arguments against EU enlargement into racist/ethnicist rabble-rousing — all this is part of the post-fascist strategy of the scission of the civic-cum-human community, of a renewed granting or denial of citizenship along race, class, denominational, cultural, ethnic lines.

The re-duplication of the underclass — a global underclass abroad and the “heterogeneous,” wild ne'er-do-wells at home, with the interests of one set of underclass [“domestic”] presented as inimical to the other [“foreign”] — gives post-fascism its missing populist dimension. There is no harsher enemy of the immigrant — “guest worker” or asylum-seeker — than the obsolescent *lumpenproletariat*, publicly represented by the hard-core, right-wing extremist soccer hooligan. “Lager louts” may not know that *lager* does not only mean a kind of cheap continental beer, but also a concentration camp. But the unconscious pun is, if not symbolic, metaphorical.

We are, then, faced with a new kind of extremism of the center. This new extremism, which I call post-fascism, does not threaten, unlike its predecessor, liberal and democratic rule within the core constituency of “homogeneous society.” Within the community cut in two, freedom, security, prosperity are on the whole undisturbed, at least within the productive and procreative majority that in some rich countries encompasses nearly all white citizens. “Heterogeneous,” usually racially alien, minorities are not persecuted, only neglected and marginalized, forced to live a life wholly foreign to the way of life of the majority [which, of course, can sometimes be qualitatively better than the flat workaholism, consumerism, and health obsessions of the majority]. Drugs, once supposed to widen and raise consciousness, are now uneasily pacifying the enforced idleness of those society is unwilling to help and to recognize as fellow humans. The “Dionysiac” subculture of the sub-proletariat further exaggerates the bifurcation of society. Political participation of the have-nots is out of the question, without any need for the restriction of franchise. Apart from the incipient and feeble [“new new”] left-wing radicalism, as isolated as anarcho-syndicalism was in the second half of the nineteenth century, nobody seeks to represent them. The conceptual tools once offered by democratic and libertarian socialism are missing; and libertarians are nowadays militant bourgeois extremists of the center,

ultra-capitalist cyberpunks hostile to any idea of solidarity beyond the *fluxus* of the global marketplace.

Post-fascism does not need stormtroopers and dictators. It is perfectly compatible with an anti-Enlightenment liberal democracy that rehabilitates citizenship as a grant from the sovereign instead of a universal human right. I confess I am giving it a rude name here to attract attention to its glaring injustice. Post-fascism is historically continuous with its horrific predecessor only in patches. Certainly, Central and East European anti-Semitism has not changed much, but it is hardly central. Since post-fascism is only rarely a movement, rather simply a state of affairs, managed as often as not by so-called center-left governments, it is hard to identify intuitively. Post-fascists do not speak usually of total obedience and racial purity, but of the information superhighway.

Everybody knows the instinctive fury people experience when faced with a closed door. Now tens of millions of hungry human beings are rattling the door-knob. The rich countries are thinking up more sophisticated padlocks, while their anger at the invaders outside is growing, too. Some of the anger leads to the revival of the Nazi and fascist *Gedankengut* [“treasure-trove of ideas”], and this will trigger righteous revulsion. But post-fascism is not confined to the former Axis powers and their willing ex-clients, however revolting and horrifying this specific sub-variant may be. East European Gypsies [Roma and Sintj, to give their politically correct names] are persecuted both by the constabulary and by the populace, and are trying to flee to the “free West.” The Western reaction is to introduce visa restrictions against the countries in question in order to prevent massive refugee influx, and solemn summons to East European countries to respect human rights. Domestic racism is supplanted by global liberalism, both grounded on a political power that is rapidly becoming racialized.

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## A Postscript to “Post-Fascism”: Preliminary Theses to a System of Fear

—G. M. Tamás

Capital is running round the globe chasing cheap wages. It is running in the opposite direction, too, in a quest for competitive consumer demand. It is running after opportunities for lucrative investment. It is running to places with low taxes. It is running to find stable government or civil wars in need of weapons and mercenaries. Unless it stumbles against national frontiers, that is, law, it is running so fast it appears stationary, impossible to localise. So fast it seems to be everywhere, which it isn't. Law – that is, national frontiers – does not and do not really arrest its omnidirectional and multidimensional run, its velocity exacerbated further by the near-emptiness of the rarefied medium in which it swishes soundlessly.

Labour tries to walk around the globe in search of higher wages and cheaper prices. It stumbles perpetually against national frontiers, that is, law. It cannot afford to be partial to lower taxes, as it is aware that it may need the state, that is, the dole. It needs the state with its boundaries, that is, law, the very state and law that stops it from being, through a comparable velocity, a worthy rival to capital, as capital is not only an adversary and a competitor but also a source of bounty which is being sought. Labour will have to share its revenue with the state to slow down capital. Thus, it will need speed even more than before. But labour is slow, very slow, through its own fault. It has allied itself with law, that is, taxes. Capital, virtually unimpeded now in its speed, synonymous with invisibility, abstraction and elegance (please don't pay any heed to the contradiction in these terms) becomes young, elegant and austere, similar in its formal principle to the minimalist, slim, even anorexic architecture of the best new art museums. It is revolutionary. It is clever. It is directionless. You don't hear it. What you hear is the tick-tock of stiletto heels on flagstones, the modish swarm of its abstract, slim admirers in black. Labour is terribly slow, it is backward. Its intellect is rejected, as only one kind of intellect is needed, the kind that won't be slowed down. Especially not by law, designed now to enhance circulation, that is, speed. Labour is fat, labour is Bermuda shorts and Hawaii shirts, the apparel of late Fordism. Very colourful and loud. Very visible. Very reactionary, very regressive. Sedentary and fearful. So is the state. Still based on physical force, hence on corporeal contact, propinquity. Noise. Smells. To pass, you'll need to shove somebody who might tread on your toes. The state now is not something, it is an obstacle to something. So it is manned by yahoos.

However new the medium, the style, the urgency and the accoutrements, the need of capital to reduce production costs and maximise profits is perpetual.

The speed of the hunt for the advantageous valuation of value does not only describe something in space (that is, time contracted digitally and otherwise), but qualitatively, too, through increased productivity, which is, of course, another contraction of time; in this case, of labour time. The global race or contest, always characteristic of capitalism, has only now become generalised, as there are no

remaining non-capitalist pockets that have made the run unidirectional (colonialism). The running of capital and the slower flow of the labour force (this, too, sped up by technology) makes observers consider all obstacles, all stops obnoxious and harmful.

Humans, though, have seen such stops as *home* – at least until now. Home is wherever there is no rush. Home is where external compulsion is supposed to slow down or be arrested altogether. Where ‘value’ in the Marxian sense remains outside; the ‘private’ is allegedly not for sale and, more importantly, it is not believed to be produced, it is thought to be just there, as it were, naturally: immobile like a tree. As Christopher Lasch reminded us, marriage was considered to have been a “haven in a heartless world”. But the stop in the global run called ‘home’ had always been besieged by bourgeois doctrine: in the guise of ‘the family’ it was the seat of procreation/reproduction, the centre of consumption and, politically, an element of ‘civil society’ along with the market, *Öffentlichkeit*, NGOs, parties, trade unions, sports clubs, churches and the rest. Electoral systems are based on residential districts where people are inhabitants of homes, thus ‘private citizens’. Home ownership is based on differential rent. Hence, the commodification and reification of the home (that is, the colonisation of the ‘private’, the dilution of bourgeois individuality, the mobilisation of the home-dweller) is not exactly a novelty.

