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**AMBIGUITIES OF TRANSNATIONALISM:
FASCISM IN EUROPE BETWEEN PAN-
EUROPEANISM AND ULTRA-
NATIONALISM, 1919–39***

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Deeply impressed by the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution (*Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*), Benito Mussolini claimed to represent the new universal civilization of the twentieth century after his inaugural visit to the *Mostra* on 28 October 1932. When he left the monumental rooms in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in central Rome, the Duce declared: 'In ten years Europe will be fascist or fascisized.'¹ This attitude on the tenth anniversary of the glorified March on Rome contrasts starkly with the prevailing positive interpretations of transnationalism in public debates and the historiography of cross-border transfers, entanglements, and interconnectedness. In fact, research on the cross-border cooperation between fascists (and Communists) highlights the normative ambivalence of transnational exchange. Its repercussions are as contradictory as the expansion of civil society across territorial, social, and cultural boundaries.²

In this article, it will be argued that the relationship between transnational relations and cross-border entanglements on the one

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¹ 'In dieci anni l'Europa sarà fascista o fascistizzata', *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 30 Oct. 1932.

² See e.g. Michael Foley and Bob Edwards, 'The Paradox of Civil Society', *Journal of Democracy*, 7/3 (1996), 38–52; Frank Trentmann, 'Introduction: Paradoxes of Civil Society', in id. (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York, 2000), 3–46; John Keane, *Violence and Democracy* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 89–127; Arnd Bauerkämper, Dieter Gosewinkel, and Sven Reichardt, 'Paradox oder

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hand and nationalist delimitation on the other is not only contradictory but also complementary and even dialectical. More precisely, the investigation of initiatives to set up a Fascist International clearly indicates that pan-European concepts are ambivalent, if not ambiguous in normative terms. In modern history, 'Europe' has repeatedly been a referential framework used to legitimize the pre-eminence of specific states. It has served as an argument for vested and often contradictory interests. This exploitation reached unprecedented proportions in the interwar period, when the Italian Fascists³ and the German National Socialists referred to Europe in order to justify their hegemonic claims. However, fascist Europeanism cannot easily be dismissed as a mere propaganda manoeuvre. This proposition will be supported by reconstructing the ties and barriers between fascists in Europe in the interwar period.

Previous historical research on transnational connections and exchange between fascists in Europe has largely been restricted to historical comparisons, whereas research on entanglements and relations between fascists has received less attention. Moreover, published studies of this cross-border exchange have concentrated on top-level cooperation between fascist leaders. Thus Michael Ledeen has investigated the *Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma* (CAUR), which had been set up in 1933 by the Fascist regime in Italy. Yet the collapse of the *Comitati* in the mid-1930s has led historians to conclude that fascist internationalism was merely a pretence, if not a camouflage for nationalist aspirations. Wartime collaboration, which has largely been equated with unqualified submission to German and (to a lesser degree) Italian demands, seems to provide further evidence in support of this proposition.⁴ Undeniably, hyper-nation-

Perversion? Zum historischen Verhältnis von Zivilgesellschaft und Gewalt', *Mittelweg* 36, 15/1 (2006), 22–32. On the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, see Marla Stone, 'Staging Fascism: The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 28 (1993), 215–43. See also Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto, 2003), esp. 165–206, 250–9; id., 'Fascism and Historic Representation: The 1932 Garibaldian Celebrations', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31 (1996), 317–45.

³ In this article 'Fascism' when capitalized refers to the Italian variant, whereas 'fascism' denotes the generic concept.

⁴ See e.g. David Littlejohn, *The Patriotic Traitors: A History of Collaboration in German-Occupied Europe, 1940–45* (London, 1972); Gerhard Hirschfeld,

alism was deeply ingrained in fascist ideology and continuously impeded the cross-border interchange between European fascists. Yet it did not prevent continual top-level cooperation. Even more importantly, nationalism did not impede contacts between lower functionaries and activists at grass-roots level, which have been neglected in historical scholarship. The common view that 'international fascism is unthinkable, a contradiction in terms',⁵ therefore needs differentiation.

Despite all due recognition of the fascists' failure to institutionalize cooperation between themselves, I will present some evidence that Italian Fascism and German Nazism were genuinely attractive throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Cross-border ties emanating from the 'magnetic field' of these two major regimes cannot be reduced to a camouflage of quests for predominance. Far beyond high politics, interchange between fascists extended to fields such as the organization of leisure and public relations. There was a sense of community between fascists in different European states in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, transnational ties transcended the realm of ideology and included cross-border activities. Thus, 'fascism' was by no means 'largely a construction of political opponents'.⁶ Yet fascist

'Kollaboration', in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1997), 546-7; Wolfgang Benz et al. (eds.), *Anpassung, Kollaboration und Widerstand* (Berlin, 1996). On CAUR, see Michael A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928-1936* (New York, 1972); Marco Cuzzi, *L'internazionale delle camicie nere: I CAUR, comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma, 1933-1945* (Milan, 2005); Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Il fascismo e l'Europa orientale: Della propaganda all'aggressione* (Rome, 1981).

⁵ Walter Laqueur, *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (New York, 1996), 218. For similar interpretations see Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Die Rivalität zwischen Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ostmitteleuropa', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29 (1981), 579-614, esp. 607; Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (London, 2003), 159; Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder, Col., 1990), 190; Hans Woller, *Rom*, 28. Oktober 1922: *Die faschistische Herausforderung* (Munich, 1999), 172-3; Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Schulen des Hasses: Faschistische Systeme in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 267; Emilio Gentile, 'Der Faschismus: Eine Definition zur Orientierung', *Mittelweg* 36, 16/1 (2007), 81-99, at 83-4.

⁶ Roger Eatwell, 'Introduction: New Styles of Dictatorship and Leadership in Interwar Europe', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7/2 (2006), 127-37, at 128.

