

Me Ne Frego: the Echoes of Italian Fascism in Modern Right-Wing Authoritarianism

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Introduction

On August 12, 2017, shortly after the clock struck 1:45 pm, self-avowed white supremacist James Alex Fields Jr. rammed his car into a crowd of counter-protestors during a white nationalist demonstration called the Unite the Right Rally. He killed one woman, Heather Heyer, injured 19 others, and opened my eyes to the path I was heading down. At age 14, I was convinced that what was wrong with the United States was that people were just too damn sensitive, that "SJWs" threatened everyone's free speech and were ruining franchises like Star Wars and GhostBusters. When I heard about this Unite the Right Rally, I was of course opposed to their ideals but felt that they did have the right to express them. With a society as free as ours, shouldn't everyone be free to express their opinion, no matter how controversial? That thought, however, shattered in my tiny little brain as I saw what the Unite the Right Rally really was. It was a threat, an ode to white supremacy and anti-semitism, a proclamation that these Tiki Torch bearing thugs would keep America white and free from "Jewish Influence" by any means necessary.

But as bad the image of men holding torches shouting "Jews will not replace us" and a man ramming his car into counter protestors was, what followed was even more abhorrent. The content creators that I watched, the same ones who beat the "SJWs" in debates with their "iron-clad" logic and reasoning skills, started to shift the blame away from the Neo-Nazis and Fascists, and on to the counter protestors. These "counter-protestors", you see, were the real agitators; after all, they had showed up to a demonstration specifically to harass these peaceful and civilised...white supremacists....Not only that, but this total "land whale" (Worely) didn't even die getting hit by a car, she died of a heart attack *after* getting hit by a car, which of course, is completely different (and also untrue, she died of blunt force trauma). It was very clear to me

what these content creators were doing; they were attempting to repair the facade that these fascists weren't fascists but instead respectable young conservatives. It also became very clear to me why people were so opposed to these right wing figures speaking in public, because the figures' ideas not only upheld white supremacy but were dangerous to the foundations of a democratic society. Even though I managed to pull myself away from a deep spiral of becoming more and more right wing, a question, or rather three questions, since that day have bothered me. Why are people Fascists? How does Fascism take hold in a society? And how did we get here?

I figured the best place to find these answers was to look to history, specifically during the early 20th century when Fascism as we know it began. But looking at all three of the prominent Fascist powers of WW2, Japan, Germany, and Italy would have been too much for JRPS. I needed to narrow the scope. I decided that I wanted to focus on Italy, not only because of own personal connections to Italy, having lived there when I was four and my own identity of being Italian-American, but also because I believed that exploring Fascism through a lens different than the rise of Hitler and Nazism would help expand my understanding of Fascism as a whole. After having gone through the process of researching of Fascist Italy, its origins, and fascism as a whole, and synthesising my research, I believe that studying the rise of Fascism in Italy allows us to draw parallels to the fascist and ultranationalist groups of today, understand how Fascism evolved, and how to recognize its hold on society. With this lit review, I hope to outline several key themes that have emerged through my research: The many definitions of fascism, the historical context of Italian Fascism, the rise of fascism in Italy, the fall of Fascism, how Fascism evolved since the end of the Second World War, and Fascism Today.

Fascism: Definitions and Historical Context

Attempting to break down what Fascism requires acknowledging that Fascism is notoriously difficult to define and there have been many scholars and politicians who have attempted to do so. According to Professor David D. Roberts,

Our conventional way of conceiving ideology has prejudicially limited our approach to all three of the interwar regimes, and it is only a bit of stretch to suggest that the inadequacy has stemmed from 'modern' assumptions that we might now leave behind. That inadequacy especially affected our treatment of Italian Fascism, which was long assumed to lack an ideology or consistent worldview - a major difference, it would seem, from Nazism and Soviet communism. And thus Fascism was long reduced to some combination of opportunism, activism, irrationalism and myth (Roberts, 11).

In his article "Myth, Style, Substance and the Totalitarian Dynamic in Fascist Italy", Roberts claims that Fascism at its simplest is a right-wing, ultra-traditionalist, and ultra-corporatist ideology (15).