Mediated as it is through rent, mortgage, credit, transportation; through heating, water, sewage, electricity, telephone, postal, cable and satellite television, radio, Internet, GPS and other networks, and through the construction industry, police surveillance and school districting, the home is nevertheless a stop in the global running, in the midst of the storm of production, accumulation, circulation and redistribution. For it is, simply, where people sleep. Whatever brings the family members or roommates together, it is usually not production. Not activity, but passivity. Biological and affective ties (if you include inheritance, which is bio-economic in character) rather than the direct cash nexus. Food, sex, rest, a sense of security and inwardness and, above all, an all-encompassing, enveloping idea of the ‘stop’. Being inside, being indoors, being at home chiefly means an interruption of perpetual motion.

By analogy, the boundary – the nation, the state, law – came to be regarded as a kind of stop as well, a shelter from the global running, round and round, of capital and labour, from the speed of valuation (production, accumulation, circulation, redistribution) and of technological innovation, from ‘change’ (to give it its official, ideological, bourgeois name). By extension, the political *analogon* of ‘home’ will be spread to ‘the boundary’ (nation, state, law) which is also a check on movement, and therefore appears as home. This analogy is the foundation of romantic-reactionary thought, especially in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, and now finds itself a niche in some left populist (green and other) ideological architectures. ‘The boundary’ – that is, a political limit to capital – is, of course, the very opposite of a home, being institutional and public. But boundaries are an expression of what is inside them. In this case, what is inside the nation-state is both a limitation on, and the enforcement of, capital, mostly the imposition of an extrinsic *measure* of sale and purchase, of the capital/labour, price/wage imbalance and the like, including the crux of the matter, the labour contract. The labour contract which – bringing together capital and labour – is essential in starting the fusion of producer and means of production which starts production

and circulation (of value) is by necessity founded on freedom (it takes place between free agents to seal an agreement for mutual gain). Freedom is an inevitable precondition of exploitation – especially, but not exclusively, in a market régime.

The nation-state appears at first as a check on the free flow of capital and of labour, inasmuch as regulation of any sort is a slowing down, an interrupting, a stop, albeit temporary. But the modern state also regulates in order to ensure speed, that is, the free movement of the subjects in the production and exchange process without hindrances from irregular forces of illegitimate violence and unreasonable tradition. If ‘the boundary’ (nation, state, law) is ‘a home’ at all, it is a home to a contradiction: to freedom (freedom from biopolitical bondage such as the privilege of noble over ignoble birth replaced by the randomness of competition tempered by the hierarchy established through inheritance and ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ capital); and a home to social protection that may very severely circumscribe the freedom of the contract (through taxation and redistribution and through workers’ rights, consumers’ rights, through affirmative action, gender equality and ecological legislation).

‘Home’ in late capitalism is presented as a freedom from flow. ‘Home’, i. e., family and its social protection by law, defended by state coercion, seems stationary, a synonym for permanent. Freedom from change conceived as compulsory, but arbitrary rootlessness. Needless to say, it is an illusion for the most part, but a notable illusion. It is notable mainly for its recent transformation whereby social protection (the welfare state and redistributive egalitarianism) has come to signify a frightening threat to the safety of ‘home’.

One of the more important paradoxes of the age is the concomitant transformation of egalitarianism – purportedly a view conceived in the interest of the majority – into an ‘elitist’ doctrine, that is, a minority viewpoint. Political victories (electoral and ideological) and opinion poll majorities, mistakenly but understandably dubbed ‘populist’, have been achieved by opposing so-called social legislation (mostly, various forms of aid to the needy), an opposition sustained by those who would apparently profit from what they are now inclined to reject. People very much afraid of the ruthless energy of the global race appear to be contributing willingly to the demolition of their own (social and national) home.

This is a major ideological transformation with very serious political and cultural consequences, and is in dire need of analysis.

It is not merely class struggle from above (although it is very much that too); it also takes into account the transformation of the main structural conflict in capitalist society – the result of a mighty ‘passive revolution’ – that makes it decidedly *biopolitical*. This biopolitical turn is in part decidedly regressive – it rehabilitates origin and status as a basis of group formations against which bourgeois revolutions have been fought – and in part ‘advanced’, ‘ultra-modern’, pretending to the supercession or sublation of class conflict, removing the centre of the fundamental social contradiction from ‘property’ to ‘the human condition’.

Let us summarise these changes first as they appear in the *doxa* of the age, and then offer a few scattered critical remarks.

1. Technological change – from automation/robotisation to digitalisation, nanotechnology to the latest wonders of biochemistry – has, for the first time in history, made human physical (muscular) effort marginal in the production of goods. This has been accompanied by an unprecedented

growth in productivity and work intensity that had made the majority of the global workforce superfluous *for ever*. Structural unemployment is not a problem any longer, however general, noxious and necessary, but essential to the 'human condition'. The majority of humankind will not be productive (of value) ever again.

2. Work – as the main socialisation model in capitalism – ceases to exist. Institutions in capitalism have been devised to assure the mobilisation of the *homme moyen sensuel* to participate in 'alienated labour', that is, in activities which are divorced from individual aspirations but are the only means for the have-nots to survive. Mobilisation and coercion have served this purpose among legally and juridically equal citizens, uprooting pockets of subsistence economy, crafts, independent farms and the like. In classical bourgeois society, people have spent their lives in institutions: school, army, church, club, trade union, mass party, sports associations, organised leisure activities, commercial popular culture, the popular press and radio, fans' and supporters' groups, nations, families and so on. Group membership in the hierarchical institutions of the state and of civil society were paramount. This institutional character of Fordist capitalism has been blown away, fractured into smithereens by the dwindling need for employees.
3. In spite of these transformations, one fundamental given of these societies has not changed: there are still only two legitimate sources of income in modernity: capital and labour. Both are becoming more and more marginal, minority phenomena.
4. Whatever is being gained by increased productivity and the retrenchment of employment, resulting in the sharp decrease in global real wages, hence the radical lowering of global production costs, makes the resources needed for consumption (competitive demand) fraught with uncertainty. Consumer markets still need the participation of the masses who have been robbed forever of the wage-type of earnings. For production and trade to go on, consumer demand will have to be financed somehow. The first panicky solution – hence the current debt crisis – has been the immense lending based on fictitious capital. Work as a legitimate resource of consumption, therefore of livelihood, has been largely replaced by credit, a second-level socialisation of circulation and demand. Similar questions had been resolved in the past by a state version of this (the 'welfare state') offering incentives for accumulation, investment and re-investment in an orderly, regulated fashion. This advancement of social credit was guaranteed by sovereign state power and by territorial expansion (colonialism) which was meant to finance non-productive wages in the 'advanced economies' (read: white nations) mostly in the state sector, making inner peace and order possible, while keeping the increasingly imaginary labour model of socialisation intact. The depletion of such state resources and of the social democratic policies directed at financing consumption (including housing, transport, education etc.) through the neo-conservative counter-revolution (1970s to the present) resulted in the appearance of an unheard-of conundrum.
5. The social and economic powers of states have been radically reduced precisely at the moment when there is no other authority to which the new non-productive majority can turn in order to ask that their survival (liv-

ing standards, upward mobility, material improvement) be ensured as a condition of human life in organised society ('civilisation'). This was also the moment when the powerful dominant ideology began in earnest to differentiate between civic and social equality, the synthesis of which was promised by the now forgotten catharsis of 1945 (see the series of 'social constitutions' adopted by 'anti-fascist' electoral majorities in Italy, Austria, France, Germany etc. in the nineteen-forties and fifties, not to speak of the Soviet bloc). This was the time when the old conflict between liberty and equality (propounded by old-style aristocratic liberalism, a reaction to the French Revolution) was revived, when equality was defined again as 'envy' and 'resentment' exploited by a cunning totalitarian ruse. This was a quite successful ploy in pre-empting the demands of non-productive, but empirically hard-working majorities for unlimited credit – since wages for non-productive labour are nothing but (disguised) credit, and wage rises are nothing but increased credit. Neo-conservative governments (and all present governments of the developed countries are neo-conservative) are in no position to deliver that. Time spent on alienated activities is not labour time in any 'natural' way, it may be and again it may be not. ??.