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movements and regimes appropriated foreign doctrines and policies *selectively* in order to avert the potentially damaging charge of pale imitation. For the same reason, they were cautious about publicizing their transnational cooperation, which was neither restricted to wartime collaboration nor to the abortive attempts to institutionalize high-level cooperation between fascist leaders. Most importantly, the interchange between fascists by no means remained inconsequential, but had a lasting impact on their political and social practice, and their movements and groups. Studies of transnational exchange between fascists can therefore shed light on fascist agency as a counterbalance to the strong emphasis on the ideology of national renewal and cultural representation prevailing in recent scholarship.⁷

⁷ The role of the fascists as actors has recently been emphasized by Robert Paxton, Michael Mann, and Sven Reichardt, though in a comparative, not relational perspective. See Sven Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadristum und in der deutschen SA* (Cologne, 2002), 717–23; id., 'Praxeologie und Faschismus: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft als Elemente eines praxeologischen Faschismusbegriffs', in Karl H. Hörning and Julia Reuter (eds.), *Doing Culture* (Bielefeld, 2004), 129–53; Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York, 2004); id., 'The Five Stages of Fascism', *Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998), 1–23; Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge, 2004), 13; id., 'Der Faschismus und die Faschisten: Überlegungen zur Soziologie faschistischer Bewegungen', *Mittelweg* 36, 16/1 (2007), 26–54, at 28. For overviews of research since the 1990s see Stanley Payne, 'Historical Fascism and the Radical Right', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (2000), 109–18; Andreas Umland, 'Concepts of Fascism in Contemporary Russia and the West', *Political Studies Review*, 3 (2005), 34–49; Sven Reichardt, 'Was mit dem Faschismus passiert ist: Ein Literaturbericht zur internationalen Faschismusforschung seit 1990, Teil 1', *Neue Politische Literatur*, 49 (2004), 385–406; Arnd Bauerkämper, 'A New Consensus? Recent Research on Fascism in Europe, 1918–1945', *History Compass*, 4 (2006), 1–31; Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland (eds.), *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on the Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart, 2006). Transfers between the fascists have received only scant attention in major textbooks and overviews. See e.g. Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London, 1995); Kevin Passmore, *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2002); Martin Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe 1919–1945* (Harlow, 2000); Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914–1945* (Madison, 1995); Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*

Despite their hyper-nationalism, European fascists maintained mutual relations that accentuated their bonds. They were brought together by different motives and interests. Apart from mere sympathy and ideological affinity, pragmatic considerations assumed considerable importance. Thus political revisionism lent Fascist Italy and nationalist Germany support from fascists (and authoritarian governments) in states which had been punished by the Versailles settlement. Similarly, fascists in Europe hoped for economic cooperation and funds from their successful 'comrades' in Italy and Germany. In the 1920s, the Italian Fascists seemed to embody and propel the new transnational civilization. After the 'March on Rome' in late October 1922, the Italian capital acted as a magnet for fascists throughout Europe. Despite his disappointment at the military failures of his Italian alliance partner, Hitler cherished Mussolini as an ally and a friend as late as April 1945, when the Third Reich lay in ruins. Yet in the mid-1930s, European fascists had increasingly turned their attention to Nazi Germany.

Interchange between fascists in Europe was not limited to overtly political issues such as mutual assistance in war and propaganda, but also concerned the seemingly non-political fields of cultural and aesthetic representations. Neither the doctrines of fascist movements and regimes nor their policies can therefore be adequately explained without taking the multiple interrelationships between European fascists into account. Not least, the adversaries of fascist movements and regimes emphasized the cross-border interchange and universal claims of fascism as much as many of its members and supporters.⁸

After an overview of the impact of Italian Fascism in Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s, the increasing competition between the Italian Fascists and the National Socialists from 1933 to 1935 will be reconstructed. In the latter half of the 1930s, which will be elaborated

(London, 2002). See, however, Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, 159–89; Woller, *Rom, 28. Oktober 1922*, 148–90; Borejsza, *Schulen des Hasses*, 252–70; Arnd Bauerkämper, *Faschismus in Europa, 1918–1945* (Stuttgart, 2006), 166–82. For more explicit comparisons and transfer studies, see the contributions to Armin Nolzen and Sven Reichardt (eds.), *Faschismus in Deutschland und Italien: Studien zu Transfer und Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2005).

⁸ Dietrich Orlow, 'Fascists among Themselves: Some Observations on West European Politics in the 1930s', *European Review*, 11 (2003), 245–66, esp. 245, 247, 250.

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upon in the third part of this article, the Third Reich increasingly prevailed over Fascist Italy. Nevertheless, cooperation between the two regimes persisted as much as ties between them and smaller fascist groups and movements in Europe. Fascist collaboration during the Second World War will only be touched upon—this complex issue certainly deserves a separate investigation. I will conclude by proposing detailed investigations on cross-border interaction between fascists and fascist agency, and drawing two more general conclusions concerning transnational historiography.

I The Impact of Italian Fascism, 1922–33

Even though he was only able to establish a fully-fledged dictatorship during the 1920s, Mussolini's seizure of power on 22 October 1922 attracted considerable attention throughout Europe. Shocked by the hitherto unknown atrocities of the First World War and disappointed at the post-war settlements and the economic slump of the early 1920s, many contemporaries perceived Italian Fascism as a promising alternative to liberal democracies struck by party strife and social dislocation. As Mussolini was able to stabilize his rule at the expense of his conservative coalition partners from 1922 to 1925, the Duce found an increasing number of admirers in European states as different as Britain, France, and Hungary. The impression of strong leadership, the vision of a 'new era', and the aggrandizement of Italian power compared favourably with the performance of the governments of western and central European democracies. Although the Italian Fascists emphasized autarchy as an important political objective, corporatism also seemed to pave the way for cooperation between European nations.

Most importantly, however, the new political style of a plebiscitary dictatorship and marching Blackshirts aroused particular admiration. The Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF), which had been established in November 1921, thus became a model that inspired the foundation of fascist groups and parties in various European and non-European states. According to a contemporary estimate, parties which presented themselves as 'fascist' had been founded in forty states by April 1925. In fact, Italy became the centre of a network of fascist groups evolving throughout Europe after the glorified 'March

on Rome'. Although relations were unequal, they lent the project of fascist pan-Europeanism legitimacy by increasing cross-border exchange. This interaction was fostered by the deliberate representation of Italian Fascism as a modern force for cross-border renewal.⁹

Although Mussolini and his lieutenants initially emphasized the national character of Italian Fascism, their political ambitions clearly transcended the confines of Italy. They busily advocated the ideal of a new transnational European Fascist civilization, supposedly embodied by the new dictatorship. Mussolini therefore encouraged Italian Fascists in Europe to assemble and support the doctrines and claims of the new regime. Thus organizations such as the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero*, which were set up by the prominent Fascist Giuseppe Bastianini in 1923, not only integrated Italians living in foreign states into Italian Fascism, but also spread the regime's claim of a renewal of European civilization beyond the confines of Italy. Although they refrained from direct intervention in the politics of their host countries, the *Fasci* unequivocally espoused Mussolini's regime and propagated it as a model. Even before the Duce openly committed himself to a 'political and spiritual renewal of the world' in 1932,¹⁰ Italian Blackshirts were delegated to countries as distant as India in order to mobilize support for the Fascist regime.¹¹

It was therefore by no means surprising that ardent admirers of Mussolini such as Rotha Lintorn Orman, founder of the British Fascisti in 1923, and Pierre Taittinger, who set up the Jeunesses patriotes in France two years later, established organizations modelled on the PNF. Yet these groups appropriated Italian Fascism selectively, borrowing those elements which suited their specific needs. Thus the

⁹ Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (London, 1981), 108; Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, 162; Woller, *Rom, 28. Oktober 1922*, 59–60, 97. Corporatism as the basis of a Fascist International was particularly highlighted by Ugo Spirito. See Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism* (Oxford, 1995), 68–9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 73.