Fascism's institutional centrepiece, giving structure to the ethereal notion of the totalitarian ethical state, was corporatism, which the regime began embracing formally in the wake of the Matteotti crisis of 1924. Fascist corporatism derived especially from the disparate syndicalist and Nationalist traditions, each accenting the import of trade unions as specifically modern organisations that potentially, at least, could nurture a new ethical-political consciousness through economic roles. But the syndicalists accenting the scope for mobilising energies from below, whereas the Nationalists saw especially the scope for discipline from above. A patina of Gentilian idealism then gave deeper resonance to fascist corporatism - but introduced some further tensions at the same time. Even if the point was to unleash energies from below, was technical competence or ethical capacity the key? (15)

Although a core part of Fascism is traditionalism and militarism, British political theorist Roger Griffin puts forth in his definition of the term that another core part of Fascism is Palingenesis or rebirth. Griffin uses the word Palingenesis because it contains some very biblical undertones. Its origins can be traced to the ancient Greek word palingenesia or regeneration (Παλιγγενεσία), which is used to refer to the rebirth of the world after judgement day in some translations of the Bible, when Jesus tells the 12 disciples: "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). According to Griffin, the reason

Palingenesis applies to Fascism is because Fascists do not just want a right wing authoritarian state, they desire a nation uniform in its culture, language, ideas, governance, people and image (Nature of Fascism, 39). According to Umberto Eco, Palingenesis within the context of Fascist ideology is essentially the idea that a group of people must be reborn as a monolithic group, and that this rebirth shall come when they rid themselves of all diversity, usually by force (Umberto Eco, 6&7).

In an attempt to analyze and to outline Fascism with more definable traits, the late Professor Umberto Eco emphasizes 14 important characteristics of Fascism as a whole within his article, “Ur-Fascism”. “Ur-Fascism” was an attempt on Eco’s part to grapple with the slippery nature of Fascism’s definability, and his article focuses on assigning a set of common characteristics to all forms and offshoots of Fascism rather than assigning a definition. These characteristics are that Fascism is a cult of tradition (5) and that this traditionalism seeks to reject modernity and can be defined by irrationalism (6); this irrationalism relies on the cult of action for action’s sake (6); Fascism cannot withstand analytical criticism because of its inherent irrationalism (6); Fascism requires the fundamental belief that diversity is weakness (6); Fascism derives from individual or social frustration (6); Fascism tells its followers that their only privilege is the most common one: to be born in the same country or to be born of a certain race, gender, or sexuality and that there is stock to be placed in these (7); in Fascism, there is no struggle for life, and life is lived for the struggle, and therefore pacifism is to traffick with the enemy (7); Fascism requires its followers to simultaneously feel humiliated by the force of their enemies and to hold the belief that they can overwhelm the enemy (7); in Fascism, “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.” (7); Everyone is trained to be a hero and every hero under Fascism should only desire a heroic death (7); since both permanent war and heroism are difficult, a Fascist transfers his will to power to sexual matters. “This, in turn, is the origin of machismo, and since sex is also a difficult game to play, a Fascist will turn to playing with weapons to live out this fantasy, and doing so becomes a faux phallic exercise” (7); Fascism is based on selective populism, individuals do not have rights, only the nation has rights (8); and finally, the language of Fascism is Newspeak, that it promotes and employs an impoverished vocabulary to limit critical reasoning of Fascist ideals and goals (8).

According to Professor Eco, Fascism seeks to enter mainstream politics in society by any means necessary because of the inherently limited language with which Fascist figureheads can express themselves. The ideology that supports fascist rhetoric, according to Eco, is weak:

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. (3).

Eco states that this ideological weakness can be traced back to the origin of Fascism and its creator, Mussolini. Eco believes that Mussolini’s brand/style/iteration of Fascism was philosophically and ideologically weak. Eco goes on to insist it was a haphazard mishmash of different philosophies, political ideas, and ideologies:

Fascism was a fuzzy totalitarianism, a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions. 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. (4)

According to Eco, this combination of a weak ideological backing and the beehive of contradictions that form the ideology means that Fascist figureheads have to infiltrate the public

discourse by appealing to emotion, and by stealing rhetoric from other political movements to supplement their own in order to gain any political capital (4).