6. The decrease in the social and economic powers of the state does not mean a decrease in the sum total of its powers; that is, the capacity of the state to exercise legitimate coercion of one kind or another. On the contrary, in this case: the state finds itself in a position to decide – to be *constrained* to decide – who will get state resources to survive and who will not, which in contemporary society means that it has the obligation and the privilege of deciding between life and death.
7. For it is imperative for contemporary states – in a situation where production and accumulation are growing and the mass of producers is decreasing apace – to find the criteria according to which some groups will be entitled to state resources (beyond capital and labour) made legitimate by legislative and juridical fiat, and which groups will not.
8. The legitimation of social life and social death meted out to some of those concerned is forced upon governments. A clear case is the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States. Since financing the non-productive lower middle classes through wage increases and direct gifts from government was culturally impossible, the US Government – through *state* institutions like Fanny Mae and indirectly subsidised banks and insurance companies – financed housing for these social groups through mortgage credit. When capital had to say no to this (the losses being considerable), class rule was re-established by foreclosures and the crashes of credit institutions serving state goals by trying to keep the middle class alive. The crisis – an instrument of capitalist discipline – has shown that there was no escaping 'the stark choices' facing the state. The choice is dismal: either they had to crunch credit and condemn hundreds of millions of people to abject poverty and thereby limit consumption, which would reduce demand and destroy production as well as profits and assets, or they had to finance credit by helping to create and recreate fictitious capital which would force them to increase taxes, inducing capital flight and a further retrenchment of production, thus creating essentially the same outcome.

9. The only solution is to reduce the number of people dependent on credit guaranteed by the state and to keep consumer demand at acceptable levels through exacerbated inequality – by keeping *productive* wages very low in the newly industrialised countries (such as China, India, Vietnam and so on).
10. But how can they determine which groups are to be deprived of any 'social rights', i. e., of non-market resources for non-productive populations (those in public service, the 'service industries' that are no industries at all, in the 'caring professions', in education and research and arts, and others described below)?
11. The answer is twofold: both moral and biopolitical. In one of the major shifts in Western (or European) history a thorough reformulation of political legitimacy has taken place, without the major mainstream observers having had an inkling – as usual.
12. *First*, the fine old contrast between the propertied and the propertyless was made to vanish ideologically, with those with 'legitimate revenue' (capital and labour) on one side, and those without 'legitimate revenue' on the other. In continental Europe, there is talk about 'active' and 'passive' populations. The 'passive' populations – the unemployed, the old-age pensioners (the 'retired'), the students, the ill, the people caring for small children or for aged relatives (especially, of course, 'single mothers'), the marginal, the unemployable, the mentally deficient, the handicapped, the homeless, the vagrants, the urban nomads, in some places the 'useless' artists, scholars, researchers – sometimes including the precariat – are considered worthless, parasitical, 'undeserving'. The techniques of inclusion, positive discrimination, social assistance – except maybe the ineffectual 'retraining' and 'lifelong learning' with their emphasis on reintegration into production – are thoroughly compromised. These populations are being punished, discriminated against, harassed, deliberately starved, encouraged to die soon. In a society where work as a socialisation model has long ago ceased to function, work is being extolled as a chief virtue without a negation of eudæmonism and hedonism (and its demotic sub-bourgeois version, consumerism). Previous versions of liberalism recognised the rôle of luck, of random distribution of rewards as an unintended by-product of freedom, but they usually refrained from considering luck a virtue – otherwise they would have had no reason to defend it. Present-day governments mean to punish misfortune and they are ready to declare, in pure Nietzschean fashion, that social position (including any position within the social division of labour) is an expression of intrinsic energy and merit. But where Nietzsche was propounding and lauding slavery, contemporary governments have to deal with non-workers. What is at stake is not the repression of subaltern, lowly workers, but the legitimisation of the social (and then the biological) death of those who cannot work, since their work is being performed by machinery.
13. The selection (I am conscious of the connotations of this term, but they are not Darwinian here as we are not speaking of natural selection) of those who are condemned to social death in accordance with their bodily characteristics and instinctual behaviour (health, age, sometimes gender and sexuality) and the cultural stigmata assimilated to the corporeal in the prevailing popular fantasy, is purely biopolitical. So are the punishments

- reduction of bodily comforts, shelter, heat, light, nourishment, clean air, medication, hygiene, exercise, protective clothing, psychophysical pleasures derived from alcohol and drugs etc. Morally, the withdrawal of equal dignity, the stigmatising stereotypes, the open, public and official contempt for the unfortunate (informally severe in these competitive societies anyway) is cutting society in two. Here, the exploited proletariat appears as a privileged class, as it is considered – in contradistinction to the New Idle – sound and worthy. Although oppressed, it is recognised as a full member of the capital–labour continuum. It is not 'unwaged'.
14. All this would of course lack persuasive force if it were not coupled with racism and xenophobia, versions of ethnicism. Ethnicism is not simply a political opinion or ideology (of which more in a minute.) Ethnicism, at least at this juncture, is a symbolic strategy which designates the randomly selected target of biopolitical selection as foreign, that is, as a non-member of the political community. As the typical beneficiary of social assistance, always presented as fraudulent, non-deserving 'sponger', 'criminal', 'welfare queen', *Sozialschmarotzer*, 'illegal alien', is symbolically foreign, his or her actual origin is of no consequence. This is how egalitarians are becoming – in the official ideology – 'elitist' as they are made to appear as defending the remote, the atypical, the alien, the minority against 'us'; which is nonsense, but egalitarians and progressives are provoked to behave as if they are opposed to the ethnicist mainstream which is not a majority but an opinion (although not *simply* an opinion.) The problem is precisely that the non-productive strata, taken together, are the majority; only the scapegoats among them are a minority. This is how 'our community' is being protected. A specific, but quite important form of the delegitimation of equality and of egalitarians is *anti-communism*. The scheme is identical: an occult, dangerous, doctrinaire élite with salvationist ideas, remote from the real, this-worldly preoccupations of ordinary folk. Just like the despised 'human rights activists', 'professional anti-fascists' or, in Anders Behrens Breivik's *patois*, 'cultural Marxists' (he is quite right, this is what we are) who are opposing the new biopolitical dispensation...
15. The crisis and mainstream politics (they are both the creators and the creatures of each other) have managed to design a double society: those of imperfect body and morality, and the sound core of society. The task is to exclude the former and to make them accept their inferiority – and to persuade the remaining proletariat to be the gendarme of biopolitical power.

The state of exception redefining friend and foe *within* national societies and nation-states remains the fundamental characteristic of post-fascism as I defined it in my essay a decade ago. Its model remains the rescinding of Jewish emancipation by the Third Reich. The transformation of the non-citizens into *homines sacri* is unchanged as well. Erecting tall dykes against migration, even at the price of slowing down capitalist *fluxus*, is still its main instrument. But the transformation of citizens into non-citizens on moralistic and biopolitical grounds – with such ferocity – is rather new. As long as there is no synthesis between the transcendental identity of the working and non-working, but mainly between the productive and non-productive social groups as opposed to capital as such, something very like fascism will prevail. Drafting the exploited and oppressed producers

as the enforcers of the rule of capital also remains, as in the 1920s and 1930s, the main danger. It is not only extremists and fools of the far right who are a threat. It is the widely accepted semblance of the unity between legitimate earners – capitalists and producers – united politically against the 'passive' and the alien which is placing everyone in jeopardy.