¹¹ Luca de Caprariis, '“Fascism for Export”? The Rise and Eclipse of the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (2000), 151–83, esp. 152–4, 177. For a case study see Claudia Baldoni, *Exporting Fascism: Italian Fascists and Britain's Italians in the 1930s* (Oxford, 2003), 9, 27, 25, 187; ead., 'Anglo-Italian Fascist Solidarity? The Shift from Italophilia to Naziphilia in the BUF', in Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan (eds.), *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London, 2004), 147–61, at 148.

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British Fascisti emphasized fascist militancy in order to combat the growing unrest among the working class and trade unions which finally initiated the General Strike of May 1926. By contrast, Taittinger was mainly attracted by the concept of the corporate state, which seemed to be a panacea to the French economic crisis and the devaluation of the currency in the mid-1920s. Italian Fascism was clearly appropriated according to specific needs and conditions in the receiving societies. It also served as a political tool in the feud between competing fascist groups in European countries. Thus Action française (AF) embraced Italian Fascism and denounced its rival fascist movements in France as deviations. When the Faisceau of Georges Valois, who occasionally invited Italian Fascists to speak at his meetings, emerged as an increasingly influential organization in 1925, for instance, the founder of AF, Charles Maurras denied the feasibility of fascism in France while expressing his admiration for Mussolini's regime in Italy. Nevertheless, AF themselves highlighted their national roots in their propaganda campaigns in order to evade political stigmatization as an imposed foreign import. The French fascists were reluctant to align themselves publicly with the Italian dictatorship in the 1920s. This cautious approach and tactical silence was also adopted by the new fascist organizations in France in the 1930s, as they, too, were anxious to assert their national loyalties.¹²

Even in seemingly strong parliamentary democracies such as Britain, where the monarchical prerogative had been undermined as early as the seventeenth century, Italian Fascism met with support and sympathy, not only among like-minded followers but also among more mainstream politicians, high officials, and journalists. Despite strong criticism of Italy's occupation of the Greek island of Corfu, dismay at the murder of Italian opposition politician Giacomo Matteotti, and unease about the establishment of one-party rule in 1925, some Conservative politicians such as Winston Churchill

¹² Kevin Passmore, *From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province, 1928-1939* (Cambridge, 1997), 306; Joel Blatt, 'Relatives and Rival: The Response of the Action française to Italian Fascism, 1919-26', *European Studies Review*, 11 (1981), 263-92. See also Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave, 1924-1933* (New Haven, 1986), 65-6, 109; id., *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933-1939* (New Haven, 1995), 19, 140, 148. On the British Fascisti, see Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1919-1985* (Oxford, 1987), 51-7; Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 60.

applauded Mussolini's anti-socialist and anti-Communist stance and policies. Frightened by the Bolshevik revolution, industrial unrest in Britain, and the General Strike of 1926, British journalists and intellectuals also expressed their admiration for the Fascist dictatorship. As the moderate policies of Conservative Party leader Stanley Baldwin, who had agreed to form a National Government with Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party in 1931, gave rise to growing criticism, Italian Fascism was increasingly espoused by radical British Conservatives. Thus newspapers such as the *Morning Post*, Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*, and magazines like the *National Review*, which had already applauded Mussolini's 'March on Rome', hailed Fascism. Support for the corporate state propagated by the Duce, in particular, transcended the confines of the Conservative Party. A corporate system of government seemed to combine political integration and a powerful foreign policy. In sum, Mussolini's adulation of the state and his emphasis on national strength seemed to compare favourably with the liberal consensus prevailing in western and central Europe.¹³

On the Iberian peninsula, too, Italian Fascism furthered the formation of fascist groups. Thus Integralismo Lusitano, which emerged in Portugal as early as 1923, was shaped by the ideology of Italian Fascism, especially the ideal of social harmony and cooperation as well as the concept of the corporate state. Rolão Preto's National Syndicalism was also influenced by the Faisceau. Similarly, Preto had closely studied the Spanish Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (JONS).¹⁴

In Spain, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who set up Falange Española (FE) in 1933, espoused a nationalist strand of socialism. Although he denied any connections with Italian Fascism, Primo de

¹³ Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and Fascism between the Wars* (London, 2005), 38, 274; Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Convert: British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), 221, 223–8; Bernhard Dietz, 'Gab es eine "Konservative Revolution" in Großbritannien? Rechtsintellektuelle am Rande der Konservativen Partei 1929–1933', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 54 (2006), 607–38.

¹⁴ See António Costa Pinto, *The Blue Shirts: Portuguese Fascists and the New State* (Boulder, Col., 2000), 225–43; id., ' "Chaos" and "Order": Preto, Salazar and Charismatic Appeal in Inter-War Portugal', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8/2 (2006), 203–14, at 208; Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 78.

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Rivera visited Italy in May 1935 and accepted subsidies from the Fascist regime in the following month. The FE defended Italy's aggression in Abyssinia and fought on the side of the Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War. Like the British Union of Fascists (BUF), the organization increasingly turned towards Nazi Germany. Primo de Rivera had visited Berlin as early as April 1934 when he had a conversation with Hitler. Primo de Rivera's successor Manuel Hedilla also attracted strong support from representatives of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, who harboured reservations against Franco's suppression of the Spanish working class. In the early 1940s the FE, which in April 1937 General Francisco Franco forced to merge with the traditional conservatives in the new state party Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS, supported the war effort of the Axis powers and increased the exchange of delegations with Italy and Germany. The Spanish fascists hoped to participate in the new world order which they expected to establish alongside victorious Italy and Germany. But the Falangists were submerged by Franco, who in turn was inspired by Fascist Italy in his efforts to establish a strong organizational structure. Nevertheless, ties with Latin America were equally important, as the fascist movement and Franco were united in the project of forming a cross-border Hispanic community reminiscent of Spain's pre-eminence as a colonial power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁵

Italian Fascism had struck a particularly strong chord among German nationalist conservatives and *völkisch* (racist-nationalist) groups aiming for anti-parliamentarian authoritarian rule in a strong state. Thus members of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-

¹⁵ Shellagh Ellwood, *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era: Falange Española de las JONS, 1936–76* (Houndmills, 1987), 19–21, 78–9; Paul Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London, 1990), 115; id., *Franco: A Biography* (London, 1993), 259; Stanley Payne, 'Franco, the Spanish Falange and the Institutionalisation of Mission', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7/2 (2006), 191–201, at 196; Hans-Jürgen Puhle, 'Autoritäre Regime in Spanien und Portugal: Zum Legitimationsbedarf der Herrschaft Francos und Salazars', in Richard Saage (ed.), *Das Scheitern diktatorischer Legitimationsmuster und die Zukunftsfähigkeit der Demokratie: Festschrift Walter Euchner* (Berlin, 1995), 191–205, at 193. For an overview see Stanley Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923–1977* (Madison, 1999), esp. 469–79.

partei (NSDAP) who had been asked to name great personalities in history in an opinion poll in 1929 placed Mussolini in third place, behind Bismarck and Hitler.¹⁶ Yet adherents of the Duce and his dictatorship were also to be found in the German bourgeoisie, especially among entrepreneurs and in liberal circles. After it had won 36.9 per cent of the vote in the Reichstag elections of 31 July 1932, Hitler's movement attracted considerable attention even among leading Italian Fascists. Mussolini, who had preferred to support the paramilitary Stahlhelm before 1930, increasingly favoured Hitler. In October 1930, the Duce charged Giuseppe Renzetti, who had set up an Italian Chamber of Commerce for Germany in Berlin in the 1920s, with establishing secret contacts with Hitler. Renzetti pressed the Führer and some other leading National Socialists to stage a *coup d'état* after their fortunes seemed to be declining in late 1932. By contrast, Mussolini had constantly advocated a 'legal' seizure of power according to the Italian model. The Duce had therefore ordered Renzetti to initiate closer cooperation between the National Socialists and the other organizations of the German right, especially the increasingly radical politicians of the Conservative Party and the leaders of the Stahlhelm. Although this procedure was also espoused by Hitler, Mussolini's Fascist regime indirectly contributed to the Nazi seizure of power on 30 January 1933. Like Mussolini, Hitler had been able to convey the impression of continuity and the promise of stability to his conservative coalition partners.¹⁷

The spectacular electoral success of the National Socialists, however, not only heightened admiration but also raised concern in Rome. Not least in order to counter the National Socialist challenge, Mussolini declared in 1932 that Europe would either be Fascist or 'fascisized' in ten years.¹⁸ As he claimed political leadership in Europe, Italian Fascists emphasized their bonds with the minor fascist movements in Europe. The Duce also extended subventions to

¹⁶ See Wolfgang Schieder, 'Das italienische Experiment: Der Faschismus als Vorbild in der Krise der Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 262 (1996), 73–125, at 84.

¹⁷ Id., 'Faschismus im politischen Transfer: Giuseppe Renzetti als faschistischer Propagandist und Geheimagent in Berlin 1922–1941', in Reichardt and Nolzen (eds.), *Faschismus in Deutschland und Italien*, 28–58, esp. 37–53.

¹⁸ On Mussolini's statement of 1932, see Laqueur, *Fascism*, 66.

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these groups. Thus the Italian ambassador to London, Dino Grandi, passed considerable funds to the BUF in 1933–4, even though he did not share Mussolini's enthusiasm for universal fascism. The BUF had been officially founded by former Conservative and Labour politician Sir Oswald Mosley in October 1932. Initially, he unreservedly espoused the doctrines of Italian Fascism. In fact, Mosley had decided to found the BUF after his conversations with Mussolini in Rome in January 1932. The model of the corporate state, which Mussolini had established in Italy, proved to be particularly attractive to British fascists disenchanted by parliamentary politics and yearning for a strong state. After Mosley had openly committed himself to National Socialism and anti-Semitism in late 1934 onwards, however, the Italian Fascists decided to abandon their financial and political support for the BUF. In Mosley's movement, this reorientation exacerbated tensions between the radical nationalists and the radical anti-Semites. Although they were strongly influenced by Nazism, proponents of fascism as a pan-European movement vacillated between these two camps. To sum up, the rivalry between Italian Fascism and National Socialism caused frictions and splits in the heterogeneous camp of European fascists, who deliberately exploited the competition for their own particular ends in domestic political strife.¹⁹

The Duce also lent his support to some other fascist groups and parties in Europe such as the Austrian Heimwehr (home guard movement) and Léon Degrelle's Belgian Rexists. In the early 1930s the leading officials of these movements admired Mussolini's regime as much as intellectuals whose belief in a renewal by universal fascism took priority over their national loyalties. In fact, scholars and writers favouring fascism as a solution to the perceived cultural crisis interacted in transnational networks. For instance, French intellectual Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, who established a close cross-border

¹⁹ Thomas P. Linehan, *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex 1933–40* (London, 1996), 283–5, 288; Arnd Bauerkämper, *Die 'radikale Rechte' in Großbritannien: Nationalistische, antisemitische und faschistische Bewegungen vom späten 19. Jahrhundert bis 1945* (Göttingen, 1991), 193, 226–8; Baldoni, *Exporting Fascism*, 11, 19–20, 169, 191–2; ead., 'Anglo-Italian Fascist Solidarity?', 147, 157; Francis Selwyn, *Hitler's Englishman: The Crime of 'Lord Haw-Haw'* (London, 1987); Adrian Weale, *Renegades* (London, 1994), 5–42. Also see Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts*, 313–14.

exchange on his rejection of parliamentary politics with British writer Aldous Huxley, condemned the seemingly all-pervasive alienation in western 'mass society'. Against this background, the cultural ideal of *Romanità* considerably reinforced the attractiveness of Mussolini's dictatorship throughout Europe. In the eyes of other intellectuals, such as Romanian writer Mircea Eliade, a distinguished theorist of comparative religion and leading proponent of 'Romanianism', Mussolini's dictatorship seemed to embody the Roman empire of antiquity and its warlike virtues. Fascist thinker Julius Evola even praised 'eternal' spiritual values as a solid foundation for European unity.²⁰

II The Common and Divided Fascist Universe: Initiatives for Cooperation and the Struggle for Leadership, 1933–5