The political landscape in Italy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides particular insight into the origins of fascist ideology and the political usage thereof. In his article, “The Shadows of Social Fear: Emotions, Mentalities, and Practices of the Propertied Classes in Italy, Spain, and France (1900–1914),” Professor Matteo Millan highlights that the propertied classes became increasingly paranoid during this era as more and more riots and strikes were conducted by the working class (Millan, 337). Specifically, Millan explores the effect that the Paris Commune and the Milan Protests of 1898 had on the upper classes of France and Italy alike. He goes on to write that even though the protestors failed and were put down, these propertied classes could not get the images of great violence out of their heads. The propertied classes therefore became even more paranoid towards any demands made by the working class (348). The only solace that the elites of Italy had was that the state was in place to protect them, although this didn’t calm their fears entirely. According to professor Mateo Millan, “The thought that the only ‘dyke’ against the ‘crowd’ was soldiers and policemen who actually came from the same social background as the so-called enemies of the civilization really terrified the propertied classes” (344). This metaphor of police and military being the “dyke” that held back anarchy evolved into what is called the thin blue line, a term popularized in part by the film *The Thin Blue Line* (Chammah, Aspinwall). In the film, the judge, Don Metcalfe, discusses the prosecutor's argument to convict a man for the murder of a cop and to sentence him to death: “I do have to admit that in the Adam's case - and I've never really said this - Doug Mulder's final argument was one I'd never heard before: about the "thin blue line" of police that separate the public from anarchy” (Morris). This idea that the “thin blue line” is the only thing that separates us from

chaos is used as a justification for abuse against the lower classes or marginalized groups, as it is either that or complete anarchy¹ (Kurtz, Colburn 330). However, because soldiers and policemen came from the working class, there was a real fear that one day they would side with the working class (Shadows of Social Fear, 344). The elites then worked to idealize the owning and defending of property in an attempt to subvert demands for worker's rights, most notably with the Del Rio brothers in the province of Bologna, Italy, who fired into a crowd of protestors. Professor Millan asserts: "These two brothers became famous for their 'audacity and bravery'; they were 'willing to do everything' to defend their properties, even if it required them to fire against an unarmed crowd of women and children" (346).

These upper classes, at least in Italy, desired a movement that would counter the gaining popularity of the Italian Socialist Party. They felt that the Italian state was too weak to fend off "subversive attacks" (351). According to Matteo Millan,

the bitter divisions within Italian society, and the broad and shared criticism of state effectiveness and legitimacy, fueled seditious purposes and nationalistic reactions not only against 'subversive thugs' but also against the liberal state² itself. It proved itself too weak to be effective and too 'democratic' to be simply brutal, and this produced a deep crisis of delegitimization. (351)

Throughout the latter half of the First World War, the upper classes would find their answer to this problem.

The Russian Revolution

In October 1917, the greatest fear of the elite classes in Europe came true. Communism had exploded in Russia and essentially took full control of the country. Russia was embroiled in a civil war with each side attempting to secure its domination over all of Russia . In Italy especially, the elites and government were shaken to their very core. Now that a revolution had

¹ This is something that will be visited later, when I discuss Modern Fascistic Rhetoric

² Liberal Democracy: "a democracy based on the recognition of individual rights and freedoms, in which decisions from direct or representative processes prevail in many policy areas"

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plunged Russia and Hungary into chaos and the rich were fleeing, who would be the next nation plunged into revolution and civil war? Britain? France? Italy? For many monarchies and other states, a communist state that challenged the status quo posed a direct threat (Colby), a feeling that was summed up by US Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby during the waning years of the Russian Civil war.

It is their [Bolshevik] understanding that the very existence of Bolshevism in Russia, the maintenance of their own rule, depends, and must continue to depend, upon the occurrence of revolutions in all other great civilized nations, including the United States, which will overthrow and destroy their governments and set up Bolshevist rule in their stead. They have made it quite plain that they intend to use every means, including, of course, diplomatic agencies, to promote such revolutionary movements in other countries. (Colby)

Italy and other European countries would soon have their own forces to support the White faction, a group composed of many factions that opposed the Bolshevik Red Faction (Randazzo Francesco, 815).