To crush this fake unity we need people who have the courage to propose disunity and to love conflict, a conflict redefined in opposition to moralising biopolitics.

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## Lets talk about fascism

—Hito Steyerl

Yes, I mean it. Not about psychology or evil as such. Not about insanity or sudden unpredictable doom. You are trying to avoid the topic. The topic is fascism.

We have seen a similar avoidance after the attacks in Oslo and on Utøya. As if societies did not want to trust their own eyes and ears. The perpetrator<sup>12</sup> has extensively articulated his neo-fascist beliefs. Yet people are trying to avoid facing this fact. His act is not called an act of terror, but of lunacy. It is depoliticized and represented as a private deviation that unexpectedly struck the country like a natural disaster. It is thus divorced from the political dimension and becomes a private, individual action.

But this avoidance has something more to tell us. It points to a gap in representation itself. It originates in very serious epistemological and political issues that are deeply worked into the fabric of contemporary fascism and its resurgence all over Europe and beyond. More than this: they are embedded very fundamentally in the ways in which we perceive contemporary reality.

The fundamental problem is not a lack of morals, though. Nor is it a question of good or evil, sanity or illness. It is the issue of representation. On the one hand political representation, on the other cultural representation; and in fact thirdly of economic participation. What do all of these have to do with the public reactions to the recent massacre?

### Political representation

So what are political and cultural representation? More precisely: what are the disparities between and within these concepts? They rest on contradictions that are irresolvable; and fascism seems to be a convenient jump cut to an attempt to explode these different aporias.

Let's start with the basics. Political representation in a liberal democracy is mainly gained by participation in the electoral process. This requires citizenship. True political representation is thus inadequate in all European democracies.

This is well known. But there are much more general and pressing issues now. Political power is increasingly being eroded. Who achieves or doesn't achieve political representation matters less and less. Even people with full political privileges, members of parties – even parliaments – are increasingly being ignored. Because whatever the people want, whoever they are, and regardless of who represents them, the contemporary sovereigns are mainly the 'markets'. The 'markets', not the people, are to be appeased, satisfied and pleased by the political class. In the area of economics, representation exists too. Participation in economic processes is measured by the ability to get credit, to own and to

<sup>12</sup> I know he is presumed innocent, yet in this case it seems to be safe to speak of him as the perpetrator.

consume. This also explains the contemporary rage against what is essentially economic or consumer exclusion. Many contemporary riots do not have political goals – why should they, since political action proves powerless in many cases? – but strive for economic participation: the most concentrated expression of this is the looting of shopping malls.

This erosion of political power is one of the results of decades of redistribution of wealth, opportunity and actual power from the poor to the rich. While it was possible, the poor were appeased with credit and indentured shopping. As this no longer seems to work, economic participation becomes a battleground.

But what does all this have to do with fascism? On the surface, nothing. But these phenomena are all symptoms of what could tentatively be called post-democracy. In post-democracy, politics is successively abandoned as a means of organizing the common.

Post-democracy is also felt within political institutions. Citizens of the European Union, for example, are faced with a host of institutions that are not democratically legitimized (among these, again, financial institutions, which are not subject to any political control). The votes of citizens do not have the same weight, depending on their citizenship, thus creating different classes of political representation. Within Europe and beyond, oligarchies of all kinds are on the rise. Retreating bureaucracies are replaced with authoritarian rule, tribal rackets and organized vigilantism. The so-called monopoly of violence is increasingly being privatized, handed over to private armies, security companies and outsourced gangs. Forces that could be controlled democratically are weakening, while states and other actors impose their agendas through emergency powers or so-called 'necessity'. There have been so many examples of this over the last few decades that I don't even want to start listing them.

All of these symptoms intensify anxieties around the idea of political representation as such. Weren't we promised equality? Yes, we were. Wasn't the idea of democracy that we'd all be represented? No, we aren't. Political representation involves a certain arbitrariness and randomness – to a certain extent they are inherent in it,<sup>13</sup> but they seem to be accelerating at a tremendous rate right now. It involves instability, unpredictability and a large dose of futility.

### Cultural representation

So how about cultural representation, then? What is it anyway? Cultural representation is (in many cases, visual) representation in the public realm. Via texts, advertisements, popular culture, TV – you name it. We don't need to go into this, you only have to look around you. The situation appears to be quite different here. There is an overabundance of representation of almost anything and anybody: in commercial as well as social media. This avalanche of representation has increased a great deal with digital technologies. That things and people are represented culturally doesn't mean much, though. It just means that lots of images are floating around, hustling for attention.

What is the relation, then, between political and cultural representation? Between *Darstellung* und *Vertretung*, or between proxy and portrait, as Gayatri Spivak put it?

There is one. But it isn't the one that has traditionally been assumed to exist. Some 30-40 years ago, early Cultural Studies with its Gramscian implications understood cultural representation as some sort of visual democracy. The assumption went something like this: if people were represented culturally in a positive way, political equality would become more likely. Passionate battles over the idea of a politics of representation characterized a large part of the 80s (and in many places, way beyond them).

But we are now realizing that something in this equation went wrong; or, to put it more neutrally, something changed dramatically. While cultural representation of everything is undergoing massive inflation (coupled with the devaluation and degradation of most individual images, texts and sounds) political representation is not only uneven, it is also less and less relevant. The two realms also seem to be running wildly out of synch. The period of the exponential growth of all things represented, the era of the proliferation of circulating images and data, is also the period of the radicalization of anti-immigration policies, the institution of increasingly harsh border regimes, the growth of neo-fascist (some prefer to call them right-wing populist) movements and parties, and a general loss of the authority of politics.

If one were to push the point, one could conclude that there is almost an inversely proportional relationship between political and cultural representation. The more people are represented culturally, and the more they snap one another on their cellphones and submit to Facebook surveillance schemes, the less they matter politically. But this may be only partly the case. The real link is perhaps that both types function perfectly erratically and unevenly. They are both more portrait than proxy, and not necessarily very good portraits either.

### The collapse of representation

And now the refusal to acknowledge fascism, even though it is proclaimed publicly and backed up with atrocities, as in the case of the attacks in Oslo and Utoya, becomes clearer – because this avoidance points to a blind spot that links the problem of representation with fascism.

Why is this so? It is because in fascism, representation collapses. It is short-circuited by attempts to avoid all the complications inherent in it, and to label representation as an alien and foreign concept. Fascism claims to express the essence of the people by imposing a leader and by replacing cultural representation with caricatures passed off as simple truth. It tries to get rid of representation altogether.

And indeed there are many reasons to be suspicious of contemporary representation. In both political and cultural representation, the link between represented and representation seems to have become dramatically more complicated in recent years, and it very often disintegrates completely. Representation, as we know it, is heading for a crash – or rather it is nose-diving in a vertiginous tailspin.

In cultural representation, the concept of reality has been stressed to an unprecedented extent. Many of the rules and conventions of visual representation have become almost obsolete with the recent digital revolution. In the case of pictures, the so-called indexical bond of photography (which was always dubious) has been shattered by copy-and-paste technologies, accelerated fog-of-war campaigns and unprecedented opportunities for scams, misinformation and deceit. Traditional truth procedures – journalistic, legal and to some extent also scien-

<sup>13</sup> For example Kojin Karatani: *Transcritique. On Kant and Marx*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003). p 151.

tific – have been replaced by digital rumour, widespread deregulation, the law of demand and Wikipedia-like, crowd-sourced 'knowledge'. Of course, cultural representation has always been tricky. But the emergence of fascism 2.0 speaks to a period in which digital rancour can spread like wildfire, fueled by avatars who can hardly be linked to real people any more. Just as representation as such has been untethered from institutional control, its content has in many cases been divorced from any empirical reality. Don't get me wrong. I don't think the digital revolution is a bad thing. On the contrary, it has enabled many great advances in the free circulation of information. But at the cost of increased uncertainty and instability. There is no denying this either.