As Hitler rapidly marginalized his conservative coalition partners in Germany in 1933–4, Italy's Fascists were increasingly confronted with a mighty rival. The Duce therefore reactivated plans for a propaganda campaign to strengthen support for the Italian model of fascism throughout Europe. Fascist officials such as Giuseppe Bottai, who had vociferously demanded that Italian Fascism be transferred to foreign states as early as the 1920s, were given free rein. As minister for corporations, Bottai glorified Fascism as a youthful movement of spiritual renewal (*Novismo*).²¹ According to this doctrine, the Fascists were to establish a global order of the 'new man'. Mussolini's brother Arnaldo, who had set up a School of Fascist Mysticism in

²⁰ Baldoni, 'Anglo-Italian Fascist Solidarity?', 150–1; Bauerkämper, *Faschismus in Europa*, 69. On Eliade, see Mann, *Fascists*, 278. On Drieu La Rochelle and Huxley, see R. B. Leal, 'Drieu la Rochelle and Huxley: Cross-Channel Perspectives on Decadence', *Journal of European Studies*, 15 (1985), 247–59. On Evola see Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, 342–3; Davies and Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism*, 207.

²¹ As education minister (1936–43), Bottai was responsible for the expulsion of Jewish scholars from Italian universities. Nevertheless, he was widely regarded as almost an 'antifascist fascist'. See Donald Sassoon, 'Italy after Fascism: The Predicament of Dominant Narratives', in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (eds.), *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge, 2003), 259–90, at 287.

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1931, proposed to educate a new elite capable of inspiring enthusiasm for 'young Italy' in European states. In fact, the Fascist regime continued to attract attention in the early 1930s, as demonstrated by the visits of European fascists who came to Italy to see the Exposition of the Fascist Revolution opened exactly ten years after the 'March on Rome'. The *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, which attracted over 2.8 million visitors from 1932 to 1934, was to represent the transnational claim to superiority staked by the Italian Fascists. For instance, twelve young French fascists bicycled from Paris to Rome in order to inspect what was claimed to be the radiating centre of European fascism. The cross-border interchange between fascist movements and groups was therefore by no means restricted to their leaders. Ordinary fascists met each other as well.²²

However, Fascist pan-Europeanism was deeply intertwined with power politics. In 1933–4, the doctrine of fascist universalism, which aimed for a transnational alliance dominated by Italian Fascism, was primarily directed against the increasing international influence of German Nazism. Thus Mussolini ordered the imposition of restrictions on the NSDAP's activities in Italy in February 1934. Antagonism between Italy and Germany grew after talks between Mussolini and Hitler in Venice had ended in a profound disagreement on 14 and 15 June 1934. The assassination of the Austrian chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuß, on 25 July 1934 and the failed *coup d'état* by Austrian National Socialists raised the Duce's suspicions about the foreign policy being pursued by Germany's new leaders. Mussolini's contemptuous disavowal of Nazi anti-Semitism and the German repudiation of Italian claims to political leadership reflected the profound disagreements between the leaders of the two major fascist powers in Europe.²³

Frenzied attempts to promote the concept of pan-European fascism under Italian tutelage resulted in efforts to institutionalize cross-border co-operation between fascists. Thus Asvero Gravelli, editor of the magazine *Ottobre*, invited European fascists to Rome in November 1932. This Volta conference was attended by right-wing politicians such as the Germans Hermann Göring and Alfred Rosen-

²² Stone, 'Staging Fascism', 238.

²³ Borejsza, 'Die Rivalität zwischen Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus', 579–86.

berg. Encouraged by the responses to Gravelli's initiative, Mussolini ordered CAUR to be established in July 1933. Its foundation initially met a strong response from leading European fascists such as Léon Degrelle and Horia Sima of the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael (Iron Guard). In December 1934 CAUR therefore held a conference of European fascists at Montreux. In addition to Gravelli, it was attended by Vidkun Quisling, leader of the Norwegian Nasjonal Samling, Oswald Mosley, General Eion O'Duffy who had founded the Irish Blueshirts, and French fascist Marcel Bucard. Yet the German National Socialists delegated only a minor official to Montreux. At the conference, moreover, profound disagreements soon surfaced. Thus a resolution in favour of the corporate ideology of the Italian Fascists met strong opposition. In fact, Quisling unequivocally demanded that the *völkisch* doctrine of 'Nordic' racism espoused by the Nazis be officially endorsed. As the conflicts could not be settled at Montreux, only a vague, non-binding resolution was passed at the conference.²⁴

Nevertheless, fascist internationalism had by no means completely foundered by 1935. Even though the fascists had failed to establish a formal institutional framework for top-level cooperation in Europe, cross-border interaction, exchange, and transfer were not disrupted. Despite their rivalry and considerable mutual acrimony, collaboration between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy continued and even intensified in specific fields. Advertising, for example, became an important sphere of medium-level cooperation, as it had to be redirected in order to achieve controlled consumption in the autarchic economies of the two states. Against this background, intensified exchange between Italian and German experts was to reshape advertising as a tool of political education and indoctrination. The National Socialist leisure organization Kraft durch Freude, too, was largely modelled on the Italian Dopolavoro, which had been established in

²⁴ Ledeen, *Universal Fascism*, 64–132; Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, 168–71; Borejsza, *Schulen des Hasses*, 252, 258–61; Baldoni, *Exporting Fascism*, 191; ead., 'Anglo-Italian Fascist Solidarity?', 157. On German suspicions about the Montreux meeting see Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Berlin), Inland II A/B, 25/1, 82–22. Interestingly, in a book published in German in 1933 Gravelli strongly advocated a German-Italian alliance in favour of political revisionism. See Asvero Gravelli, *Hitler, Mussolini und die Revision* (Leipzig, n.d. [1933]).