Revolutionary Divide in Italy

While the Italian government and elites were pouring their resources into their military intervention in Russia, the Italian Socialist party was having its own debate (817). Francesco writes that seeing the success of the October revolution in Russia, some party members started to wonder if playing the politics game was really worth it after all. According to Professor Francesco,

The continuous contact with the Bolshevik leaders, as well as with certain Mensheviks like Martov, fueled a discussion between reformists and other socialist groups. The main question was whether Lenin had betrayed Marxist doctrine after the October Revolution. This was a bitter theme that initiated many confrontations among the most knowledgeable of Italian Socialist minds. Filippo Turati, for example, rejected it because Russia was undergoing an ‘anarchic and utopist deviation of socialism.’ Claudio Trèves, meanwhile, justified Lenin, stating he was motivated in light of a chaotic state of historic contingent necessity. (815)

This split within the Socialist Party appeared to make them more volatile and revolutionary than ever before, and with Italy suffering from debt as a result of the war, the tension throughout this period was palpable. In a period called the *Biennio Rosso*, or “Two Red Years” Strikes were

constant and civil unrest was everywhere (Casa, 179). And it is from this period of political and economic instability that one man would pop up and change the course of Italian history, but also, send it on the darkest path it's ever known. In part, the story of both right wing authoritarianism and modern authoritarianism in general, is the story of Benito Mussolini (Waxman).

The Rise of Fascism in Italy

In his book *Mediterranean Fascism 1919-1945*, Professor Charles F. Delzell emphasizes that in order to understand how Fascism came to rule Italy, you must understand the man behind it. Benito Mussolini was born on July 29th, 1883 in Predappio, Italy. Born to a socialist blacksmith, Mussolini was no stranger to politics and his early life. As he matured, he was very much shaped by his father's views (Delzell, 3). In 1902, Mussolini moved to Switzerland in order to avoid compulsory military service in Italy (3). While there, he became obsessed with the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vilfredo Pareto, and most importantly, Georges Sorel (96). Georges Sorel was a syndicalist³ who advocated not only for the violent overthrow of capitalism and the ruling class, but for the overthrowing of decadent liberal democracy by the use of neo-Machiavellian appeals to emotion on the working class. Professor Delzell theorizes that Sorel's idea that the working class needed to be motivated by any means necessary to further ideological goals of socialism left an impact on Mussolini, and would be the basis of Mussolini's undemocratic ideals later in his life. Mussolini also started to get more and more involved in socialist politics. He wrote for a Swiss socialist newspaper, *L'Avvenire del Lavoratore*, helped organize socialist protests, worked for Swiss unions, and was deported multiple times for his

³ a revolutionary movement and theory advocating the seizure of the means of production and distribution by syndicates of workers through direct action, esp a general strike.
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activities. In 1904, he returned to Italy to be pardoned for his desertion by serving in the military for two years (Scheuer 21). When he finally got out of military service, he bounced around from position to position in different cities' socialist newspapers and organizations.

He finally built a name for himself publishing a novel he co-wrote with fellow socialist Santi Corvaja entitled *L'amante del Cardinale: Claudia Particella, romanzo storico*, or *The Cardinal's Mistress*. This story was published in the socialist newspaper, *Il Popolo*, from 20 January to 11 May 1910. The story was deeply anti-clerical and got Mussolini and his co-author in trouble with the church (Maranzani). This incident propelled him to become one of Italy's most prominent socialists, and in 1911, he would become arguably one of the most important socialists for the Italian movement. In September of 1911, Mussolini helped organize and in a riot protesting the Italo-Turkish war. He bitterly denounced Italy's "imperialist war", which earned him a five-month jail term. After his release, he helped expel two "revisionists", Ivanoe Bonomi and Leonida Bissolati from the Italian Socialist Party, as they had supported the Italo-Turkish war (Delzell 3). For his role in both denouncing the war and helping to expel the two members, Mussolini was rewarded with the editorship of the Italian Socialist Party newspaper *Avanti!*, and would help see its readership rise to 100,000 readers (Delzell, 4). The reason to bring all of this up is not to illustrate that Fascism is secretly a form of socialism, but to provide background on the movements and ideas that shaped Mussolini before his downfall, because in 1914 Mussolini and the Italian Socialist party would split radically as Italy was embroiled in a national debate over whether or not to join the First World War. He would abandon the Italian Socialist party and socialist doctrine in favor of his own type of nationalism, and while he did not quite have a name for it yet, this nationalism that he was seeking to promote would evolve into Fascism.