In political representation, one of the major realizations of recent years is that even those who are politically represented feel powerless, as power today seems to be coded more economically than politically. So, ironically, political representation starts to resemble cultural representation. It becomes more portrait than proxy, while its internal contradictions increase. Complications thus intensify, with both political and cultural representation.

### Finance and epistemology

Maybe the common denominator of all these diverse slippages in representation is the notion of speculation. Speculation is at once a financial and an epistemological tool. In finance, speculation means to take a step whose implications cannot be safely predicted. Not all the information is (or can be) available at the time of taking the decision. Risk is thus increased, but presumably so is opportunity. Speculation also means that value is increasingly unhitched from the object to which it refers. It does not refer to the thing in question any more, but to the context of its circulation and the affects attached to it. It represents mood swings around derivatives of derivatives. It is more like video feedback from a wildly agitated hand-held camera feed than a conventional still-image illustration (and by this I do not mean to imply that the latter is more truthful than the former – just more predictable).

It is not difficult to see how this relates to speculation as a tool of observation and research. *Speculari* means to observe in Latin. It is used as the Latin translation of the Greek *theoria* and describes the quest for the essence or origins of things behind their empirical existence. At the same time, it refers to a jump into the haze of pure appearance, as Augustine's reflections on the recognition of God in a dark mirror suggest. According to Hans Reichenbach, speculation characterizes periods of transition in philosophy, when the questions exceed the possible rational means of answering them. Thus philosophical speculation also presents risks and opportunities. It presents the possibility of thinking outside the box as well as the danger of getting completely lost out there.

But speculation has also come to characterize many vernacular processes of representation. All the things that are not known, but are suspected. All the rumours that are not substantiated. All the complexity lost in compression. Viral videos, whose circulation multiplies in bubbles of representation, a thick coating of affect dripping from them. Grainy, abstract footage from war zones. The addiction to emergency and catastrophe, and their subsequent inflation on exponentially multiplying screens. The loss of confidence in images and any other referential values and their relation to whatever they refer to.

Many of the processes that characterize speculation in general – above all its risky and unsubstantiated relation to reality – are inherent in digital representation practices. Representation as such is extremely dynamized by speculation. The result is that the relation between referent and sign, between person and proxy, becomes extremely unpredictable – like many other contemporary phenomena. Speculation turbo-charges representation; it accelerates the tailspin that we are living through today.

This is not solely bad news. Speculation as a method opens up new freedoms of expression and thought, which on the other hand can easily be put to terrible use. Opportunities arise by the minute – and realities are destroyed and wasted simultaneously. This opens up new horizons of thinking, which in many cases end up as complete delusions. It is a harbinger of possibility and exploration, just as it plays into bigotry and bias.

This is where fascism comes into play. Where representation collapses or spins off into precipitous loops and feedbacks, fascism seemingly offers easy answers. It is the panic button for blocking off annoying remnants of reality.

By apparently doing away with the complications of representation, fascism manages to obfuscate that it is the highest form of contemporary speculative representation: its point of collapse, or of impact. The crash itself is at once over- and unrepresented. A blind spot filled with delusion and death. The irreversible unparting of the ways with empirical reality.

The good news for fascists is that their ideology is so compatible with contemporary economic paradigms. Because it resonates perfectly with an ideology in which society is nothing and the individual's greed and will to power are everything. In which tribe and racket rule supreme and flattened stereotypes hyperventilate. Especially in an era of first-person shooter games and online fanaticism, fascism seems like an ideal complement to 'overdrive capitalism': a built-in competitive advantage for Aryans. Not only does it promise to reintroduce a (completely speculative) referent for value, namely race or culture; conveniently, it also promises its target audience that it will be in the upper echelon of the class divide, because dirty and low-paid jobs will be dumped on 'subhumans'. It presents a seeming alternative to the brutal equality of liberal democracy in which everybody is presumed to 'make it' or fail, by presenting itself as self-evident 'truth'. In fascism, the abstract equality of capitalist liberalism is abolished by the collapse of class into race. It is a perfect ideology for lazy Aryans: you enjoy all the benefits of capitalism without actually having to work.

At this point we recognize that the words 'Aryan' and 'race' can be replaced with other copy-and-paste jargons that share similar premises. Most terror attacks of the last decade have actually been initiated by right-wing extremists who want their respective cultures to remain 'pure' and exclusive, who hate women, communists and most minorities (minorities from their point of view, that is) and cook up an ideology centred around testosterone-driven masculinity. Not all of these ideologies are fascist, and there is no point trying to boil them all down to this notion. But all of them try to replace equality by uniformity – however they define the latter.

But here is the point. None of what I have written about necessarily leads to fascism. It presents the context that facilitates its emergence: it doesn't inevitably lead to it. The reason is simple. People have the choice. Anybody can choose to become a fascist or not. And most people, thankfully, have so far chosen not to.

And one can also choose not to ignore the problem. Instead of denying these challenges, we should face up to them. We should face up to the complete un-hinging of reality by reintroducing checks and balances, by renegotiating value and information, by insisting on representation and human solidarity. This also includes acknowledging and opposing real existing fascism and its countless derivatives and franchises. Denying its existence means surrendering to a newly emerging paradigm of post-politics and post-democracy; to a complete turning-away from reality.

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## UR-FASCISM

— Umberto Eco

In 1942, at the age of ten, I received the First Provincial Award of Ludi Juveniles (a voluntary, compulsory competition for young Italian Fascists – that is, for every young Italian). I elaborated with rhetorical skill on the subject “Should we die for the glory of Mussolini and the immortal destiny of Italy?” My answer was positive. I was a smart boy.

I spent two of my early years among the SS, Fascists, Republicans, and partisans shooting at one another, and I learned how to dodge bullets. It was good exercise.

In April 1945, the partisans took over in Milan. Two days later they arrived in the small town where I was living at the time. It was a moment of joy. The main square was crowded with people singing and waving flags, calling in loud voices for Mimo, the partisan leader of that area. A former *maresciallo* of the Carabinieri, Mimo joined the supporters of General Badoglio, Mussolini's successor, and lost a leg during one of the first clashes with Mussolini's remaining forces. Mimo showed up on the balcony of the city hall, pale, leaning on his crutch, and with one hand tried to calm the crowd. I was waiting for his speech because my whole childhood had been marked by the great historic speeches of Mussolini, whose most significant passages we memorized in school. Silence. Mimo spoke in a hoarse voice, barely audible. He said: “Citizens, friends. After so many painful sacrifices . . . here we are. Glory to those who have fallen for freedom.” And that was it. He went back inside. The crowd yelled, the partisans raised their guns and fired festive volleys. We kids hurried to pick up the shells, precious items, but I had also learned that freedom of speech means freedom from rhetoric.

A few days later I saw the first American soldiers. They were African Americans. The first Yankee I met was a black man, Joseph, who introduced me to the marvels of Dick Tracy and Li'l Abner. His comic books were brightly colored and smelled good.

One of the officers (Major or Captain Muddy) was a guest in the villa of a family whose two daughters were my schoolmates. I met him in their garden where some ladies, surrounding Captain Muddy, talked in tentative French. Captain Muddy knew some French, too. My first image of American liberators was thus – after so many pale faces in black shirts – that of a cultivated black man in a yellow-green uniform saying: “*Oui, merci beaucoup, Madame, moi aussi j'aime le champagne . . .*” Unfortunately there was no champagne, but Captain Muddy gave me my first piece of Wrigley's Spearmint and I started chewing all day long. At night I put my wad in a water glass, so it would be fresh for the next day.