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May 1925. The Italian Fascists promoted the social policies pursued after their seizure of power in the International Labour Organization (Internationale Arbeitsorganisation), which had been founded in Geneva in accordance with the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919. As an agency of knowledge transfer, the Internationale Arbeitsorganisation advocated the combination of state policies in order to transform leisure activities without abandoning individual freedom. In this institutional framework of cross-border cooperation, Italian experts had succeeded in impressing their German colleagues with the Dopolavoro. It was only in 1933–4 that the National Socialists clearly disentangled their Deutsche Arbeitsfront from the model of Italian social policies. The ambiguous relationship between Fascism and National Socialism was to continue after the rapprochement between Italy and Germany, culminating in the formation of the Berlin–Rome Axis on 25 October 1936.²⁵

III When Pupil Became Teacher: National Socialism as the New Model for European Fascists, 1935–9

The rapprochement between Fascist Italy and the Third Reich in 1935 and 1936 promised new perspectives for cross-border cooperation between the two major powers and even seemed to promote the project of a universal fascism. Its invasion of Abyssinia had completely isolated Italy in international politics, as the unequivocal indictment of the League of Nations and the ensuing embargo of the Italian peninsula clearly demonstrated. Moreover, their common support for the Nationalist insurrection of General Francisco Franco against the Republican government tied the leaders of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany ever closer together from late 1936 onwards. Beyond the cooperation between these two major powers, however, the Spanish Civil War became an important arena for transnational collaboration

²⁵ Waltraud Sennebogen, 'Propaganda als Populärkultur? Werbestrategien und Werbepaxis im faschistischen Italien und in NS-Deutschland', in Reichardt and Nolzen (eds.), *Faschismus in Deutschland und Italien*, 119–47; Daniela Liebscher, 'Faschismus als Modell: Die faschistische Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro und die NS-Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude" in der Zwischenkriegszeit', *ibid.* 94–118.

between European fascists. Thus Eion O'Duffy, who had considered supporting Italy's attack on Abyssinia as early as 1935, sent 700 Irish Blueshirts to Spain where they suffered heavy casualties against the Republican troops. The Romanian Iron Guard also provided fighters for the Spanish Nationalists. The influential Legionaries Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, who were killed in combat in Spain in December 1936, even became martyrs in Spain and Romania. In Britain, twelve Blackshirts managed to sail the 3,708-ton Spanish Republican vessel *Rita Garcia*, which the British authorities had impounded in Grimsby, to Nazi Germany.²⁶

Yet the Fascist rulers of Italy were increasingly relegated to a subordinate position by the National Socialist leadership. Hitler's visit to Italy in May 1938 accelerated the radicalization of Italian Fascism which had begun in the mid-1930s. With the publication of the Manifesto of Race and the enactment of stringent racial laws in 1938, Italian initiatives to institutionalize transnational cooperation between fascist leaders in Europe under Italian tutelage had clearly foundered. The dependency of Fascist Italy on Nazi Germany directly affected the development of the minor fascist groups in Europe. Despite their initial reservations about the Social Darwinist doctrines, anti-Semitism, and expansionist programme espoused by the National Socialists, many European fascists had enthusiastically applauded Hitler's seizure of power. Thus the leaders of the fascist movements in France and the Netherlands did not hesitate to approach the new rulers of Germany as early as 1933. After they had rapidly established their undisputed dictatorship in 1933–4, the Nazis managed to increase their influence among European fascists.

²⁶ Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder, Col., 1999), 288–90; Mervyn O'Driscoll, *Ireland, Germany and the Nazis: Politics and Diplomacy, 1919–1939* (Dublin, 2004), 186, 193; Linehan, *East London for Mosley*, 285. On the role of European fascists in the Spanish Civil War see Carlos Collado Seidel, *Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg: Geschichte eines europäischen Konflikts* (Munich, 2006), 97–8, 197. For an account of British policies see Jill Edwards, *The British Government and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (London, 1979); Douglas Little, 'Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 23 (1988), 291–31; Donald Lammers, 'Fascism, Communism, and the Foreign Office, 1937–39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6/3 (1971), 66–86.

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The seemingly unbeatable Third Reich assumed the status of the dominant model, increasingly surpassing Italian Fascism. Nazi organizations such as Ernst Wilhelm Bohle's Auslandsorganisation and Alfred Rosenberg's Außenpolitisches Amt of the NSDAP cultivated the image of an omnipotent Third Reich. The turn towards anti-Semitism reflected the growing attractiveness of National Socialism. Thus Anton Mussert's Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (NSB), which was initially inspired by Italian Fascism, launched a propaganda campaign against the Jews in 1935. Anti-Semitism was particularly promoted in the NSB by Rost van Tonningen, who was received by Hitler in Berlin in August 1936.²⁷

In similar vein, the BUF was renamed British Union of Fascists and National Socialists in 1936. In the summer of that year, the party was granted a subsidy of £10,000 by Hitler who was also involved in Mosley's secret marriage to Diana Mitford in Berlin in October 1936. Although the leading National Socialists remained sceptical about the British fascists' political clout, the latter's overtures to the Third Reich undermined their bonds with the Italian Fascists. As the lean-

²⁷ Bob Moore, 'Nazism and German Nationals in the Netherlands, 1933-40', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 22 (1987), 45-70; John Perkins, 'The Swastika Down Under: Nazi Activities in Australia, 1933-39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 26 (1991), 111-29. On Hitler's visit to Italy in 1938 see Paul Baxa, 'Capturing the Fascist Moment: Hitler's Visit to Italy in 1938 and the Radicalization of Fascist Italy', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), 227-42. For an overview of Bohle's Auslandsorganisation see Hans-Jürgen Döscher, *Das Auswärtige Amt im Dritten Reich: Diplomatie im Schatten der 'Endlösung'* (Berlin, 1987), 166-74. On the Außenpolitisches Amt, which had been largely discredited in Britain by Rosenberg's tactless behaviour during his visit to London in May 1933, see Ernst Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg: Hitlers Chefideologe* (Munich, 1st edn. 2005; 2007), 285-322. For Britain see also James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, *Nazis in Pre-War London 1930-1939: The Fate and Role of German Party Members and British Sympathizers* (Brighton, 2005), esp. 18-31, 46-62, 127-76. On the strongly pro-German Link in 1939 and 1940 see Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism 1939-40* (London, 1998), 170-1, 219-24; Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 179-83. On the NSB see H. van der Wusten and R. E. Smit, 'Dynamics of the Dutch National Socialist Movement (the NSB): 1931-35', in Stein U. Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan P. Myklebust (eds.), *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen, 1980), 524-41; Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe*, 62.

ings towards National Socialist Germany became obvious, ties between the London Fascio and the BUF loosened, and Grandi shifted his allegiance from the British fascists to the Conservatives. Similarly, the Belgian Rexists of Leon Dégrelle, who had initially been supported by Mussolini, received German subventions in the mid-1930s. Not least the French fascists, who had fused their traditionally strong anti-Bolshevism with anti-Semitism from 1933 on, gradually adopted a more positive view of Germany. This transition to pro-German attitudes was considerably fuelled by the election of Léon Blum's Popular Front in 1936.²⁸