Although some socialists had initially called for joining the war (Young Mussolini, 189), after a series of riots and strikes in Romagna called the Red Week, which was sparked by the death of three anti-war protesters, the Italian Socialist Party quickly changed their stance (Tucker, 569). According to German-Swiss author Emil Ludwig, Mussolini initially supported Italy remaining neutral, but he quickly changed his mind. Seeing World War 1 as an opportunity, both for his own ambitions as well as those of socialists and Italians and heavily influenced by the anti-Austrian sentiments of Italian Nationalists, Mussolini believed that joining the war against Austria-Hungary could liberate the Italians living in their territory and from Hapsburg rule (Ludwig, 321). He decided to declare support for the war by citing the need for socialists to overthrow the Hohenzollern and Habsburg monarchies in Germany and Austria-Hungary who he said had consistently repressed socialism (321). As his support for military intervention grew and grew, he came into conflict more often with pacifist members of the Italian Socialist Party (Young Mussolini, 191). Finally, in late 1914, he would be expelled from the party. He resigned from his post at *Avanti!* and started a new publication, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, which was staunchly interventionist (Tucker, 825). It was here that he would reject socialist ideas and the doctrine of class warfare. His removal from the party would cause him to become bitter towards socialist causes (Gregor, 191). Thanks in part to his firing but also the heavy nationalist sentiment of the day, he no longer viewed class warfare as the best way to unite the Italian people and improve their situation . It was only through revolutionary nationalism that would unite all Italian peoples (191). On December 4th, 1914, he would renounce his support for socialism, for it had failed to recognize that the war made national identity and loyalty more significant than class distinction.

The nation has not disappeared. We used to believe that the concept was total without substance. Instead we see the nation arise as a palpitating reality before us! ... Class cannot destroy the nation. Class reveals itself as a collection of interests—but the nation is a history of sentiments, traditions, language, culture, and race. Class can become an integral part of the nation, but the one cannot eclipse the other... (191)

The class struggle is a vain formula, without effect and consequence wherever one finds a people that has not integrated itself into its proper linguistic and racial confines—where the national problem has not been definitely resolved. In such circumstances the class movement finds itself impaired by an inauspicious historic climate (192).

Although his early group, *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria*, wouldn't gain much popular support throughout the early years of the First World War, the early physical clashes with socialists and police would solidify Mussolini's acceptance of political violence as a tool of Fascism (196). This group was lacking in terms of an integrated set of policies. The only thing they knew they wanted was a reborn Italy, not governed by a weak and ineffectual parliament, but of a nation uniform in its collective consciousness, ruled by a group of elites would, in turn, lead all Italian peoples to prosperity and greatness, a great Leviathan (Young Mussolini, 195 & 196). From 1915 to 1917, Mussolini would not be able to establish any major victories for his new movement. Although the Italians had joined the war on the side of the Entente, something Mussolini and other hardline nationalists had supported, the war had not gone as well as hoped for the majority of its campaigns against Austria Hungary. According to Professor David Stevenson, the commander of the Italian Armed Forces, Field Marshal Luigi Cadorna, was not only incompetent but also stubborn and would lead thousands of Italians to die in the alps (Stevenson, 101). Mussolini served in the Italian army until 1917 until he was wounded in action. Upon his return in late 1917, he continued his work to push his ideas into mainstream politics. By this point, *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* was politically irrelevant and functionally disbanded. He would attempt to build a solid foundation of beliefs and policies that would be core to Fascism, including its stance on agricultural reform.

In 1919, Mussolini re-established the Milan *fasci* as the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Squad), which had 200 members at its conception. It would eventually evolve

into the National Fascist Party in 1921, but in the years between 1919 and 1921, the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* and related groups would not be idle. Although Italy had been a victor in WWI and ended up gaining the territories of South Tyrol, Trentino, Istria and Trieste from Austria (Moos, Carlo), it did not gain the city of Fiume or the Dalmatian coast like it wanted. The treaty that enshrined these gains, the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye/Treaty of Versailles, was viewed by many Italian nationalists as an insult. Italy had bled 400,000 men in order to gain control of those territories and the nationalist elements and groups felt it had been ripped off by the Entente, a feeling that was summed up with the term “Mutilated Victory” or *vittoria mutilata* (Sabbatucci, 101-106). Among some of the beleaguered parties angry at the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, were Italian veterans of WWI. Disgruntled that they had sacrificed so much in order to gain so little and unemployed in an economy where living wages were hard to come by, Mussolini’s message of unifying Italy and demanding the respect Italy deserves on the world stage appealed directly to these veterans’ struggles, and they signed up in droves for the Italian Combat Squad.