In May we heard that the war was over. Peace gave me a curious sensation. I had been told that permanent warfare was the normal condition for a young Italian. In the following months I discovered that the Resistance was not only a local phenomenon but a European one. I learned new, exciting words like *réseau*, *maquis*,

*armée secrète, Rote Kapelle*, Warsaw ghetto. I saw the first photographs of the Holocaust, thus understanding the meaning before knowing the word. I realized what we were liberated from.

In my country today there are people who are wondering if the Resistance had a real military impact on the course of the war. For my generation this question is irrelevant: we immediately understood the moral and psychological meaning of the Resistance. For us it was a point of pride to know that we Europeans did not wait passively for liberation. And for the young Americans who were paying with their blood for our restored freedom it meant something to know that behind the firing lines there were Europeans paying their own debt in advance.

In my country today there are those who are saying that the myth of the Resistance was a Communist lie. It is true that the Communists exploited the Resistance as if it were their personal property, since they played a prime role in it; but I remember partisans with kerchiefs of different colors. Sticking close to the radio, I spent my nights – the windows closed, the blackout making the small space around the set a lone luminous halo – listening to the messages sent by the Voice of London to the partisans. They were cryptic and poetic at the same time (*The sun also rises, The roses will bloom*) and most of them were “*messaggi per la Franchi*.” Somebody whispered to me that Franchi was the leader of the most powerful clandestine network in northwestern Italy, a man of legendary courage. Franchi became my hero. Franchi (whose real name was Edgardo Sogno) was an anarchist, so strongly anti-Communist that after the war he joined very right-wing groups, and was charged with collaborating in a project for a reactionary coup d'état. Who cares? Sogno still remains the dream hero of my childhood. Liberation was a command for people of different colors.

In my country today there are some who say that the War of Liberation was a tragic period of division, and that all we need is national reconciliation. The memory of those terrible years should be repressed, *refoulée, verdrängt*. But *Verdrängung* causes neurosis. If reconciliation means compassion and respect for all those who fought their own war in good faith, to forgive does not mean to forget. I can even admit that Eichmann sincerely believed in his mission, but I cannot say, “OK, come back and do it again.” We are here to remember what happened and solemnly say that “They” must not do it again.

But who are They?

If we still think of the totalitarian governments that ruled Europe before the Second World War we can easily say that it would be difficult for them to reappear in the same form in different historical circumstances. If Mussolini's fascism was based upon the idea of a charismatic ruler, on corporatism, on the utopia of the Imperial Fate of Rome, on an imperialistic will to conquer new territories, on an exacerbated nationalism, on the ideal of an entire nation regimented in black shirts, on the rejection of parliamentary democracy, on anti-Semitism, then I have no difficulty in acknowledging that today the Italian Alleanza Nazionale, born from the postwar Fascist Party, MSI, and certainly a right-wing party, has by now very little to do with the old fascism. In the same vein, even though I am much concerned about the various Nazi-like movements that have arisen here and there in Europe, including Russia, I do not think that Nazism, in its original form, is about to reappear as a nationwide movement.

Nevertheless, even though political regimes can be overthrown, and ideologies can be criticized and disowned, behind a regime and its ideology there is always a way of thinking and feeling, a group of cultural habits, of obscure instincts and unfathomable. Ionesco once said that “only words count and the rest is mere chattering.” Linguistic habits are frequently important symptoms of underlying feelings. Thus it is worth asking why not only the Resistance but the Second World War was generally defined throughout the world as a struggle against fascism. If you reread Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* you will discover that Robert Jordan identifies his enemies with Fascists, even when he thinks of the Spanish Falangists. And for FDR, “The victory of the American people and their allies will be a victory against fascism and the dead hand of despotism it represents.”

During World War II, the Americans who took part in the Spanish war were called “premature anti-fascists” – meaning that fighting against Hitler in the Forties was a moral duty for every good American, but fighting against Franco too early, in the Thirties, smelled sour because it was mainly done by Communists and other leftists. . . . Why was an expression like *fascist pig* used by American radicals thirty years later to refer to a cop who did not approve of their smoking habits? Why didn't they say: *Cagoulard pig, Falangist pig, Ustashe pig, Quisling pig, Nazi pig*?

*Mein Kampf* is a manifesto of a complete political program. Nazism had a theory of racism and of the Aryan chosen people, a precise notion of degenerate art, *entartete Kunst*, a philosophy of the will to power and of the *Übermensch*. Nazism was decidedly anti-Christian and neo-pagan, while Stalin's *Diamat* (the official version of Soviet Marxism) was blatantly materialistic and atheistic. If by totalitarianism one means a regime that subordinates every act of the individual to the state and to its ideology, then both Nazism and Stalinism were true totalitarian regimes.

Italian fascism was certainly a dictatorship, but it was not totally totalitarian, not because of its mildness but rather because of the philosophical weakness of its ideology. Contrary to common opinion, fascism in Italy had no special philosophy. The article on fascism signed by Mussolini in the *Treccani Encyclopedia* was written or basically inspired by Giovanni Gentile, but it reflected a late-Hegelian notion of the Absolute and Ethical State which was never fully realized by Mussolini. Mussolini did not have any philosophy: he had only rhetoric. He was a militant atheist at the beginning and later signed the Convention with the Church and welcomed the bishops who blessed the Fascist pennants. In his early anticlerical years, according to a likely legend, he once asked God, in order to prove His existence, to strike him down on the spot. Later, Mussolini always cited the name of God in his speeches, and did not mind being called the Man of Providence.

Italian fascism was the first right-wing dictatorship that took over a European country, and all similar movements later found a sort of archetype in Mussolini's regime. Italian fascism was the first to establish a military liturgy, a folklore, even a way of dressing – far more influential, with its black shirts, than Armani, Benetton, or Versace would ever be. It was only in the Thirties that fascist movements appeared, with Mosley, in Great Britain, and in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, Norway, and even in South America. It was Italian fascism that convinced many European liberal leaders that the new regime was carrying out interesting social reform, and that it was providing a mildly revolutionary alternative to the Communist threat.

Nevertheless, historical priority does not seem to me a sufficient reason to explain why the word *fascism* became a synecdoche, that is, a word that could be used for different totalitarian movements. This is not because fascism contained in itself, so to speak in their quintessential state, all the elements of any later form of totalitarianism. On the contrary, fascism had no quintessence. Fascism was a *fuzzy* totalitarianism, a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions. Can one conceive of a truly totalitarian movement that was able to combine monarchy with revolution, the Royal Army with Mussolini's personal *milizia*, the grant of privileges to the Church with state education extolling violence, absolute state control with a free market? The Fascist Party was born boasting that it brought a revolutionary new order; but it was financed by the most conservative among the landowners who expected from it a counter-revolution. At its beginning fascism was republican. Yet it survived for twenty years proclaiming its loyalty to the royal family, while the Duce (the unchallenged Maximal Leader) was arm-in-arm with the King, to whom he also offered the title of Emperor. But when the King fired Mussolini in 1943, the party reappeared two months later, with German support, under the standard of a "social" republic, recycling its old revolutionary script, now enriched with almost Jacobin overtones.

There was only a single Nazi architecture and a single Nazi art. If the Nazi architect was Albert Speer, there was no more room for Mies van der Rohe. Similarly, under Stalin's rule, if Lamarck was right there was no room for Darwin. In Italy there were certainly fascist architects but close to their pseudo-Coliseums were many new buildings inspired by the modern rationalism of Gropius.