The overtures of European fascists to National Socialism and the activities of the Third Reich's diverse fellow-travellers aroused the suspicions of the leading Fascists in Italy. Mussolini therefore attempted to strengthen ties with the fascists in south-eastern Europe, whom he regarded as an indispensable pillar of Italy's future Mediterranean empire. In particular, the Italian Fascists attempted to tie the Romanian Iron Guard, Ferenc Szálasi's Hungarian Arrow Cross Party, and the Croat Ustashi movement of Ante Pavelić to their regime. They had been sponsoring groups such as the Ustashi even before 1933. In fact, the Croat fascists had found refuge in Italy after King Alexander had set up his royal dictatorship in Yugoslavia in 1929. In sponsoring the fascists of south-eastern Europe, the Italian regime claimed cultural superiority over Nazi Germany. As Mussolini's prestige as the instigator of fascism declined in the 1930s, Italian culture

²⁸ Andreas Wirsching, 'Auf dem Weg zur Kollaborationsideologie: Antibolschewismus, Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus im Denken der französischen extremen Rechten 1936 bis 1939', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 41 (1993), 31–60, esp. 50–1. On the BUF see Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Sämtliche Fragmente*, pt. 1: *Aufzeichnungen 1924–1941*, vol. ii. 1.1.1931–31.12.1936 (Munich, 1987), 629–30, 632, 649; Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933–9* (London, 1980), 104–7, 173; Arnd Bauerkämper, 'The Denigration of British Fascism: Traditional Anti-British Stereotypes and Claims of Superiority in Nazi Germany', in id. and Christiane Eisenberg (eds.), *Britain as a Model of Modern Society? German Views* (Augsburg, 2006), 147–67. On the change in the BUF's programmatic orientation see Baldoni, 'Anglo-Italian Fascist Solidarity?', 147–61, 236–9. On official German attitudes to the BUF in 1933 see Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 43II/1432a/55, pp. 55–7.

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allegedly rooted in ancient Rome was increasingly juxtaposed with German power in Fascism's foreign propaganda.²⁹ Yet the increasing rivalry between the Fascist and Nazi regimes did allow for pragmatic cooperation, which was largely pursued below the level of high politics. In fact, close interaction continued in a number of policy fields. It was therefore no coincidence that the German propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, complained about the increasing flow of high-ranking Fascists and National Socialists between Italy and Germany in 1937.³⁰

As a consequence of the increasingly strong claims of allegiance, fascists in the European democracies were largely associated with Italian Fascism or German Nazism and seen as copies of foreign regimes. They were therefore excluded from the construction and representation of dominant national traditions. The majority of Britons, for instance, apparently saw Mosley's Blackshirts as pale imitations of the Italian Fascists who also wore black shirts. Violent confrontations at BUF meetings and the rabid anti-Semitism which the British fascists integrated into their propaganda arsenal in 1934 contradicted the deeply rooted self-images of fair play, peacefulness, and civility in Britain. Popular conceptions of 'Englishness' rested on individual freedom, which the BUF clearly threatened. In order to avoid the impression that they were Hitler's or Mussolini's lackeys, Mosley's men and the other European fascists had to stress their autochthonous roots. Nevertheless, national representations co-existed uneasily with pan-European aspirations. In the last resort, the fascists were successfully discredited as imitations of Italian Fascism or National Socialism. Their outward appearance as somewhat 'alien' was a major reason for their ultimate failure.³¹

²⁹ John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (Houndmills, 2006), 113; Laqueur, *Fascism*, 63.

³⁰ Woller, *Rom*, 28. Oktober 1922, 192-3; Sennebogen, 'Propaganda als Populärkultur?', 127-30, 144, 146.

³¹ Gary Love, "'What's the Big Idea?': Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), 447-68, esp. 455-7, 460, 462-3, 467-8; Christina Bussfeld, *'Democracy versus Dictatorship': Die Herausforderung des Faschismus und Kommunismus in Großbritannien 1932-1937* (Paderborn, 2001), 183-6, 206, 232, 236-7, 308. For an open rejection of the principle of national sovereignty see the statement in Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, 152-3.

Following the German occupation of Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France and Italy's entry into the war, high-level exchange between fascists was increasingly reduced to military cooperation and political collaboration. Interaction between the indigenous fascists and the Nazi or Fascist occupiers increasingly bordered on treason, and fears of subversion led to the internment of fascists in states such as Britain. In occupied Europe, volunteers were recruited for the German Army as well as for the armed SS in different European states, and a large number of fascists consented to defend 'Europe' against 'Bolshevism'. Thus many soldiers of the Spanish Blue Division juxtaposed Europe with the tradition of Russian 'despotism'. In fact, the Nazis utilized the symbol of Europe on the ox in order to legitimize their dictatorial supremacy on the Continent. Yet they ultimately aimed for a new Germanic empire that would leave the European nations little autonomy. At this stage, therefore, the doctrine of pan-European fascism was a mere camouflage for German claims of unrestricted domination. From 1941 on, Nazi hegemonic policies were also directed at their Italian ally.³²

IV International Fascism: A 'Magnetic Field' of Changing Relations

Fascists in Europe vacillated between pan-Europeanism on the one hand and hyper-nationalism on the other. Borders between European states were crossed, constructed, or redrawn. After Mussolini's spectacular 'March on Rome', Italian Fascism served as a model for like-minded fascists in Europe. From the mid-1930s on, however, the minor fascist movements and groups accommodated themselves to the seemingly superior National Socialist regime. Even Italian Fascism could not escape the tentacles of the Nazi regime, as the official adoption of racial anti-Semitism in 1938 clearly indicated.

³² Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2006), 32, 36, 258–98, 415; Enzo Collotti, *L'Europa nazista: Il progetto di un Nuovo ordine europeo (1939–1945)* (Florence, 2002). For details see Wolfgang Schmale, 'Visualisierungen Europas: Ein historischer Überblick', in Vrääth Öhner et al. (eds.), *Europa-Bilder* (Innsbruck, 2005), 13–34, at 17–18; Xosé-Manoel Núñez, 'Als die spanischen Faschisten (Ost)Europa entdeckten—Zur Russlanderfahrung der "Blauen Division" (1941–1944)', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 3 (2006), 323–44, at 326, 338, 343.