With an avid base at his command he got to work. He had learned from the failures of his earlier ventures with Fascism and showed a brutality towards his political enemies in a period of political violence that was almost unmatched in Italian history. In his article, *The Institutionalisation of “Squadristo”: Disciplining Paramilitary Violence in the Italian Fascist Dictatorship*, Professor Matteo Millan illustrates,

Thousands of squadristi formed 'action squads' and spread terror through the countryside, destroying the premises of 'subversive' parties, occupying whole towns, beating up and humiliating political opponents. This squadrista violence profoundly undermined the institutions of Italian governments, which proved wholly incapable of maintaining law and order, especially as it was not uncommon for the police, and even some prefects, to side openly with the blackshirts. The confrontations became so violent that some scholars have seen them as an outright civil war. In one comparatively short interval, between November 1918 and June 1921, 986 people were killed in this political violence.(556)

This violence culminated with the March on Rome, which happened on October 28, 1922. Thousands of blackshirts flooded the streets of Rome, all with one simple request, they wished to rule Italy. Although they only had 30,000 participants in the March, this was enough to convince King Victor Emmanuel III that serious consequences would be had if Mussolini was not appointed Prime Minister. And so, on October 29th, Emmanuel III gave in, and made Mussolini prime minister of the new government. The violence however, would not stop, and would continue for a while because even though the king had made Mussolini prime minister, it wasn't enough (556). They desired Mussolini to gain full dictatorial power and they would kill as many people that stood in their way. On January 3rd, 1925, after the high profile murder of Socialist member of parliament who raised the possibility that the Fascists had tampered with the results of the election, Giacomo Matteotti, Mussolini gave a speech taking responsibility for the blackshirts (though he did not mention Matteotti) and challenged his political opponents to remove him from power (Pugliese, 90). Many historians and scholars, including Professor Giovanna Dell'Orto, believe this marks the beginning of Mussolini's dictatorship. But as big a role as the violence that flooded the streets of Italy played, violence alone did not secure Mussolini's or Fascism's power in Italy. During the period of 1919-1925, Fascism's core beliefs began to attract the attention of not only the upper classes, but with the demographics that had previously been supportive of the Italian Socialist Party thanks in part to its position on agricultural reform. According to "The 'Red Menace' and the Rise of Italian Fascism" by William Brustein,

The Italian Fascist party first offered an agrarian program in early 1921. During the first half of 1921, articles appeared in the fascist press proclaiming 'land to the peasants,' 'to every peasant the entire fruit of his sacred labor,' and 'we want the land to belong not to the state but to the cultivator'. The Fascist party proposed to transform agricultural laborers into sharecroppers, sharecroppers into tenant farmers, and eventually all three into landowners. To accomplish these transformations, the Fascists promised to reopen the land market. They would convince large

landowners to transfer land to the Fascist land office, which would then allocate or sell the land to interested cultivators who would have a specified time period to pay off their debts. (658)

Although this sounds like it would scare away the elite classes' support, Mussolini and the Fascist Party made it clear that it supported the kind of large scale commercial farming the rich wanted to preserve,

The Fascists' major hurdle was to convince large landowners to place their land on the market or agree to lease it. The Fascists won over many large landlords by defending the economic importance of large commercial farming, and by convincing the owners of large farms that a larger and stronger class of sharecroppers, tenants, and small owners would provide a buffer between the large landowners and the Socialist labor unions, and would greatly reduce the Socialist threat of class revolution. (658)

Professor William Brustein contends that many people chose to support Fascists out of material interests, and that all though the fear of socialism helped drive Fascist support, it was ultimately convincing the working and upper classes that it was in their best interest to support Fascism, even at the cost of the lives of those who might oppose Fascism.