There was no fascist Zhdanov setting a strictly cultural line. In Italy there were two important art awards. The Premio Cremona was controlled by a fanatical and uncultivated Fascist, Roberto Farinacci, who encouraged art as propaganda. (I can remember paintings with such titles as "Listening by Radio to the Duce's Speech" or "States of Mind Created by Fascism.") The Premio Bergamo was sponsored by the cultivated and reasonably tolerant Fascist Giuseppe Bottai, who protected both the concept of art for art's sake and the many kinds of avant-garde art that had been banned as corrupt and crypto-Communist in Germany.

The national poet was D'Annunzio, a dandy who in Germany or in Russia would have been sent to the firing squad. He was appointed as the bard of the regime because of his nationalism and his cult of heroism – which were in fact abundantly mixed up with influences of French *fin de siècle* decadence.

Take Futurism. One might think it would have been considered an instance of *entartete Kunst*, along with Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. But the early Italian Futurists were nationalist; they favored Italian participation in the First World War for aesthetic reasons; they celebrated speed, violence, and risk, all of which somehow seemed to connect with the fascist cult of youth. While fascism identified itself with the Roman Empire and rediscovered rural traditions, Marinetti (who proclaimed that a car was more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*, and wanted to kill even the moonlight) was nevertheless appointed as a member of the Italian Academy, which treated moonlight with great respect.

Many of the future partisans and of the future intellectuals of the Communist Party were educated by the GUF, the fascist university students' association, which was supposed to be the cradle of the new fascist culture. These clubs became a sort of intellectual meltingpot where new ideas circulated

without any real ideological control. It was not that the themes of the party were tolerant of radical thinking, but few of them had the intellectual equipment to control it.

During those twenty years, the poetry of Montale and other writers associated with the group called the Ermetici was a reaction to the bombastic style of the regime, and these poets were allowed to develop their literary protest from within what was seen as their ivory tower. The mood of the Ermetici poets was exactly the reverse of the fascist cult of optimism and heroism. The regime tolerated their blatant, even though socially. All this does not mean that Italian fascism was tolerant. Gramsci was put in prison until his death; the opposition leaders Giacomo Matteotti and the brothers Rosselli were assassinated; the free press was abolished, the labor unions were dismantled, and political dissenters were confined on remote islands. Legislative power became a mere fiction and the executive power (which controlled the judiciary as well as the mass media) directly issued new laws, among them laws calling for preservation of the race (the formal Italian gesture of support for what became the Holocaust).

The contradictory picture I describe is not the result of tolerance but of political and ideological discombobulation. But it was a rigid discombobulation, a structured confusion. Fascism was philosophically out of joint, but emotionally it was firmly fastened to some archetypal foundations.

So we come to my second point. There was only one Nazism. We cannot label Franco's hyper-Catholic Falangism as Nazism, since Nazism is fundamentally pagan, polytheistic, and anti-Christian. But the fascist game can be played in many forms, and the name of the game does not change. The notion of fascism is not unlike Wittgenstein's notion of a game. A game can be either competitive or not, it can require some special skill or none, it can or cannot involve money. Games are different activities that display only some "family resemblance," as Wittgenstein put it. Consider the following sequence:

1 2 3 4  
abc bcd cde def

Suppose there is a series of political groups in which group one is characterized by the features abc, group two by the features bcd, and so on. Group two is similar to group one since they have two features in common; for the same reasons three is similar to two and four is similar to three. Notice that three is also similar to one (they have in common the feature c). The most curious case is presented by four, obviously similar to three and two, but with no feature in common with one. However, owing to the uninterrupted series of decreasing similarities between one and four, there remains, by a sort of illusory transitivity, a family resemblance between four and one.

Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it will still be recognizable as fascist. Take away imperialism from fascism and you still have Franco and Salazar. Take away colonialism and you still have the Balkan fascism of the Ustashes. Add to the Italian fascism a radical anti-capitalism (which never much fascinated Mussolini) and you have Ezra Pound. Add a cult of Celtic mythology and the Grail mysticism (completely alien to official fascism) and you have one of the most respected fascist gurus, Julius Evola.

But in spite of this fuzziness, I think it is possible to outline a list of features that are typical of what I would like to call Ur-Fascism, or Eternal Fascism. These features cannot be organized into a system; many of them contradict each other, and are also typical of other kinds of despotism or fanaticism. But it is enough that one of them be present to allow fascism to coagulate around it.

1. The first feature of Ur-Fascism is the cult of tradition. Traditionalism is of course much older than fascism. Not only was it typical of counter-revolutionary Catholic thought after the French revolution, but it was born in the late Hellenistic era, as a reaction to classical Greek rationalism. In the Mediterranean basin, people of different religions (most of them indulgently accepted by the Roman Pantheon) started dreaming of a revelation received at the dawn of human history. This revelation, according to the traditionalist mystique, had to be *syncretistic*. Syncretism is not only, as the dictionary says, "the combination of different forms of belief or practice"; such a combination must tolerate contradictions. Each of the original messages contains a silver of wisdom, and whenever they seem to say different or incompatible things it is only because all are alluding, allegorically, to the same primeval truth.

As a consequence, there can be no advancement of learning. Truth has been already spelled out once and for all, and we can only keep interpreting its obscure message.

One has only to look at the syllabus of every fascist movement to find the major traditionalist thinkers. The Nazi gnosis was nourished by traditionalist, syncretistic, occult elements. The most influential theoretical source of the theories of the new Italian right, Julius Evola, merged the Holy Grail with *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, alchemy with the Holy Roman and Germanic Empire. The very fact that the Italian right, in order to show its open-mindedness, recently broadened its syllabus to include works by De Maistre, Guenon, and Gramsci, is a blatant proof of syncretism.

If you browse in the shelves that, in American bookstores, are labeled as New Age, you can find there even Saint Augustine who, as far as I know, was not a fascist. But combining Saint Augustine and Stonehenge – *that* is a symptom of Ur-Fascism.

2. Traditionalism implies the *rejection of modernism*. Both Fascists and Nazis worshiped technology, while traditionalist thinkers usually reject it as a negation of traditional spiritual values. However, even though Nazism was proud of its industrial achievements, its praise of modernism was only the surface of an ideology based upon Blood and Earth (*Blut und Boden*). The rejection of the modern world was disguised as a rebuttal of the capitalistic way of life, but it mainly concerned the rejection of the Spirit of 1789 (and of 1776, of course). The Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, is seen as the beginning of modern depravity. In this sense Ur-Fascism can be defined as *irrationalism*.
3. Irrationalism also depends on the cult of *action for action's sake*. Action being beautiful in itself, it must be taken before, or without, any previous reflection. Thinking is a form of emasculation. Therefore culture is suspect insofar as it is identified with critical attitudes. Distrust of the intellectual world has always been a symptom of Ur-Fascism, from Goering's alleged

statement ("When I hear talk of culture I reach for my gun") to the frequent use of such expressions as "degenerate intellectuals," "eggheads," "effete snobs," "universities are a nest of reds." The official Fascist intellectuals were mainly engaged in attacking modern culture and the liberal intelligentsia for having betrayed traditional values.