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Despite Mussolini's role as mediator in the Munich Agreement of 30 September 1938, the Duce gradually lost his strong reputation among fascists in Europe. Nevertheless, the imperialist ventures pursued by both Italian Fascists and German National Socialists ultimately undermined national sovereignty. Cross-border interaction between European fascists therefore remained significant, preparing and facilitating wartime collaboration. The fascists not only regarded and portrayed themselves as the vanguard of a new, universal creed, but they also developed a sense of common destiny underpinning expansionist policies. Any tight and rigid analytical separation between fascist movements and regimes in the various nation-states is therefore misplaced. Instead of reiterating the national paradigm in historiography, scholars should also highlight cross-border exchange, interaction, and cooperation between fascists in Europe. Apart from comparisons, recent approaches to the investigation of interconnectedness are particularly suited to grasping analytically this dimension of fascism, which should be taken seriously by historians.³³

More specifically, studies of relations, entanglements, exchange, and transfers between fascist regimes, movements, and groups in Europe draw scholarly attention to the agency of the fascists themselves. Continuously interchanging across borders, they established

³³ On the resilience and persistence of national paradigms in historiography see Stefan Berger, 'A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present', *Journal of Modern History*, 77 (2005), 629–78; id., Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore (eds.), *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London, 1999). On different approaches highlighting interconnectedness see Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, 'Introduction: Comparative History, Cross-National History, Transnational History – Definitions', in ead. (eds.), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York, 2004), pp. ix–xxiv; Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond', *History and Theory*, 42 (2003), 39–44; Shalini Randeria, 'Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities: Civil Society, Caste Solidarities, and Legal Pluralism in Post-Colonial India', in Yehuda Elkana et al. (eds.), *Unraveling Ties: From Social Cohesion to New Practices of Connectedness* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002), 284–311; Philipp Ther, 'Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe', *Central European History*, 36 (2003), 45–73; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 30–50; eid. (eds.), *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (Paris, 2004).

a network of transnational social practice. Despite their strong nationalism, which they maintained, the fascists were by no means completely separated in national communities of devoted followers of their respective leaders. On the contrary, they not only observed their fellow fascists in foreign countries and exchanged ideologies and concrete political demands but also adapted strategies of attack, for instance, street fights against political opponents. Thus the scuffles that the Stormtroopers deliberately initiated in the streets of Weimar Germany were largely modelled on the militancy and raids of Mussolini's *fasci di combattimento* in northern Italy in the early 1920s. Similarly, the marches of Mosley's Blackshirts, which culminated in the violent clashes in Cable Street in the East End of London on 4 October 1936, are inconceivable without fascist militancy in other European states. Whereas recent research has highlighted the quest for national renewal as a crucial source of fascism in Europe, investigations of transnational interchange draw scholarly attention to the agency and actions of fascists across national borders. In general, fascism emerges as cross-border political and social practice. Although published historical studies have already highlighted the central role of the fascists as actors, only investigations of transnational entanglements and transfers can reconstruct and explain the exogenous roots and limits of fascists' agency, their world views, and performance. Despite the radical nationalism characterizing fascism, the uneven network of asymmetrical relations between fascists must be taken into account by historians. Similarly, fascist ideology should be strongly related to the actions, performance, and social and political practices of the fascists themselves.³⁴

Yet research on the transnational dimensions of fascism also leads to conclusions that transcend research on international fascism. First, the cross-border interchange between fascists highlights agency as the conceptual foundation of a transnational history of social practice. The cultural turn has deprived German social historiography of its essentialist notions. This epistemological change has placed core issues on the agenda of social historians. In particular, the new emphasis on agency and social practice is apt to tie diverse findings

³⁴ For overviews see Sven Reichardt, 'Neue Wege der vergleichenden Faschismusforschung', *Mittelweg* 36, 16/1 (2007), 9–25, esp. 19–22; id., 'Was mit dem Faschismus passiert ist', 392–5; Bauerkämper, 'A New Consensus?', 15.

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of a broad scope of empirical studies together. Beyond the fixation on images and discourses, social historians need to devote their efforts to the investigation of social practice, which no longer presupposes historical 'reality' and given structures, but identifies and explains individual and collective perceptions, interpretations, appropriations, and the construction of meaning and sense. Thus culture has to be related to social action and vice versa. The construction and exchange of self-images, representations, and stereotypes are to receive particular attention. Arguably, the analytical focus on social practice and agency in certain constellations can provide the new social history with the glue it needs to maintain a profile. In any case, it will propel historians towards a radical contextualization and historization. It is the fascists themselves who merit close attention.³⁵

Second, transnationalism has had an ambivalent impact on the course of modern European history. Cross-border interchange has characterized civil society as much as the Third International and fascism. Pan-Europeanism clearly can serve very different purposes. Thus fascists were inspired by the vision of overcoming national antagonism in a unified Europe. At the same time, resistance movements in the occupied states and in Germany referred to their vision of a unified, peaceful, and democratic Europe. This ambivalence cannot easily be disentangled, but it leads to the insight that pan-European ideas and activities designed to promote a peaceful unification of nation-states depend on basically symmetrical relations and the principle of reciprocity. However, in democratic states as well, the notion of 'Europe' has served different and at times even contradictory purposes and aims. In all probability, it will continue to be both an argument and a tool.

³⁵ Charles Tilly, 'Neuere angloamerikanische Sozialgeschichte', in Joachim Eibach and Günther Lottes (eds.), *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 2002), 38–52, esp. 47. For a historical and philosophical perspective see the contributions to James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge, 1988); J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (New York, 1971); Martin Mulrow and Marcelo Stamm (eds.), *Konstellationsforschung* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

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Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945 surveys the phenomenon which is still the object of interest and debate over fifty years after its defeat in the Second World War. It introduces the recent scholarship and continuing debates on the nature of fascism as well as the often contentious contributions by foreign historians and political scientists. From the pre-First World War intellectual origins of Fascism to its demise in 1945, this book examines: * the two 'waves' of fascism - in the immediate post-war period and in the late 1920s and early 1930s. * whether the European crisis created by th Fascism in Europe was composed of numerous ideologies present during the 20th century which all developed their own differences from each other. Fascism was born in Italy; subsequently, several movements across Europe which took influence from the Italian faction emerged. Purists assert that the term "Fascism" should only be used in relation to the National Fascist Party under Benito Mussolini in Italy, which ruled from 1922 to 1943. However, commonly the following European ideologies are also described as forms of, or strongly related to fascism 8. It thus brings together accounts of fascist internationalism in interwar Europe (A. Bauerömpfer (2007) Ambiguities of transnationalism: fascism in Europe between pan-Europeanism and ultra-nationalism, 1919-39. German Historical Institute London Bulletin, 29, pp. 43É67; A. Antic, J. Conterio and D. Vargha (2016) Conclusion: beyond liberal internationalism. Contemporary European History, 25, pp. 359É371) with those of fascist notions of extra-European colonialism (W.W. Schmokel (1964) Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919-1945 (New Haven; London: Yale University Press); D. Atkinson (1995)