Conclusion

Before I end this lit review, there are a few things I want to mention that I did not get to include in the actual content of the paper, as these were parallels I drew on my own and not part of anything I researched specifically. The first is about Eco's definition of Fascism. Although his points can be used to identify fascistic movements and rhetoric, I believe it is important to remember that just because some of Eco's outlined characteristics can apply to other political organizations and movements, that does not make those organizations and movements fascistic. For example, communism in Russia after the 1917 Revolution took on many of the aforementioned qualities associated with fascism. In his book *Tiny Revolutions in Russia: Twentieth Century Soviet and Russian History in Anecdotes and Jokes*, Bruce Adams asserts that the Soviet Union believed in the heroic death: that any good proletariat hero should always

desire a heroic death if it means advancing the cause of Communism (Adams, 19). According to Bruce Adams' research, the Soviet state showcased this belief by giving many awards to soldiers who committed acts of recklessness posthumously throughout the Second World War. Adams uses the particularly morbid example of Alexander Matrosov to illustrate the prevalence of the heroic death in communist Russia: "One of the greatest individual heroes...was 18-year-old Alexander Matrosov, who threw himself over the embrasure of a German pillbox in order to save his buddies. In the anecdote he is conflated with 14-year-old Pavlik Morozov, who turned his father in as a kulak during the collectivization campaign of 1932 and was soon thereafter murdered by his neighbors." (32)

Although the Soviet Union clearly demonstrates one of Eco's 14 characteristics, that does not make it fascistic. As terrible as the Soviet Union was, claiming that it was a fascistic government because it meets one of Eco's characteristics of Fascism is not a particularly logical criticism one could levy towards the Soviet state. This applies to most of the characteristics outlined by Eco. This is why even though the use of the "other" and xenophobia are talking points Fascists will hammer home, the use of the "other" is also not exclusive to fascism. Xenophobia and other characteristics are effective propaganda and political tools, which is why fascism employs these tools. It is the confluence of all of Eco's proposed characteristics, not the presence of some of these characteristics, that defines fascism.

The second point I would like to make is that while I was doing research for this paper, an event eerily similar to what happened with the Del Rio brothers happened in Kenosha, Wisconsin. A teenager fired on three protestors to protect property that wasn't even his, and he was put up on a pedestal for it, despite the fact that he was wielding the weapon illegally. When it was revealed that he felt compelled to go to Kenosha because of the right wing news coverage

of the protests, no one was surprised. On national news, pundits focused more on the destruction of property at the hands of protestors rather than the event that caused protests to demonstrate in the first place. On networks such as Fox News and One America News, fear mongering about Black Lives Matter activists coming for you and your property was commonplace (Brown, Lee, OAN). These are the same networks that constantly push the “Thin Blue Line” narrative to their viewers, which harrowingly ties into the way the upper classes of Italy viewed the police and Fascist movement as mentioned in this paper.

Unfortunately, I only got to scratch the surface with this lit review. It turns out it’s incredibly easy to start writing a research paper instead of a lit review and not even realize it until suddenly two months worth of writing need to be reworked ostensibly. This is in part why I did not get to discuss some of the themes I mentioned in the beginning of this lit review, which is a shame really, as I had done quite a bit of research on how the ideological weakness of Fascism was one the reasons Italy performed so laughably terrible in WW2, how Fascism survived WW2 and even managed to remerge in Italy not even 30 years after they had been so roundly defeated, and the ideological link between Italian Fascism and the Alt-Right. I can only hope to rectify the failure to cover these topics within my project.

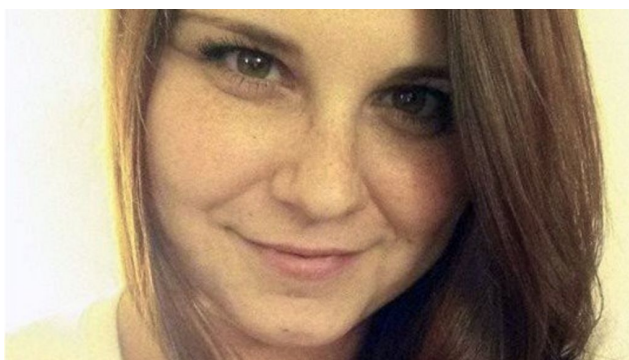
I’d like to end by thanking the people who made this paper possible. First, I’d like to thank Betsy Goldman, for helping me get back on the right track with this lit review and for providing encouragement when I thought there was no way I was going to have anything close to presentable for exhibitions. Next, I’d like to thank my advisors, Dustin Dusang and Samson Allal Kartaoui Jardine, for putting up with all my ramblings whenever I got excited about something I had researched and for trying their best to help even though this was their first time being JRPS

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Dedicated to my mother, who I wish could've lived to see this...



...And dedicated to Heather Heyer, may your death not be in vain.



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