4. No syncretistic faith can withstand analytical criticism. The critical spirit makes distinctions, and to distinguish is a sign of modernism. In modern culture the scientific community praises disagreement as a way to improve knowledge. For Ur-Fascism, disagreement is treason.
5. Besides, disagreement is a sign of diversity. Ur-Fascism grows up and seeks for consensus by exploiting and exacerbating the natural *fear of difference*. The first appeal of a fascist or prematurely fascist movement is an appeal against the intruders. Thus Ur-Fascism is racist by definition.
6. Ur-Fascism derives from individual or social frustration. That is why one of the most typical features of the historical fascism was the *appeal to a frustrated middle class*, a class suffering from an economic crisis or feelings of political humiliation, and frightened by the pressure of lower social groups. In our time, when the old "proletarians" are becoming petty bourgeois (and the lumpen are largely excluded from the political scene), the fascism of tomorrow will find its audience in this new majority.
7. To people who feel deprived of a clear social identity, Ur-Fascism says that their only privilege is the most common one, to be born in the same country. This is the origin of nationalism. Besides, the only ones who can provide an identity to the nation are its enemies. Thus at the root of the Ur-Fascist psychology there is the *obsession with a plot*, possibly an international one. The followers must feel besieged. The easiest way to solve the plot is the appeal to xenophobia. But the plot must also come from the inside: Jews are usually the best target because they have the advantage of being at the same time inside and outside. In the U.S., a prominent instance of the plot obsession is to be found in Pat Robertson's *The New World Order*, but, as we have recently seen, there are many others.
8. The followers must feel humiliated by the ostentatious wealth and force of their enemies. When I was a boy I was taught to think of Englishmen as the five-meal people. They ate more frequently than the poor but sober Italians. Jews are rich and help each other through a secret web of mutual assistance. However, the followers must be convinced that they can overwhelm the enemies. Thus, by a continuous shifting of rhetorical focus, the enemies are at the same time too strong and too weak. Fascist governments are condemned to lose wars because they are constitutionally incapable of objectively evaluating the force of the enemy.
9. For Ur-Fascism there is no struggle for life but, rather, life is lived for struggle. *Thus pacifism is trafficking with the enemy*. It is bad because *life is permanent warfare*. This, however, brings about an Armageddon complex. Since enemies have to be defeated, there must be a final battle, after which the movement will have control of the world. But such a "final solution" implies a further era of peace, a Golden Age, which contradicts the principle of permanent war. No fascist leader has ever succeeded in solving this predicament.
10. Elitism is a typical aspect of any reactionary ideology, insofar as it is fundamentally aristocratic, and aristocratic and militaristic elitism cruelly implies

*contempt for the weak.* Ur-Fascism can only advocate a *popular elitism*. Every citizen belongs to the best people of the world, the members of the party are the best among the citizens, every citizen can (or ought to) become a member of the party. But there cannot be patricians without plebeians. In fact, the Leader, knowing that his power was not delegated to him democratically but was conquered by force, also knows that his force is based upon the weakness of the masses; they are so weak as to need and deserve a ruler. Since the group is hierarchically organized (according to a military model), every subordinate leader despises his own underlings, and each of them despises his inferiors. This reinforces the sense of mass elitism.

11. In such a perspective *everybody is educated to become a hero*. In every mythology the hero is an exceptional being, but in Ur-Fascist ideology, heroism is the norm. This cult of heroism is strictly linked with the cult of death. It is not by chance that a motto of the Falangists was *Viva la Muerte* (in English it should be translated as “Long Live Death!”). In non-fascist societies, the lay public is told that death is unpleasant but must be faced with dignity; believers are told that it is the painful way to reach a supernatural happiness. By contrast, the Ur-Fascist hero craves heroic death, advertised as the best reward for a heroic life. The Ur-Fascist hero is impatient to die. In his impatience, he more frequently sends other people to death.

12. Since both permanent war and heroism are difficult games to play, the Ur-Fascist transfers his will to power to sexual matters. This is the origin of *machismo* (which implies both disdain for women and intolerance and condemnation of nonstandard sexual).

13. Ur-Fascism is based upon a *selective populism*, a qualitative populism, one might say. In a democracy, the citizens have individual rights, but the citizens in their entirety have a political impact only from a quantitative point of view – one follows the decisions of the majority. For Ur-Fascism, however, individuals as individuals have no rights, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will. Since a large quantity of human beings can have a common will, the Leader pretends to be their interpreter. Having lost their power of delegation, citizens do not act; they are only called on to play the role of the People. Thus the People is only a theatrical fiction. To have a good instance of qualitative populism we no longer need the Piazza Venezia in Rome or the Nuremberg Stadium. There is in our future a TV or Internet populism, in which the emotional response of a selected group of citizens can be presented and accepted as the Voice of the People.

Because of its qualitative populism Ur-Fascism must be *against “rotten” parliamentary governments*. One of the first sentences uttered by Mussolini in the Italian parliament was “I could have transformed this deaf and gloomy place into a bivouac for my maniples” – “maniples” being a subdivision of the traditional Roman legion. As a matter of fact, he immediately found better housing for his maniples, but a little later he liquidated the parliament. Wherever a politician casts doubt on the legitimacy of a parliament because it no longer represents the Voice of the People, we can smell Ur-Fascism.

14. Ur-Fascism speaks Newspeak. Newspeak was invented by Orwell, in 1984, as the official language of Ingsoc, English Socialism. But elements of Ur-Fascism are common to different forms of dictatorship. All the Nazi

or Fascist schoolbooks made use of an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning. But we must be ready to identify other kinds of Newspeak, even if they take the apparently innocent form of a popular talk show.

On the morning of July 27, 1943, I was told that, according to radio reports, fascism had collapsed and Mussolini was under arrest. When my mother sent me out to buy the newspaper, I saw that the papers at the nearest newsstand had different titles. Moreover, after seeing the headlines, I realized that each newspaper said different things. I bought one of them, blindly, and read a message on the first page signed by five or six political parties – among them the Democrazia Cristiana, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Partito d'Azione, and the Liberal Party.

Until then, I had believed that there was a single party in every country and that in Italy it was the Partito Nazionale Fascista. Now I was discovering that in my country several parties could exist at the same time. Since I was a clever boy, I immediately realized that so many parties could not have been born overnight, and they must have existed for sometime as clandestine organizations.

The message on the front celebrated the end of the dictatorship and the return of freedom: freedom of speech, of press, of political association. These words, “freedom,” “dictatorship,” “liberty,” – I now read them for the first time in my life. I was reborn as a free Western man by virtue of these new words.

We must keep alert, so that the sense of these words will not be forgotten again. Ur-Fascism is still around us, sometimes in plain clothes. It would be so much easier, for us, if there appeared on the world scene somebody saying, “I want to reopen Auschwitz, I want the Black Shirts to parade again in the Italian squares.” Life is not that simple. Ur-Fascism can come back under the most innocent of disguises. Our duty is to uncover it.

“I venture the challenging statement that if American democracy ceases to move forward as a living force, seeking day and night by peaceful means to better the lot of our citizens, fascism will grow in strength in our land.”

Freedom and liberation are an unending task. Let me finish with a poem by Franco Fortini (Poem translated by Stephen Sartarelli):

*Sulla spalletta del ponte  
Le teste degli impiccati  
Nell'acqua della fonte  
La bava degli impiccati.*

*Sul lastrico del mercato  
Le unghie dei fucilati  
Sull'erba secca del prato  
I denti dei fucilati.*

*Mordere l'aria mordere i sassi  
La nostra carne non pi d'uomini  
Mordere l'aria mordere i sassi  
Il nostro cuore non pi d'uomini.*

*Ma noi s' letto negli occhi dei morti  
E sulla terra faremo libert`  
Ma l'hanno stretta ipugni dei morti  
La giustizia che si far`.*

*(On the bridge's parapet  
The heads of the hanged  
In the flowing rivulet  
The spittle of the hanged.*

*On the cobbles in the market-places  
The fingernails of those lined up and shot.  
On the dry grass in the open spaces  
The broken teeth of those lined up and shot.*

*Biting the air, biting the stones  
Our flesh is no longer human  
Biting the air, biting the stones  
Our hearts are no longer human.*

*But we have read into the eyes of the dead  
And shall bring freedom on the earth  
But clenched tight in the fists of the dead  
Lies the justice to be served.)*



